

# MORNINGS OF THE ORESTEIA

*New and Selected Poems*



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MORNINGS OF THE ORESTEIA

1.

Aeschylus  
Look up  
At your mother  
In the cup  
And cry  
Where is all the blood supposed to go?

2.

The soldiers  
On the plain,  
Are hard-pressed  
To explain  
How few have come back from the war of love.

3.

A sword  
Shines in the sky  
It says  
Vengeance  
Is an eye  
And I will pierce far into your mother's mind.

4.

Aeschylus  
Runs far,  
His heel breaks  
The sacred jar  
And wails: where is this jewel of pain supposed to lead?

5.

When lies  
Flourish everywhere,  
And the morning  
Burns my hair  
And mothers kill all husbands in the end.

6.

Aeschylus  
Calm down  
Says the river  
With a frown  
I know Death and Death is not so bad.

7.

So he made  
His skin  
All wet,  
Took the river  
For his pet,  
Whispered: Prisons are tomorrow, I am a bird!

8.

Crazy princes had their dreams along his arm.  
His abacus broke up and floated by.  
The river grinned and led his to the feast  
Where painlessly his sister chewed upon her arm.

9.

Don't be silly  
Drolls the nurse,  
Rain never falls  
Into a purse  
In the future ash will never weep down from the sky!

10.

Your vital visions  
Are so crude,  
Now suck my breast  
This is your food  
Your errant mother is away and will not feed.

11.

So Aeschylus  
Settled down  
To the nipple  
To the gown  
Put from his reason all the ghosts with flashing arms

12.

The binding chain  
Upon the stone  
Is made of tongue  
Rather than bone  
So that Prometheus may see much farther in his dying

13.

The wheeling beak  
That eats his liver  
Does not splinter  
Does not quiver  
And only raids one rich plantation at a time.

14.

Centuries  
May pass  
Yet Aeschylus cries  
Alas!  
What sons of flesh can spring from fathers not their own?

15.

But the question  
In decay  
Holds the chorus  
In its sway  
While some elders sell his offal to a crone.

16.

Still Aeschylus  
Blinds the crows  
With an arrow  
With a rose  
They become more lethal killers in the gloom

17.

They scratch  
Inside each spine  
For some trace  
Of the divine  
For the killer, for the victim, for the tomb

18.

The runner  
At the gate  
Brings a message  
It is late  
While fires fail at the feast in Marathon

19.

The Watchman  
On the roof  
Tries so hard  
To stay aloof  
But dying Queens always urge him to betrayal.

20.

Aeschylus  
In his bath  
Smells the mortal  
Aftermath  
Suspects the scales of justice are deferred

21.

Oh Aeschylus  
Look up  
At your mother  
In the cup  
Soon you must learn to leave her pleading go unheard.

AND AFTER THIS OUR EXILE

*“you must not forget, that when you look into  
the abyss, the abyss also looks into you.”* Nietzsche

Do the half-dead know what life  
his loins will have?

Naked and erect  
in passionate moonlight  
he scrutinises each plot  
like a map  
with million-sided destinations  
culminating in the fury of going.

Everywhere the earth stirs —  
the moon subscribes to shallow burials.

Gripped by frost  
crass crackles underfoot.

He targets recent graves,  
watches earth-dulled hair flourish  
with shards of bone & fingernail  
just above the surface.

Limbs already respond  
to his crazed stealth,  
plants quickly germinating  
in matrices of blood.

Blind, tendrils grope for him:  
the limbs of those imperfectly killed  
by weak violence  
& left in festering state  
to wait in clay  
for a Resurrection  
which loses impetus halfway to heaven.

Surrounding vegetation too discovers  
its new sex  
in reprogrammed cells,  
each one a sacrifice to generation.  
They guide him,  
eunuchs suddenly potent in a brothel.

Untutored loins engage some twisting skulls.  
Curved bone vibrates and swells.  
Membranes revive  
fleshed by the aroma of his skin.  
He straddles each grave once,  
leaving a measured pearl,  
the scent from which will spread  
in maddened whirls.

Rapidly he leaps to the next plot,  
expertly depositing each opal drop  
with insectine precision.

Soil patches groan.  
Tombstones topple  
from torsos breaking through  
the evenness of slabs.  
In gathering crescendo timbers split:  
he's harnessed strength all the living dead possess,  
harvesting their muscle bloom  
before the moon goes down.

Limbs race to silver air  
faster than his own seed  
shooting to the soil.

Nearby evergreen trees are withering:  
tenacious wax moon-wrenched,  
dripping with white acids  
in imitation of him.

Each leaf surrenders life  
to the convulsion. He gauges  
each stalactite in night's cave  
with compound eye.

He squats and waits  
for other limbs to break swaying sod.

Soon a hand probes through.  
He pulls the arm,  
but tendons dully snap.  
So he clears the earth around,  
consummate white nurse  
of the nerve earth bed.

He tongues quivering flesh  
each lick restoring lustre to the limbs,  
each grasp glow to her muscles.

Life cascades through her —  
her stifled, laugh is everywoman's,  
its thrill sustained by fire  
forbidden in the world.

He smiles,  
feeling on her stomach  
a dream incarnate.

She's sweeter now than rotting forest,  
delirious with rose and fermentation,  
far sweeter than if she'd danced  
new-bathed to nectar sheets.

She whines her soul through pus  
as he sucks the ruby mass,  
a doctor extracting poison from a wound.

No camera could catch the exquisite bite —  
speed and bliss combine, accelerate  
beyond that point where impetus consumes  
all trace of vagrant matter.

Tenderly he breaks each bone.  
Swaying she moans in rhythm.  
She takes her marrow in her palm  
enveloping his penis. The lubricant compels  
sharp stars to coalesce.

She presses flaked blood-flow  
between his buttocks,  
her earwax stings his eyes.  
Chewing her liver  
he finds more eloquent tongue.

They heave to her beginning  
while he gives her small hands strength  
to crush her own skull.  
Both watch in awe  
grey matter mixed with seed,  
blood with pulsating earth.

Her womb-cells wildly multiply  
& just as quickly burn  
scorched by his clamorous seed.  
She writhes, bones freely breaking.  
She chants 'feet,' 'mystery' & 'line'  
enveloping them both  
in a choral cup.

Her face cuts through his spine.  
Its flesh carves down his legs.  
She clasps his body-soul,  
he crushes her pelvis  
his penis still shuddering  
in a sucking cave.  
Her vocal chords explode.

They clamp in harmony.  
She leaks into his bone  
pregnant with velvet death.  
Their mixing blood congeals.  
He dies  
choking on a rich chunk of her womb.

On their entangled ribs  
bright flakes of morning snow.

MARINA

He summons echoes of his former self  
each guest a slave to what he cannot be  
*life friends is rubbish, let the wine flow free*

In each charade he is a nameless bird  
who eats the nest of immortality  
will he not turn into our company?

