

Bradford-On-Avon

Late May trails cowparsley
 And the first summer dust along the roadside;
 To the river the town falls slowly in tiers,
 With walled gardens, a cloth mill, a drift of cottages
 Among the hawthorns; pale lines of fish
 Cut the khaki water, and the illuminated gaps
 At the splay roots of willows.

Wedged into the ground with stone clamps
 Is the cool tomb of the Saxon church,
 Empty of prayer and function,
 And arrived at over a comic opera bridge.
 Inside Holy Trinity, tendrils of sound
 Grow and block the light; Dufay
 Is the wine that fills this vessel up
 With one voice, two voices and a rebec.

Around a Georgian summer house
 The Vicar's son, on a motorized lawn-cutter,
 Slowly circles, mopping up the froth of daisies;
 Negotiates the weeping ash, embarrassed,
 Or just incurious, at us smoking there.

In the garden, white-dressed columns
 Slowly move their Seurat shadows.
 You sleep beneath a lilac bush, whilst I watch
 From under an old straw hat; at the cricket match,
 In the green-gold dazzle, the cricketers sometimes disappear.

Occasionally when I talk to you
 I see you scurry into a thicket,
 And hide yourself, to re-emerge grinning.
 You say you're lonely; I can believe that
 Since I'm partly responsible.

Ian Burton