

GOING BACK Andy Breckenridge

Three days before I had to go back
I decided not to wash

because each disappearing minute
was a coin in the chest from the Armada
ignored by the corrosive salt

and every second was an amethyst held
in the vault of a pyramid overlooked
for centuries by the experts.

I counted them as I counted each tiny
droplet in the hanging mist
from my morning dose of deodorant.

On the fourth morning I washed them all away
clamped in the transparent case of the shower
an exhibit with no witness or label.

HANGOVER Andy Breckenridge

A fish flashes and slaps the surface
of what might have been last night.

Eyes deep pressed in their sockets
bristling like sea urchins at low water.

A dry scramble for the blankets
to cover him in the outgoing tide.

Jellyfish on the beach fizzing to dust
in the midday sun; the madness

of the bearded castaway alone
with too much blue to comprehend

and no words for crazed lips to send.
A screen in his palm and a metal

sandwich aftertaste and a brain
sunburnt by balm or poison with

a skull and crossbones on the label.
The wet trees and grass, the rocks and

pebbles are dense with their own essences.
This bastard breadfruit will ripen

as mortal and as bitter as last night,
before the evening flood tide

blows life into tomorrow's eyes
shaped from cool damp clay

THE GIFT Andy Breckenridge

For H.P.

I feel blindly in the depths of the bag.
Something cold and metal. A whole
scottish mackerel. There are no words
and I manage not to say them.

When will we recognise that each of our
blood cells are microscopic mackerel?

When older kids pointed to the sky
and shouted 'mackerel', I thought it
was to take the piss when we looked up.

Its flesh is laid out in brightly lit altars,
studded with peppercorns or tickled
with harissa, or just plain smoked
for the fundamentalists.

Pilgrimages will still be made to midge ridden
western outcrops, where they are
tearing up the sea, and jewellers fashion
gold and silver coster necklaces, krill brooches
and darrow earrings luring them down from the sky.

I am proud that we worship the same godhead,
thankful that you and I are of a stripe.

DO NOTHING Andy Breckenridge

Who were you that
Came to our town and
Set up photoshoots
With girls in interesting clothes
On the misty pier
early on Saturday mornings?

And who sat with your two acolytes
Loudly improvising harmonies
To Johnny Come Home
by the Fine Young Cannibals
along with the juke box?

And who upbraided the
Minister for being part
of the establishment in the street
and him being quite a young
groovy minister to boot?

Perhaps you wrote poems and painted too?

Most of our creative and bohemian
young folk went off to the city
as soon as they could, looking
for communities of like minds, leaving
behind others to worry about
the season and if the town
was bringing in money. Why did you
travel in the opposite direction,
however briefly?

The two locals you befriended
hoped your barrelling energy would
transmit to them, too. They are moody
and interesting beside your curtailed
mushroom haircut as the strains of
Johnny Come Home fade.

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BIO: Andy Breckenridge has lived in the South East of England for twenty five years, where he works as a secondary English teacher in Hove, but originally comes from Oban. He has recently had a poem published in the Shoreham Wordfest Anthology, and another in Nutmeg Magazine last March. These poems are part of a collection he is working on called Letters From The South.

Favourite poem: The Cuckoo by Tomas Tranströmer