

# INTROIT

*12 November 1958*

November light low and strong  
crossing from the left  
finds this archaic  
trolleybus, touches the side of it up  
into solid yellow and green.

This light is without  
rarity, it is an oil,  
amber and clear that binds in  
this alone and suggests  
no other. It is a pressing  
medium, steady to a purpose.

And in the sun's ray through the glass  
lifting towards low noon, I  
am bound;  
                    boots on the alloy  
fenders that edge the deck,

lost out of the day  
between two working calls  
and planted alone  
above the driver's head.  
High over the roadway  
I'm being swung out  
into an unknown crosswise  
route to a connection  
at the Fighting Cocks  
by way of Ettingshall;

old industrial road,  
buildings to my left along the flat  
wastes between townships  
wrapped in the luminous  
haze underneath the sun,  
their forms cut clear and combined  
into the mysteries, their surfaces  
soft beyond recognition;

and as if I was made  
to be the knifeblade, the light-divider,  
to my right the brilliance strikes out perpetually  
into the brick house-fields towards Wolverhampton,  
their calculable distances  
shallow with detail.

\*

What is it, this  
sensation as of freedom? Tang of  
town gas, sulphur, tar,  
settled among the heavy  
separate houses behind  
roadside planes, pale, patch-barked  
and almost bare,  
the last wide stiffened leaves  
in tremor across their shadows  
with trolley-standards of green cast iron  
reared among them, the catenaries  
stretching a net just over my guided head,  
its roof of yellow metal.

A deserted, sun-battered theatre  
under a tearing sky  
is energy, its date 19□02  
spread across its face, mark of  
anomaly. And the road  
from Bilston to Ettingshall begins  
beating in. Whatever  
approaches my passive taking-in,  
then surrounds me and goes by  
will have itself understood only

phase upon phase  
by separate involuntary  
strokes of my mind, dark  
swings of a fan-blade  
that keeps a time of its own,  
made up from the long  
discrete moments  
of the stages of the street,  
each bred off the last as if by  
causality.

Because  
of the brick theatre struck to the roadside  
the shops in the next  
street run in a curve, and  
because of that there is raised up  
with red lead on its girders  
a gasworks  
close beyond the roofs,

and because of the fold of the  
folding in of these three to me  
there comes a frame tower with gaps  
in its corrugated cladding  
and punched out of the sheets high  
under its gable  
a message in dark empty holes, USE GAS.

\*

Something's decided  
to narrate  
in more dimensions than I can know  
the gathering in  
and giving out of the world on a slow  
pulse, on a metered contraction  
that the senses enquire towards  
but may not themselves  
intercept. All I can tell it by  
is the passing trace of it  
in a patterned agitation of  
a surface that shows only  
metaphors. Riddles. Resemblances  
that have me in the chute  
as it meshes in closer, many modes  
funnelling fast through one event,  
the flow-through so  
dense with association  
that its colour comes up, dark  
brownish green, soaked and  
decomposing leaves  
in a liquor.

\*

And the biggest of all the apparitions,  
the great iron  
thing, the ironworks,  
reared up on end into the bright  
haze, makes quiet burning  
if anything at all.

When the pulse-beat for it comes  
it is revealed, set  
back a little way, arrested,  
inward, grotesque, prepared for.

Then gone by,  
with the shallowing of the road  
and the pulse's falling away  
cleanly through a few more  
frames of buildings, noise,  
a works gate with cyclists;  
the passing of it quite final, not a tremor  
of the prospect at the crossroads;  
open light, green paint on a sign,  
the trolley wires  
chattering and humming from somewhere else.