**Church Going**

Unsurprising, you being born just then,

the war dead, Nietzsche’s rage, Darwin’s clear truths

that we were clever chimps as well as men,

having soaked into the old, that all such youths

would yawn at gods, that boasting, lustful Zeus

and strident Yahweh strike you as obtuse.

The Coventry skyline had its own effects,

the urban boredom clotting in the blood,

relieved by only quick pints and quick sex

for eight to sixers, though life being good

materially did not help. We know that gods

are most appealing to the poorest sods.

Did Pa, being keen on Hitler play a role?

We must belong, for sure, but uniform

comes in such different fashions for a soul,

a chirpy swastika across the arm

can do the job of crosses round the neck.

As long as you belong, then what the heck?

Then you, in time, turned off to poetry,

that gentle field just out of town, where God

was not unknown, and you liked double-u B

at first and mined like mad his mythic load.

You saw three ships go sailing by; what star

would one go sailing by that sailed too far?

But this did not last long. In time you found

that voice, that caught the tedium of an age,

the dreary sound of fridges, the mindless sound

of rock-and-roll being danced inside a cage

by sad couples dying to fuck, and thereby forced

to that from which they could not be divorced:

the years of work, squat homes on flat estates,

train journeys twice a year to see the dad

going senile, television, and those plates

of slimy dinners, all the kids gone bad,

all riding to that last stop in a hearse,

then popped beneath two lines of awful verse.

Yet somehow when you went into that church,

as you said dubious women would, or a ghost,

or ruin-bibber doing his research,

you think you found what never can be lost,

that hunger to be serious, as you say,

that need to put all childish things away.

Was this sincere? Post-modernist you’re not,

so we can take you almost at your word,

that something in you judged the human lot

as slightly better than Camus’s absurd.

Some almost-instinct somehow, some unknown,

some bracelet of bright hair about the bone.