

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 ?