

something about holes

Gareth Alun Roberts

The point of the hole was not the hole
but the digging of the hole,
interspersed, as it was, with tea and blisters
and a grunt and a chat and a fag.

And birds singing in the wind-draggled trees.

And the rain – sometimes; and the sun on your back –
sometimes; and the cold sweat and the hot sweat
and the good sweat and the work sweat
and the down-tools-going-home sweat.

It didn't matter how long it took to dig the hole,
it was only the dot of the time of the hole that mattered:
start on the dot; a dot for finishing; and dots all the way in between
for lunch-breaks and tea-breaks
and buddy-breaks to switch blisters.
Hole-time is measured on a clock of dots,
our picks and shovels ticking it out.

The width of the hole and its breadth were tenuous,
the depth of the hole unimportant:
sometimes it was filled with cubic-feet,
sometimes with cubic-metres;
and sometimes just shovel after shovel...
but I have no measure for that,
just the dots and the tea and the fags and the blisters,

and the birds singing in wind-draggled trees.