

**That's Not a Fishing  
Boat, It's a Giraffe:  
Responses to Austerity**

Ian McMillan

smith|doorstop

Published 2019 by Smith|Doorstop Books  
The Poetry Business  
Campo House,  
54 Campo Lane,  
Sheffield S1 2EG  
[www.poetrybusiness.co.uk](http://www.poetrybusiness.co.uk)

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ISBN 978-1-912196-75-3  
Designed & Typeset by Utter  
Printed by Biddles

### Acknowledgements

Thanks to the producers and editors of the following, where some of these poems first appeared: BBC Radio 4, Hardship anthology, the Giant Steps anthology.

Smith|Doorstop books are a member of Inpress:  
[www.inpressbooks.co.uk](http://www.inpressbooks.co.uk). Distributed by NBN International, Airport  
Business Centre, 10 Thornbury Road Plymouth PL 6 7PP.

The Poetry Business gratefully acknowledges the support of  
Arts Council England.



Supported by  
**ARTS COUNCIL  
ENGLAND**

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## *Channel*

Welcome, in your tiny boats.  
Here is a gold piano  
For you to rest in.

Welcome, with your soaking clothes.  
Here is a butler's pocket  
For you to sleep in.

## *Chart*

In the opticians. A man comes in, says

THEY SHOULD SEND THEM ALL BACK  
THEY SHOULD SEND THEM ALL BACK  
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THEY SHOULD SEND THEM ALL BACK

That special intimacy of the opticians.  
The way they look into your eyes. His  
Bald head gleamed in weak winter sun.  
He could read all the way down to the bottom  
And beyond, if there had been more words.

## *In the Barber's*

In the Barber's an older bloke sits in the chair,  
Takes his hearing aids out and says  
'Yer can seh what yer want nar. Ah can't hear yer.'

The young lad keeps blowing  
His grandad's referee's whistle, and the barber  
Does the old Tony Curtis/Yul Brynner gag

And a man puts his head round the door  
With an 80th birthday card for someone  
Who's just been and gone. The lad blows

The whistle. The bloke with the hearing aids out  
Shouts 'Men dee afoor women. On a 52-seater coach,  
You'll hev 40 women and 12 men.' 'You're all offside'

Says the lad with the whistle. 'That one's disallowed.'

## *Eight Poems Translated from a Lost Language*

1.

The banks of steel flowers are rusting  
In the air that was borrowed  
From yesterday's mist. Milk seethes  
In bottles.

2.

Sing me the end of your song  
Before the beginning, said the official,  
Officially. I refused. His rope curled.

3.

Sing, unbuilt wall!  
Sing, unmade bed!  
Sing, untold story!  
Sing, uncarried infant in the arms of the uncle!

4.

The sunrise reminds us  
That nothing is permanent  
Not even the way we speak  
As a door slams in our faces.



5.

Your breasts  
Are so beautiful  
I wish  
You had three.

6.

I caught you thinking  
By the well. You were thinking  
About the well.

Why do you not think  
About the sky?  
I asked.

The moon is in the well,  
You replied.

7.

They said that one day our language would die  
And I pointed to a bird and said 'Birdsong never dies,  
It just swims from the beak to the ear.'

8.

One line is not a poem unless the king writes it.