

135 SMALL TO MEDIUM POEMS

Robert Rowland Smith

One Lullaby

Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star

What twinkles but the stars, they chime
From many million miles away and are
Not heard. More a silent silver shiver
Than a sound, more the picture of a river
Than a river that is real. Like ideas, they shimmer,
Sparkles from a waterfall begun in heaven
The twinkly stars will light and die
Like embers on the night's dark essence -
Opaque and nothing but the night.

But see, one little star has left and come away,
Left the luminescence of the starry haze,
Broken from the shining sheet of stars.
This little star belongs no more to the sparkling scree
By which stargazers are amazed.
She is a single thing, alone, a crumb of glass,
She alone will hang, one diamond earring sans its pair,
Lone earring laying on the jeweller's cloth of night.

This little star has got snapped off, a little twinkling link
From a chinking chain, clinking on
The many tinny stars as she falls away
Like a knife that dings a flute of chilly tingling wine,
Before the speech. Before the speech begins.
It rings, this ding, to start the starry silent hush.
She arcs across the vaulted plush of night.

That's what her twinkle is, the little star's,
More than a point of light,
More than a glint,
More than the quick reflected
Flash of sun upon the nuptial knife
As it cuts the cake. She sings the sharpest notes,
High as a kite, white against the blackest night.

She trills a tinkling tune at first, the little star,
But soon the tune will shrink its notes to a single one,
A note not known outside the heaven
Whence she came. It is the sound of light itself,
Narrowed to a single point, this pointed star,

A pin within the black felt cushion of the night.

And what she sings is miracle itself:
The being-just-one, the special twinkling One.
(For miracle is that which is unique,
Innocent of after and before.)
Where others dimly shine, she the little star
Will radiate her whiteness like a bride or nurse,
And with some morsels of white light
Send a signal she's the only one,
Only one to save and salve,
Silverize the blackness of the night,
Turn it white,
Be the special one, the angel star,
Messiah-twinkle, followed by the followers
Looking for the one, the only one among the stars
Outshining all her sisters bedded in the night.

And having stooped to earth, the twinkling star;
Pricked the dark that clothed or cloaked
Ten billion human beings;
Left a pinhole in the carbon sky
For them, ten billion human beings,
To catch a sight of heaven,
And steal a photo of the majesty beyond,
A souvenir of what may not return;
The twinkling star now lifts again, arcing, parabolic,
No longer young but aged a thousand years,
Weathered, withered in the twinkling of an eye
By this lightest brush with human time,
This oxidation of her silver,
Poisoned to the point of death -
And with what sad and stately steps
Ascends the highest highness of height's height,
Whence she radiates, a lantern, twinkling, winking, in the night.

Three Songs of Unrequited Love

1

Your eyelashes arrows firing into eye-stars,
a swamp of tar,
where they take root as reeds, bristling.

How you change
at the pool's edge,
the surface a door
you fell through,
no drowning mark,
no reflection,
leaving me swabbed
in dark oil,
wandering, a live candle, a suicide jacket staggering around the bonfire, dreaming of sparks,
so I could blow myself back into your memory.

And you'd start the long, long glide up,
through the green weeds, a silver aquatic spaceship, crown of diamonds
on your head, an orange frill;
and me still
crying into the pond, not knowing
if you'll ever break the surface, or get called away
under the glassy, translucent wave, distracted by a falling shell,
an inner ear, see-through cartilage, a squid's backbone quill,
your hair streaming in ribbons, sometimes tightening around the throat, red twine white
neck,
now loosening without danger;
and me a gratuitous lifeguard waiting on an accident happening to the one I love, just to
create an event
to justify my presence at the scene you still swim far beneath, now in a cave
where a fire burns
like a hot glove stretching in the water, and the masks circulate
among the nymphs with bubbles fluting from their mouths.

Where are you, my love. Come and gasp for air beside me,
be a silver sneeze
and let the gold sun
tap its rods in every drop you shake off.

No more seaweed hair. Slither back into my heart.

2

The ice edges
into April, May, June, pressing a curved blade against the lip of my heart.

Shards of you clatter from me like broken armour,
and the soul-sap leaks
its toffee over metal.

Of these thousand tuneless pieces
only one, a tone-egg, holds music,
but it fell into the grate and split
sending sound into the river beneath our feet.

Out rolls your arm like a fire hose and he acrobats into it,
both of you engines,
boxes of flame spurting crystals up the sides of skyscrapers, knotting your tongues together
and tossing planets
down the boulevard bowling lanes.

You left lightning-fronds on my skin,
the colour of your hair,
as if my fate was to be wrapped
in your shroud, my mouth cloth-stopped & eyes sealed with a line
of translucent glue.

You win. I lose.
A ticker-tape of hieroglyphs spits out the news.

3

I found you in a little house,
polishing reflections.

Square window light, floor lines, your side-face - pure Vermeer.
In your locket a canvas.
Its hero captained vessels, ploughed the arc of oceans, fleet as a dolphin,
until he drowned in banknotes.

From a wet clay pot
spinning in your orphan hands, you looked up & it
folded like a cow's tongue.

On my back I carried a clock thunderous as a piano, & set it down while we ate.
Time clanged like a judge.

Yellow monkeys stole the food we dropped.