He coins a riddle, with Sphinx-contorted face  
'I drink the sun, the sun will soon drink me  
*life may be something, let the life flow free*

A former wife plays puppy for his cake  
she barks and begs-his pleasure's plain to see  
is this the woman I touched longingly?

He mixes with old friends –'But George,  
your scarf's the colour of the wine-dark sea!'  
*if wine is rubbish, let the wine flow free*

Then glass in hand he walks, into the sea  
they follow to the sandbar of his theme  
He gazes where his silence used to be

And still he walks, into the shallow sea  
they call their hero from his reverie  
*is life then rubbish? will the wine flow free?*

His glass bobs where his silence used to be  
'I drink the sun, the sun will soon drink me'  
*life friends is rubbish, let the wine flow free*

## FRANKENSTEIN

Having no chronometric choice  
The clock ticks on. Yet in its shadow  
Lurks a deeper time, with hands  
Of teeming flesh... Keats measured  
Death's tumescent timepiece in an alley  
Shocked by two boys in mutual fellatio.  
Meanwhile a more elusive Shelley woke  
To find his head still fast impaled  
Upon the glacier of his wife's last dream...

-Did you see my monsters on the promontory?  
They would not shrivel to enduring stone  
But glided to the blanket of the sea.  
-Why Percy you always dwell on that hideous pair  
You have no time for me...

Having no chronometric choice  
The leadpoint stops. The sun gasps  
At its rim of lowest density.  
Francesca's smile survives the rotting pool...  
So who could blame Dante in  
His crying collapse, his marrow knowing  
Different circles had condemned his love  
To paradise so sanitised of touch.  
He could but whisper through a million years  
What once took moments in their sudden fall?

THE NAKED DANCE

Perhaps nature is itself the paradox:  
All I know is that while you danced  
Naked in the snow, and threw your clothes  
On branches aching with the touch,  
I felt the tumult of an icy lust  
Perfected by the very snow that fell.  
Nothing is usually darker than grey flesh  
Exposed to the incomparable snow;  
Yet, when the morning moon had failed  
And eerie light exuded from the flakes  
You blended with that light,  
Until one tender sound alone identified  
A dance which gathers colour to itself.

You moved until the snow became a dance –  
Your flesh the clothes it tossed idly away.

CAPE CLEAR ISLAND

No shapes nor fine geographies will spring  
Around me on this island place.  
I study water worrying a rock  
And know how countless eyes  
Have seen this present glint,  
A thousand minds have mourned its darkening face.

What sculptor, so meticulous,  
Scorned the long millennia,  
Apportioned rock and shadow  
Cave and hill, until minute perfection  
Reached such exemplary silences  
That words themselves became a monstrous change,  
And visionaries fools who groped  
For what already pounding there?

GENESIS

Earth-fire extinguished, heaven shot with flame,  
A bronze girl in the water's hail,  
Command, in sensuous excess,  
A planet's path, or comet's icy tail.  
All nature's children self-consume:  
Lear, element-in-flesh turns element again,  
Heraclitus coaxes ash upon the sand,  
While Charlemagne is crowned with his own rotting skull.  
None more than Lighting  
Its white flesh devours:  
For in that landless protein bowl,  
Before the word, Eternity astride,  
Observe, Illumination spent,  
How darkness soon consumes the fecund tide.

PHUSIS

When ashes ventured to Heraclitus  
That more things may exist than fire  
He disappeared into a sunny gap  
Created by foreshortening of his stride.

As Ur-Syphilis whispered to dying Thales  
That water had no monopoly on pain,  
The unitarian cried drops of semen  
Whose unique salts made Ur-Syphilis extinct.

When flies debased all number to Pythagoras  
A gown surged forth from the ineffable,  
Enmeshed all flies with their descendants,  
Imparting death its concentrated tone.

When a mushroom visited the atom bomb  
Accusing it of flagrant imitation,  
The atom limped back to the empty ark  
Convinced that nothing could replace the light  
Convinced that nothing could invent the dark

PROMISE

You led me  
to a forest  
but the forest  
burned.

You led me  
to a desert  
but the desert  
rained.

Where will you lead me  
now that my body  
is as ash,  
my soul  
a waterfall?

A MIDNIGHT TORQUEMADA

Last night  
You brought your poem  
To the balcony  
You held it  
With both hands  
Over your head  
Like a dead lover.  
As you taunted it  
It was defended  
By the wind.  
You picked it  
Of its words  
With such dexterity  
That the poor shape  
Left behind  
Didn't even bleed.

You sent the paper  
To the four corners  
Of the moonfilled compass  
Absorbed the stranded music  
Into your brain  
Until it rose  
To full crescendo  
In your nightmare.

Within that nightmare  
Your mouth was spread  
Across the poem  
Whose words raced  
In opposite directions  
Like stallions  
Parting the last victim  
Of the Inquisition.

SEAWEED IN FOUNTAINSTOWN

They expect shrieks from jagged coves,  
Sheltered bays where tanned bodies  
Change into pure desire: but I just grip  
Their luminescent buttocks, create  
A grimy necklace for their thighs.  
Curling I delight in their furtive nakedness  
Recall a summer when they slithered onto shore  
Passionate, rebellious, even then.  
Ancestral stem,  
Mother of our kind, is lost in that same flesh,  
But yet, twining with these lovers midnight limbs  
I smell the reek of cities interpenetrating,  
Identify an echo from the stratosphere as though  
The star responsible for life opened its belly  
To show a womb still stained with blood of genesis.

WHILE THE WOODCUTTER PAUSES BY THE  
VIOLETS

Run, little Red Riding Hood,  
Until your intricate bonnet blends  
With the sunset. The nearsighted wolf  
Is still convinced it is the only  
Condom in the forest capable  
Of fitting his expectant member  
Swelling in the undergrowth.  
Run forever

Though you know  
He's being fuelled  
By your kind grandmother.

It slows you up to realise  
She was not swallowed whole:  
First he ate her tobacco-stained fingers  
(These now animate his paws)  
Then he ate her neck  
(Severing the terrified head in due process)  
This now feeds his hungry heart.

You think it strange  
Fleeing for your life  
How the hand which stroked your forehead  
Into sleep so many turbulent nights  
Now craves your youthful death.

Run, red girl  
With  
Axes in your eyes

And  
Not even the bloodshot moon  
Will catch you.

