

Withernwick-1994

who's that old man sitting there
as if he belongs in uncle's armchair

when I close my eyes I can hear
uncle's voice loud and clear
but wasn't it only yesterday he was strong and tall
carrying me on his shoulder young and small
into his blacksmiths shop
the fire in the forge fed by coke
burning hot without any smoke
the bars of iron glowing white
being bent and shaped to a size just right
to fit the shires tall and grand
to get them ready to work the land
the finished shoe plunged in the trough to quench
the hissing water the acrid stench
the hammer on anvil beating and ringing
purest notes like children singing
to the whispered chorus of sighs and pleas
from the overhanging churchyard trees

when I open my eyes what will you be
sitting in the chair opposite me
please don't be old because if you do
then I'll have to be older too
and the boy and the man and the forge will just be
images trapped in memory.