

Small Towns

Brief chameleon, the dusk
Lies down upon the dreaming hills;
Slow down, slowly down,
Gentle as a lover down
On the Earth and the small towns.

Yellow the eyes of houses blink;
Call forth the bath-reluctant child,
Women full of back fence rumour;
Crooked, hero-burdened men
Into the houses in the small towns.

Outside the soon-be-home cafes
Shadow-silent youth appear;
Slump like the old verandah folk;
Joke, uncertain, city-tempted;
Not much work in the small towns.

Sullen, the passing stock-trucks fold
The air in diesel, dung-sweet scented;
Stock jew-quiet, drivers fisted,
Laughter around the roadhouse bar;
Rear-view image of the small towns.

Along the highway flickering threads
Of travellers creep on, night-uneasy,
Yearning forth the jewelled wink
Of lights in the hills' concealing palm;
Stop for a while in the small towns.

Cats cry now the ancient pain
Of love; cry back the cave: Fire! Hunt!
The blunt purpose of club on hide;
Songs of the dark ones, settler sighing;
Stirring sleep in the small towns.

Only the night-owl, spectre-heavy
Shadow from the whispering trees,
Hung in the bright-wheeled dome of space
Measures the pace of the east hope rising
Over the Earth and the small towns.

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