## A BLADE OF GRASS

*It all began when she saw the houses collapsing to one side. She saw them peel in thin yellow flakes, making no sound when they floated to the earth. Then she saw the sea splinter in angular fragments, but I could see nothing but waves veined like exposed rock hanging interminably where the water met the shore. She would tell everyone of this, but no one of the sand flowing through her mind.*

*She would tell no one of the sand labelled with clear colours stopping before her eyes wherever she gazed directly, hurting her eyes with something subtler than the pain of light. She bathed in the rockpool as the columns of water closed, called bits of her dress trees, and trees bits of her dress, blaming the water for the stolen colour, averting her eyes from the painful whiteness of her dress. The following night she raced down the hill to the edge of the frozen lough.*

*No, not even the moorhens could awaken her, not even their plaintive cries could move her when they discovered the rats had eaten their legs when they slept. No, not even the cries of other birds gripped and stranded by the ice that hardened round them in their sleep could lure her from the vision of eternal flakes.*

*She would scream that sparks were closing round her, that the car was shaking in the thunder, that he must not leave her now to get help, that he must stay and be patient until everything was silent. Once she screamed she was the Lady of the Ferns. Then she screamed she was the Lady of the South, whose dress trailed elegantly over the continent of Africa, cooling the deserts, and warming the nocturnal jungle.*

*She said that words were like bits of slow metal in her blood, that she could not think because of the words that blocked her thoughts. Each time she sighed she would cry. With the evenness of birdcall she would laugh when she awoke, and screech more loudly when bands of purple and green mellowed in the sun's companionship.*

*She took her dress from the wardrobe one morning with the same ceremony as a priest takes the ciborium from the altar.*

*She was so carefree that morning as we ran in the fields owned by the tall stallions. But while she rested she saw one blade of grass expand from the millions of others. She saw it glowing through the wind, even though it waved in an area broken by the shadows of the trees. And it came toward her, hovered over her, then disappeared into her, cutting her eyes in rapid silence so that their colour and blood were instantly drained.*

*And on the ground before her the hardening pieces of blood formed letters and shapes she could not understand. We ran home, dreaming of good horses stomping on the evil blade. We dreamed of the blade of grass that would come to life when she was sleeping, in answer to the meadow's call. It would rise slowly from the field, like a sleepwalker, and make its way, by some invisible map, to her room. It would cut her eyes until she would see dark filaments and cry. But tonight she said she would not be there. She would be safe beside the Lough, gazing over the island where a patch of sky would not abandon the faint dry colours of autumnal sun. In the velvet shimmer she was sure light would comfort her. She would be safe there, wrapped in the sweet chill only creatures of the night remember.*

## THE DARK CONTINENT

Major, when you came back from Africa  
No monument was erected to you.  
You had nothing but scarlet fever  
And a heart so broken  
It was no longer an organ filled with blood  
But a fetish for those who never loved you.

Quickly you resumed your habit of hounds,  
The nightly chore of cleaning horns,  
To call some other beast than the lame  
Crazed animals who squired your caravan  
Those nights you found, eventually, shores of sleep.

There you would resume, in garish nightmare,  
That morning you were nineteen, when you came home  
After a weekend spent abroad  
To find your mother had killed all your dogs,  
Because you loved them more ardently than her.

You trembled there, near fumigated kennels,  
The corpses long removed and burned,  
While she slipped back from the lined window,  
Afraid that you might see her as she studied you,  
Hoping her revenge might spring some love, love miracle,  
Or at least a recognition of the pain she felt  
When you were born with hatred in your eyes

While she squirmed back in fear at her creation.

TRUTH WITHOUT ANGER

If my body wasn't set on its decay,  
You would not love me with a living love.

If my voice didn't linger in the air  
And follow the dead eagles to their rest

You would not hear my cello in the tomb  
Built brick on brick by all you could remember.

If my love for you had eyes and ears,  
No light could glimpse our desolation now

Where, in the Rose, the rose has earned its power.

## THE MILKY WAY

We too will face our vast extinction,  
And nature's frank embarrassment when its minions  
Debate if the cockroach or the unicorn must replace  
Our anaemic footsteps on a skin-stitched road.

Friend and foe will weld in the same dream  
While cities pause in their utility.  
None will describe the low attrition  
When centipede and guilt collide—  
The glacier timorous in its shy retreat,  
The ant ecstatic with its massive form.

Some will be grateful as signed sleeping tablets  
Melt meekly in a littered mountain gorge.  
Yet more will wonder as gold graven images  
Sprout veins despite blessed diasporic rage.  
Others will fast incarcerate the Fool  
Who screams his god has added a footnote:  
*let planetary frisson part black spotted seas,*  
Not to mention his inability  
To perish  
After spying the workload in the promised land.

Until this time we'll have no cave to hide  
Except in mirrors we put facing down  
Or else within claw-prints of Tyrannosaurus,  
His shadow peaking as our vision dies.  
Our standby flight was booked in a star-nursery  
By a clay nurse spurting milk across the galaxy.

GULLIBLE DESTINY

My father invented a wartime submarine  
It would right itself  
                                  in apocalyptic waters  
It would right itself  
                                  When every wrong succeeded  
While ships  
                                  Would leave the harbour  
Not suspecting  
  So many shades of opinion  
  slept under them  
                                  their shimmering flukes  
                                  changing the course of the war

LANDSCAPE MOTHER

Snow-lover  
Watch your tears  
Corrode limestone further  
Take on the character of rain...  
Or paraphrase the essence of your theme:  
The only true democracy is pain.

Clutch at the oak  
Worn to its root  
Until its trunk lives yet again  
In brief dance,  
Dandling the child left in you  
Until wind ushers her away...

You feel the warmth  
Of her flesh everywhere,  
Though only her fruit endures  
Branching within you  
Up to the flowering brain,  
Her voice shrill in your scream,  
Your wish still clinging to her womb...

You bathe now  
In her afterbirth-  
Trapped in a corrie lake  
Between orphaned earth and sky  
As her arctic parenthood recedes

Into that choice oblivion  
Where no lack of memory  
Can let her die...

How can you drop  
From her dying fingers  
If she is everywhere?

MOST MIRACULOUS ORGAN

My son's sweet love did not resist  
I laid her like a leaf upon the stream.  
She weighed as little as this garland  
whose petals circle in a whirl of death.

I could have saved her still,  
but who could interrupt such song  
or hinder one so well attuned to doom?

A son's contempt is difficult to bear  
but to endure the minion of his heart  
lacing my pain with blooms about the court?

Yet my eloquence could damn me —  
who else could so observe  
and not be there?

Hamlet, I was your father's ornament  
not his wife... your uncle craved  
my flesh upon his knees.

And that was not your father's ghost  
(mothers too can lurk behind the arras)  
Did you not recognise old Fortinbras  
enacting his own posthumous revenge?

Let's walk tonight upon my battlements...  
Be thou my husband Hamlet and my friend...  
For smiles can linger on a bitter lip  
wreathing with innocence the death-mask of a state.

LADY MACBETH AT BIRNAM WOOD

That burning heap, that note,  
they're sure it's me.  
Yet I feel sorry for the servant girl  
I've left a charred offering on the floor.

If needs be, immortality will clean  
the bloody spot The cauldron has space still  
for one surprise: my letter cheating death.

