

MY GRANDFATHER'S LIFE

My grandfather wore a pink perforated patch;  
They'd given the wrong eyedrops one day in hospital.  
I was told he never complained and got small compensation.  
He hated fuss;  
He was that kind of man, I was told by dad.

My grandfather used to sit in a corner,  
At a small school-like table.  
Always wearing a waistcoat,  
Smoking his pipe now and then;  
Sucking butter-yellow mints  
That he sometimes offered around.

He used to work with a handcart,  
Moving other people's furniture;  
Hard laborious work, for a strong man.  
He used to live in the Isle of Man  
With my dad and grandmother.  
He came of good family it was rumoured.

Dad was not his real son,  
(Though dad was never told so,  
Not until later)  
But another man would occasionally visit  
and bounce dad on his knee.  
My grandfather never complained.  
He never slept with my grandmother,  
But he never complained.  
All he asked was a meal to come home to –  
Scrupulously content with that and tobacco,  
And perhaps the odd pint of beer.  
He never argued – said hardly a word.  
And when he lived with us in Liverpool,  
I just a child,  
Grandmother long-dead,  
It was the same.  
You hardly noticed he was in the room.  
He might have been a peaceful alien spy,  
Come to observe our planet  
From his little schoolroom desk in the corner.  
And when he died we hardly noticed he was gone.  
There just, weren't anymore mints.  
And the table was simply chopped up in the backyard.  
... For firewood.