

Reclamation (On Visiting the Captain Cook)

On the carpet-stripped floor
Across the dusty bar tops -
Impressions and shadows;

Impressions of whores' breasts
Flopped out for the best boob
Competition- an old marketing device

In times as steely as the toe caps
Of the old docker's dusty boots
Making ghost rhythms in our ears,

Clunking amongst sad-vulgar bric-a-brac
Of incongruous lost inhabitants:
Old family photo's and a sex toy box.

Haunted by the fact that Granddad
Had his last pint with Dad here
On knocking off from Head Wrightson's
With the cancer already in him,

And shadows, brawling shadows:
Fists raised and an old landlord's shade
Mock dancing a drunk to the door

Where you can feel the hard past
kick you up the arse.

Andy Willoughby