I watch them carve my husband's destiny,  
and though the castle's far  
I hear him blurt his words to lifeless stone  
with my tomorrow hanging on his lips.

How strange my voice  
could be so soldier-like:  
I bid them hew my lover's branch of sleep.

Macduff, my son,  
will cleave the prating fool —  
He was not, after all, of woman born.  
And my poor chicks he butchered  
will rise up Into those flames  
where hell shall sleep no more.

Tonight two witches will lament my loss  
and chant my death into  
that cave they'll never reach:  
the crack of doom.

TELAESTHESIA

*“a falcon came, and with its talons clawed the eagle’s head; it, unresisting, cowered there, offering itself to wounds.”* Aeschylus. *The Persians*

For years I floundered in this dizzy stress,  
always hopeful of another birth,  
unable to repatriate the mess,  
stern matrix we call home.  
Now you expound the difference  
between travellers & wanderers:  
the first being rooted in too-knowing earth,  
the latter helpless in dawn-breaking foam.

How friendship blossoms in unlikely bonds  
of how friend summons friend ... in reverie  
I turn on ghostly tile to demijohns  
as you resume your custom of home-brew,  
in Colchester or Oxford where the scree  
of dim pedantic ware comes to defile  
two souls communing in a student room.  
In such blithe domains I visit you —

but also where weak children grope their straps,  
not conscious that cerebral palsy  
curtails their modest portion of the pure  
while nurses show them apathetic geese.  
All prisoners in this tight infinity  
our mouths too shudder in their godless paps  
& cannot suck the poison from the cure,  
our nearest star embarrassed by its fleece.

Each night hope dreams of how the real might change —  
but gods don t interfere with star-shod laws;  
both our dead fathers contradict our cause,  
while a comet from the drag which ages us  
acquires a tail to suit our point of view.  
Trapped in one world, the spine-tip must make do,  
become sophistication’ toy then bend  
so that our ashes finally transcend

(wing-tips intact, his claws sunk in the new)  
a fledgling falcon, struggling in the blue.

NOBODY ESCAPES DEATH BY DROWNING

How often have I penned a solar system  
only to feel it sweat  
called the moon whole, only to see it flee  
from its half ghost  
in a slow breast stroke lengthening to eternity.

I believed also  
that merely waking on a spring morning  
would dispel death as easily as dreams  
forgetting  
that no matter how we die  
each of us drowns eventually  
sinking back into the lake  
of our own blood where lifeguards  
are transformed into birds who lament  
but cannot help our red demise...

Water, mother, being as you are  
the very stuff of grief you cannot cry...  
My body shudders with the hanging fact  
of things unspeakably themselves  
and only my tears are cold  
themselves ungrieving  
Passive at the centre of their paradox  
and never dry unless that eyelid close.

## UNCERTAINTY PRINCIPLE

A shiver spoils her lovemoan, he can tell:  
The lines of love's equation are almost parallel.

## LIR'S OTHER CHILDREN

Why did their lustre fade?  
Yet with men too age seldom delays:  
He thrives a seeming lifetime to discover  
He's old within the moment of her gaze.

CARNIVORA BARCELONA

You have no avarice now  
Your day-shells cluster and bleed into  
The sluggish river where points of light shoot  
Up like silent fireworks from beneath; points that  
Die only in contact with the foam which is already  
Overfed with light. Your beaches are clocks  
That keep time more slowly than the frantic timepiece  
Of supersaturated dust, glinting knives in miniature  
That remember me from my first blind visits  
Where I cried, not knowing why, into your velvet shadows.

No, the livid dragons by the port are not unusual:  
This is the customary fire, the primary illumination  
Engulfing the impotent streetlamps in noisy flames.  
People throw water from the windows on a magical fire  
Only quenched by silence: specially chosen waters,  
Changed by formulaic words, ignited by the pulse of  
Festivals whose points of rest are lurking carnivals.

The water fuels the fire, while the dragons chase  
The children to the place of music. A limb climbs  
From the famished sea; it feeds on the loud meat  
Passing between the mouths and ears of dancers  
Draped in the flame's reflection; it shakes hands  
With light-fingers flowing like serpents from  
The windows; it mocks the weak artifice of the  
supermarkets.  
It throws the restaurants together in one steaming mass,  
Until its clienteles fall confusedly together  
Like multitudes of earthworms in a dwindling sod.  
I saw, while your substance mindlessly expanded,  
The limb snap on Diagonal, tossed from the fenders  
Of one car to the other, its sinews flying in all directions.

Lost in a new confusion, your cars made love,  
The bonnets kissed, the virile beams entwined,  
Until hundreds were admitted to the orgasm.  
Human entrails were foreigners to this feast  
Meekly side-stepping the crash into eternity.  
Your lens, Barcelona, could not adjust  
To vertical accretions of crying meat  
Who assemble wherever there is light:  
You saw them march in endless rows to beaches  
Conceived from the ejaculations of tyrants,  
Until, your streets festering, you watched  
Your children gather and eat the night-shells on the shore.

A BIRTH CERTIFICATE OF SAND

Again you describe your identical Other  
Limping through a tiger's veins,  
Or taking stock of the bodies you exchanged  
Seizing what is particularly useless  
In each encyclopaedia ...

My continuous book had no beginning,  
But would lose its cover  
For the luxury of end.  
Its index was a weight upon dream's nightmare  
With no appendix beneath the name of 'Borges'.  
On the multiple next page is marked:  
'Hereditary blindness = calm oblivion'...

Thus Nearness becomes the first god in Olympus  
Indifferent to the victor and the slain.

But this is the apology you burned  
After the Battle of Brunenburgh,  
The ink you drank  
From the last sword etched  
Upon its battlefield.  
It is also the self you  
Lectured to  
From babbling darkness,  
A being denied existence  
Only to live again  
In the eternal dream  
Of what can never be...

Your shade sings  
In the next tap of your stick.  
No minotaur will find  
An invisible clue.  
Nor will he ever bend his head to taste  
The blood of Jorge Luis Borges poured  
Into that one lost letter of the labyrinth.

## AN ENVIOUS PARADISE

Under my dream survives one liquid chamber  
where streams compete to illustrate your body,  
where skies assemble to address your face  
poised above me in a velvet shadow.

Under your skin Is an evasive heaven,  
playfully meretricious, with the tang of hell.  
I touch its fleshy evidence to find  
it has no traces of the supernatural  
and closes like a cockle in its shell.

Above our bed ecstatic creatures cry.  
They know, in their pure paradise, they'll never share  
the tremulous clutches of our sweet despair.

FACE BENEATH BRIGHT GLASS

She wears her beauty  
Like a heavy cloak;  
What will she do  
When old age  
Becomes the nakedness  
She fears?

## THE MAN WHO NEVER WAKES

The man who never wakes  
Is scored with the marks of baffle.  
We sit by him, watching the drama of his hands,  
While invisible weapons bring death among the bedclothes.

