

Back from Beyond: 21–22 July, 1972

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This poem has its origins in a day some forty years ago, a day which began with my sudden collapse and ended with a dash by ambulance to hospital for emergency and life-saving surgery. As that day wore on, its sounds became mingled with those I could hear in my head, a music played by a shadowy figure waiting not far away ...

SONNET

Grey, as only in July
late afternoon is grey, and
gentle the quiet, homing tide
that carried me hither, far
from the mooring where I had
rocked all day, lapped by dreams as
reality ebbed and flowed ...

As jetsam, abandoned by
drifting seas, eroded by
sand-sweet wind, scoured limbs limply
shift and stir as small eddies
of sound break and slap, sucking
into whorled hollows ...

Pattering on throbbing skin:
shrilling from dry, stretched gut: thin
echoes spiral up from dropped
pebbles slowly depth-gauging
still pools of cold silence ...

Huddled beneath pain's
tattered blanket, I observe,
incuriously, that Now
becomes a bright close to the
tunnel of Time's inverted
spyglass, a soft litany,
distant, yet heard with
urgent clarity, before
I am overwhelmed in a
surge of dark oblivion ...

Beached stone, bleached bone-white, as white
the winding sheet of aching
hours in sleepless summer nights,
until pearls of song (so the
fifth morning of Creation
broke) drop and gather into
radiance, dewfresh, — the hurt
of it! — annealing ...

So rose
waves rescue me from the
disappointed shadow of
yesterday's musty busker.