

## Movement

### Movements by Norman MacCaig

Lark drives invisible pitons in the air  
And hauls itself up the face of space.  
Mouse stops being comma and clockworks on the floor.  
Cats spill from walls. Swans undulate through clouds.  
Eil drills through darkness its malignant face.

Fox, smoldering through the heather bushes, bursts  
A bomb of grouse. A spec of air grows thick  
And is a hornet. When a gannet dives  
It's a white anchor falling. And when it lands  
Umbrella heron becomes walking-stick.

Within these movements and become them, here  
In this room's stillness, none of them about  
And relish them all - until I think of where  
Thrashed by a crook, the cursive adder writes  
Quick V's and Q's in the dust and rubs them out.

### Island by Kenneth Steven

*The title piece of Kenneth Steven's **Collected Poems** (Saint Andrew Press, 2009)*

I remember what it was like to barefoot that house,  
Wood rooms bleached by light. Days were new voyages, journeys,  
Coming home a pouring out of stories and of starfish.  
The sun never died completely in the night,  
The skies just turned luminous, the wind  
Tugged at the strings in the grass like a hand  
In a harp. I did not sleep, too glad to listen by a window  
To the sorrow sounds of the birds  
As they swept down in skeins, and rose again, celebrating  
All that summer. I did not sleep, the weight of school  
Behind and before too great to waste a grain of this.

One four in the morning at first larksong I went west over the dunes,  
Broke down running onto three miles of white shell sand, and stood.  
A wave curled and silked the shore in a single seamless breath.  
I went naked into the water, ran deep into a green  
Through which I was translucent. I rejoiced  
In something I could not name; I celebrated a wonder  
Too huge to hold. I trailed home, slow and golden,  
Dried by the sunlight.

### **The Bumblebee**

I went into a room I had neglected  
He or she was crawling torpidly against the door step  
Inside my tall glass door which opens on to the balcony.  
Outside was a high blue day in wonderful dizzy midsummer.  
I thought: he has been here for days, is starving and close to death.  
But I invited him to step onto a compliments slip from the British Journal of  
Psychiatry,  
and languidly, like a child with flu, he consented - one leg, two.  
And then, with a shove, the whole of his body.  
I opened the door and lead the freighted compliments slip on the earth of a window  
box.  
I thought: let him die at least in sight of the sun and the chestnut trees,  
the extravagant summer roses.  
He lay still. I turned to go in.  
But a sizzling arrested me - I looked back - he was gone  
Like a humming arrow  
I saw him sing into the green depths of the air, then higher and higher

on a swerving, all-but-straight path, lofting superbly above the tree tops  
like someone in no doubt at all where he's got to get to.

*David Black from **Claiming Kindred** 2011 published by Arc Publications*

### **HERON by Robert Macfarlane from 'The Lost Words'**

**H**ere hunts heron. Here haunts heron.  
Huge-hinged heron. Grey-winged weapon.

**E**ked from iron and wreaked from blue and  
beaked with steel: heron, statue, seeks eel.

**R**ock still at weir sill. Stone still at weir still.  
Dead still at weir sill. Still still at weir sill.  
Until, eelless at weir sill, heron magically ...  
unstatues.

**O**ut of the water creaks long-legs heron,  
old-priest heron, from hereon in all sticks  
and planks and rubber bands, all clanks and  
clicks and rusty squeaks.

**N**ow heron hauls himself into flight - early  
aviator, heavy freighter - and with steady  
wingbeats boosts his way through  
evening light to roost.



## **The Night Mail by W H Auden**

This is the night mail crossing the Border,  
Bringing the cheque and the postal order,

Letters for the rich, letters for the poor,  
The shop at the corner, the girl next door.

Pulling up Beattock, a steady climb:  
The gradient's against her, but she's on time.

Past cotton-grass and moorland boulder  
Shovelling white steam over her shoulder,

Snorting noisily as she passes  
Silent miles of wind-bent grasses.

Birds turn their heads as she approaches,  
Stare from bushes at her blank-faced coaches.

Sheep-dogs cannot turn her course;  
They slumber on with paws across.

In the farm she passes no one wakes,  
But a jug in a bedroom gently shakes.

Dawn freshens, Her climb is done.  
Down towards Glasgow she descends,

Towards the steam tugs yelping down a glade of cranes  
Towards the fields of apparatus, the furnaces  
Set on the dark plain like gigantic chessmen.  
All Scotland waits for her:  
In dark glens, beside pale-green lochs  
Men long for news.

Letters of thanks, letters from banks,  
Letters of joy from girl and boy,  
Receipted bills and invitations  
To inspect new stock or to visit relations,  
And applications for situations,  
And timid lovers' declarations,  
And gossip, gossip from all the nations,  
News circumstantial, news financial,  
Letters with holiday snaps to enlarge in,  
Letters with faces scrawled on the margin,  
Letters from uncles, cousins, and aunts,  
Letters to Scotland from the South of France,  
Letters of condolence to Highlands and Lowlands  
Written on paper of every hue,  
The pink, the violet, the white and the blue,  
The chatty, the catty, the boring, the adoring,  
The cold and official and the heart's outpouring,  
Clever, stupid, short and long,  
The typed and the printed and the spelt all wrong.

Thousands are still asleep,  
Dreaming of terrifying monsters  
Or of friendly tea beside the band in Cranston's or Crawford's:

Asleep in working Glasgow, asleep in well-set Edinburgh,  
Asleep in granite Aberdeen,  
They continue their dreams,  
But shall wake soon and hope for letters,  
And none will hear the postman's knock  
Without a quickening of the heart,  
For who can bear to feel himself forgotten?