By dawn, exhausted, he sleeps fitfully  
within his sleep: his body is the future and the past  
Yet we cannot call him different  
Vexations are vexations be they vertical or horizontal.  
But his sleep is deeper, being shrouded by a sleep.

Observe, it is an Autumn evening and he treads  
A winter path. His hands are icicles under warm blankets.  
He'll never know how loving hands have turned him  
On his side. Perhaps, eternally drowning in  
Our atmosphere, he gropes to reach this world.  
He senses, as we gather In a close circle,  
Strange ghosts with open eyes who gaze upon him.

THE ROPE DANCER

Not from mere things can texture so proceed.  
Her woven feet are twinned between the frees,  
While her poised parasol can make the air more blue  
To spin a space where proper nouns can feed.  
From coiled shadows there is no noise at all,  
    Even her lover is in exile from its call  
    And nothing else, not even aftermath,  
    Her laugh the satisfaction and its need.  
Not from mere things can texture so proceed.

## A MARBLE CEMETERY

A stretch of land, barely two miles,  
And a dim view of the ocean-  
    Between them  
The blood of several years is shared.  
    My blood is spread there  
In a stretched transparent stream.  
    On a cloudy summer morning,  
    In a thick coat  
Absorbing slowly the moisture of the grass,  
    I lay there  
Letting water spread over my face.  
I heard the dull sound of earth falling.  
    I left the eternal spot  
    I had chosen  
    At four o'clock.

But I had coveted other parts  
Of this faintly sensual place  
Each leaf and wave chipped carefully  
    With heads and branches  
Shrinking in the cramped space of a dream.

Had I not buried Keats,  
Dragging the leaves over his poems,  
Placing two crossed sticks  
    On a pagan page.

In a drapery of words I buried him.

With no human world dark phantoms grew,  
Eagerly they seized the passive place.

I tried to wrench my poems  
From the dry still figure  
Of an old man in a dressing gown  
    Reading by a beach...

Each time he raised his head I wrote  
Nor did I stop when his contemptuous glance  
Lowered itself forever in stone-like folds.  
The marble of fixed faces did not break  
As they hardened round me.  
I reached out my hand  
But could not clasp  
That web of wood and water  
Which once I thought I loved.

IN HOPELESS LAUGHTER

Your mind in pressure  
Yet body ever free  
In its most choice  
Unrest.  
I reach  
A wider plane  
Of nothingness  
Relinquishing  
My hold for seed  
Will only thrive  
When urged away-  
A numberless extravagance  
Of brief life  
Brief hell  
To reach  
Your limbs in moisture  
Quiet now  
Like nature's hush  
After the church bell.

BRINY WATERS

The briny waters lose dissolving salt  
Then flit in expectation for the taste

That will, in taking, remit their own default.  
The tongue in savour pluralises choice

Creates an end the waters cannot know  
The consequence the echo of its noise.

And when transformed, metabolism dies,  
When thrown beyond the effect of its sphere

What salt shall know what saltiness implies?

BALLET OF GLASS

This bed is bound by timber  
But soon a glassy stage  
Appears under your finger  
Now crystalline with age.

Was it from Scandinavia,  
This ballet wrought in glass  
With its lonely spectral lovers  
Indifferent as we pass?

Could leaves be such a purple  
The roots transparent, clean;  
Could they be so indifferent to  
Their bed of rapid green?

A WEED THAT KILLS ALL MEMORY

I have escaped the playwright:  
The fool I've bribed  
Is King enough

A weed-faced, chalk-chewing look-alike.  
They'll hardly notice me  
Among French ranks

Once every day  
Bringing breakfast to my daughter,  
The kind she used to bring me  
When I could still remember  
I had loins.

I'll even join court players  
And watch them ask  
With what authority  
I stem the illumination of the stars...

I'll hear late-evening tongues intone:

*King of ennui, remember us.*  
*King of champagne, enliven us.*  
*King of dust envision our old eyes.*

Long after they have quit the theatre  
(My infected slave still dying)  
I'll take Cordelia's hand,  
Become the only plaything  
She'll ever throw away

And this will be my sleep.

## BLOOD MURMUR

His hands sank to the vaults  
of minted blood ... Often he would caution  
me not to shake my head to induce sleep  
lest its severed self would fall  
into a stream no water could retrieve,  
a stream composed of its own falling fear  
compared to which mere drowning would be bliss.  
In solving sums his mind would flow  
beyond fixed polarities of thought  
where magnetism was his mother's smile,  
not a cold law, enticing unions  
of the banal with the impossible:  
suns dropping safely into suns  
or fathers telling fathers who they are.  
I remember his face after an accident:  
pain being a sleep endured as was his death,  
etched on his wounds I wasn't meant to see,  
a sentence in the blood no dream could hide.  
The first gift I remember from him  
is a box which failed to close:  
When I go the money'll be cut down  
you and your mother will be left alone.  
My father paid the dark and closed the door.  
My hand still searches for his currency.

CROUCH BURIAL

Since he refused your soul  
What price will pay the ferryman  
To take you further home  
But the loan you borrowed  
From the dark he guards?

ANNIHILATION

Life empowers greyness,  
Distilling your distress.  
In thrones of passing  
Your beauty shines in duplicate  
While you are still immobilised in one,  
As stardust  
Suffers contemporary pain  
To hinge upon your zero ...  
For beauty cancels, cancels  
Not half-lines, but half its own  
Unyielding measure;  
Burning you, it's absent at your birth,  
Missing to the point of being there,  
Guilty at the length of time  
It spent at your conception.  
Mistress of the nebulous wound  
Scored on the mouth-promise of your face  
And shy annihilation,  
The only guest you cannot now endure,  
Because your hybrid innocence  
Bears nothing, no false witness, and your name.

TRAJECTORY MINUS O

Angel points downwards  
With its special lie  
Its arm strengthened  
By disembodiment and love's exact  
Distance from a creature of tomorrow  
Born in brotherhood,  
And cemented by an ancient sacrifice  
We feel wave-centric  
to our bone ...  
Children moving in one face  
Plead with the part of me  
I cannot see, while you measure death  
Poised on a bridge  
Above the church of caves ...  
Don't anger your gene-twisting flaw;  
My changeling arrow  
Can't handle such wry rhythm  
Primavera  
Schools of geography fade to the nearness we call calm  
One letter at the top of a white page  
(the alphabet will censure you which one)  
As it waits in and redefines the queue  
Beside the bank  
Of nonetheless exchange  
Ah tongues.

