

3 short poems (2)

by Neil McCarthy

When the night is early

When the night is early enough
for the stars to count and the sea
just a silhouette against the neon,
and this rock beneath us the only
throne we will ever own, I sit close
to you, trying not to disturb the heron
paused on stilts in the tidal silt,
waiting for the water.

Clear as my conscience may be, you still haunt me as the brown settles to black

sit there and recommence as if nothing had ever happened,
your hands conducting the orchestra of your purity.

We are now at the age, it seems, where clichés suffice to
regale the years and talk of how kind they have been,
naivety a scapegoat for the slips.

The child in me wants to take you down, come up with
some playground retort to send you packing;
the man in me wants to feel nothing,

sit and run my finger down the side of my pint glass,
and look straight through where the dark stuff used to be.

Laces

for Alex

How many times, singing, have I
untied your laces, pulled
off your shoes and held
one to my nose, pretending
to sniff some foul odour
if only to make you laugh?

As you grow older you will
forget such gestures; the
world as you come to know
it, an open envelope of
good news and bad. From
dependent to child to boy to
adult; an alphabet sung backwards.

