

Man with a Stick

Fish

Old man checks his rear view mirror, wispy hair, familiar eyes
Journeys alone, unsure of the exit, straddling lanes his signal
s ignored
Deaf to the horns, blind to the anger, stalled in the traffic o
f a fast moving world
The Man with a stick

Long rod dipping fishing hollows, short sword slays the ranks o
f weeds
Bat of ash on the edge of a diamond the kiss of willow before t
umbling bails
Rock n'roll snares, cheerleading batons, the pencil scratches o
n an empty page

A pointer raps on a cloudy blackboard, a cane taps time on an o
utstretched palm
Learning the lessons, reciting the mantra that sparing the rod
is spoiling the child
Says a man with a stick, watch the man with the stick, the man
with the stick

And you force back the tears; stand in the corner listening to
the sniggering of so called friends
Hold the pain in a fist, stare back in defiance, and vow to you
rself that they won't hit you again
Stifled your hate, channelled the anger, snuck in the system an
d bided your time
You tightened your lip, accepted the beatings and they measured
you up for a uniform , you fitted the uniform

Then they gave you a stick.

A Knobkerrie and a bloodied shillelagh in calloused hands take
the lions down
Pick axe hafts and hickory truncheons cracking the skulls on th
e picket lines
Bamboo staffs and sjambok switches, cudgels bludgeoning hearts
and minds
Clearing the streets of a burning township, scattering crowds f
rom a city square
Herding the queues of the weak and the hungry, testing the will
of the few who dare face the man with the stick

You dealt out the blows following orders, the questions were le
ft for another time
You held it inside; absolving your conscience laid all the blam
e on the 'powers that be'
You gave them your all, got a watch and a bungalow, mothballed

the uniform and faded away

Lost all you loved, withered and vulnerable, abandoned your car
at the side of the road at the end of the road, your fate unavoidable

The son becomes the man

The man with a stick, a man with a stick.

Old man follows cracks in the pavements, leans weary at the end
of days

Unsteady, checking his balance shuffles along on his lonely trail

The man with a stick