

chalk cut

a pearlescence hangs
over the crumbling
scooped-out parched and
silver earth
spilling detritus
among dry flint-scat
cracked by the malice of the sun.
up here the afternoon is thick
with a honeyed buzz
and the high thrill of larks
balancing way up
on straw-thin columns of
blue air

a ghost is looking
into the holes
where clacking insects
enter and exit the world
cuckoo spit clinging
to the sharp grass
is the only moisture
and the land is dust and
mauve light
enveloping the slow
moving cattle
and mesmerized sheep
trapped in living geometry
and immeasurable time

everything is permeated
with a vast desolate joy

in the arcane places
beneath the soil
black quartz
runs like crystallised blood
where the barrow-dead
live outside of time
in the darkness
between the long ages and
grey stone
suspended in the moment
before speech

their ornate flints
are scattered as offerings
to long-neglected gods
still haunting the grass tombs
where libations stained the
dirt red
and where silence
and barely moving air
are the only living witnesses
to a thirst as slow as time
and to the secret
green water
in the delicate filaments
of life now rising
from the arid-sweet
high-downs'
white chalk