

ANNA IN THE ASHES

Anna's in the ashes,
mad as leaves,
harvests her tears and watches him
grind them
for his bread,
you're mad he said.

And true enough the look in her eyes
is wild and hunted, her baby cries,
her hair's a mess, her arse is fat,
she smokes too much, and shakes and sighs,
it's too much he says *to live with that*.

Poor old farmer
to live with that.

Leaves crack against the window,
and he rattles out the charges,
you left the fire unlit,
and didn't clear the ashes.

So with ash in her hair
she forgives his trespasses,
but wanders on his dreams
like a hungry fox,
leaving many snowy footprints.

The empty fields trail away to nothing,
and more snow on the way
will cover any trace,
where she's running to keep up
with the songs of her babies,
and the knock of her heart,
and the knowledgeable wind
that rips her face.

The snow turns to sleet
and the mark of her feet
comes round in a circle
to the same old place,

where he waits
with his shotgun.

So is it better to be mad or dead?
Or to walk with her babies
out into the night?
You'll die he said
of cold, and raving snowstorms.

But her eyes and the night
are hard and bright.