

TONY ROBERTS

## The Gates at Crow Howe

Up here the world will simply happen.  
 Here human design is fraught as God's.  
 The view from their window has collapsed  
 In a rubble of stone and slate.  
 It is as if the higher field  
 Had slipped down through the rain  
 Into the corner of this rough lawn,  
 Where a jackdaw flaps about a sodden bench  
 And wrought iron garden chair, both derelict.  
 Behind the fallen outhouse,  
 The white-faced houses and the firs,  
 The fell beckons in a shawl of cloud.

Before the gates at Crow Howe,  
 The maple has shed so many of its scarlet leaves  
 It seems to stand in its reflection.

Supposedly they are out to air the bruising,  
 They avoid the fell, skirt patches here  
 Where Rydal Water threatens tussock grass.  
 They're slowed as much by torment as by afternoon.  
 She asks him, where they're going now  
 And knocks aside the hand that lifts the map.  
 Cheap pun, and yet he cannot bring himself to care—  
 Another infidelity. And then, returning past the gates,  
 She stoops to pick the showiest leaf  
 It is something to remind her of her misery.  
 If the worst comes to the worst, there is acceptance.  
 After all, there are so many fallen leaves.