

REGIONAL OLYMPIAD IN ENGLISH

2012

Group Five

Part One
Dictation

I was driving eastwards / when I saw her, / walking towards me / at the edge of the road – / a plump solitary woman / in baggy cotton trousers / and a straw hat. // It was only a glimpse, / and I was doing seventy miles an hour / at the time. // I trod on the brakes, / provoking an enraged roar / from a huge petrol tanker. // It was impossible to stop / until I came to a drive-in café. //

In a cloud of dust, / I raced back down the road, / wondering if I had hallucinated / the figure of Maureen. // But no, there she was, / plodding along ahead of me / on the other side of the road. // I slowed down, / provoking more indignant hooting / from the cars behind me. // Hearing the noise, / Maureen threw a casual glance in my direction, / but I was concealed behind dark-tinted glass, / and unable to stop. // A few hundred yards further on / I pulled off the road / and got out of the car. // There was an incline at this point, / and Maureen was walking downhill towards me. // She walked slowly, / with a limp, / grasping a staff / which she thumped down on the road / in front of her / at every second step. // Nevertheless her gait was unmistakable, / even at a distance. // It was as if forty years / had been pinched out of my existence, / and I was back in Hatchford, / outside the florist's shop, / watching her walk towards me / in her school uniform. //

If I had scripted the meeting / I would have chosen a more romantic setting – / the interior of some cool dark old church, / perhaps, / or a country road with wildflowers / blowing in the breeze along its margins. // As it was, / we met on the edge of an ugly main road, / deafened by the noise of tyres and engines, / choked by exhaust fumes. // She slowed, / hesitated, / and stopped, / as if she feared my intentions. // I laughed, / smiled, / and held out my arms / in what was supposed to be / a reassuring gesture. // She looked at me with alarm, / clearly thinking / I was some kind of homicidal maniac / or rapist, / and drew back, / lifting her staff, / as if prepared to use it / for self-defence. // I stopped, and spoke. //

(Adapted from “*Therapy*” by **David Lodge**)

*Преди първия прочит на диктовката на дъската се изписват собствените имена от текста: **Maureen, Hatchford.***