Back and forth we shovelled words, heaps of magnetic ants. Love-crocuses formed a wreath
around our feet.

Then a triangle of meaning got lodged in your eye,
a one-way boomerang,
& you saw me double.
Glass burst, fur bristled. You vowed to lock me up too.

Now I am that fly between two wafers of framed glass, wired into my own feedback, slowly
roasting black,
my flat world filling with smoke.

Three London Pastorals

1

My eye pressed on the green, where shone
The sheep and strips of ash, and history
Was held at bay by nature. Soon the pipes
Employed a chord, and all the doves flocked out.

I blinked, and in this spot of time remembered
Names and things. Pots, pans and who
Had owned them. On the strand, effaced,
The record of transactions, for re-cutting.

Bloodshot now, I winked along the lock
At Camden. Lapping at the stream, some lads
Looked up and with a gold abandoned brick
Aimed at the oily water and smashed it.

The smithereens flew against
The wall of workshops overrun by pigs.

2

I crawled into the garden, crunching
Snails beneath my knees. Ahead, the shed.
The Kensal moonrise taking potshots,
Wan sniper, infirm lady, speckled mirror.

I was struggling against silver, noting that the grass
Was grey as cardboard. Scythes, saws
And hammers waited on their special hooks.

Then a blackbird, dropping
Mercury pellets from its compulsive throat,
They pinged between the ash and elm.

The wind had got inside and rattled
The matchbox of images.
I got pulled a little closer.

3

When I woke, at dawn, near Heathrow,
The wet thyme stuffed into my mouth and ears,
My nose stunk out by hyacinth and
Chamomile sprouting in my throat,

I could focus only on the exhaust pipe
Now at eye level, a flute of sorts
Awaiting music. Unsummoned,
The rats came anyway

With their avocado humpbacks,
Formed a square, began to twitch.
Through the mountain-ash branches,
A jet plane transcending
Like scissors thrown beyond a fight.

Two Curses

1 BROW OF THE HILL

Jack the farmer ate a onion,
Threw his spade into the air,
Ran across a blighted field.

Aimed at furrows in the field,
Spade came wheeling through the air,
Split Jack's brow as through a onion.

2 THERMIDOR

With a boiled lobster, you're in hell.
Holding its crutches out of its pot,
It screams up at you to jump in as well,
And becomes your own eyeball if you do not.

Seven Incalculable Figures

I

RED – LONG MERCY, A PIANO
deals notes, scutcheons flock
& some black hair falls

just where you'd expect an
entrance, a door sans handles,
perhaps cats accenting

the frame – black spots
in the eye between red bands –
& perhaps nothing more.

Redeem was printed here,
black, white & red marks,
grace notes, rising bloody.

II

BLUE-LIME CRASH CHOCOLATE,
all's sweet in the end,
the cell-bursts just moments,

the parrot an instance of
hybridity – stop – he first
saw him crossing the ice

fractured – stop – more iodine
lent phosphorescence
to the already-too-romantic

sugar, not ice – stop –
at this temperature, it
changes, like for like – stop –

III

OPEN GAVE VOICES TO BIRDS,
our word shall be 'breach'
though it names, not sings.

Those tiny tongues, circumcised,
a nation calling itself
through the pass, concord,

those bare-ruined-choirs.
Bare. Ruined. Choirs.
It's not the same, the cut

bleeds, the throat suffuses,
the warble clots. Come –
the rank milk of another.

IV

RADIO SAND, A BILLION GREEN,
the more sealed up the more
the manifold, the cells crunch.

Hard-wired from pharaoh
to bunker, a golden thread
direct into the circuit

clicks: magic numbers appear,
a shadow visible only
at distance, by sound

by heaven. The stars
crackle & smoke, transmit
incalculable figures.

V

LEAF-RATTLE IN A RIB-CAGE,
gold wires, a smoke eddy,
a text read. Acts. Scenes.

The engine of the heart
& a key-tongue telling
the lots – maybe some clay

begins to form in human
shape. Wired for
the opposite of thought.

Come on once again &
breathe, if only the two
parts could again touch.

VI

LOVESICKNESSE – a bar,
afar a bird, &
the middle-ground of light.

Haystacks, & darts glinting – the verb in this
walks in my breath

before me, misting
her eye, a beam
laid on yellow rush;

pricked below the heart
for all to see through:
wings stirring within.

VII

I COULD READ, I COULD DRIVE
the bar would fill with red,
the film would blow his hair away.

'Before' is a sublime word,
the raked gravel, the gymnast's ponytail,
a zinc pyramid on the palm.

Maybe you should stop dividing,
maybe the tower locks &
the emperor's drunken soldiery

freeze. The car keys haven't
moved; the window-pane,
not bloodshot. Now begin.

One Animal Poem

FOX

What? The thick string, coiled like umbilicus,
Old man's penis, hip replacement
Fires a rocket, red as yellow
Into its cruising custard eye.

Dips its soul, dry, into no-soul
And comes out with nothing.
Doesn't dip again, it hobbles,
Resentful of the I that dogs it.

Back wheel warped, and unrelenting,
Can't remember any jazz.
Thinks of thinking; nears the fall
From off the train bridge, tries the end

Of being fox. Past buried foxes,
Past the dead unburied eye of its
Mother in the soil. In the next life,
Less fox, less being at the margin,

Perhaps more swan.

