

## Meeting

*Paddy Webb*

"Why don't you pretend," you said,  
and all the time I was lying  
a little, saying what nice words  
came into my head  
just to please you.

Oh! my friend  
I have squandered emotion;  
I have never known the truth  
but would wrestle for meaning,  
lay bare a nerve, a muscle,  
sometimes probe an artery  
with the scalpel of my mind —  
and my feelings — my feelings:  
fragile as porcelain,  
tough as an old boot,  
tender as the flesh of laichees,  
ruddy as pomegranates  
burning like old old beacons  
on the ancient hills of history  
to drown in the pupil  
of your alien eye.

I would send out messages,  
tapping the keys like birdsong,  
flickering blue-green sparks  
from the centre of irises,  
but I could not defile  
the white blank purity  
of the narcissus you.

Though I bleed frequently, in  
and out of season, cannot train  
the flow into tributaries  
to craze the enameled  
surface of your otherness.  
We meet, we touch, we separate,  
leaving only thumb-print  
smudges on the edges of skies  
washed by a smother of tears.