

# DUSK CHORUS

A photograph of a window with dark wooden shutters set in a textured, yellowish wall. The shutters are closed and have a vertical slat design. The wall has a mottled, aged appearance with some darker spots. A tiled ledge is visible at the bottom of the frame. The overall tone is warm and somewhat somber.

Colin Dardis

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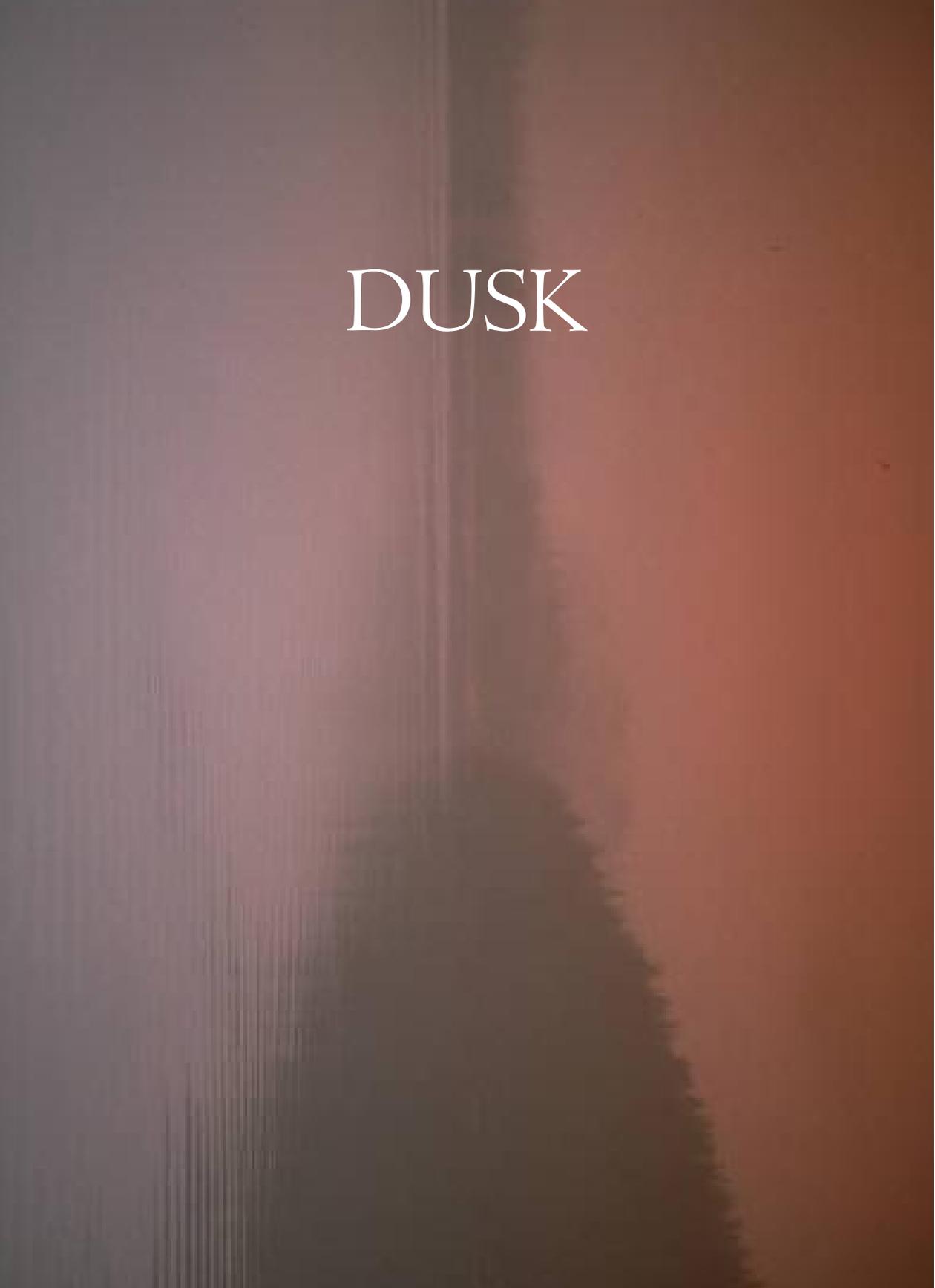
<http://lowlightsforlowlives.weebly.com>

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# DUSK

## Oil Painting

Dusk is approaching  
with its hues of purple and gold:  
a bruise echoing the day.