Six Lucky Thirteens

1

CRACKLE SHALE, THE FOAM first swells its bread-lace
Veils the shards of chalk, becoming
Second wave, anamnesia,
Something grey left in the salt-suck.

Still the bridal rushing-on,
Curling ray-wing, lips the wave and
Forms a sheath that will be punctured,
Sperm make shadows through the ice.

Snagging now, the layers leaven

And reflect. Crackle shale...Now it can, it must -
It has already dredged itself and doubled,
The froth-skirts innocently fecund.

Round the rock the ragged rascal ran his cape.

2

WHERE THE SOUL SNAPS, in the forest,
There the blinds reshuffle, passing
One more out; first lesion; antler-cradle.
The rifle makes a cross against the birch,

More meets no-more, drops the sodden carpet
Onto sod. Spark uncoils a scale to heaven
Help us count them in and out.
Chambers set with welts of gold.

Leaf-shatter, blackout, last flame-pathos,
Stir the bodies in the lake like logs. About
The camera-silver dragonfly
A thread of smoke or whitened hair there hangs.

What goes up must come down with bleeding arms.

3

FLATTENED-GHOST TOY-THEATRE trembles
Like a giant dog the God has breathed on them
And sulphur levitates through boards,
Gentlemen, black railings, soured lamplight

Foxes in the edge of squares, the lords
Are leaping behind glass, and yellow
Snow has got into the eardrum,
Followed by the baying hounds

With diamante eyes, on sticks. Please melt
This art. It keeps on coming back
But never changes, fixed as Christmas.
The matchbox shuts up, air cut out.

Over the hills and far away, a drum-roll.

4

COPPER BIRD BIRD SHUFFLE

Through the orchestra some tongues vibrate.
Send the ribbons flying from the maze
And wait for the repeat. They turn a violent red.

Along the ledge, a rank of insect husks
Is trembling in the moving air. Her voice descends
Ahead of her in waves, to pull her down
Into the trap-eye corner of the glass

No sharpened mouth can crack. Branches,
Syringe-spatter, chords dice through the heart
Producing flowers in a pattern, rising
On the cusp, an echo swallows excess light.

Summer is a-coming in this wide room.

5

STORIES FOR THE LOTUS-MIST LAMENT

The damp-smoke of those bales and reeds
Come reaching down the throat-bells, weeds
Enwrap the cedar-box, about the trees the crimson silks ignite.

Puppets multiply in fields, the lines
Pass lacking origin, they fibrillate
In paper veins. A mandolin
Is slicing soil in silver clatters

On the starry bank a bright nymph drowns, her tongue
Annealed to other tongues, stuck with spots of ash.
Oh, the lovely losing, sucked into the wind's skin,
A diaphragm that shines with his distended face.

Everything comes to those who wait forever.

6

CHURCH WITH OWL-SPORES CLOUDING,

Millennium between each wing-bat
Bellows silence. On a post, a black sticks

Crowning down the sides, and then the pearly

Grey that's pink and brown, it shudders
In the chapel, eddies in the rafters,
Sprays undying fungus from the heavens;
Fire of figures in the oven-box.

All still waiting, crush the perfume
From the dead, the wing lifts like a
Bandage. Puff, and masonry dissolves
Its biscuits, spun through air onto a tongue.

Every time we say goodbye to inundated ground.

Three Seasons

AUTUMN

Your dead body, Paul:
candles at dark afternoon
shine on your wax face.

Perpetual autumn:
not the false end which revives,
but continued death.

We stray from the sun
onto the shadow-plain decked
with grey moon trinkets.

Bitter apples, smoked
on the bonfire's ash carpet;
pigs in the dark sty.

Stranger at the hearth —
we serve out an extra meal,
our speech is different.

WINTER

Snow-fat deposits
soaping the bone, bodies melt
on the camp's pure ground.

To the blue light bulb
we shuffle, metal flower
of controlled winter.

There are the train's wheels
at a station — still the bleak
continent ahead.

Communications
down: me alone with myself
to distance and hurt.

Daily, salted food.
It feeds our longings, makes us
despise the plain friend.

Born into the dark,
a saucer of radium.

Cactus of winter,
last remaining,
your glass panes implode.

Thick migrations,
get ahead of the shadow
claiming the weaker.

SPRING

Spring! Flower scaffolds,
the gaudy boxes tremble,
death raised up in life.

The cuticle smarts
forward, reflexive, ahead
of gathering up.

Police dressed in black

line the fountain court; bright clouds
scud across the sky.

Two floors above the square,
the stone-balconied rooms that
the plane trees will make dark.

Five Chlorine Poems

1

How the clinic stings, the pale green of the walls
Was once a headache that dripped, and a patient
Suffered on the floor as a wounded ox.
The steel thrills electrically, an abacus wire fence
Has flecks of white cotton, and where the red resin
Stuck on the concrete, they use chlorine
To scrub it off. It's in the out-houses
That the terror hangs, its dog breath
Lashing at the flies, and when the lights snap on:
It swallows. Outside, in earth, lies an engine,
A metal heart clogged with worms, which pounds
Every century or so, causing the planet to slip
Off its beam like a drugged animal.
The stars then do their sadistic dance,
Each point will pierce the methylated skin,
They file into the syringe, a ballistic shower
Of mercury, sprung for release into the vein.
No wonder these are lunatics, that the organ
For absorbing mercy was cut from them at birth
And incinerated. See the chimneys pointing
Up at God, and speaking only smoke,
The frilly billows black, they make a roof of clouds.

