

Old Ruddock's boy made good, they say, up country

I thought a jaunty walk was best
To take me down the deepened lane.
I turned my lumpen throat and back.
My father watched with straightened mouth.
No talk of pride or shame or pain.
I blinked away the scorching light.
The shadows shattered in the narrow track.

I didn't have the words to spell
the restless itch
the urgent thirst
for towns and light, the edge, the world,
the something, not hedged in.

I used to take the kids at first.
We made our nest in Rowan Tree
where the cowshed used to be.
Just the promised August week
they swung on gates and ran with sticks.
I smarted at the change of it
and waited for the hush of sleep
to wander out in startling nights
and stride across the deep grooved fields
to thwack again the hoar oak tree.
The proof to me I'd been.
I'd creep about the cleaned up yard,
Flowered up with tubs and neat,
until, with softest soughs,
it came . . . the past . . .
the pull and pump and suckle,
the warm hay-breath of cows,
the pink and velvet nuzzles,
the muddy slap of hooves.

And yes, I've got the cars and house,
The long haul holiday.
I've even got some Cup match comps –
A good life, as you say.

Pat Glover