

dandelions

i

sun-drops little suns warm
the earth they grow from
grow from earth grown from
the sun

 each floret a singeing ray
of glancing light radiating
out of a hot centre
a burning disc guarded by
lion's teeth

 purple spotted
or green hungry for heat

miracles of apomixis
like us they grow white-haired
as they grow old
 and from their beaks
a snowy pappus spreads

so children who've no notion yet
of time

 make them their clocks
and do not know it's their own
hours they tell off
one by one

ii

these flowers our metaphor
golden
as corn from which we make our bread
live out their natural span
duly rise shine and set

each day in warmth of May
we
spray to death this benefice
turn their sun's centres cold before
their time

all down the middle
of the autoroute lethal
machines keep our highways tidy
ruthless we pluck them from our
garden lawns our beds of pampered
blooms

old countrywomen
must seek before sun-up
to pick them for a brew
of glowing wine

so soon
it is too late for summer
or regret

iii

Ra mighty falcon carries crook
and flail

perches on summit
to observe himself as scarab
shoving the sun's bronze ball
up over eastern horizon

Osiris his body gold his hair
pure lapis lazuli

steps from his bark
of darkness and embarks in diamond-
studded ship upon celestial ocean

around his arms three cobras intertwine
 their tails form amulets —
 stability goodness life
 jasper turquoise obsidian —

two baboons chatter a greeting

ankh shew ankh shew ankh shew

as paling moon slips down the sky
the dew-drenched land sparkles in faience
and enamelled cloisonné

iv

so once we might have said
when we believed in gods

today in vacant lots
 in city parks
the sleazy edges of towns
brave dandelions hold erect
their plates of brass
 while plates of gold
hold in the church their thin wafers
of bread

 believers take the Host
the rest await the true death
of the sun

 each day
look hard to see if he's grown red
and growing larger spread
across a sky of green
his mighty heart grown cold

dark knowledge clouds our sight
and we no longer see
his birth each day as new

— a phoenix rising —

but a star declining

Paddy Webb