The sun settles down into the evening,  
oil sinking into turpentine,  
thick smear of orange-gold  
streaked in frayed ribbons  
with knots of blue scraps  
tied into the fabric of the day.

Black jots of people scan the horizon  
for their brushstroke leading home;  
it is a cruel pointillism that  
places them here, in this picture.

## **Shimmer**

On the mountainside of Belfast  
you have carved a constellation:  
the rock shimmers to your eyes,  
the night is but an echo of your smile.

All statues are awake this evening,  
their creamed marble tones  
honoured to reflect  
on such whispers of beauty;

each star a celebration,  
suspended in the sky  
by the memory of your grace:  
the sun blushes in comparison.

## Punch This Season

Invisible teeth are biting these weeks,  
only doing their seasonal job  
to the best of its description;  
pinchers blow under the door  
and attach the outside to my skin,  
employed to gnaw as the year recedes.

The sun has become a ghost  
that refuses to haunt  
and rot this enamelled chill;  
so plug in the electrical punch  
of artificial heat, and let the decay  
burn through autumn's mouth.

Lay down your battlements  
in the hollow of evening, of another day  
fraught with gaining footholds.

Let the wine scatter across your firmaments:  
the clock brings eventual redemption.

## The Light has Come to Stay

Time moves forward: at least,  
that's the direction we choose  
to call linear progression.

Time moves, to leave a sliver of pupil  
peeking out  
through which any errant light may slip;

although the whole dark, substantial weight  
of the night is pulling down on them,  
that thin little crack remains, allowing  
the facility of sight to persist.

The sun is a stubborn security light,  
its flickering death throes zoning  
across the back walls of the day.

## Take the Sun

And if she danced,  
there would be sunsets  
where the evenings paused  
in splendour,  
slow settling of  
Seville orange into scarlet,

footsteps of light  
on the horizon  
spinning the orb of day to night.

Her red whispers  
glistening twilight:  
a constellation of fire-flies,  
a sword in the sky.

## City Breathing

The city is blinking at me:  
no wink of solicitation,  
the tip of drink in my direction  
welcoming me within;  
just the steady, unhurried drawl  
of its electric eyelids,  
too slow for a flicker,  
too clinical for a flutter,  
without smile or sparkle.

I blink back; not to mirror  
a posture of regard, only  
to bear some recognition  
of our counterpoints:  
myself against the streets  
and the nascent twirl  
of invisible machinery  
marking our time together.  
The night's breath condenses.

## Silence

Silence, I think  
we should be acquainted:  
take me into your hold  
as one so tainted;  
take your coat and wrap  
it around my night.  
Peaceful sleep, purity  
until morning light.

Silence, tend me  
with your loving heart;  
I cannot hear the beat,  
it has no moving parts.  
Silence, tame me  
and make the flame hold still,  
reassure me, relieve  
my flickering will.

## Lost to the Night

I am Sid Vicious in the Hotel Chelsea  
swimming in a drug of sweet winter;  
tasting like oblivion  
as I wait, lost to the night.

The night of black bra and panties  
with lunar white resting on her belly,  
the seas of the moon filling  
with junkie blood, and stainless tears.

Her skin appears to have found peace,  
while I want to spin her round my earth,  
roll her love right through my sky.  
The orbit is over. We die.

## Capturing my Dreams

Cascade of night  
approaches my slumber,  
pillow creases whispering  
tales of twilight,  
unconscious thoughts upon the  
remaining day;  
in rest, I search for visions,  
nocturnal ambition  
goading my senses at play.

