

Am I to be an orphan?

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**I wonder, as I hold my father's hand
remembering my mother's death
and one minute wishing him the same quick peace
the other gasping him back to this life?**

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**at forty-six and supposedly full grown?
It will be a different world for me then
cast onto the last level of living.
'We'll be next', one of us will say
as we drink his memory in the Rhindsdale Tavern.
'We'll be next' and we'll laugh and drink
and roll out stories and musings and silences
in the black-suited hubbub, lagered and vodkaed
filled with broth and steak pie.**

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**in the inevitable natural order of things?
I will drag behind me my children
and they theirs, and a whole line of us
shuffling through generations spinning
patterns and whispers in our allotted time
for the next and the next and the next.**

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**among strangers in this room in the Glasgow Royal
with its windows cheerily curtained casting out
to the Necropolis, John Knox on his pillar
calling the grey sky around him?
Here?
With the only comfort that, for him
and me, life is changed not ended.**

Charlie Gracie