

1.11 Voyage of a Trussed Chicken (2001)

Like Palinurus, I
was lost a space upon the main.
First waked from deeply-frozen
prospect of consumption at
an orderly repast,
then pitched by moonlight
into unaccustomed waters,
I sailed – as you will see – the gamut
round, until I ended in
this deeper darker tomb
inside the earth, beyond
the reach of fox or hound, and
where a better class of worm
will pick me slowly clean at last.

For seven days and seven nights
I stately sailed upon my little raft
my legs obscenely splayed, my
puckered arse exposed
as in a coyly proffered kiss to those
who watched disgusted from
the serried windows of the port,
who mocked my nudity, indignantly
abused my origins, and little thought to rescue me.
But friendless, I, without the wherewithal
to hide my shame, declined to sink,
bouyed up by certainty that I
was victim of some real mistake:
at night the swell would take me out
among the broad dark waters of the Thames,
but each new day would find me back
a-bobbing squarely by the boats,
outside the windows known to me –
a bold petitioner, who silently accused
the offending hand that set me loose
then hid its name from me.

A tribulation undeserved, for me
who'd played my blameless part
from egg to supermarket floor,
hygienic to the core and salmonella-free,
my weight, my price transparently displayed
upon my breast for all to see.
As hot October days passed on

I lost my self-respect –
a whiff of something more
than under-wing BO rose up
to wrinkled noses round the port,
while other birds – the moorhen, grebe
and goose and swan – all
skirted me with seeming little
sense of fellowship, and fish
kept low, unappetised –
until I knew for sure
that putrefaction was my name.

And then behold! The seventh day
delivered me, so here I lie interred
and slowly feasted on by
myriad amorous little mouths –
darkness, to oblivion, to nothing.

Thameside – October 2001.