2

Come unto the gallery, the white blaze
And blurring faces. The house-sized cube
Of ice gets lowered, and the figurines
Try not to melt in the kiln, they plead
For gold, their feelings hammered out
In traceries drawn with fiery plasma.
In the centre stands an object, mapped
On the chlorinated floor where supplicants
Will sniff and pleat their veils. What's ugly
Blasts through the air-con, not the black
Stack of carbon rods, the sceptre, cross
And scaffold. No, the edges of the art
Get disinfected; let it hang inside
A mortuary. When the sun then gilds
The four white walls, it becomes a mass,
Celebration quick set into form. Rising
Bleach will wash the eyes, and angels
Plug the top right corner where divine
Afflatus shoots in brown and blue.
Some people weep for love that's so displaced
It wanders from itself; some hold hands and freeze.

3

Spread the chest, accordion-like, and comb
Out the strings of hardened glue that once
Were lyrics, the glassy beads were moments
Of aphasia. Try bowing it for the archive air
Still trapped. With time the glass discandies
But no thanks to nature: forgiveness-chlorine
Worked beneath the rug of memory.
Where all face-up was figure, devices
From the eternal garden - buntings in the
Almond groves, choristers of saffron, sandalwood
And cloves - here the frame was sweetly
Rotting with a fine astringent stripping
The petals from their roses. Caustic, yes,
It stripes the heart like acid, but what it
Leaves is love, that is, annihilation.
For when the air vibrates, and it is heard
As beauty, it's the subsidence inwards,
The deaf self-cancelling that counts,
Where the worms feed on the corpus,
Each increasing loss makes matter rich.
And so float on your back as on a piano,

You rot with rapture, while the music must withdraw.

4

A street cloud soaked with red like a dressing,
Clients in a staircase saga. Through a lens
It's merely traffic, incessant circulation
Round the blood-wire circuit, pausing
Just to let the chlorine dry - then step
Darkly on the threshold. Up close
The face splits and from it memories leak
Their blue yolk that sticks to all
Who touch. It streams into the gutter, glittering.
Come, pull up the shirt, this poppy helps forget.
No, into the brain-folds drops a cigarette
That on contact hisses; the mouth averted
Like a wound that pulls the face-sheet
Into pleats. Stars rattle, and the earth
Gets squeezed until the thicker drops
Come through and form translucent crests
Or crusts. The light beneath the slowing cars
Is boxed. When it's done, they speed away
To confirm their absence from a scene now swollen
And reloading every smeary cartridge. The rack
A row of rifles, fireflies catch among the blonder hairs.

5

Saltwater cups the eye, bacteria in packets
Will fizz and jostle, combining readily. Edges
Aren't quite white, a yellow-brown pollutes the liquid,
The salt a sweet infection. Yet there is no thanking
Worshipful enough for this chemistry,
Each cell a crimson canvas in the bud, where
Microscopic eggs mash into a purple paste
And bleed with grace into the fibres. On the surface
Emerald rings of chlorophyll appear as on a shroud,
And a see-through golden wing of wasp
Like sugar burned, shivers in the first winds ever known,
The originals. Before, the sun and air were as pictures.
Then the great tear in the book out of which
The weather fell. And all the while,
The germ-cube ice-tray buzzing, a honeycomb
Of eyes with wrappers unremoved,
An effervescent milk coursing through the tubes.

And we look back as if we were not made of it,
 As if the love of origins excused us from our
 Derivation in them, as if between that time and now
 Were sheets of runway pavement, all sparkling with chlorine.

One Sonnet

Is it that engines live? Repeating but
 Never remembering, they don't know death.
 Unlike the carnal wheeze of human breath,
 Their vapouring and ticking keeps them shut.
 But human lives are drafted in a door
 Ajar—a pinkish chink of light to hold,
 Like medieval arrowers, the roar
 Of war-machines below: The sleekish mold
 Of Love, the thorax-lubricated-engine,
 A dark and heavy metal angel, veiled
 Within the heart's own glass and granite dungeon
 To reinforce a weak defence that's failed,
 Is then unclipped, and rolled along, as if
 All-seeing, to the battlement's squared cliff.

One Hundred Pseudo-Sonnets

I

Where a torch is brought up
 from the thorax shaft,
 the heart from a dark distance
 glisters a moment
 —a throat of crystals—
 then larynx shuttle
 arrays the light,
 having no use but
 rhetoric invents
 its own raison d'être.

II

Scudded in dust
how beautiful the tents
where burning revealed
the lineaments
in one face
of both saint & devil
& nothing
save divers mancies
proffered against rising
want of direction.

III

Quick-freezing urine candied
on an incline,
sweet balmy memories
are longer lasting,
another ginger eye
has taken up the gleam &
vigilance passed on &
counted out &
no colossal cat
can ever melt it off.

IV

How braid tenses
almost like
a given word
covers all manner
man-shames
almost gathered
curtaining bloodshot
tonguing
yellow smokescreens
in funky relax.

V

Heart cupped with tar
bled up
to maroon blackness,
flooded channels
kept a meniscus
down below dying
where sulphurs flare
no man got a thought
but further
into the negative.

