

THE BLACK RABBIT, AMBERLEY

Arundel, on a lazy Monday
Historic town, asleep and content
A chance sign arrests us:
River cruises.
And sometimes, it expands.

We step aboard,
Confident youths our stewards,
Wearing their expertise like medals.
Swans glide abundant,
Secure in their river mastery.

The boat's engine is jerked awake
Startled, shaken into wakefulness
It quickly resumes its even tenor
Smilingly smooth
No big deal

We chug, so close to the bank
But impossibly removed from the walkers:
They from us and we from them
We have our journey and they have theirs
Both equally valid, both equally real, but different...

And here I am, renewing memories with my love:
Companied by strange families, but equally drawn
To this small adventure of travel
They look around, hardy venturers
Waving with confidence at passing vessels

Reeds sway, swath, swathe
Little Egypt, little Nile
A high five from high tides
And the water washes us onward
Gently assertive.

Far too soon chalk cliffs loom
Drawing us ashore
The Black Rabbit
Eighteenth-century memory
Twenty-first century slick.

We seat and are sated
We dine and are dined

With impersonal efficiency:
And the river bands with ease,
Curvaceously blithe, it draws us to it:

The sun emerges
Saluting the Arun
The river returns it back
Reflecting it to us
Gladdening our souls

And we dine, and we toast
Ourselves and the river
And the glory of living
And the freedom of love:
And time stands graciously still.

There is so much before
There is so much to come:
The magnificent walk
Back to Arundel, river and sky
Applauding every step;

But time is lenient
Expanding this moment
A little eternity
Flowing and still
Enclosed by myself and my lover.