

## Shane

He just wanted peace for some reason  
You could never know, his tongue being a blunt instrument  
Disused like an old chisel. When he felt put upon he'd murmur  
'Duv' and 'If ever a man suffered', but mostly he plied his shears  
Leant back from his spade, or set to with his saw, Woodbine gripped tight  
In his weak mouth, cap pushed back, listening to its music  
Like an angel attuning himself to the spheres. Plain was how  
He liked his water and mild his beer. The one joke I heard him tell  
Was another man's glory and died on his tongue.  
She complained, laughing sadly, about his two left feet  
And his voice in chapel that ascended the rungs of a hymn  
Like the unsteady ladder he used for fixing slates.  
There were jobs, yes, he never got round to, so  
The wiring turned lethal, the distemper flaked off like romance.  
And when he wasn't slicked and shirted down the Myrtle  
He was apt to be in her way. A child might cultivate his faults  
Out of loyalty, watching as he pulled the garden round him  
Like an old coat, seeing him glance at the sky above the hills  
To rebaptise his solitude. Why else is he here with me now  
Across decades and a division of lives I still wish away?  
I gaze into the screen like he gazed into the fire or both of us  
Into a green patch of the old canal rife with fish and secrets.  
In his silences you might know a man, not in the clatter of talk  
Where I heard him mocked and belittled. It was only when  
No one was looking that he winked at me and flourished his Colt  
Making stars from the sun as he grew into his shadow each morning.