

This Is My England

Part One: In the Country

Ancient and mighty oaks
roots thrown up like brown bones
iced, delicately, with
the caramel swirls of
unbending dog-owners.

Flashes of kingfishers
shyly hunting along
the river – mainly of
the lesser-spotted blue
nylon rope genus.

Money doesn't grow on
trees round here, but they do
bear exotic fruits from
distant shores: Heineken
Fosters, Stella Artois.

Carrier bags blossom
strange bunting blooms among
the looping beauty of
strangling six-pack holders
stretched, twisted and opaque.

A stolen cycle drowns
in shaded glades – but check
there's not a child still there
ghostly feet pushing round
underwater pedals.

Upside down skeleton
pushchairs tangle, breed with
orphaned umbrellas and
something sinister in
this sibling lust propels

an ex-toaster to swing,
suicidal, dangling
from its tight noose of flex
target practice somehow
for showers of thrown stones.

The giant fir tree stoops
towards the river, pained
eternally by its
nail-gunned label: Private
Licensed Anglers Only.

Part Two: And in the Town

Guts spill out when well-fed,
one old homing pigeon
bursts just like an old tyre
sprawled hotly in the mall
a popped carton of corn.

A hedgehog, dead, blown up
like a big bowling ball
a silent bomb, waiting
to spike and spatter crowds
of bare-legged schoolgirls.

Three magic plastic fish,
frozen stiff in mid-leap
Checker board football fields
Purple, hungover men
kicking bladders, bursting.

We cross white pontoons, high
in the frost air above
the canal - pray the tube
of sewage won't burst as
we steppy-stone along.