

A History of Capitalism

In the end it wasn't the machines
that broke but us. So we sealed the vaults
beneath our cities, streaming war porn
and McCarthyite B-movies round the clock.
Anonymous graffito: JOIN THE DREAM POLICE!
Someone said you are what you conspire
to be called. A million houseflies that had snuffed it

in the plastic chandeliers of rented mobile homes
pelted us like hail. Credit ratings, zero hour
contracts, restructuring, corpsing out of bed
at 6 am, knowing the waters by the promenade
better than the inside of your head.
A mouthful of Victory Gin for the cold.
All I know is that one day

you got this cough that wouldn't budge,
a scratching from beneath the floor,
the TV switching itself off during *Plasticsene*.
Then the door heaved open, unleashed an avalanche
of discarded magazines and doctor's notes,
a lake of bad cheques sluicing from beneath the bed.
Your parents, who'd been sitting on the couch for weeks

were buried in newspaper cuttings, betting slips,
final notices, postcards, unfinished sudokus.
Illicit receipts flurried from the u-bend.
Effluents emerged unstoppable
from gutters, anointing passers-by, rendering them
with a detail worthy of Pompeii. A terracotta army
lined the street outside the job centre

and crept at elemental pace across the sky
like a Byzantine frieze. Movie posters,
mouse mats, fag ends, Formica worktops,
crystallised into coral reefs, swirling to infinity
in the galaxies of mezzanines
and we lived momentarily, but it might as well
have been forever in their shadow.