WHERE MATRIX TURNS INTO A HOUND

I am afraid, yes,  
because your beauty has dismembered me  
afraid beyond fear' circumference, yes,  
because death means nothing  
while pain is not even entered  
in a dictionary of jokes ...  
When the moon comes close  
I do not shirk its cadaverous flame;  
rather I go through  
to pathlessness where the cosmos  
flees from its own laws ...  
and that means nothing in a world of sand,  
courage being a flourish of dead limbs,  
where deserts no longer negotiate with number  
and light is its own bright apology  
for being there.  
But your voice  
takes my appointment with you  
out of time  
and even further from its contrapuntal children:  
muse, vanity, coincidence, recoil.  
And I freeze to hear of your wonderful sensation  
as you crawled into the womb of a man last night, —  
the very moment I should have spoken but could not —  
yes crawled into that embryonic sea  
to find your blood of vanquished years redeemed  
in a manchild  
bleeding through his palms  
the same foetus  
who created menstruation.

FREEFALL ONTO LEVEL GROUND

Our love has ended with blindfolding care.  
Far from an epic sadness,  
No fanfare in the raw throat of denial,  
No pool of devious tears  
Testify to a cross-roads when  
There could be no going back,  
The forever of two beings apart  
Who yet fed on the same atmosphere  
And revelled in the same ecstatic loss.

A quiet sadness, permanent  
As midnight surrounds us now:  
And no reunion can cannibalise  
The pain. You long to perish  
Back in the beautiful country  
Known only to the sisters of despair  
Before anger, and its midwife, could be born.

But die you didn't, and now must seize  
A tragedy as banal as our laments:  
Erosion, crumbling, fall  
While your longed-for escape to overcrowded paradise  
Petrifies into a dreadful courage  
With no excuses strewn on the ravaged plain.

CATHERINE EARNSHAW

Chameleon! Be Gone! Our first foreplay,  
do you remember? All persists within  
this downward thrust. I quivered, at  
the centre, & was gone. You were rocks,  
retched, hard-breathing, suspired in weight,  
necklaced in ice. You were the kennel  
when the hounds were fled, a downward  
helix to ecstatic bone ...

Marrowless  
my shiver bleeds, a novice ghost  
trying out the chains, too soon  
introduced to human blood, too splayed  
with preposterous recall ever to learn  
from memory.

I know your other love will  
wrench me back, will succour stone before  
the stone can flee — I fathom such light-joints  
from cruci of transformation, from slash —  
— vivid shell. To face my courage in my  
place alone, I must face you: gaunt transit  
mirror, bargaining sand-quantity, extra kiss ...

I  
can no longer breathe our common prayer.  
Dead crucifix, suffice. No hate, nor yet,  
annihilation. Drained of its power I  
stoop its hecklings to a stare &  
vaunt my way into a Moorish dress... O Laughter!  
Crown my parted lips, with one weft, your disdain.

Dead love —

The pilfering caress. The dancer in perpetuity  
blends with me now, against you, tenderly.  
Twigs cristle lightly, mattering the wind.  
I turn away. A face for every turn, a prayer  
for every yet to be discovered cave. You frown.  
In a phalanx of caged loss. Our kiss. It sheds  
bleeding. Windows melt, our glass. They drip  
down, ivy-mettled, from the stones.

Once penned  
our firs expired. You glanced them, ever wilting  
as your passion grew. Our ghosts grate  
far from us. It would astound our meek  
remembrancer, but we know little of coiled pain  
fame covets as its own... we tow, united  
in death moors cannot consummate. Such  
tracts we pound low scoff at suffering, crying  
with us for a luxury called pain. Mocking  
our magma, rocks dance. Too high, too low.  
We crouch, then redirect upheavals; instead  
of living love... We are gone, archaic valediction:  
one torn hand.

Inclemency,  
our church, it broods over wax.  
Our kiss stops with one finger,  
austere bell... O would it ring  
— sound, speculate fond this-way beams,  
dressed in epidermii, centuries.  
We thrive, fed by scratch-verity: always,  
grains under fathomless terrain: our  
peat-bark horizon ... O cloven foot,

bring back your body: I am shrift &  
virgin, hacked close with your seed, shed  
now so blithely on each heatherbell: you feed upon the  
starved thorn that was me. Love, both you & I  
announcing  
we fare well. Our industry, worrying the dogs.  
our post-coital hush, both torment, anaesthesia for  
North sea butterflies to wake on.  
When will another body come around: Kings &  
Queens of pillow centre poison, we graft dreams ...  
Guard our bay-window, from my stone-loving hair.  
And when I saved you from the cliff  
Instead of thanks, you cursed the soft abyss,  
And gouged my face until my face was air.

A PRIMAL THIRST

Sentinel darkness  
will not permit  
the women drink  
their children's blood  
from off the torn  
vagina of the battle-zone.  
Nor will it countenance  
their lamentation  
of infants dragged  
from garland scented  
birth  
right to the sun's  
dry root...  
Stripped of their  
furious mantles  
they do not seek  
to stanch their  
own bright wounds —  
knowing their own gashes  
will respond  
to posthumous live blood;  
will stop them  
screaming  
at shades  
which have  
immortalised  
the field.

## THE MOUTH OF THE FLOWERS

He gambols with his comrade in the snow  
Then takes the loved bones to the bed of night  
Not conscious in the glacial undertow

*that he prefers the company of old people  
in the darkness  
to that of young people in the light*

‘Man is a fallen creature, don’t they know?’  
Is whispered from the spectral catamite —  
He crushes both the crushed one and the blow

*preferring the company of old people  
in the darkness  
to that of young people in the light*

He stands among the ruins as they glow,  
A ghost before the photographic light  
Drinking his gall before the gall can flow

*preferring the company of old people  
in the darkness  
to that of young people in the light*

A steel bride sleeps beneath the watchful crow,  
While dreams congeal into an armalite;  
Trained on that flesh which flesh would overthrow

*preferring the company of old people  
in the darkness  
to that of young people in the light*

He draws a line so that their soil might grow  
Sensing the dangers of the Infinite,  
A realist bound by the real although

*he prefers the company of old people  
in the darkness  
to that of young people in the light*

He listens to the cosmic stereo  
Time' falcon with no luxury of flight  
While lesser birds assume his superego

*preferring the company of old people  
in the darkness  
to that of young people in the light*

The soul which fails to age forsakes the show  
To sate their Sophoclean appetite —  
Blood pitched against blood's brother cannot know

*that he prefers the company of old people  
in the darkness  
to that of young people in the light*

His muse surrenders to their cameo:  
An Empire bowed before its neophyte  
Enacting what the dead must undergo

*lest he prefers the company of old people  
in the darkness  
to that of young people in the light*

He draws his pistol on The Big Fellow  
Trapped in the prison of famed cellulite:  
Am I to die in their imbroglio

*preferring the company of old people  
in the darkness  
to that of young people in the light?*

A dream lures victims to the G.P.O.,  
Concealed beneath the grim hermaphrodite  
Which chuckles in its green impetigo

*knowing he prefers the company of old people  
in the darkness  
to that of young people in the light*

His brain explodes in visions of tomorrow  
And from its shell squirms one shy paraclete  
Who guides shawled figures to the doors of limbo

*preferring the company of old people  
in the darkness  
to that of young people in the light.*

BETWEEN THE MAZURKA AND THE TANGO  
COME THE THREE TYRANTS

*During my dream-party the tyrants always come looking for forgiveness. They show me bleeding hands, the three of them, always together, embarrassing my guests. They wail at what they still must suffer, tell me they have relived each fraction of all their victim's pain.*

I tell them there is no forgiveness,  
And yet there is always forgiveness.

