

Beached In Ayr

Where the busy land meets the idle sea
Lies the tideline of last night's intrusion.

And here is a place to be, for that line
Of tide is a boundary with the past
And I can serve as tour guide to what was.

Look to the right and let me draw your eye
To the dead gull, and the way that all the
Stark white and glossy black shrinks to a heap
Of sodden feathers on stiff scaffolding.

Looking down to your left you see what was
A Portuguese man-of-war, now no more
Dangerous than a crushed cherry jelly
Spilled out of a child's paper party plate.

As you proceed along the beach, please note
Particularly the scattered remnants
Of teenage parties: emptied bottles of
Raspberry vodka, no longer wicked,
And the slippery skins of used condoms.

And here, the ruins of a child's summer:
Unlaceable trainer (left foot, of course);
Broken base of that unfathomable
Game, where aimless swings are made at a ball
On elastic; and a broken bucket,
Last reminder of the sandcastles that
Rose and dissolved in Disneyland grandeur.

And on and on as you traverse the beach:
Dead gull, crushed seashells, used condom, dead gull
(Herring this time), dead pigeon (yes, pigeon),
All rest in this sad and sandy graveyard.

On returning home, I lay out with care
My meagre gatherings from the tideline:
Shells (razor, mussel, cockle, oyster, whelk);
A child's plastic inaction figure (not
Postman, fireman, builder or policeman,
But, sea-battered, some face- and formless thing).

Later, in the saltless sea of my bath
I sink beneath the water. My body,
Womb-wrapped again in comfort, warm and wet,
Renews, revives, invigorates and sings
Of the sand, and the sea, and the tideline.