

THE GATES OF EDEN

At the time, we didn't spot the gates.
Our playground was open to the cobalt sky,
Trees shimmered, fruit fell into our thoughtless hands,
The lion and the lamb licked our fingers and toes.
Why would we notice the gates?

Our world was small. We knew the golden sun shone for us,
But the secrets of mother moon, hauling the tides, to and fro,
The circuit of planets, the life and death of stars -
All these extensions of His far-reaching mind, we did not know.
And we did not see the gates.

The getting of that fig was no mean task,
Not just a matter of sleight of hand.
She had to work at it, persistent – wilful
Curiosity rising at every set-back
As twigs cracked and branches snapped.

It wasn't easy. It wasn't quick.
You would have thought He and His hosts
Would have heard the noise. They must have noticed.
But He didn't shout: "Oy! What are you up to?"
Oh, no! He waited. He knew we hadn't seen the gates.

Seems like He was hoping we would break the rule – give Him
An excuse to light His blowtorch, reach for His goggles
And get to work on His hot-metal vision for the human race.
Yes, that was how it was. Of course we couldn't see the gates,
He was going to make them especially for us.

All the time she was wrestling with the sticky fruit –
Tongue and lips dripping with juices, sharing secret seeds
With me, mouth to mouth, cheek to cheek –
He was clattering and clanging, hammering fiery swords
In His furnace, choosing iron castaways for His gates.

He knew our future. He searched our bins, our rubbish tips,
For rusting cogs, twisted brackets, skate-blades, chainsaws,
Garden hoes, ploughshares and bayonets. All those iron discards, shards
From abandoned factories, debris from shattered cities,
He gathered them to make His seven gates.

One gate for the devastated rainforests, two for the oil-slicked oceans,
Three for starving children dying in the heat of the sun,
The fourth is for melting icecaps, five for poisoned lakes where silver fishes
Float belly-up, not fit for food, six for weapons of destruction.
The last gate is open wide: an invitation back to Eden.