*Stalin, Hitler, Mao-Tse-Tung; all the other tyrants have abandoned them, they are the circus side show of crime. My guests throw them scraps, but they dare not eat: each morsel spawns a new victim in their bowels; they tear at my trousers, cover me in saliva, and urine the colour of birch-bark ...*

I assure them of no forgiveness,  
And yet there is always forgiveness.

*Hitler carries paintings he never finished; his old flatmate is tethered to his side; he cannot learn Russian, the ideograms of Chinese give him headaches; and, besides he truly dislikes his enforced companions; his one testicle in life has been taken from him in eternity ...*

I tell him there is no forgiveness,  
And yet there is always forgiveness.

*Stalin is youthful by comparison and plays a mean balalaika; even here he is always successfully escaping assassination attempts; this keeps him young he says and one step ahead of his companions; the poetry of his teens is clothing him; just when I think he is happy his tears fall like countries on his cheeks; he wanders around the fringes of the waltz whereupon all my guests stop still at this he leaps from one chandelier to the other pretending history has never happened.*

The breaking beads tell him there is no forgiveness  
And yet there is always forgiveness.

*Mao Tse Tung crosses the Ganges every day he says, only now he has no one to assist him; death is nothing he assures me; he has drowned every hour and still recovers for the next ordeal those he has killed file through his dreams at night he tells me, bringing him gifts he does not want, when all he wants is sleep.*

The buckles stitched into his armpits  
tell him there is no forgiveness,  
And yet there is always forgiveness.

*So each night three tyrants always come into my dreams, but the guests have learned to ignore their tantrums, they have even joined the company of pleasure: when they eat they vomit, when they dance they melt, when they speak they cry, when they move they are reminded of dark stone which made them human and always under all their antics they in whispered tones keep hinting at forgiveness ...*

Even the poodles snoozing in the chandeliers  
tell them there is no forgiveness,  
And yet there is always forgiveness.

LOC MOR

My head came forth upon Jail Cross  
chained with no mythic albatross

*The old men in the bowler hats disappear for days on end.*

A blonde girl cackled in the trees  
humbling the humbled Pyrenees

*The old men in the bowler hats disappear for days on end.*

God genuflected from a cloud  
I heard each atheist stone applaud

*The old men in the bowler hats disappear for days on end.*

A whisper asked where Cain had trod  
my voice surrendered with a nod

*The old men in the bowler hats disappear for days on end.*

Our orange husky failed to rise  
on its unwanted paradise

*The old men in the bowler hats disappear for days on end.*

When blood took over Fairy Lawn  
dead stars mated, dead stars shone

*The old men in the bowler hats disappear for days on end.*

My father folded his own skin  
into a grain of oxygen

*The old men in the bowler hats disappear for days on end.*

My mother craved erotic moons  
My father questioned answered runes

*The old men in the bowler hats disappear for days on end.*

My sister kissed the gifted doom  
condemned the living to exhume

*The old men in the bowler hats disappear for days on end.*

A creature made of light dragged me  
I dragged the creature after me

*The old men in the bowler hats disappear for days on end.*

A GLIMPSE OF HEAVEN

You felt the stars were angels when you walked  
The four miles into Midleton for the matinee.  
Your mother had to explain how they were human,  
That Deanna Durbin was a breathing being,  
Treading her own tightrope in the skies.  
The factory you weaved in has long closed  
And all who danced with you as children  
Have found new roles in some mysterious cast.  
Once, when your bicycle broke down  
A stranger braked in silence to your rescue;  
Before the village you were already bound  
For it was he who vowed to marry you  
When you were eight and he was twenty-five.  
Your mother asked you to fetch paint,  
Gazed through the linen as you giggled home.  
I asked you why you never went with anyone  
The years between when he seemed gone forever—  
When love seemed ash spread on a barren ground.  
'Just a song at twilight' speeds the answer  
As if Deanna Durbin had returned to prompt you:  
'I always knew your Daddy would come round.'

## FIRST DAY AT SCHOOL

You saw crafts bloom from the blue shipyard  
while brother Alby asked you to hold  
the small shell to your ear, and listen to the sea.  
All the boys who could twirl sticks with their fingers  
had promises of sweets salty from the ocean.  
Sails clinging to the wall were made  
from your father's Sunday shirt,  
impossibly clean when he took off his overalls.  
In the fire the brother set behind you  
you could hear the mariner's shouts  
battling against yellow gales.  
Now, once again, your mother's at the door,  
but this time she can't see your fears-  
for you've come home, tired from Atlantic journeys  
and she has far more smiles than you have tears.

PAMELA

Empty today & but for her merest whim  
all yesterday, you are nothing  
but the promise she forgets, the infant  
she wishes to her womb, or the comb  
she made from rose-thorns  
falling from her dirty hedge.

& but for her whim you would  
be nothing now, except for  
your new life becoming  
a carp speeding sideways to its death  
a choir chanting a requiem unseen,  
each voice making your seat still lonelier,  
the van your father could not  
yield to scrap, your Dinkies  
in their disciplined display  
beneath the screen of ceaseless worlds,  
or a child rocking his head  
from the moon-seized finger of fairy lawn  
to its enchanted other side  
because Pamela's bandaged hand  
flashing across night's carousel  
would not let his laughter sleep.

BEYOND FAIRY LAWN

A tug of war raged on  
Between you and Lough Marsh  
While you gathered roadside dust  
Or played dizzy with Pamela.  
And when you held that photograph in 1968  
You knew that 1966 had fled  
With the sky-blackening birds  
Into the island whose trembling roots  
Reached down and down and down  
Vainly with the moorhens trying to find  
Lost pictures of eternity.

REFUGEES IN A TIME OF WAR

Darling, it was fit practice for the funeral.  
You in one of your two wedding dresses  
Dancing forever until midnight never passes,  
And I ecstatic in the adolescent 'now and I are one'  
Betrayed by voices at the edge of reason.

And maybe the wedding will happen beyond the funeral:  
Bodies littered on the bomb-shocked street  
Show no surprise at their abrupt transition  
As their ghosts drift down to summer-seeming bays.

We waded in the extinguished blood  
Like fellow-workers on the mission once  
And for all might end... Your wedding dress  
Blown onto the endlessly dying angel  
On a famous square no one in shellshock can remember,  
As my tears add piquant weight and wisdom to the blitz.