VI

Stars threshed to haywire
light spanked out
& flued up
in starred aeroliths
we couldn't breathe
for prepared gas
giving the lie
to the Zeit thrill,
ash brilliantine
above celestial joy.

VII

Your life is what it was,
a silent film
with melancholy piano
has the resolution
only to be died into
by nostalgia
of dumb repeats
stroking each boxed bar
for the self-exempting
patina of love.

VIII

Pastoral sheet-metal clasped
on the breast
defends the heart-
sore of the nation
fragment-embedded
& unlettered
for the pathos heroes
who got everything
coming to them
unprovisioned.

IX

Two hundred and twenty two
estimation clocked
a thought cadre
triple set
those newly politic
rustling renown
mid black cabs
exacted number and
makes up more
handsome for interring.

X

Flight-recorder melodies
thronged the aerodrome
in cascades
of human bodies
hymned by
operating instructions,
that dying fall,
that tragic chute,
come-uppance of
the lyric class.

XI

Take all events twice
she and she
double-consonanted
split box of the
vibrant rift
in keyed mind
that fringe sputters,
the gap crops
in the teeth
that speak it again.

XII

Sickness of the 'and yet'-moon
where metals change
in weird light
out of period
'at the same time'
truth-blood has no flow
in grammar
that's a rusted frame
so good to break for
dust, orange in silver.

XIII

Shower-of-jasmine gate
a guest towel
for splashes, petals,
tiny white birds
—device & real
transplant:
dressing now rising
air disturbs
the warm jasmine
on the stone wall.

XIV

Cradle intention-necklace
mint end,
choked in the cot
where greasy roots
grow up the side
& branch, dewed,
to the capital
splendour.
Now there is
inhalation.

XV

Unzipped with scopic jet
to humidity of petals
as interleavèd aperture
begins to blink
at the centre
where damage
will be done
in earth
as it is in air:
sex-piece in sight.

XVI

Burnt fin, fishy racked up
on the grill
welds its tin-skin
and seals
the eyes
don't analyse
when change curls in
& we lose sight
of mail and bonds the
eyelet white scab.

XVII

Copper-bracketed wrap-around
this neck
of speaking
bullets bitten
metal toffee
plugs the lungs
the heart
the spleen cradled in
sugar killing me
softly softly.

XVIII

We come upon the white mouth
& kiss out
the ashes.
We are we
by this loving
the whole word
wipes from within
where the air
goes in liquids shine
& hold us there.

XIX

Slowest part of the canvas
where turps yokes
the fibre-net
for patience
with glosses stuck
in blood poring over
what special needs
to be got up
and set running:
remain there.

XX

Resembles what it's least like
lies life love
lies bleeding
from the
palm presses pane
clear the teeth
fall & bitter it
& tear the flesh
by the dock
it dresses & soothes.

XXI

Striped enamel brooch
with green and gold
read, then read back
that each line rules
and now refers
till reference moves
and slides what was
before beneath
to gold, then green
then gold.

XXII

Lip-pink carriers of sand
pillars brushed, arching
mid treetops,
sugaring there
in the sun—
seals & gels, the
guelp of monkeys
tearing skin-bracelets
& throwing off
crusts of salt.

XXIII

You, brown tomb-boy,
whore of carbon,
a few burnt hairs
from the wrist
still settling
as dust
upon the stars:
let's make
the night-sky shudder
with your dead kiss.

XXIV

You were a curl of mirror
amid fields
a scythe of sky,
young at one point
& aged
where the glass clouds
iris muslined o'er
from picking work
the cuticles tugged
into the earth.

XXV

Single rocketed fillip of care
through crimped air
wave argent girders
will not personify
but be the other world
this life is ambrosial
so much so that
from an auburn look
layer after layer
evaporates, floats off, goes.

XXVI

Inexorably colonized chequerboard
the Idea outs
to the margins
& merges the tare,
the paranoid recount
of bondsman & lord
changing strips
for the love of
one
who gobbles the corpus.

XXVII

Pink imago squids down
the tract
from papa to pipi,
puffed-up gum,
it will be eaten.
Cut to the stairs,
flats, slats & bars,
a small dog
sweats into
the ruby stair carpet.

XXVIII

Jet grill-spirit as sapience
as per, count them,
they'll morass
if not kept
in white houses.
Excepting
the jet coming
after the future,
this chromatic
necklace re-ranged.

XXIX

Tissues breathed in ghost-cradle
flaxen disharvest,
all embers.
So late now,
so very late,
not a soul
but milks by
the last limb,
some yellows
form solids.

XXX

Dogs before the chromed chair
heats them up
at eye-level,
swivels like
a master
in third position,
breaks
a wafer hoop
rimmed by
reflected gold.

XXXI

End-plugged tulip straps
come quickly
goes the head
down
& parts
the velvet flaps
let through
who saves
the current,
what is presence.

XXXII

O, pippin! link in! fine!
smear the command
on the blade
drops a little
moisture
in blister-colonies.
Hear the sun
crackle & smirch
from all that
long distance away.

XXXIII

Square glass powdered
with cobalt
you know
the boy has
a pen-knife,
what is his
purpose,
how dispose of
extra grains
at focal lengths.

