

Roger Craik

THINGS MY FATHER SAID

Here's the Humble, hunting to the Nimble.
Newts have amiable faces.
The rhinoceros can not be tamed to any purpose.
I hope we see the jazzard jazzing,
and the Squirrel Man singing "Massachusetts."
You can judge a song
by whether it ends on a single note,
and by the quality of the drummer's teeth.
Hey tisty tosty an owle is a bird!
Don't ask a man to swink and swive.
In Aberdeen Wendy wrote four books
and I wrote nothing at all.
It's not his fault he's Raymond Williams.
His original name was Drumpf, you know.
Yes, next time. I'll see you next time, Roger.

SEASIDE INCONSEQUENTIAL

“There’s something written on the sand out there,”
a fairly well-known poet said
to my friend John. “I’m going to have a look.”

(They were walking on a promenade
in Swansea, Aberystwyth perhaps.)

When the poet came back,
he said to John
“It says ‘wanker.’”

THE FLOWERING GRASSES
(for Polina Zlatarska)

In the last days of his life
he saw the flowering grasses waving,
waving as they waved when he was a child,
and came to realize that in his life
he had forgotten the grasses.

MORNING SONG

The leather of my grandfather's desk
gleams taut, uncreaking in the early sun's
first splash, before a shimmering screen.

Against the haste
that squanders now for what might come,
how sobering to muse again

that in a few more centuries, perhaps,
sun will slant where once wide windows were,
this great work-worn desk and hand still young,
and no one left alive to read this poem.

AFTER MONICA JONES

“If you’re heartbroken, get down on your knees”
(she’d counsel women undergraduates
unwise enough to ask for sympathy)
“and scrub the floor: it always worked for me.”

How fortunate for them they never saw
her fretting through the frowsty listless hours,
grime building up upon the kitchen floor.