

HOWARD WRIGHT
LONDON WALLS

The sirocco drives us from the Underground.
We gulp the air like divers too long below the surface.
Keeping the Sabbath has created a desert.

Megalomania surrounds us with mirrors
and submachine guns are for personal use only.
Bicycle locks are what remain of bikes,

and we are warned not to give money to beggars.
Strangers, post-apocalyptic, we wonder
what is produced all day at those windows,

down those screens, through those portals,
those desks where lights never go out,
offices with no walls to speak of or talk to.

Resentful, no one lingers in the architectural silliness.
The stillness hurts the imagination.
They sign their lives away with nose bleeds.

CLOCKS

All the mantel clocks have stopped at the same time,
winding down on fireplace, sideboard, and shelf;

insides withered, spent, defunct. It's the dying, then death,
of each heirloom in chestnut and rosewood housings,

an unhinged family of glass and brass, that I begin to hear.
Open the flimsy back door, there is more space

than workings, more dust than metal. And as none have
the same mechanism, I must stoop beneath the stairs

to unhook big butterfly keys until, room by room,
the ensemble gets going again under the comfortable push

of thumb against knuckle; the out-of-kilter, ancient
twangs, clangs, and pings, hammers hitting steel springs

in discord, analogue entropy as disconcerting and odd
as sudden footfalls upstairs in an empty house.

CEZANNE AFTER RILKE

Giant hogweed wait like congregants
to ford the river while pylons spread out
in single file. A dogma of cloud, monotony of grass,
fish jumping like ideas breaking free.

Brazen cabbage whites tussle, then clear off
down the lazy water, all over the place,
puritanical crows bickering against the stubble field
like particles of soot on a sheet of gold.

He knew the exhaustion of these perspectives,
the space between history and perception.
Colours to others, what he saw was conflagration.
By his own admission it nearly killed him.