

## 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 crumples  
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

Smith 4

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.