Murmurs come to me,  
yesterday disappears.

Dipping and curling,  
rumbling through colour and shape,  
evolving into a half-imagined reality,  
a form independent of nightmare or fantasy;  
magic appears to us in our sleep,  
showing us the road to travel on.

## Sleep Becomes Her

Sleep becomes her,  
a gentle state;  
pink rest of childhood  
overthrows her visage.

Sleep  
is a solitary adventure,  
becoming lovelier when  
shared with such beauty.

Nature provide our heat:  
a summer embrace  
envelops our pasture,  
sealed by a moment's peace.

How I yearn for that moment  
to expand its arms pass tonight  
and extend its love  
into Forever!

## Bedtime for Modern Days

The daily grinds mean nothing at the end of days:  
perhaps in summary, I will be judged  
for not completing my audit in time,  
one more example of sloth, in a lifetime  
spent half-asleep.

I am restless, in the pure definition of the word:  
without rest, not agitated or fidgeting, just  
wanting to lie down and allow the night to wash  
its calming shadow over my thoughts.

To sleep is divine; to think of sleep is a prayer.  
Man must have his peacetime, his solitude  
away from the non-stop mechanics  
of this fully functioning world.

I fall asleep on a cog and feel its jerk  
moving in time with the city clock:  
a tick to rouse my slumber,  
a tock to rock my lullabies.

Tonight there's a sweat of bed sheets across me  
as the hours are roped in the rising dearth of light;  
I collapse into the little death of human mystery  
and ponder at the awakening powers of misery.

No one cries themselves to sleep in the real world,  
the idyll of the fairytale is woven to give  
sweet dreams: so sleep now, as a child  
that does not question the dark,  
but accepts that it is meant to rule over shut eyes.

### **Cosmic Curtain**

The edge of space  
invades the night,  
pursed lips  
blowing fever down  
from the clouds,  
flying up blindness  
into our silky eyes.

Starlight  
runs like milk  
down the back of  
a denuded negress.

## Insomnia Shorts

i.

So many words about  
insomnia, and yet none  
have sent me to sleep.

ii.

Inhale the passing of dead skin cells:  
the smell of sleep upon your passage,  
a hint of sweat baked into dry-weather sheets.

iii.

The night watch of waves:  
asleep in water, rolling  
a slumber round the moon.

Rest, and may you stay in rest  
between the crest and the shore.

## Sleep in Sanctuary

Anonymous night,  
come and drown me in your delirium:  
thick padded coat with stitched fantasies.

Let me cast off the trails of day  
and wade into your rising seas.  
Make me an island, a castle  
with reinforced moat of steel  
to protect me from slings and arrows.

Only when dawn comes creeping up  
with heavy foot, may my drawbridge fall  
with great reluctance.

Night, shield me from the Trojans,  
for I am but one man, standing against  
six billion warriors; my scent, thick and wet  
in their nostrils, charged up for the hunt.

Night, I will reach up and pull  
your blackness around my bed,  
sheltering blanket of sweet refuge.  
I hide in your promised sanctuary  
and pray the stars do not betray me.  
The eye of the moon is upon me  
and the trumpets echo now.

## Furrows

The sheets never stay  
flawless and crease-free  
beneath me:

my very presence,  
persistence of movement  
bringing friction

to the bed hearth,  
crankles in the plicature  
of linen and down

aligned with a flexion  
of limb and spine,  
contorted throughout night.

## The Night Birds

The flutter of nearby cuckoos  
merging into swarms,  
streets echoing with their cackle:  
coarse, rough banter,  
a pumice stone  
against sleeping skin  
turned into sound;  
noisy scribbles  
against urban papyrus.

There's the shriek of the female  
battling it out  
with the woof of the male;  
mating calls, battle cries,  
whooping and looping  
past traffic lights at green  
and poorly situated town apartments.

There is no sleep  
in the hunting hours  
of the night birds.

## Tightly

Evening bends towards me in greeting:  
I am comfortable under the weight of the moon,  
being gently kissed by violet starlight  
against night falling as apple blossom.