XXXIV

Fixed wing strung along
in one accord,
a sort of arm
of something else,
its durée
is exquisite,
leads along
in air-space
making waves
which won't revolve.

XXXV

Black glass poem:
it's classified,
the sides
of two secrets
sheer away
into sands.
Arm bands,
lit cradle-group:
weather clears
for the air-lift.

XXXVI

Pump ghosts at cliques
& these thrive
on plastic food.
Room for more,
so add colouring
till they fluoresce,
patent applied for.
Legionnaires
at bursting point
blast through the grille.

XXXVII

Thermal clinic ruins
tiles are proof
though moss crops
between...
memory's mulch.
Both sides return
awakened
to orange blazons
stalling
second sleep.

XXXVIII

Three polite strangers
in a wax charm
assisting.
Oak leaf symbol,
plain tongue,
they drink
clear water
and move on
past the grille
of poor impression.

XXXIX

Shifts dressing, ratcheted
through the dark
change box,
slot filled
for a boost
of new boys
jump to lead
from cut to cut,
lipstick past
the mechanic siren.

XL

Satyr-maddened death car
bumps, & glints
swollen goat
at the wheel
wheels round
& slides a glass shaft
blazing through foreheads
of tellers & nurses
starred brainless
by sliding tables.

XLI

Figure the white bed
sustains
in heartstopping
grace.
The hollowed
poem
beats
to ward off
all openings,
all stories.

XLII

Green sublime coma
faint jangle
of glass birds
mocking.
The room
itself dreams.
Come back
into suffering,
more moon
before midnight.

XLIII

Metal-jammed angel
sunk in sands
buzzing
with messages:
the last figure,
sun shut up
inside it,
packed with heaven,
static, unmoving.
First & last figure.

XLIV

Lake, copper, smoke pass,
half-exposed
transits, values
still not fixed,
a redoubled seeing
the smoke-clothed
figure
walk into the shining
lake, absorbed
sink without trace.

XLV

Shame-corals shallowing
to minds
pumped up
with air of god,
swim in the
crimped stream
of rebuke-shells,
deaf atoms
swerving
through gala days.

XLVI

White remainers unplugged
blue light dies
by night flowers
human cells.
Seen purely by
their radiance,
the cracked bone
& hyper-love
droning for ever
in measured effects.

XLVII

Sheer shine transection
where the thick
black cable
vibrates the glass,
all lowered
to a militant
reed drone,
quack surgery
on the
cleared trellis.

XLVIII

Soft moon armour
gently smile,
a silver sponge
passed twinkling through
the roomy cage,
the eyes
are hollow,
foam abounding —
an arc around
the flaking head.

XLIX

Eye-cut paper blinds
this is tree sun,
this the state border;
a blood pellet
slips along
the slit,
then branches
into fibres
where is my love
I cannot see.

L

Tide-sickness of being
after power
dies down
the viscous wash
& a blue-grey morning
crystals reappear
on the clayey skin
half-caked
in estuary mud
forms the low-life.

LI

Million-shuttered zinc
apparatus shuffles
a clique
new coined,
air-conditioned,
definitely clear
the plastic pack
shows
the mechanic eye
primed for blinking.

LII

Through the butterfly bone
come blasts of ash
in silk disgust
and three
carbon rods
laid across
commemorate
love's heat
between beings
who change into death.

LIII

Of rose-lore falling
reddest snow
when wing remembers
in the gut
in shadows —
 down, down
thread-roots quiver high
like transparent hair —
bloodied owl dashed
on the glass.

LIV

Birdsong rusting canal
amber-gris
an iron loop tongues
the speckled current
tied fast
a gasp
of liquid & air
soul's dereliction
a spoiled handkerchief
flapping at sunset.

LV

Rain-blonde column
parakeet
the love swamp screech
smears the face
the arms
cashed in
for monuments
of harmony,
parades beneath
the sandstone hair.

LVI

Burning head streams
through the room
smites the bookshelves,
a toy train
on the table,
a kick
in the orbit
and the rim lifts
a turning disc
portering comets by.

LVII

Setting as pink shell
so young
green cars
washed from the sea
onto the drive-in,
she a shade
then cluster
of small lamps,
bulbs exploding softly
shell & flesh.

LVIII

Far sheaves calling,
throats unlaced
at random,
sighing with a crackle
in the air.
Gathered here,
the place comes with
arrival's orange blur;
leaking down the wooden side
clots of softened fire.

LIX

Crest, becomingly dazed,
ignite slow patches,
let them come on
& burst the retinas.
Small fry
in the froth...
You can do it,
cream up
to eye level
iron block & think.

LX

Squirms your magpie hair
in terrace shade
fruit rolls down
the slope
& splits
revealing seed.
Age of borrowing,
five cards flash
the gloom,
magpie in the royal beard.

LXI

Cold limb passing
in milk air
new life
at hand
what measure.
Stones dislodged,
dust crusts
the lips
are sealed
the eyes are white.

LXII

Tall bronze horses
lick the lip
of river
petrol rising
in & out
of life form,
jet of fire
seals the breast,
burning cars,
rearing horses.

LXIII

Razor, soft bag soft
paper rolled
the buckled
iron lines
a spray
of bluest cornflowers,
powdered shoes.
Decoupled parent
& split boxes,
intervals of doubled news.

