

CROSSBEAM

Horizontal light
intoxicates. it stretches eastward
beckoning along your gaze across the barley,
where the forlorn manor gatehouse
pricks the plashy surface of the levels,
to the rearing downs, the hill figure,
and the wheat slopes falling
as they do behind you
by the syringa bush, so waxen-sweet.
the chalk pit and the rutted track
that marked the harrow's passage.
With moss-green orange tiles
on gothic struts, the bgarn's a tent
for sleeping in. This church is not.

It clasps the mound,
squat belfry-turret like a cap,
and waits in growing quiet. The light is vertical
inside, in heavenly suspension,
telling how eight boys died in battle
and one upon the armistice: his sacrifice,
brought home from a spoiled harvest,
queers the pitch of time,
blockading the processional sun
though made at the final hour prescribed.
That white and lonely stone
belongs to him. *May God grant
that our great loss may be
for his eternal gain.*

The upright lettering
declares the whiteness that sustains it.
Deluded singleness of sight intrudes,
for no man leaves a testament
except as one is given. Flint
walls and shingled cottages
are grouped around the common
where a broken gate
obstructs the nettle paddock;
some lilac festers on a drinking trough,
and a blackbird calls beyond the rector's garden.
Time shivers and grows colder
through the ring of elms where light unseen
holds steady as the dark expands.