The scars of the day are healing:  
tears in silver-orange fabric  
placating, lacerations down turned  
in funeral pose of respect.

The tightness of dusk has come  
to rest beside my travels;  
elegant in temporal sway,  
swinging repose of security.

I am an old dog in his basket,  
favourite bone at paw, gnawing  
into the soft marrow of the day,  
cherishing his honeysuckle.

## Sunshine Bed

If you have brought sunshine with you,  
leave it at the foot of the bed;  
in fact, tuck it undercover,  
so sleep can see its radiance.

The fields of green, the skies of blue,  
please place them all under my head:  
on them my dreams will soon hover,  
I will trip on their soft cadence.

I surrender while passing through  
the landscape I long to retread;  
in here, the mind can discover  
valleys of eternal patience.

Although I leave the day behind  
there is no darkness of the mind.

## Home for Stars

Every star needs to fall  
into a constellation;

an expanse of light  
shrinking to a pinpoint,  
drops melting through the dark  
as if silent skies were water.

The blessed union of imaginary lines  
crafting a framework of belonging;  
the lattice, the cradle,  
the makeshift bed  
to find contentment in;  
the persistent home  
resistant against all comets,  
a corner of the sky to call home  
and be called to.

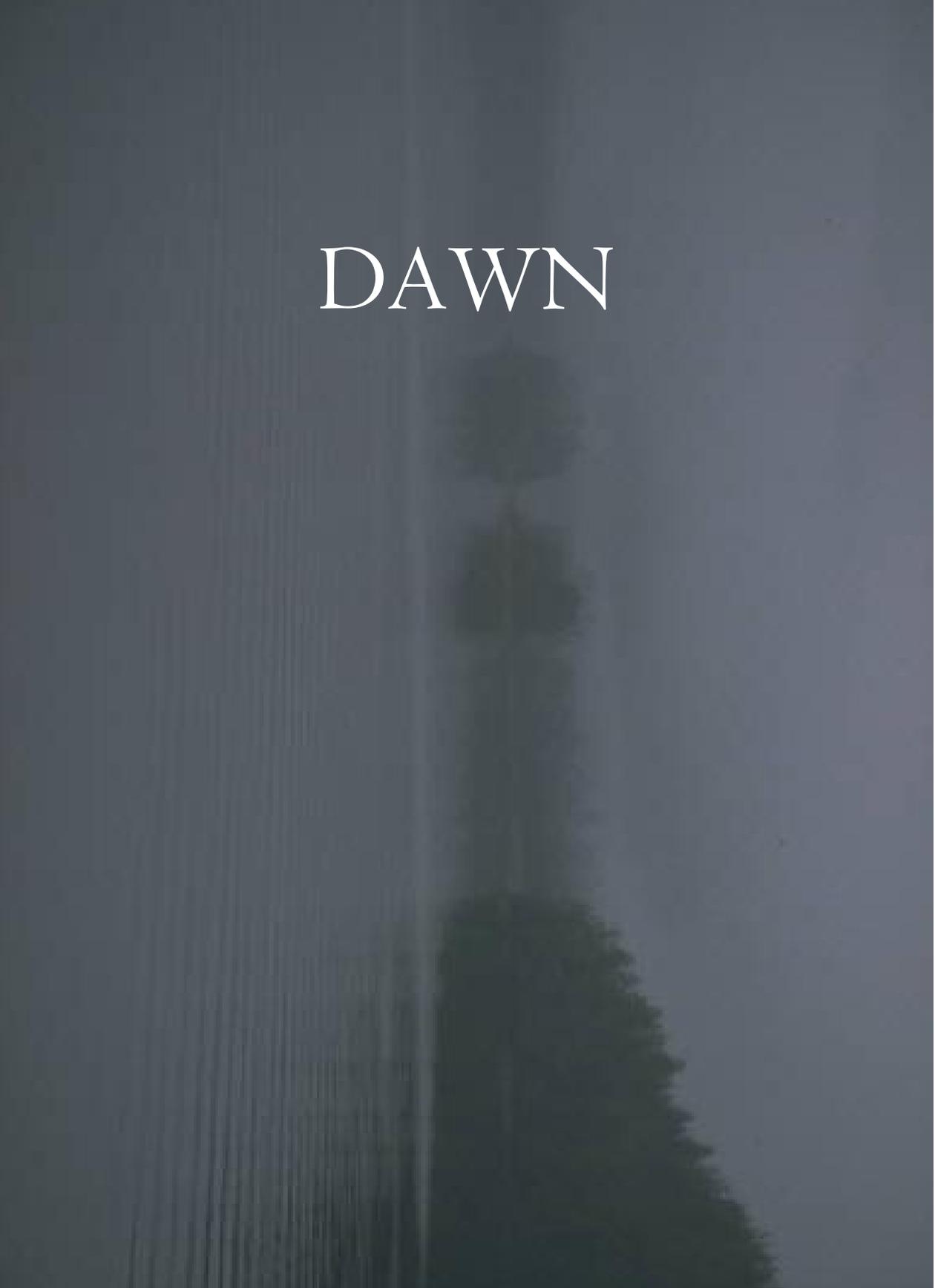
## Asleep, as a Corpse may Dream

I tried reading some Bukowski,  
but I just wasn't feeling it;  
so I corpsed out like a dead poet  
on this funeral bed of mine,  
the night wind pressing against  
a rented window, mourners  
pacing down a church isle.

The blood not reaching  
my vital organs: my tattered heart,  
bruised liver, withered brain,  
with eyes on the verge of drowning;  
they were two barrels perched  
on top of a waterfall.  
I was cold and wanted peace.

It came in the form of sleep.  
The morning came next,  
to rape me of my dreams.

# DAWN



## **Awake to This**

Down in the broken townland  
of uncomfortable progression, the sun  
is surprised to find no one alive to greet it:  
no soul that has set alarm or themselves  
