

Senility

Two of Five Pieces

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Senility

Called from pleasures
I go tap-tapping down an old man's back
down the skin of eighty summers wasting
on a rib-ladder closing
on a history of heart and lungs.
These narrowly contracting bags I find, proclaim
"Today his chest is clear as yours or mine."

This is the news required
as the tide of vigilance
laps his sheets each surfacing dawn.
"He's doing very well."

He leans his gaze to the voice dinting
the routine of his room
but slides the focal point towards infinity
past those gathered
to the motes of memory

to where
pinned in the wind
through their age and bond
her sacrificial flags go fluttering
battered and fastened into the room's corner
hinged haggard to his unhinging.

In this too a workless son and centreless
clock-bound slave
to the incontinent brain and its seepage.
Two tight-wire walkers
well talked out by nine each bed-wet day
the backyard hoist their prayer-wheel creaking.
The sheets flap up the scent of their detentions.

Time in its time will track them round their modest corner
novice at the final question
voting through their staring man a triple fate
when wind or human weather throws his way
a decent threatening pus-serious good infection.

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