

# Arab Strap, Bliss

She lives and laughs until she cries,  
but love-heart shades hide ember eyes.

In sunlit selfies: teeth and tan;  
a garish drink, a well-toned man.

But when the sun has turned its back,  
and shadow sharpens its attack,  
her muscle memory kicks in  
to lacerate her paper skin.

She reads the words that fathers, husbands, sons and brothers said,  
but there's no knowing what is going on inside another head.

She is a ghost, she's an echo,  
and they can't help if they don't know,  
but the day is coming –

Soon she'll be bare and unknown,  
on a walk in the park in the dark all alone;  
her keys in her bag, her earbuds full blast  
to drown out the birds, disposition downcast –  
and she'll call it bliss.

They said beware of strangers, but now that's all we are,  
rolling real-time autofiction, reveries with avatars.  
I'm what I think you think I am, the same voice sings a different song:  
a hundred billion neurons making it up as they go along.  
I don't know what you know, I know what I believe.  
I know what I can give – but I don't know what you receive.

The knives are sharpened, pistols drawn,  
the boys warm up and flex their brawn.  
Soon hearts are broken, points are scored –  
it's just some banter when they're bored.  
They've always been there, they're not new,  
but now they've got a good venue.  
Let's hope the day is coming ...

When you'll be bare and unknown,  
on a walk in the park in the dark all alone;  
your keys in your bag, your earbuds full blast  
to drown out the birds; disposition downcast –  
and you will call it bliss.

Cowards under camouflage,  
lobbing hate-bombs, hurling jeers;  
faceless brutes and bigots,  
revealing all their boyhood fears;  
hostility, fragility,  
rejected, vengeful tattletales ...  
we built another world,  
but history and hate prevail.