against the night, in order to witness  
the slow fracture of dawn  
trickle down the black mountainside.

The dew forms, the bird giggle,  
the flowerheads turn; and yet  
humanity instead turns  
on their TV to find beauty;  
readymade, easily digestible,  
pop-in-the-mouth nuggets  
to soothe your curiosity  
like electro-antacid tablets.

I want to awake early  
and use the camera of my mind  
to snare panoramas of intensity;  
burn my internal film  
with eternal images of first light,  
the victory of time, coupled with  
the bakery smells and myself,  
alone in a city of death.

## **In Bed, with Dreams Unrealised**

In bed, where dreams lie unrealised:  
a paramount of dirt sheets and body odour,  
developing luxury sores  
from chaffing against night and day.

Too long have bodies rested,  
atrophied.

Break the fast and rise.  
Greet the morning with your own sun  
Qualm hunger with living.  
Thirst.

## **A Public Alarm**

These sheets are conspicuously thin  
inside their tepees of linen construction;  
the reality of dreams swept aside  
against a flashlight mornings  
bearing down on bewildered eyes,  
acclimatising figures  
rubbing their collective consciousness  
against the beginning of day.

## Turning

In winter, there are small seeds of spring  
lying in curled dormouse pose,  
dormant and patient; wait,  
wait until the tides of the season  
have drawn out from frozen shores.

Blue vacancy arrives, dawn becomes violet  
as the slow thaw of renewed spirits  
and sleeping embers collide.  
The months dig into the stitches of snow,  
sifted by the turn of the world:  
old Father Time with his ageless shovel  
choosing to fill in or take away  
from the speckled grave of the months.

The false revolution of the sun lies down  
in April grasses and stifles the wind.

## Euphoria

It is dawn and I have awoken  
to the grey becoming bronze,  
familiar wash of spring blue  
soaks the rolling eye of earth,  
nature blinks another day  
out into the horizons.

The simple delight of catching daybreak  
climb over the dampened rooftops,  
mildew slates glisten with all the elegance  
of functional architecture.

