

Cauldron
Gareth Alun Roberts

*“Only within the moment of time represented by the present century has one species—
man—acquired significant power to alter the nature of his world.”*

Silent Spring; R Carson

*“I saw pale kings, and princes too,
Pale warriors, death-pale were they all;
Who cry’d – ‘La belle Dame sans merci
Hath thee in thrall!”*

La Belle Dame Sans Merci; J Keats

“I will show you fear in a handful of dust.”

The Waste Land; T S Eliot

*“My poetry, from the cauldron it was spoken.
From the breath of nine maidens, it was kindled”*

The Spoils of Annwn; Taliesin

I

The bee in the bell of the tulip
rasps its drone against the sky.
From the bird-barracked edge of the woodland
the black claws fly

II

to tear at winter’s broken tent
and rail its forgetful snow
into torrents of remembering where
the dead men grow

III

hard beneath this stony rubbish,
this clutch of seething roots;
to breathe the dirt and gulp the wine
of poisoned fruit.

IV

The peace that’s passed their knowing
shan’t loiter any more
amongst these fine, pale princes
withered on the floor

V

and rattled around the Lady’s feet -
now come from her burnished throne.
This terrible harvest strewn about,
by her hand is sown.

VI
From their brow the lily blooms,
on their faded cheek, a rose;
and where their heart once ached with blood
the lilac grows -

VII
cruellest flower of cruellest month,
heralding April's spate;
and all those princes caught therein
have sealed their fate:

VIII
to be swept away like drowning men
beneath this grim onslaught.
These pearls that were their eyes, too dim,
and too dearly bought.

IX
And I, this haggard, wounded king,
I too have swum this tide,
this anguished river of fevered Spring
that my Lady rides.

X
The hooded hoards come swarming in
from April's teeming plains;
this riotous flood so rudely forced
by thund'rous rains.

XI
She has laid my kingdoms into waste,
perfumed my shattered bone
with garlands of a forlorn lover,
eternally alone.

XII
I will bury my head in the bell of cold mountains,
from her cry that won't be hushed;
and plunge my hands in the cauldron, filled
with silent

XIII

dust.