

## **The Tempestuous Peaches\*\***

Henry stares from the slide like a Crimewatch photofit. Neatly Elizabethan, he's bearded with skin peach-smooth, instead of scarred from his life as a gunner and sailor. Constantina, scarfed in Improbable White, has a similar, doubtful, peach-smooth complexion, unmarked by the myriad abrasions from cooking and the endless manual labour of running a 'tipple house'.

Public documents link them to incidents of fraud and anti-social behaviour. Based on this, it's tempting to extrapolate the public into the rest of their life. But Phillip Larkin, in his poem "An Arundel Tomb", cautions us on reading too much into what remains. The mason's token carving on the couples' tomb (of them holding hands) is read by later generations as proof of their lifetime of love.

*"Time has transfigured them into  
Untruth. The stone fidelity  
They hardly meant has come to be  
Their final blazon..."*

We'll never know what Henry and Constantina were really like. In a 17<sup>th</sup> Century port City mental ill health, abuse and discrimination may have been so commonplace as to be normalised. But, maybe, the Peaches were just too sensitive for their hard times; easily bruised by insults and the harshness of life. And now, what we know about their life is distorted by the negative.

*"Above their scrap of history  
Only an attitude remains"*

But what if your own life was remembered only in this way?

You'd become, your Caution for teenage possession of an acid tab, your speeding tickets, your neighbour's complaint to the council about your noisy 40<sup>th</sup> Birthday Party, All the private joy and tenderness of your relationships; all the times you helped people in the street or donated food, clothes or money to charities; unrecorded and forgotten. All you'd be is a brown, corrugated husk; the antithesis of your once fragrant, sunset-coloured fruit.

**(\*\* The story of Henry and Constantina Peach. pp38-40)**