

# The gentleman in the black velvet waistcoat

On a scale of hedgehog to fox, how many things do you know, mole?

From a distance it looks like fabric snagged on the wire

When I think about you, I think about the creature in Kafka's burrow

but closer up the brain still can't make sense of it all:

hearing the persistent whistling, in constant fear of something

it starts to conjure up thoughts of martyrdom or cult mass suicide,

breaching the burrow's defences – getting past the baffles and pitfalls:

it cannot comprehend – despite ample evidence to the contrary –

it's like folk-wisdom about those who have the most

that a human might gas or shoot or dig out or bludgeon

being the most fearful about losing what they have.

a dozen or more of these compact, comical, cylindrical bodies

And the question of knowledge revolves, like meat on a spit –

and pin them to barbs in the wire, as if a warning:

if you know these many small things, does it mean you're lost

as if moles are far-seeing, rational actors

in the details – unable to see the totality of the threat you face;

who will take on board a threat, weigh up its implications,

and if you know the one big thing, does that leave you without

make a considered decision to move on somewhere less hostile.

the cunning and resources you need to defend yourself?

Do they know that you brought down kings in your day,

with your black velvet waistcoat and song of silent vibration?