

His Felpham Cottage

flint cobble and Bognor stone rubble
walls (in places roughcast
and whitewashed), the rest red
brickwork—three brick
chimney stacks—original
thatch roof, now wrapped
in chicken wire—inside,
a yellow-white plaster, the ceiling
beams exposed, stained
espresso brown—batten
doors, sash windows—a flower
garden where Blake kept
his vegetable patch

here did those feet, here
under the same roof over me
—from this door, Blake would walk
but two minutes, striding
past cornfields, to reach
the wild, unrestrainable sea
and the end of England

he once wrote a “Ladder
of Angels descends” into Felpham,
—Felpham, where I see a ladder,
too—to be under Blake’s same roof,
to touch the doorframe he passed through
is to stand on distant steps
of the same ancient ladder

places marked by history
have side rails running through
the rungs of time—the rails connect
and separate—if you
grip them and lean
with all your weight, you can feel
the ladder's structure, its camber
and weightedness—Blake is here
and nowhere, never and always—
he holds the opposite end
of the same wooden beam
I feel in my empty hand