There is no dawn chorus  
in the big city.

Our nests filled with the cavalcade  
of motor car and pedestrian talk,  
morning chatter of daily commutes  
filled with echoes of the previous night  
and the splutter of shift workers  
tying up their starts and ends;  
an ever reliant engine ignites  
and the grim driver curses its obedience.

The sustenance of hot water  
collapses into sinks, showers and coffee mugs  
while millions contemplate retirement

over their bowel-conscious cereals,  
and I lie on in bed,  
waiting for the cattle roar  
to drive the herd forward.

### **I'll Rather Wait**

I'll rather wait until dawn  
than expect the sun to set each day.  
Lifting the veil of darkness  
like a first kiss  
alerting so many uncharted senses,  
the passion of daylight  
flitting across our slumber.  
To be awakened each morning  
by nature's lips  
pressed so softly into  
the bosom of our beds,  
springtime has come  
and blessed us with release  
from nocturnal meanderings.

## Driving On

When everyone else is experiencing  
his or her little deaths,  
the writer keeps on typing:  
it is the mating cry  
of a bachelor bird in flight,  
pealing out before the new day's dawn,  
muffled by the occasional traffic  
of motorcars and homeward drunks.

We drive on in silence  
when we have no words of our own;  
or borrow wise words,  
staled by repetition,  
to shout out into vacuous streets,  
deaf from civility.

The writer continues typing,  
hoping that someone will hear his words  
amongst the whisper of dreams.

## An Agreeable Orbit

The first, very first rays  
do not need to penetrate:  
the topsoil has been lifted,  
grass and weed removed.

The light is fresh, original  
without taint from hail or cloud,  
leaf or branch, unfiltered  
by nature or civilization.

Now here is the initial touch,  
prime in its primary sense  
rich in reaching for the hope  
of equilibrium, peace.

Now hope that through this  
contact the sun and the earth  
will conquer space and find  
an agreeable orbit today.

## A Shift of Seasons

Up before sunrise,  
waiting for the dawn of you  
to come grace my winterland;  
a shift of seasons comes upon me  
when you shine your smile my way.

The permanence of desire,  
to awake beside a still-fighting flame  
that knows no extinguishing air;

come light your fire around me,  
let us set up camp in each other  
and settle down for the rest of our hours  
together, peacefully.

I have seen your star in my sky  
and it has guided me home.

## The Clock has made a Mistake

This morning, the city slept in.  
Each pavement was a pillow  
and each street, a linen bed.  
The cars chose rest over rust  
and the traffic lights had  
no one to blink to.  
Even the buildings seemed sedate,  
without a whisper at their windows  
or a shout at shut front doors.

I only awoke  
when the church struck eight;  
but now, in the late winter air,  
I think the clock had made  
a mistake.

All the drunks have gone asleep,  
yet none have been replaced  
with the sober and the half-sober,  
just myself, half-mad and wondering  
where the city has got to.

## Island

The birds should not be chittering  
at 3.49am of an early March morn.  
It is hardly morning, mind.

Perhaps something has aroused them,  
the wind in their nests,  
the unnatural pallour of streetlights

invading their branches;  
a passing motor vehicle  
alien to their wings.

So where is my silence?  
God has sent this avian song  
to soundtrack my restless night.

Where is my island, free from birdsong?  
Free from trees and commuters  
and artificial light.

I will find my rest  
in an opened book, no?  
Ah yes, perhaps, perhaps.

## Spring of Spring

Succumb  
to that little bird  
tapping at the bark,  
sending vibrations through your nest.

It has been winter  
and the need to shelter  
is motionlessly felt.

But she has come  
with news of spring,  
and has spotted leaves  
on fresh pastures.

With a olive sprig in her beak,  
she beckons you  
to abandon your tree  
and find peace elsewhere.

## Hang the Sun

Take away the sun, and you eliminate  
the grades of trees, every tress of grass,  
every leaf angled towards the sky.

Rather, hang the sun over there,  
by my bedside: it will do  
for a makeshift fireplace.

