

## FOUR POEMS



*Charles Tomlinson*

### ST PETER'S CHURCH

White, gold and silver—  
all this chaste excess  
above the dark of pines,  
the pastoral greenness.

Black Forest barns  
stand ample for use:  
vast, grounded, shipshape  
under rafter and roof.

But this jewelled interior  
outgrows the green haven,  
its aim and its art  
exceeding the given:

Saint Peter's keys  
larger than life glow;  
the putto is bowing  
its golden cello;

and the shape of this melody  
you cannot hear  
climbs and curves vinelike  
through the luminous architecture

up to the tip  
of cross, crown and shoot,  
fed from the one  
darkness and taproot.

## THE GIFT

A man stepped out of the field:  
a hawk with both wings spread  
rode at his wrist:  
“She’s still learning”, he said.

I heard her bells  
clash in the winter air  
and watched her stare  
unfocused on any human thing.

“Not long since,  
she hit out at me.”  
“You mean beat you with her wings?”  
“With her talons and feet I mean.

Since when she’s behaved.”—  
he let her  
eat a morsel of game from his bag—  
“Of course, she screams when I go to get her.

Someone offered me  
real money—but we shall see:  
I think I shall keep her—  
four pheasants, a rabbit and a hare

this very week. Like one?—  
a pheasant, I mean.” She began  
to shift on the perch of his hand  
while he dug from his bag the gift.

Then she eyed the bird  
transferred to my keeping:  
I was relieved she was jessed  
firm to his hunter’s wrist.

And so there passed this gift unforeseen  
beneath her unblinking sight,  
under the easterly chill  
of a winter twilight.

## FANFARE

Not the full glare,  
but the shaft unravelling  
into rays—a soundless fanfare  
that flashes from cloud and falls between  
us and the field's loud green,  
a swathe of light  
extending its frontier  
between where we were  
and a future about to be  
as we enter it and follow  
this summoning into here and now.

## DRAGONFLIES

Dragonflies  
flock to this garden  
like swallows in autumn  
(it is high summer):  
such glamour  
in predation, scissor-jawed  
and single-minded,  
they radar their way  
past obstacles,  
flying in formation,  
pilots who are their own craft,  
speed their sole stratagem:  
cold that means death to them  
makes them begin  
to disappear just as the dark  
comes cooling in.