Darling, we were fit practice for the ruined tank,  
Its young American soldier cindered  
To a beautiful amaze  
Because he was the last to be invited  
To love's blushing condolences  
Behind his skull, behind his cherished dream,  
Where we, heroically at peace might greet him

Taking his arms like flowers to the ditch,  
Taking his arms still twitching to the grave.

## STOPPED CLOCK IN PARIS

Yesterday's France  
was a meal served up  
with darkness-tilted spoons.

No sooner were her children born  
into nightmare's atmosphere  
than Orly became another mother  
reabsorbing its unwitting young.

Madame Lescop lives in a battered clock  
reliving all she could not do  
when Nazis killed her family  
under the gaze of her inaction.

Try as they might  
no one can chart the legacy  
of her interrupted time,  
no one paint the pits  
of her Purgatorio.

Her truth is trapped  
in senseless circumstance  
masked poorly by plausible particulars.

The pots and screams she throws  
are smokescreens, emblems of  
what no one can accept:

the quiet madness of what happens,  
death's themelessness in life's face.

No, she'll never leave her house  
because her loneliness  
a foetus in never ceasing growth  
would surge toward the perpetual labour  
of never being born.

AMONG ASHENBACH'S LAST THOUGHTS

*love does not know how to yield*  
*to ancient images- Propertius*

Whoever on this beach has known  
How flesh from light erupts  
At juncture of sea and sand  
Will see how sweet careers of words  
Dissolve before the careless limbs  
Of this one solitary child,  
So void of world and self  
That moments are his clock  
And cosmic space the measure of his hand.

## THE LAKE OF PIGS

My father drives me to the slaughterhouse.  
He speaks of life advancing, life in pain.  
A pig looks at me from its hood of doubt  
Its gaze reflecting what is in my brain.  
Beyond the wall they know what's happening,  
They know bright silence is unnatural,  
The wound you can't see is the mark of Cain.  
The blade that rips each throat is shuddering  
And must be sharpened on another's spine.  
Running from the funeral of pigs  
I see a funnel through a broken wall;  
A low voice whispers that the fluid is wine.  
Driving from the funeral of pigs  
My father speaks to me of life eternal,  
While I remember how the Lord cast out  
His demons to the innocence of swine.

## KEEPING THE FAITH

When his father spoke  
of suicide, hope died  
within the son. Did  
he fall from the kitchen roof  
by accident

Or did he want to feel  
his son's arms round him  
in awkwardness, just once,  
risking death  
for that sole intimacy?

For the son did drag him in  
marvelling at his own strength,  
& at his father's gaiety  
when he revived

to tell the tale  
of how he always missed  
the second last rung  
of every ladder,  
mesmerised  
by the sanctuary of roofs.

Two hugs  
in a lifetime of proud stances!  
The second when his father  
spurned the house, after yet  
more arguments, more  
than his rage in its useless pride  
could bear

Yet at the merest touch  
    he turned  
like a soldier under orders  
    alone at an oasis  
    who takes the last  
instructions from a rusty transmitter  
& walks with heavy clothes  
    into the desert  
    where his comrades  
  
in their bigger silence  
    have been slain.

LUNAR DESCENT

Erase the moon to make it Permanently yours.  
And the words that cluster around suffering  
    Fade into a single syllable.  
These words I write, as you, Benjamino Gigli  
    Rejoice in vernal May  
    In the year of my mother's birth  
    In the year of my mother's death.  
To soar under the earth is in that flight of voice

Two membranes in the throat of death will never join,  
    Because the first is made of clay  
While the second does not know it made the clay.

## TAKEN FOR GRANTED

To us they are always parents, yet  
to themselves more children than before,  
as they struggle, graft, in a familiar  
yet unfamiliar role ... Centuries  
of craft, but they are always cast in  
at the deep, finding wisdom, embracing folly,  
in a million glittering mistakes.  
To be accountable wholly for another destiny,  
and if the kids go bad, then fully blamed.  
To us they are never victims to the end  
until we see them quivering like children  
at the grave, and place our hands too late  
on ghostly shoulders collapsing in our name.  
We drain them fully, assume their sacrifice,

because we leave our evidence  
in the nursery  
because we hide our questions  
in the womb:  
who is my father crawling  
from the ice,  
who is my mother sailing  
to the tomb?

## WATER LEGACY

In each canal we found familiar arteries and veins.  
In each canal we saw atom-tempests of our blood  
Drawn out in all directions like some tired canvas  
Over time.

In each canal our love's iconography was falling  
Into painted liquid already over-pregnant with images.  
In each canal I traced your fascination with this water  
World as some meta-ghost would record the outlines  
Of the supernatural.

In each canal we watched our bodies from a tower as they  
Arched in silent spirals for one perfect pirouette.

In each canal the clandestine apotheosis of suns.  
In each canal the face of the living death flaked over us  
And everything that falls and

In each canal your true love heavy with its infinite burden  
Was leaving me like blind snow racing  
Over an abandoned mountain.

THE LOOSE KIMONO

Over the threshold  
Love's competition

in

in forfeit  
of the victim

love's keener mind  
began in you, in me,

tenderness ...

In such abodes  
a species thrives alone

voids gloat  
when souls are herded

by their fingertips  
All smiles live

on the verge  
of their extinction

While your name in Japanese  
arrives before my wrist

can take it in  
and leaps out

of the window  
miming glass

Only here they bind  
our tongues to make

them beautiful;  
bodies folded

in a drawer  
of scented  
bindweed

so a worshipped sun  
can challenge

The Kimono.

Having chronicled  
the fragility of heels

That's why  
she still makes love  
in the Infinitive

but you know deep  
in the chisel of a tear

You may bow before  
your victor on the bridge

from a dress-sense  
which cannot compliment the sere

she has won her honour  
from the wrong salvation

Our arrow is the patent  
of the sin & while the steel

of the inaccurate  
casts no shadow

The caress of paradox  
ensures desire is not  
our own

The rustle  
of ancestral hedges  
pales before  
the palm-curl  
of a barb

Love such as this  
will not degrade  
to a host of high emotion

nor will the syntax  
of random stones

invert  
the virgin case

fire is the last pupil  
to embrace a dance

She wears  
numerous costumes  
in defence

while you reveal but one  
the loose kimono  
melts the vantage knives

while your heel so  
used to weightlessness  
can breathe

sustained by her capacity  
to Fall.

A CHOICE OF CLIFFS

Your body —  
a lithe vessel  
borrowed from the underworld.  
Soon it will break open  
& like any other shattered cup  
no one will know  
how dead flesh fell,  
nor what parts of me  
will lie among  
the fragments ...  
Shall we both dare  
to enter  
your dark blood?  
& after mutual evaporation  
shall we rejoice  
or watch our bones  
sink down  
a drain of ash  
after tasting  
your incision  
your dry metal?





