

## TWO POEMS



*Fergus Allen*

### CHILD FATHER TO MAN

The water-coloured hills say nothing  
And I am saying nothing back.  
They stand for scratches and fatigue  
In the there and then, quite unlike  
The soothing mother's milk they promised.

Here and now, in an undrained grazing,  
Cinnabar moths are sussing out  
The yellow nurseries of ragwort;  
I pause, damp-footed among horsetails,  
As purposeless as an appendix.

Then peering through a hawthorn hedge  
I see my past self in a field,  
An undersized dissembling boy.  
"So interested in insects", they said,  
"But tiring quickly after lunch".

Aged eleven, in the treble register,  
I was not at a loss for words;  
Always discontented, of course,  
And wanting to be somewhere else—  
A right little pain in the neck.

But quick enough to oil the wheels  
When my comforts were under threat,  
When venerable locomotives  
With leaking glands got steamed up  
In rusty Victorian sheds.

That field held little except vacation  
From encouragement and loving care.  
As a tortoiseshell paused to probe  
Some boring flower, I lifted my eyes  
To Mount Venus and the Hell Fire Club.

—

#### LATENT HEAT

In the Moravian cemetery, Whitechurch,  
the dead are buried upright, on their feet  
under uniform capstones, his or hers,  
ready for the last trump and Resurrection;

and flecked by the elm-light of late July  
the girl from 2A, for whom I've been a cypher,  
brushes against me, bare arm against bare shoulder,  
her skin milky cool and easily dimpled.

Knowing there is no such thing as an accident,  
this comes as big news to an only child.  
The dust-devil of sensation takes over,  
supervised by Morgan le Fay or some such.

Years on, when I check in to adolescence,  
the whole caravanserai will be shaking  
to music, while behind a rusted gate  
the dead Moravians still stand and wait.