

EIGHTEEN 1980

Old oak piano, warm mahogany of violin
shapes fuse with the grace of the gauche
and the young, small-waisted faces, pools
of eyes, lusted abundance, springing steps
and swinging wings of hair — music students
as it happens, so the babble of voices
are parrying knowledge, improvisation
and crescendos of mirth in clefs and keys,
instead of somebody's standard works.

Kate, Jane, Anne-Marie, the names sound
a rollicall of history, even Tristana,
a dreamed not given name, slender, dark,
apart, a Medea bound for shoals, while
another, the sophisticate, op shop shoes,
sequins fashioned for the forties, black laced
legs a Lautrec sketch, is the forever courtesan.
The more sensitive and searching, fingers
burnt, hold their exquisite mouths and eyes
in vulnerability and nervous cigarettes
spike the laughter with their counterparts,
the youths, handsome, shaggy shy,
or articulate and knowing — the catalysts.

So what has changed? At eighteen now
you have the vote — the difficulty is
to remember it.