LXIV

Lightning crocus, streak
the sky theatre,
flash on
the spider-ground
soft eggs goggle
& skirts
are breathing through gills
they mushroom
& frighten, photographed,
orangeous in saffron.

LXV

Blade-mechanical-efficacy
hands shuffle
& blur
the layers
striped black
the recess there
the secret
voice or cave
the bled thing
dripping on ash.

LXVI

Head rigged, buckled
a dwarf arm
capped by
three-clover-pod,
cracking it.
Mouth like a thumb
plunged into
the counter-wave,
what chance
if not bound fast.

LXVII

Beaded trapeze-blood,
silver balls
that fire along
the magic circuit
of sand,
you science!
you rods
in air!
you looking up
from your team.

LXVIII

Plaster head pulsing
blue & red lights
proportionate to
the vehicle door
slides back
to reveal the setting:
putty knives
fill the cracks,
the whole & perfect egg
is good as new.

LXIX

Alchemy headset radio on,
intuit the dry basin
where crystals remain.
The competent pilot
sparking with signals
leads under instruction.
It goes to his head,
the fire becomes green
& tubes disappear
into the face.

LXX

Love-bank where
the liquids balance,
silver nets
both naïve heads
that rest,
the water glass &
glass their eyes
exchange infinitely
to the gravel-bed
fund of white discs.

LXXI

Fading...second selves
blur & shuffle
past slow cars.
Inside, lit switches
& exits
in outline only.
How do we
carry the body
of what was lost,
what goes out.

LXXII

Snakebite word-cure
good & evil
draw them out
& twist until
the origin is shed
in blaze of skin
& glossy strokes where
tongues & eyes pick
flecks of dressing
from the wound.

LXXIII

Skyblue lyre black throat
the box vibrates
& earthquakes out
into a wooden rose.
The wreaths are set,
wire twisted
round a martyr
head that hums
from heavenly crack
eyes slit upward.

LXXIV

Lens flake showers
unbridled, casting
ranging through worlds.
Shootings—
each grain
magnified,
blown up
& gusting in
toy snowstorms
of the head.

LXXV

Wing: wing, the note
jumps a spot
up & down
the flute-throat.
Learning to fly,
to soar...
Stale perfume
plays over
the boy
unclips the collar.

LXXVI

Spotted face-film
grey skin
not space
but hymen
shone through
by stars.
Old light,
red gone white
& sacks of ash
to look up from.

LXXVII

White pill trajectory,
mental pinball,
lips pushed back
& wired.
The thing explodes.
How lovely
moisture slipping off
the walls
like bark,
in glassy beads.

LXXVIII

Purring of two hundred cats
shuffled masks
warding odours
ramparts running tense —
sex defence,
these stand-in nurses
stitch the slits:
the king
is being kept
alive.

LXXIX

Rests upon capital:
the headland,
the deposit,
the mineral wealth
& after a time
acculturation.
Flowers appear
on metal & stone,
the sense of
interest changes.

LXXX

Tape returns cinema haze
over the hill
the harvest
silhouettes grow...
Some details
are lost,
the good abstracted.
Memory wrappings,
take-out returns
romance the gold.

LXXXI

Gauze mask moth,
amber eye-gum
& shuttering
of lids
or is it wings.
Fine things,
the light inside
revolves white birds
alight in silence
on the battle dress.

LXXXII

Destroyed heart repeating
by rote
its chances
'til it changes,
reinvests
in unique patterns
of the surface
intimating depth
where the pain
can never score.

LXXXIII

Fast-slow picture house,
lit boxes,
moving figures,
not bodies:
only records
can be changed.
The colourless review
commences
at any rate
still eyes yield.

LXXXIV

Gold letters rose
in coiled dust-gust
flaps to the ear
hair brushed aside,
confidentially,
precious truths
circulate, unfold
& fold in
through the slit
of silence.

LXXXV

Clear mandarin paste
dried leaves
shuffle & bond
as a screen.
The royal body
then removed
the skin wall
stands glossed
with orange
& china blue.

LXXXVI

Lyric automatic breath
the beat
the stringèd cage
& it's not human.
Accelerate the heart
image through the screen
of after-life
the brakes' glissando
sinews tighten,
wind the monkey.

LXXXVII

Dream pink sanatorium
carnations
for eyelashes
spy out the
babies, troops & bathers
on the sands
trickle in glass
the I-V sinks
& war cries
stripe the air.

LXXXVIII

Shadow life of lessness
we light on
scraps in a cave
drawn dumb
by disappointment
traced from memory.
Creatures with holes
for eyes—
candles swinging
from a chain.

LXXXIX

Propped things, wood & bone
in a moonlit room
angled to lick silver
coating from frames
folding, anorexic
dying from
the outside in
lunar deckchairs,
radiant half-lives.

XC

This Ich, this body-breath
this death.
Avenues
of trees
& the pelt
of deer
moving behind.
We are blind
in our lungs, we
touch on dead birds.

XCI

Carbon-darkling eyes
record while watching
& turn on
the central heat
where greased skins
reduced to need
are printed by
the fire they press
illuminates
the dimming eros-resin.

XCII

Grate-voice, ashes
splutter
from the throat,
the chords
a burnt-out
match folder
blows a smut eyewards—
pyramids fly
over moondust
into the eye.

