

## **Peach and Rose**

### *(i) To Be Beside the Seaside*

In casual conversation  
on the tram in Blackpool  
with two shopgirls wearing  
purple glittered stetsons  
on their way to a nuns' convention,  
got asked quite straight:

*Hey, Mister, who d'ya fink's da prettiest,  
Me or me mate ?*

Throwaway camera to hand,  
I take a pretty mean snapshot  
of the Tattoo'd Ladies  
neatly framing as backdrop  
the ramshackle pier-end  
and a donkey's rear-end.  
I smile, show the photo,  
and slip myself out of the picture:

*Ah, ladies, who knows  
How to choose between a peach and a rose?*

I check the watch,  
move towards the exit,  
dodge the horticultural debate.

### *(ii) The Razzmattaz*

All around, illusions:  
The Butterfly Lady  
The Goldfish Woman  
The Headless Mummy  
The Eiffel Impressionist

Roll up roll up to the culture-free zone,  
Neon lamps and lasers brightly setting the tone,

Ride the rollercoasters with your all-day tag,  
Clubbing to the beat with an all-night stag,

See the fortune teller play her infamous game,  
Chew the famous rock to the end of your name,

Beat the Guinness Record for drinking from a shoe,  
Spew the lot the furthest and beat that record too.

Adrenaline seekers

    joining the sponsored Revolution  
        plunging towards Valhalla,  
            happily bumped and tossed.

Un-sponsored punters in even deeper  
    playing the one-armed  
        double-handed  
            on a weekend beautifully lost.

(iii)      *Postcard from the Fifties*

If you've ever been to Blackpool  
And sat on top of a tram,  
You'll know the simple pleasure  
That charmed yer Dad and Mam.

If you've ever made a castle  
And buried yer Dad in the sand,  
You'll know the priceless treasure  
Of bucket and spade in hand.

If you've ever tried the dodgems,  
And chips wi' pot of tea,  
You'll know the simple pleasure  
Of being beside the sea.

If you've ever held your lover  
And kissed together slow,  
You'll know the simplest measure,  
And all there is to know.

(iv) *Postscript*

Walking past the painted facades  
of the B&B's and glitzy arcades,  
where clumsy troupes of litter dance  
and cast-off Kiss-Me-Quick hats parade  
with the ghosts of the old variety acts  
uncharitably discarded from the central pier,  
like flattened beercans on a dimly-lit sidestreet,

arrived at the station, the answer still unclear,  
do you leave your brains in the left luggage rack,  
go and wallow in the nostalgia and tack,  
or next time head to some upmarket gîte  
or hacienda in Spain where the sun  
shines each day and the prunus persica grows,

well, mister, which one's it to be –

*Southern Peach or Northern Rose ?*