

## Reclaiming My Voice

A pint in my local, Christmas Day '99  
First time I looked over at Danny and thought 'Damn, he is fine'  
Playing pool with the lads, Danny-boy on my mind  
Bent over the table, that peachy behind  
His wife on the phone saying turkey is served  
I had a burst up against him  
Phwoar, his peaches were curved  
Go home to your wife, to your not-so-fun life  
I'll sit here with my beer and imagine your rear  
You bloody enjoyed it though you said it was nothing  
Be me not your wife and the turkey you're stuffing  
Feeling forlorn once Danny had gone  
Me back in my bedroom with Christmas pudding and porn

Danny later took me aside during a footie lads meet  
And told me he knew I was gay by the way that I speak  
'Don't bother me mate,' he said, 'that particular street  
But I hope I don't catch it; did you get it from something you eat?  
It doesn't make me a gay I was just having a peek  
at the size of Ben's tackle whilst he was having a leak  
I might listen to Kylie and boogie to Chic  
And got a big hard on when Ben did a streak  
Running stark bollock naked at the footie last week, him running over the pitch when the Gunners  
got beat  
All of us lads admired the size of his meat  
But me, a full time full blown gayboy  
Sure I've thought about dipping my toe in but never my feet'  
Growing up with the lads  
Acting my lad-self amongst my mates  
Who liked women and I liked men  
Still doing things that 'lads' do  
But me not being straight is what differentiates  
Me from them  
We all drank beer and played pool in the pub  
And then I opened my mouth to speak

And my voice, its tone, its hue  
Its texture separates  
Me from them  
We do not sound the same, my voice creates  
an almost immediate reaction  
'You sound like that poof off the telly' the barmaid commented  
I then hated the sound of my own voice  
And so I closed my mouth and did not speak

This was a time in my life  
when I thought sounding camp perpetuates

negative stereotypes straights have of gays  
Did my voice give away  
My hidden secret I kept at bay  
Trying not to divide me from them  
Sound manly, act the geezer on my Harley  
Hide that in my bedroom, I learnt the language of gay Polari  
Be the bloke when I spoke  
'Alright mate', 'Alright Dad'  
I tried to sound more 'lad'  
When I opened my mouth to speak

Years later someone said my voice was lovely  
A voice with an accent that so evidently indicates  
my life so clearly  
I was born with this voice. I did not have a choice  
My voice no longer haunts me, it liberates  
It's no longer me and them  
It's we  
And so now I choose to open my mouth  
and take pride in its texture when I speak

We are all the same, men are just men  
So the lads like Benice and I like Ben  
I've recently liberated my body from years of self-shaming  
Now it's the turn of my voice that I'm firmly reclaiming  
And my mannerisms too,  
Move aside who finds them too camp and too gay  
I'm now reclaiming who I am, this is my reclamation, in every way