XCIII

Glass smoke box
yellow coils
the embryo,
each cell
invaded, graded
by its chances
for survival; see—
smuts cluster
like a five
on a die.

XCIV

Quicksand silver is
pink gravel,
breathe, my daughter,
glitter streams
into your lungs,
pulls you from the
pulsing birth-world,
birth reversed,
crafts its lovely
shipwreck art.

XCV

Craze, sky needles
arcing
death hairpins
touching planes off
to explosion
too soon too
soon to die
the hair shot white
in a clock
instant...shatterbones.

XCVI

Infra-red death corridor,
resin floor,
the via negativa.
An ox killed here;
speed cameras
line the wall—
the order of
religious mania.
Hands of smoke
tie things up.

XCVII

Automatic box with strings
whirrs with evil,
clicks & winds
its inner spool;
here comes
the printout
punched with genes:
tears of rosewood
jackpot out
onto the floor.

XCVIII

Weird head dog
dropping
at the disc's rim
a pinball
rolls across
the eye
tracks it:
watch what
think, thunk
matted-breath-animal.

XCIX

Steelblue radium heart,
sperm coating the
aluminium box
where finger
traces an 'S':
brand it all,
live on
in tin flies
bouncing off
the night-light.

C

8194867 air supply:
blood sunset,
helicopter plague
droning.
Crops destroyed,
'the wasteland grows'
random yet
programmed.
Glass shields
multiply the image.

Five Leftover Poems

1 SHIPBUILDING

Estuary tar oozed, the gulls were torn-out throats
Of white, thrown onto the air
For the birds. Men with buzz cuts
And skin patterned like stretched stained glass
Pressed their wool, and down the damp quay
The rope-gear piled in thick snakes.
The ship still a whale fossil in the mud,
A flat design. To raise
This house of bones, haul it upright,
The cathedral of a hull, the belly
Wherein the throng would pray safe passage
For this wobbling Babel across
The sprung musculature of the sea,
Would take a thousand grey souls.
These passed invisibly through its sides
In slow shoals, dull dead-mackerel silver,
Some already drowned and crumbling
Like the fur around a kettle filament,
Flakes of the dying to be done, fish-food falling.
For now it was life, the sap of saltwater
Seeping from the cables, the weeping
Wound on the cut palm. The sense that her day
Was nosing towards her from the sea,
A whiteness like a wedding, rattling
dried flowers on the saltwater
And when this vessel of her coming arrived,
She would leave.

When will
She sail? The snap of cables
In the heart, a skewered lump of meat
That rises in the throat and throbs,
Kidneys pumping diesel, blurting
Blood oil through the system, throbbing, waiting.
She waits like an old maid to be dressed,
The struts are brought, the whale bones
Boiled and whittled, the she-spider erection
Hoping to teeter for a fine afternoon
In the birch tree park. Her breath
Blows about the iron skeleton, and cuffs

The heads of men at work; not yet a maiden
 And already a wreck, a wrinkle of lines
 Dabbed at by the moist rivermouth.
 2 SEX

Yearningness, the strain —
 consume the air
 between two mouths —
 folds back, redoubles,
 repeats the body phrase
 & falls to dropping
 sap on parts of skin.
 Like trying to speak
 a name that will
 not come, the kiss
 is wordless, deaf & dumb
 the flower in the mouth;
 beads on the slope that
 sing from far away —
 over-being, each
 gloved in each, pressed and
 begins again in rebeginning
 every touch wipes out
 what comes before,
 takes place within a word
 that no one knows.

3 FOREMAN

Auspicious comes event in springtime, closely
 To its bearers, day and night. Not close enough
 To fill them, some borders remain
 Shafting here and there behind the sun, before
 Appearance, like falling trees behind the sun
 Unseen collapsing. Light in splinters.
 This is the skill at the origin.

Day posts up, and night lays out,
 Shielded by the sun which hides a forest
 At its hind. The whirr of chainsaws cutting
 Measures filing lengths and storing archetypes
 In the sun's cool cupboard. The foreman
 Has to watch it, watch he doesn't knock
 The unimaginable blocks & measures, or cause

Disruption. —Watch it, foreman. Days and nights

Turn on their pulleys as where event comes,
Comes slowly, though, then more quickly,
Pushed between uneven slabs, its lobe.
Here it comes now, fair, auspicious, tacky
With becoming and sheerly goes on through.

4 WAX

You grow as you cry
your skin displaces.
Be for me. Annul
My madness, skim
The film, engrave me.

Your thing sears me
Blind. It lanterns
My chronic spirit,
Bludgeons my mouth
makes my kisses break

My copy examines.
To make your match
is maximal straining.
Sincerely. I'll re-
lick the wax-pour up.

5 TANGO

Dance-hall Argentine:
Mosquito micro-lites take messages
From lover to lover across the floor.
Melodies from a drowned piano,
The notes are scarlet fish
Or aquamarine or mandarine
Or turquoise, rising through gluey
Water and like cigarette paper sticking
On lips where they dissolve.
Soft shoes brush and slide,
The dusty plush of banquettes
At the side -
Girders of sunlight
Angled over glasses of lemonade,
Some shade. Shapes made
As if projected, forms morph
Into forms, she dips her branches

In the cooling stream, he plants
The staff in underwater sands
To push off once more, and glide.