

## *Tumble Birds*

*Gareth Alun Roberts*

Standing-stones laid about;

their own weight holds them down to the strewn silence  
of these Caithness-bleak, peat-bed moor-lands;  
grey faces turned, forever, to the sky.  
I pass them by.

Away from their "colder-than-night" in the soft summer breaks:  
and on  
to that hill there,  
sipping the light of the sun  
like a fat-bellied laird.  
With the wind at my back and a maze of tipsy insects  
misting my path, as sweat  
faithfully nicks my brow  
up to the frown of the hill  
where I'll stop awhile,  
beside this puffed wood:  
is silent.

The snail-trailing river  
and sun-lazy fields:  
silent.  
While the breeze mutters softly  
to itself:  
ignores the rest  
and me, sitting here at the edge of wood, fern, field and sky:  
let the world pass me by.

I have no need for it,  
or at least that part that turns day into night  
and years into lives. So pass me by:  
I'll remain here at the edge of it all; and watch

the tumble birds,  
as they roll through summer  
in their Caithness-bright field;  
tumbling, soaring;  
rehearsing a ballet  
they'll perform far away  
in their Winter Circus,  
to a "Full House" applause,  
and the smoke and lights and din of fires  
bursting in the black and bright-ringing night...

While Caithness nights grow cold.  
And the featherless wind  
has left nothing,  
but the ruined pattern  
of this scatter  
of tumbled-down stone,  
and me; left here on the edge...  
Alone. Wondering...  
"if stones could fly...?"