

## ORLANDO, A WINTERTIME

You come upon the location quickly.  
There is no melting in of soft fields.  
At once this is no village green.  
Barbed fences choke off and in  
The keen decay.  
The foot-rule or rod of reckoning  
Is used sad in abuse of this separation.  
The sick hurt of cramp and dark and damp  
Scratched random in the dirt,  
Has no effect  
On the disinclined lap luxury  
Of the impenitent elect.

Here in the ebb of the human heart  
In the scrimp Lent of reason,  
Here in the bitter winter season,  
The rites of death are given  
To the living  
In this sepulchre of dust and rust  
And flim-flam juggling.

Day breaks real.  
The tacky wind wheezes  
Its bare breath  
Into the location shacks,  
Condenses on the window panes,  
Gives sickly chests  
Their shroud-shrift hacks  
And rheumatic backs their twinges.  
It stops the dripping taps  
Along the rutted lanes,  
Swings a broken gate off its hinges  
And with lover-like clinging  
Wraps all  
In the dreary wail of its early singing.

Winter is the hardest time of the year,  
The chap-checked runny-nosed season  
Muggy and grey with hardship.  
A plain-termed standing order for misery.

Luke porridge puffs a little warmth  
And filling,  
Lack of blankets gets compassionate billing  
In the press  
And some will be the warmer.

Days begin early and end late.  
The bus queues curve and turn  
In patient migration  
To the city and back,  
And the day between holds its breath.  
For in Orlando it is not,  
What is,  
But the great vacant lack.

The light of day rubs up the place in silence.  
Here where half a million sleep  
Remain only the sick  
The very old and the children.  
Deep Empty.  
No people, no cattle, no cats, no plenty,  
No space, no light,  
No time, no gentry,  
No honours, no glories beneath the bush,  
No acquittals, no side tracks for pain,  
No ballot-box gain,  
No plucking out before the final trussing.

The power station looms loud  
Above the hard fortune  
Of penny-pinched ways,  
Dead-letter hours,  
And snuff-sick Sundays.  
It stands clear against the sky  
This source of city lights,  
High above  
The sob sacking shanty plights,  
Shells littered with life and mendings  
Choke fully in the tetter of their endings.

The Power Station  
Is not for their glory.

Ever or ever in the unswitchable night  
That has no honest trespass,  
The midwife will not go thru' its tough grope  
And birth, hard or easy  
Must entangle its own natal rope.  
Those who expire in the night  
Likewise cling lonely  
Without a blessing or a light.

But one comfort hugs its sharedness here,  
In the premise of neighbours  
Scaled even  
In the backstair of their labours,  
In the grey smoked tinned fires  
That veil the sunset  
In substantial shadow,  
In the common word of palaver  
And of stress,  
In the ballast of complexion,  
And the firm rivet of numbers,  
In the blessed galore on this hill  
That never slumbers sound and safe,  
A bespoken hope  
Measures the mean hour flaw  
In the fastening rope.

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