

Rural Life

Why was it tradition to pen up the dead?
In case they went walking? leaving their souls
in tufts of white wool along the trails
they followed when younger? In Dyfed

they leave their names in the telephone book
for decades, invoking a relative's care
against the one hostile, random caller
we all know and fear. You always cook

more than you've mouths, strictly speaking, to feed
but it always gets eaten. I remember,
one time they brought sheep off the moor,
watching the barely controlled stampede

draw into a river round dry walls and ash
so that the herd became one thought.
The body's deceptive—it gets caught
in the frame of a pen, but watch it dash,

cascade. It is a waterfall whose roar
makes you pull back from the steaming edge,
hypnotised by the breaking knowledge
over the lip, no end to coming just more and more.

Seaside Sanatorium

Frantic, dogs search for the thread
by which to unravel a slackening tide.
They never find it. The ocean's a bore
with its circular breathing.

Light, also boring, moves up a gear
and a thrush cries "Cricket, wicket",
everything twice. I live
at a distance from my own life,
a true provincial. That delay
has cost me everything.

They make you choose
the sky outside. Instead,
I prefer the sky inside my head,
the sea in the cedars
to the sea in the sea.