

## 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  
grasps 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.