

### 1.1 Syon Lane (1988)

Wallflowers shouted  
from the immaculate beds  
when first I knew it;  
prize-laden, garlanded  
with breath of the May-mown field,  
Syon Lane was strung, a bright bead  
on the fast and lisping track to Waterloo.

Poplars, tall custodian trees  
caressed the sky and relayed  
urgent whispers of the evening wind.  
Young Raj, with the fleck in his brown eye,  
presided in his station-master's cell  
until that bright and dismal day  
when the frail trajectory of his life  
intersected with the fast up-train.

Till then the wolves still circled in the woods,  
good order still prevailed –  
the strutted bench embraced us  
on those summer evenings: on  
winter nights the gas-hearted room  
cocooned some six or more.  
But with Raj's going  
the back of it seemed broken

and one by one the elements gave way:  
the bench betrayed its function  
to serve at last the eye alone,  
a bare frame of calligraphic scrolls,  
the panes, the signs, the locks – all,  
all yielded to conspire  
in the bitter slide to entropy.

And now the wolves themselves are gone.  
Bare bones are left  
where the summer wind  
disturbs the nettle-heads waist-high,  
the poplars lost their heads last year –  
with shattered stems and branches splayed  
they neutrally await  
the final equilibrium.

And I again await, with sharpened ear  
to catch that moment when  
the iron rail sings to the impending train,  
and I am borne away.

Gillette Corner – 1988