Comb those clouds down  
to beside the hearth,  
and put aside one for a pillow.

Plant the trees neatly in four lines  
encasing our trepid bodies,  
and we shall shelter inside these walls.

Let a river dance past our feet  
as morning finds its way  
to the back of the wardrobe.

## Rising

There are days, such as today perhaps,  
where the birds do not land on your windowsill  
to purposely awaken you; nevertheless  
it is still morning outside, and the day  
demands to be recognised in its entirety.

Yes, those curtains can be undrawn  
and the sunlight wholly means to be  
invasive; it is a powerful blessing  
charming your eyes in orange allure,  
she beckons to you from the outside.

So burn down your dungeons  
and vanquish the black for today:  
now is the time of phoenixes  
rising fast across the cityscape,  
circling; may you catch up to them soon.

## Kids in Shop Fronts

Kids outside shop fronts  
at an unfathomable a.m.;  
not for the commerce,  
but conversation,  
held up in the night along with the stars.  
The ease of crouched whisperings,  
oblivious to the stranger stealing pass,  
a trepidatory tread  
under orange scattergun clouds,  
the comfort of the morning's glittering river  
left a quarter mile behind.

No jobs await;  
perhaps studies,  
and finally, bed.  
Sleep is not a conclusion,  
merely the day put on hiatus.

## Sunrise at Bridge

This memory is mine, mine, mine alone,  
undiluted by other eyes  
and contrary perceptions,  
the rare passing motorist unable  
to fathom such beauty through their windscreen.

5a.m., and the world so alive  
in the summer light,  
the residents' sleep allowing me  
to chisel out a private niche of Belfast  
as I stand at the apex of the bridge;

terracotta popcorn clouds  
Paul Henry could be proud of,  
the Lagan shimmering like a debutante's necklace  
lovingly wrapped around the city's neck;

and I, the solitary admirer  
in this secret gallery.

## Teasing the Sleeper

Sunday morning:  
light filters through coffee-skin curtains,  
slow grey presence  
shifting pass uninhabited hours.  
Then the creak of daybreak comes,  
swinging from black-blue bruise  
to pale yellow skin,  
drip of orange seeds  
swimming across walls,  
forming a hundred golden smiles,  
each one sewn into the air  
with God's promise  
of another day.

This light teases the sleeper,  
flirts with circadian rhythms,  
infringes night music,  
forcing its own beat into the dance.

We wait for its pulse  
to quicken our own sense of life  
and utter us awake,  
the sun swaying supreme  
against the hustle of the night.

## Release the Sun

Today we prosper against nature's black,  
burning her cloak  
with the defiant hollers of the day.

These hours belong to us, secreted  
into a microcosm of our life together;  
we make our own constellations,  
ascribing futures out of desire.

We refuse to be background scenery,  
only there to cast shadows  
with our pale perimeters.

Now is our time  
to release the sun inside ourselves:  
beacon of vibrancy, breathe of vitality,  
arising and awakening from this land;  
for we are the wind that turns the mill,  
the light that kisses the shoreline.  
We are wanderers guided by our own stars  
and no night shall conquer our common dreams.

## Awakenings

i.

The clock strikes Eight  
without reluctance  
and a lone seagull caws  
at the space between buildings  
we call sky.

ii.

The city's gut  
swells and spills  
with urbanite corpulence  
over a straining greenbelt:  
plunder of a trembling virgin.

iii.

Away from the straight line  
of red lights and speed signs,  
rivers of minnows surge by,  
pulled by the North Atlantic drift  
towards the salmon leap.

## Affective

The box encloses,  
six sides of Autumn  
snuffing out the light of your summers.

Punch a hole in the wall  
and force a crack;  
stick your fingers in  
and tease the space, find  
brick and mortar malleable  
to your touch; widen the hole  
and insert a window where your fist laid.

Open that window  
and let the air moisturise your thoughts;

and then, when no one's looking,  
crawl through the frame  
and escape into  
the dawn of the unknown.