

Flight

Effortless and uninscribed, the sky
has earthed everything outside
of where even bleached flight-lines

are ground as small as the pellucid breastbone
of a golden oriole or wren
between the thumb and palm of my right hand

to a powder that settles on this:
the point at which two rumours coalesce,
one to do with vision, one with voice.

One minute, it's ruse and colour,
the next, it is wingspan and whirr.
And who's to say just what occurs

when something loses the run
of itself, and slips airborne
and downwind into the auburn

undertone of flight. And so, away
from the calligraphy of swallows
on a page of cloud; tern prints on snow

that almost lead somewhere
but then break off and stutter
underground, or into breathless air.

Closer to hand, there is the slight
precision of the black and white
and its close score and counter-cut

that becomes what happens here,
between these squat characters
and a thinning fiction keen to aspire

to a sequence of hard words laid
 one on the other and back again
 like a schoolgirl's braid,

chaotic and restrained: that cannot
 be taken in hand; that's here now, but
 working up to clearing itself out;

soon to be thin air: nothing to write
 home about; an advancing quiet
 that throws this into shadow underneath

where, by way of leave-taking this time,
 death, like a moth in a paper lantern,
 is rattling in even these lines.

Whitethorn, and Then

Plucked like a leaf from a whitethorn hedge
 and put down almost at once before the flowers tarnish
 or the promise of worse luck can come my way.
 Of which the house and its bright door are innocent
 as Sunday evenings or a whitethorn hedge
 with all the light flocked into it. Any hour of late.
 A kitchen table with plain flour sieved unfairly
 so the table's even gleam is done away, and nothing
 to show for it but my hands and their business
 to do with the white-handed home and the waiting on
 for the first slice to be dressed with cream
 that will gather itself against the heat, and turn
 like small white buds to a square of warmth
 that comes lately when there's nowhere else to go.
 I make a well and count the seconds until
 the water fills and the crumbs begin to topple
 in the small deep like flecks of whitethorn
 strewn on a whitethorn hedge when there is little
 else to see from inside and anyway, the heat has
 blanched the view into something so seemingly
 close. Like the twin lambs who will probably buck
 my broken playpen in the back of the garage
 for what is left of light over Auburn hill.