

Plenty

Jem Poster

The phrase seemed right for the time. There are, we'd say,
plenty more fish in the sea. I taste it again, the heady
mixture of greed and insouciance; the future waiting
for what we might care to do to it.

Have I invented
these insistent images? Trawlers strung out across a pale
expanse of sea in stormlight, their brown hulls shrouded
in luminous spray; the wet ropes taut, the seethe and slide
of life plucked from the prodigal waters. Strong hands
guiding the swollen nets; the holds crammed full, the decks
shining with scales. All this
like some grained newsreel, the residual shadow of a world
we loved unwisely.

Where shall we go from here,
knowing what we know? Spillage and exploitation, repeated
patterns of violation; soft white bellies turning
to an impassive sky. Our children know it too, the stench
blown from the littered shoreline, the struggle for release
from stifling dreams; the ineluctable roles played out
in rented bedrooms to the scream of gulls, the wind
rattling the casements; the unemployed
haunting the sullen back-streets; the deserted quays.

Jem Poster is the author of a poetry collection, *Brought to Light* (from which this poem is drawn, with acknowledgements to Bloodaxe Books), and two novels, *Courting Shadows* and *Rifling Paradise*.

