Samhain

In scattered houses porches flicker
with Jack ‘o lanterns’ grins.
Children put on cloaks and swim
through yellow rooms.

The only person breathing the cold air
is a farmer on his cableless tractor,
puddling through the slop of the yard
cutting its clatter
safe in the echo of the big barn.

No one notices
the tall man who lopes
down off the hills that dusk has lost,
his tread heavy through acres of furrows.
When he sees the valley’s nest of lights
his pace quickens.

She sees him step across the stream
and walk towards the graveyard wall.
She does not rush to greet him
but waits until his eyes find hers,
her black hair half dissolved in shadow.
‘What kept you so long?’
‘Oh, this and that’ he shrugs,
reaches into his pocket and hands her a bronze brooch.
She softens, he bends
to press his cracked lips to hers.
The cold wind stirs in the yews.

A child stands at the washing up bowl
pouring water from cup to cup,
starts like someone wrenched from sleep
peers out of the window
sees only the wind whisking up the trees,
turns back to consider her foam mountain.

The couple walk out of the village,
take the road that runs like an arrow
straight through the heart of the forest.

Each time a car flashes past
they climb the verge and shield their eyes
then walk on, hand in hand until

he parts the undergrowth and they disappear
into that confused space
where trees shudder their tangled limbs
acorns and chestnuts tumble down
to sink into the moist ground.
Woodworld

Branches fade
and reappear.
Traffic noise
drifts in and out
of a hedge of mist.

A buzzard flares
grabs a branch
settles feathers
into larch twigs
a cluster of cones.

Frogspawn islands
in the brown lake
of a tractor rut.
A leaf watches
with gold-rimmed eyes.

Lake Goddess

Armfuls of captured gold and silver
feathered their way to the lake bottom.
Sometimes a loaf of bread
was left on the jetty.

She hides in the alders now,
like a shy child, listens
to our boots clomp
along the wooden walkway;
engrossed in conversation,
we pull absent-mindedly at leaves.