

the collector

once more I search for stones
in this autumn time
that hammer a lake's skin
to pewter
 rejecting sharp weapons
useful for slicing a rival's shin
and those of the right kind that I find
I shall not lay out prettily
on my window sill
 the time
has gone for all that morning
fun
 now mostly evenings
leave them where they lie
 still
in their accustomed places
outlasting the human faces
that imitate them
 some shift
uneasy in their splashing rill
watching and waiting
fish scuff their ridges
 or hide
in their moving shadows
snakes curl in rocks' dried-out hollows
I turn some small smooth pebbles
over and over in the shallows
of my pocket
 where they rub
soothingly
 yes — they comfort me
seem to match the mottled bruises
on my skin
 they have grown
heavier with age as my bones
(at least they take more energy
to lift) yet they're more brittle
too
 yet they stay lovely
veined or pitted striped or honed
with little bits of all
earth's colors in
 as fall days
shorten I look for stones
they wait there patiently
and will not run away

humming birds

it was very sudden

buds were slowly turning back
their petals when the birds descended
out of the sun
darted in straight swift jabs
and oblique angles

treading air then stopped
beaks extended
their snaky throats pulsating
their wings a blur of light

two aerial motor-bicycles
that hummed and buzzed and jazzed

they sucked
like small refuelling
space-craft coupled to parent ships
then backed away
hovered
then sipped some more

(they can go off
in any direction like exploding
fire-crackers on quick rays of flight
in vertical or reverse take-off)

and they can put out their brights
dimming to olive-dun jade
flash again into life
then vanish)

two pairs of jewel thieves
ruby and emerald

dive-bombed
my fuchsias
and
after the attack
the only sign a slight wobble
of purple and red flowers
as if a wearer of ear-drops
shook her head

paddy webb