

Out of doors

1. *Anticipation*

Attraction really the wrong word when being close to or even in vicinity or even at passing mention of her gives rise to great uneasiness—but uneasiness is quickly addictive—in uneasiness body exits soul—pulls soul up after it in a lurch like a plane at take-off—here I imagine—being afraid of flying—though it strikes me as an appropriate vehicle to express—my gnawing urge to—no—pay attention—mother still speaking—has told me that she—she—a family friend whom I see once a year at same Christmas party—me always same—new reasons for staying indoors—she always uncontained—newly extravagant and newly confident—and confidence I have been known to find frightening—mother has told me that she—she—needs her laptop looking at—blue death screen—this—this I can do—I say so and prepare to depart for this almost-neighbour and mother touches my cheek and says I am pale—of course compared to her—hardly fair—and yes maybe a little pallid finding out if I occupy the same place in her—her—thoughts the year-round that she occupies in mine—pale—also—at my recent realisation that knowledge hurts more than its opposite—perhaps better not to force this point from her—there is if anything too much light in this world—too much beauty which tortures with its distance—end of lecture—assignments due Monday week—and yes I know church tomorrow and I will be back for dinner.

2. *Consternation*

In this conurbation there are enough crazy men to worry a blameless civilian like myself—down the street I press my teeth against my gum—wonder why a family that can afford to live on the park's edge would summon *me* to attempt a fix—on top deck of bus I correct my humility—master of all—possibilities branching in my brain—fervent—perhaps a summons—albeit indirect—from her—ambiguity—bus descending lower—lowing wheels—rubber rumble—twigs scrape along roof—nature's signature—amplified in noise as if—much closer than it is possible to be close to anything—wonder council hasn't seen to these branches hanging—what a thought for an eighteen-year-old brain to entertain—I think—in mother's voice.

3. *Consolation*

Impossible—impenetrable—a Mac—I knew it would be a Mac—God knows why they make them like this—its workings in light inaccessible hid from our eyes—my hands white and workless—at the limit of what can be gleaned from YouTube tutorials—I lift these hands from this granite table through the freshened air onto my face—shame—sorry—I say several times—too many—and she—she—smiles and doesn't mind and suggests we go to the park—unfazed by levelling dark—we walk saying little—she amused I carry a headtorch always in a city so full of light—too much if anything—she says and I agree—but grateful for it now in the park which is unlit—its rolling grasses graced by deer—she says she comes to this spot we have reached—overscored by trees—every night to enjoy the grass—which I realise to be a kind of joke when she borrows my headtorch to roll a joint—but not totally a joke as she also slips off her shoes to touch the earth with her feet—though the earth is cold despite the unseasonable warmth—and induces me—pushing anxiety back till later—to do the same—and she tells me—she thinks many things here—like that life imparts wisdom like a tattoo gun—printing in pain—and I fail to return her simile with one of my own which is perhaps what is expected—and here I realise why she asked me here—I am face to face with myself darkly reflected—a fascinating curiosity—specimen a better word—something she will probe in earnest and describe in hysterics—but at this moment—she watches the particulated light of the city from this hill of unexpected vantage—and she tells me how different it—the city—is from the prehistory she has studied in her first term of History—this surprises me as it did not occur to me they in History would begin before the beginning—much less that she would be interested in old dwellings—places where neither stone nor brick nor tiles were employed in slight habitations—she seeming so stone-hard in the best way—real—and she shares the acrid sweet grass with me which I answer with—inevitability—a cough and rush of expectations I struggle to articulate—so I watch her watching—then—when this becomes futile—join her watching the city—mycelium-white wink of a thousand headlights—legion of red crane lights above—and the planes above them—their occasional roar the only sound to break in—to our arbour—a sound not unlike a river or wind-brushed leaves—only louder—and I quote—*concussis cecidere animis*—barely audible—*ceu frondibus ingens sylva dolet lapsis*—just for the sound of it really—and she—she watches still—and I wonder why I—and she says—with shattered souls they fell down as the great forest laments its fallen leaves—rather a nice translation of the thirteenth book of Virgil—better than I could have managed—liking Latin really for the sound of the thing—and I see her—in the new light of the new moon—new.

4. *Nation*

There are dozens of cities the size of this one each with their own logistical arrangements and it's amazing there's any planet left given the size of just this one—and she says—that's good—

say something else like that—and I stumble—feel unwatched—a sudden weight off my wrist—stumble into speech about my favourite street which of course we couldn't see but which was really there—taken on faith—through the sea of carrotty streetlight—through a glass wine-darkly—a street that is the country felled and placed on its side for all to walk along—beginning with—on left a church whose stucco façade quickly gives way to bare brick—this represents hypocrisy—on right a Pret—this represents our country's historical entwinement with France and Europe as a whole—though the pronunciation of the final letter—t—indicates how far—for better or worse—we have grown from our roots—further on—a tree-canopy midway shields cars and railings' violent elegance—and it is here you notice the name of the street—Little Britain—which justifies my analogising—and St Bartholomew's Hospital ahead—the computer says so—St Bart—inspirer of health and massacre and much mischief in-between—left—the great bulging stone—St Paul's—on this rock I will build my—no—wrong apostle—Petrus—Petrus Ramus torn—out of doors—a branch petering into nowhere—nowhere left to turn—your trees won't save you now—I like that—she smiled—not quite convincing—my smile back—lost in the dark.

5. Fibrillation

Not a failure—I think—walking back with her in that gliding legless way that is walking a gentle downhill at night where the body is nothing but confident blur—confident we will see each other again and perhaps before Christmas—and yet—this curious melancholy—sense of being known so deeply and knowing nothing in return—knowing nothing except that it was an end as well as a beginning—an end of the beginning of life—last day of my life up to—several steps closer to grave—no—think positive—another few thousand steps from the womb—more soil on whoever I was once and no longer wish to be—yet there was still the laptop unfixed—yet always the option to—boot from BIOS—hazard of not waking at all—*am* trying new tricks—making foot fall on bare grass—trying not to think—my heart—is this what grandmother called fibrillating—no surely it is just an unwarranted attention on the innards—which should be silent—trying not to think—when she jumped up from the bench so forceful it was totally uncharacteristic—trying not to think—of the tick—tick—in every blade a promise to self—broken—tick—tick—toccata and—pew—a minor failure if a failure at all—must try not to tell her about this ticking in the chest—the psycho angelus that bothers me at regularly unexpected hours—would worry her—make her want—to deliver me from—a load of nonsense—according to—my word—is that—the time.