**In the Snack Bar**

Formica-laminate used for worktops; cheap

Hyperbole-little moments given great importance

Alliteration-C sound is harsh, like smash of cup

A cup capsizes along the formica,
slithering with a dull clatter.
A few heads turn in the crowded evening snack-bar.

Busy, hard to navigate

Attention brought to moment

Contrast-clatter seems sharp and loud, dull makes it sound every day and ordinary-emphasises his clumsiness

Personification-cup hiding out of embarrassment

An old man is trying to get to his feet
from the low round stool fixed to the floor.
Slowly he levers himself up, his hands have no power.
He is up as far as he can get. The dismal hump
looming over him forces his head down.
He stands in his stained beltless garberdine
like a monstrous animal caught in a tent
in some story. He sways slightly,
the face not seen, bent down
in shadow under his cap.
Even on his feet he is staring at the floor
or would be, if he could see.
I notice now his stick, once painted white
but scuffed and muddy, hanging from his right arm.
Long blind, hunchback born, half paralysed
he stands
fumbling with the stick
and speaks:
‘I want –to go to the-toilet.’

Dehumanising-taking away identity

Hiding self, embarrassed

Alliteration-fricative sound=continuous, shows how unsteady he is

Not real, mythical-frightening in his difference

Simile-makes him seem inferior to others, animalistic, wild; frightening to look at; ‘caught in a tent’-suggests he is trapped, uncomfortable

Poor, not well cared for, doesn’t care about appearance

Rain coat

Personification of the hump-disability controlling his actions, depicted as harmful, inescapable

Sense of dread, doom

Bleakness; negative view of disabilities

Emphasises man’s weakness-‘levers’=careful process, requiring assistance

Enjambment-emphasising length of time taken to do this, struggle

Speaker taking active role-from observing in stanza 1

Reluctant speaker

Dashes in speech-creates pauses, suggesting difficulty in speech, stammering-out of nerves or inability?

Enjambment-emphasises slow nature of movement, difficulty completing simple tasks

Dealing with issues for most/all of life-extended ‘o’ of assonance emphasises this

List of disabilities emphasising helplessness

Not holding stick-suggests weakness, lack of control

Well-used, not well cared for

Hinting at disability

It is down two flights of stairs, but we go.
I take his arm. ‘Give me-your arm-it’s better,’ he says.
Inch by inch we drift towards the stairs.
A few yards of floor are like a landscape
to be negotiated, in the slow setting out
time has almost stopped. I concentrate
my life to his: crunch of spilt sugar,
slidy puddle from the night’s umbrellas,
table edges, people’s feet,
hiss of the coffee-machine, voices and laughter,
smell of a cigar, hamburgers, wet coats steaming,
and the slow dangerous inches to the stairs.
I put his right hand on the rail
and take his stick. He clings to me. The stick
is in his left hand, probing the treads
I guide his arm and tell him the steps.
And slowly we go down. And slowly we go down.
White tiles and mirrors at last. He shambles
uncouth into the clinical gleam.
I set him in position, stand behind him
and wait with his stick.
His brooding reflection darkens the mirror
but the trickle of his water is thin and slow,
an old man’s apology for living.
Painful ages to close his trousers and coat –
I do up the last buttons for him.
He asks doubtfully, ‘Can I- wash my hands?’
I fill the basin, clasp his soft fingers round the soap.
He washes, feebly, patiently. There is no towel.
I press the pedal of the drier, draw his hands
gently into the roar of the hot air.
But he cannot rub them together,
drags out a handkerchief to finish.
He is glad to leave the contraption, and face the stairs.
He climbs, and steadily enough.
He climbs, we climb. He climbs
with many pauses but with that one
persisting patience of the undefeated
which is the nature of man when all is said.
And slowly we go up. And slowly we go up.
The faltering, unfaltering steps
take him at last to the door
across that endless, yet not endless waste of floor.
I watch him helped on a bus. It shudders off in the rain.
The conductor bends to hear where he wants to go.

Simile-conveys difficulty of movement, everyday tasks made to seem epic

Lack of agency, being moved rather than moving

Juxtaposition (placing two opposing ideas close together)-crawling movements contrasted with what seems like endless space

Repetition and hyperbole-shows how minute his movements are-struggle

Suggests a lot of thought put into every movement

Alliteration-slow, drawn out sounds

Hyperbole-exaggerating slowness of movement

Onomatopoeia-highlighting v quiet sounds-relying on other senses to guide

Sensory description highlighting absence of sight, means of navigating sightless world-through sound, smell and sensation

Onomatopoeia/personification-suggests danger, threat-harsh sound startles man, unfamiliar

Contrast/juxtaposition-every step seen as difficult, hard to navigate

Sense of desperation, need for support, unsteadiness

Uncertainty, double-checking

Repetition-emphasises difficulty of movement, endlessly slow pace

Speaker’s patience

bathroom

Chaotic movement, unsteady

Contrast-man’s appearance with perceived cleanliness of the bathroom

Lack grace and elegance

No privacy or independence

Gloomy, deep in dark thoughts

Weakness, even in simple tasks he is weak

Doesn’t want to draw attention-everything he does is quiet, slow so as not to alarm

Emphasis on slowness, difficulty completing simple tasks

Lack of privacy/independence

Little faith in own abilities, reduced to asking for help with even simple tasks

Holding tightly to support, lack of embarrassment in assistance, closeness

Weakly, used to impairments

Onomatopoeia/personification-loud, unseen sound is frightening, jarring against silent bathroom

Weakness, inability

Everyone around has to accommodate his needs

Personification-emphasising weather conditions, difficult for man

Rhyme-used to create motion, progress

Hyperbole of previous section contrasted with new found confidence

Sense of relief

Repetition-emphasises clumsiness of movement, juxtaposed with will to succeed

Repetition-emphasising slow pace, but new found hope

Speaker’s opinion on man-admirable, to be respected in his everyday struggle

Alliteration-plosive (loud, stop sound) sound, showing strength, determination

Repetition-emphasising slowness of movement

Sense of dread

Negative word, usually for technology-too complicated

Slow, great effort for every movement

Wherever he could go it would be dark
and yet he must trust men.
Without embarrassment or shame
he must announce his most pitiful needs
in a public place. No one sees his face.
Does he know how frightening he is in his strangeness
under his mountainous coat, his hands like wet leaves
stuck to the half-white stick?
His life depends on many who would evade him.
But he cannot reckon up the chances,
having one thing to do,
to haul his blind hump through these rains of August.
Dear Christ, to be born for this!

“there but for the grace of God go I”-I could have been you; only luck means I haven’t lived the same life

Exclamation of despair, frustration

Symbolism-August=usually sunny-even in good times has difficulty

Personification of disabilities-dehumanising man

Effort and struggle

Cannot risk anything

Purposefully avoid

Rhetorical question-encourages reader to reflect on attitude towards disability

Trapped by disability

Ambiguous-physically due to stooped figure; ignored by others-no personal connection

Contrast in imagery-seen as monstrous and frightening, but weak and dependent

Isolated from public-blunt

Must have confidence, depend on others

Highlighting desperation of his situation

Ambiguous (more than one meaning)-dark=unable to see, unclear; dark=unhappy, gloomy, bleak

Internal rhyme, emphasising necessity, lack of choice