

Child Psychologist

The boy placed his glass of water on the centre of my desk,
touched the thin meniscus and said

It feels like this

then pushed his finger through the water's skin.

I noted the refraction, his finger enlarged and broken.

In retirement I remember this, and dream of flies
hatching from flakes of my skin.

When I look in my mirror I see
beads of sweat. A moth, wings folded, on my shaving light.

from Collisions

Clutch

Your foot in a Nike runner on the clutch of the car your hand in plaster of Paris your dogs your walks your notes for messages your curly handwriting your knowledge of herbs your late night radio and flasks of warm water your mirror over the fire to watch TV your watching of fire your washed jam jars your jaw on the face of your daughter your jaw on the face of your sons your hatred of jackdaws in the chimney breast your summer blessing on our fields your face in the mirror watching TV your cups of tea your rosary beads your herbal remedies your Nike runner pushing –

Dirt

All this and no measurement on it ask how to ask and you shall so I asked the dirt and spring rising I asked the dirt with no measure on it I asked for I asked the dirt how to ask and you shall receive though you should not ask I asked the dirt to give me with its springtime risen breathless I asked for you I asked the dirt to give me back with its invisible spring returned rising released freshening me I asked the dirt to give me back your face it could not have it and all its springs and freshly –

Fontanelle

To be a mammal to be to know warmth by the passing of warmth to know touch by the absence of touch to be cared for unconscious to be fed to be washed to be brought forth to be centred round a heart a stomach a face to see eyes to know eyes to know your own eyes in others to care for others to be another to be the centre of another heart to know a heart by the absence to hear a heart within your heart to have heard a heart within your head before your skull had hardened to have felt –

from **Birdsong Sonograms**

The pipit's song:
shark's tooth
dangling
on a string

The magpie's ratcheting:
dust-storm
diminishing
the Roman forum

The goldcrest's chirp:
guillotine
in a hall
of mirrors

The jackdaw's croak:
fish-hooks
dropped
in clear ice water

The starling's whistle:
wheat field
scythed
finally gathered

Coolisheal Pines

The entrance is through an old Cortina,
more rust now than metal, both dog-bed
and gateway through the overgrown briars
let wild to keep cattle out of the copse.
Seats ripped out and replaced with straw,
a scattering of bones, smell of damp dog,
cardboard and rot (this all happens before
I am born) with the vulnerable mongrel
bitch laid out where the back seat should be,
her teats clamped on by bundles of half-life
who whimper for milk even while drinking.
I push past, exit through the driver's door
and into the woods. In underwater light
the trees take on a calm terror and creak
without wind. I walk across a carpet
of pine needles, years old, take sponged steps
toward a small stream and see Nanan
scrubbing clothes against a rock, the foam
dissolving downstream. I call. No answer.
(This is before my mother is born.)
Her back to me, she hums her song,
her shoulders unhunched in their work.
I turn to the half-knocked cottage in the trees,
the back wall, hearth and chimney breast
still standing, and a mantelpiece covered
with unfilled picture frames. Tom sits
in his high-backed chair by the fire
poking at the hearth buried in pine needles,
their low smoulder more smoke than flame.
I sit with him, am ready to speak
about the things I remember, cornflakes
drenched in cow-warm milk, the gummy bite
of calves in the shed, the carriage clock,
when the dog skulks back through the woods,
ears low to her head. Tom clicks his tongue
and she lies at his feet. His eyes are hidden
by his glasses, I cannot tell if he sees I'm here.
He lowers his hand to the dog's head.
She laps at milk from a small copper pan.

Small Talk

Each time I
try, you slip
and I lose

hold the sense
of your now-
ness. So when

you sleep and
I sleep, I
hope we hold

a fraction
of our time
awake with-

in us, our
slow junctures,
breath perhaps,

and who can
say asleep
we don't float

out over
fields of soy,
roots sprayed pure,

startle fawns
into wake-
fullness (dreamt

alert ears,
sloped, twitching)
our only

witnesses...
If ever
I do slide

and you slide
so close, each
over each,

so close we
cannot know

each from each

it may halt
all talk in
the off hours,

when nothing
but tacit,
softly worn

awkwardness
is needed,
to create

atmospheres
of error,
cracks between

which silence
sifts, in which
love may lie.