

Old Tar Thoughts (v.9 final)

*I peel my sleep-gummed eyes apart
As grey day creeps into my ken;
I still have seas to sail, old friend.*

*My nose tells me that breakfast waits;
That Mission reek tempts me awake;
Where I am bound, I doubt there's cake.*

*I hear the moon-pull slap and suck
Of ocean on sea-wall and pier;
It draws me out – its call is clear.*

*The gulls' screams, now, invade my day,
The raucous, raiding, greedy flocks.
That fishing blizzard by the docks;*

*Last night, my brass, the last of it
It bought a whore – her woollen dress
Recalls my blanket's rough caress.*

*Her perfumed memory's best forgot;
I tasted flavour on her lips
Of many sailors, many trips.*

*I hurry from the Mission now
And run down Dog Leap Stairs – they're steep
My ship-bound shoes wake those who sleep.*

*I've bait inside and bag on back
My buckled feet, by cobbled wynds
Pass Crown Posada's creaking sign.*

*And now, my hurrying heart is light
As, with the quayside comes in view
A glimpse of ships, a-swarm with crew.*

*I sniff the tang – tar, salt and ropes
I leap on board with grateful feet
They itch to walk the ocean's street.*

*As quayside moorings splash astern
My thoughts now turn to flying spume;
They yearn for voyage, ocean room.*

*And why, you ask, do I so crave
The thrill of sea-swell under keel ?
It's just something that I feel.*

*For me, it has aye been the same
The Tyne my heart, the sea my joy
Since this old tar was cabin-boy.*