

# Airport Check

*Heraklion. Crete.*

Why choose me  
from all these others? Perhaps  
with five o'clock shadow and  
half-closed eyes  
my passport life now reads like a story  
too good to be true.

Probing my cabin bag it seems  
is not enough. Someone waves  
a wand over my torso,  
back and front, asks me to raise  
my arms like wings.

So I comply,  
unflappable Icarus, ready  
once more to soar  
towards the sun.

## Fear of Flying

The armrest gives him no rest.  
He grips it with sudden strength  
as four engines rage on wings.

In time his eyes will close and  
his body, diazepam-relaxed,  
merge into the seat.

But not yet. Aloft, with whisky  
glass unsteady on his tray, he scans  
the vast slate acres of the sea

where the restless sharks patrol  
ruffed waves, waiting for  
something to happen.

## Above

*Earth grabs your feet  
the ground presses  
– Joyce Lee*

... which is just as well because  
the temptation is always  
to float above the world

in the company of clouds  
where mystery  
enamels the earth

irregular dams glinting  
like diamonds set among topaz  
in the odd emerald field

one could believe  
from such a height that any creature  
hidden under rock

had the translucence of pearl  
and all things black and  
unbeautiful had drained away

to some irretrievable depth

## Ceraunophobia\*

The black bitch whines  
as thunder tears the sky

Through glass  
we watch the planet ripple  
daggers ravish the earth

Something in love  
with metal is roaring  
in the firmament

We fear its scorched embrace  
jagging from sky  
and pray for golfers

with four-irons, for steeples,  
and for the lone farmer  
on the horizon

tractor-high

\* fear of thunder and lightning

# Morning Becomes Nuclear

good start to the day  
sun zipping through glass  
perfect September

a cloud of hyped-up silvereyes  
shakes the old prunus  
petals rain on grass

indoors the smell of toast  
Arvo Pärt's hypnotic *Fratres*  
chant-like on the radio

putting on a good face  
the spunky sun  
carries on as usual

six million degrees  
searing a reactor heart

# Hellebores

*for Julie*

What is it about hellebores  
that they hang their heads so meekly  
as if there were a bunch of shameful secrets  
in their modest pasts? Maybe they're  
just feeling homesick for the dew-drenched  
slopes of the Balkans.

Look how they keep their heads down,  
fixed on the soil, only here and there shooting  
shy winter-rose glances upwards like a row  
of Princess Dianas. Could be a neurosis.

A course of Osmocote might  
make them stand proud and purposeful  
as the thrusting jonquils in the next bed.

# Butcherbird

*Yarra Valley*

Somewhere near  
he sings like an angel,  
white-collared, grey-surpliced.

His steely beak though,  
hatchet-hard, spears  
life in an instant.

Yesterday's trophies  
lie in a tree-fork:  
mouse, frog, crumpled cricket.

A carol floats on morning mist.