

A N D R E W M C N E I L L I E

Chaffinch

(*Fringilla coelebs*)

Inching your way, hopping-running,
Among the chaff of the morning's
Bird-table badinage, you call out

Pink-pink, pink to winter's red
-raw sun, the slate-blue wash of sky
Foreboding wild weather in the hedge.

Day's prospects look as slender as you seem,
Little as the light in that frozen
Crystal sliver of a puddle where

You peck at crumbs of frost and tap
The numb stone with your tuning fork.
But pink, you go, with perfect pitch:

Pink-pink to winter's rumbling baritone
And ruddied storm-drift plumage of slate-blue
And tattered blast as you take wing.

Headland

for Michael

Migration of gorse over thirty summers:
A linnet's flight between
Two stars of outcrop karst.
Can you say you saw it?
A lifetime in an instant
Wherever thought runs here.

I remember when those golden purses
Blew my heart as far as Mōna's isle
And every feeling soared
On tugging-hugging woollen air,
The seaborne day delayed
However tides ran there.

Things held by the eye, where
Gentians grew, or pipits nested,
And in the mind's eye too:
The year's doomed youth
Who lost his hold and fell,
Overreaching for an egg.