Three Poems

Andrew Smith

Glasgow necropolis

1. I woke to find Thursday still dark,
the trainlights scattered in a passing graveyard,
thrown back from polished stones
as if the dead
in their banked city
were turning on and off
their bedroom lamps.

We drew into Central
by Kennishead and Pollock
and through the mist
the flat lights wrote
a script in orange binary.
Stories morsed in storeys
and an unbroken code.

2. The rich dead
have their bones and urns
ensconced above St. Mungo
in the comfortable ranks
one would expect for
merchant corpses,
although stone angels
weather as they grieve
and all the testament of eulogies
and family trees on copper
have lost out to graffiti
and encroaching verdigris.
These green suburban graves
will be anonymous as tenements.

Behind John Knox's back
two miles away
the Sighthill flats
are turning on
their lights against the evening.
3. The final anxious houses of the propertied
and the high towers of the displaced poor
fill spaces on the same earth.
Are not unconnected.
There is a word for their relationship,
heavy perhaps, and unpoetic
but the word is dialectic.

Harter Fell

The tip of Harter Fell
had snagged a muscle of cloud
which flexed, but held,
dragging itself further down the rock
until, by late afternoon,
the valley-floor had all but hauled it in.

It was the pared time of year,
November had scauled everything,
leaving the trees exposed
against the sky and scree,
abandoned nests and old rookeries
hanging in the ribs,
recalling the gulp of tacks
my brother took when we were kids,
and which I still imagine
an x-ray might find clustered in his gullet.

We climbed up out of the sun
tacking a way from bluff to bluff,
with each new outcrop
darkening out of the distance
like an oncoming ship
until we seemed to be walking under
the prows of a stone flotilla,
harboured in the mist.

Earlier, on the shoulder of the pass,
we had wandered round Hardknott fort,
Mediobogdum to the fourth cohort
posted from the Dalmatian coast,
guarding for themselves perhaps,
memories of the Adriatic,
but for Hadrian, the road
that tracks the Esk, west to Ravenglass and east over Wrynose, up to Ambleside.

That angular fingerprint on the hillside has power's old concentric whorl: principia, granaries, barracks, outside wall. Nub and cusp, a shape so familiar to us we mistake it for something natural. The same learnt dyslexia with which we misread hills for all that's most callous and implacable, as if they were a range of splintered letters spelling out a word for permanence.

But just the opposite, these set crumpled are nota benes to the liquid earth, three thousand foot memories of how easily the order of things can change, how little of what we take as given is, or needs to be.

Therefore, also, a question: how much of what we swallow leaves us torn?

**Lunar Estate**

To belong. Words that sound revenant already, a song of a footless ghost, up to its shins in the world's accumulation, soles resting on the line of some redundant underearth. Half bodied, things glimmering like an advert through its chest, always drawing the eye.

Belong to. The shadow becoming bone, words like a scrap of shell or chitin we hang our fists around, gripping as if it were stigmata. Property's nail. The way belonging's changed, the choice entailed, the choice we forget we make, between home and own.

In our local Safeway they are selling off the moon one white, impacted acre at a time. Crater lip, rock shelf, dust: 12.99. And the logic at least is honest as a knife, while having fucks up dwelling in our lives.
the least deceptive home promises no oxygen, 
no water, leaves us only thirst. 
True to these lies, they are changing 
this bought earth to moon, the moon to earth.