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## Poems

Rod Mengham

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## Poems

### Abstract

SMITTEN, THE STOA

# Rod Mengham

## SMITTEN

Before dawn all the first born  
died under the anaesthetic.

Paper, ink, pen and all  
the poisonous skin is heir to

started to feel utterly strange  
I still have the ticket

lights go out and this automatically  
puts hope into the hygienist.

They named a clinic in Chicago  
I have never walked into

in the dark of the stem  
although hidden now is the balance of power

the square root on which life depends  
but that's not the only answer.

The casual tourniquet has ceased to turn  
I explain to the children my nightmare

hating the mainland as it slips from view  
for the breaking surf has covered it over

with everlasting moisturiser.

## THE STOA

- i. No republic without hard art  
debriefing a holiday romance
- the long wormcasts so dear to me  
the rate of flow comes back
- gender must be saved from drowning.
- ii. The memory roots itself in a dialling tone
- no lesson in faith  
is the ticklish commander of this mission
- incensed and pushily unavailable
- iii. the flesh delays for  
the sound of breathing up stairwells.
- iv. Even in youth you cheated  
with hinges of hand over fist.
- Now it's a pack of lies
- they ply to and fro and  
bring colour to the floor of the hunting lodge.
- v. The teeming brain
- comes off the rails
- no one has any idea
- in the dark passage of our natural life  
draw the veil or apply the dimmer
- quietly cross it off the list.
- vi. A mind laid waste by flying colours  
does not belong in these halls and corridors.
- vii. Happiness in side-shows  
built on sand. Rest in the shade
- with a packet of sliced cheese.

- viii. It took three men to guide your feet  
your pocket money had gone missing.
- Thoughts of impeachment keep things straight  
like tiny grubs within the pale.
- The last request  
carries no weight.
- ix. The keys to your cell  
are pushed through the bars.
- x. Barefoot in the freezing labyrinth  
your friend is a late learner  
lower your antennae now.