

Imperial Employment, Shadowed

The bare hill in majesty of sky, light rain,
That teaches the ancient jaw,
That folds my hand into its horizon.
How that sound builds on the river bank,

There, as evening comes
Stacked against low chalk. Faces
Grow of calcium as night falls off
Along the escarpment, the oval shadow,

The few fingerless trees.
Ghost breath distant seas, breaking,
That bare the unspeakable prisons and crowns,
Where hides the eyes-dry nightmare of

Imperial employment, shadowed.

Ships to the sugary polder:
Tonnes of waterlogged clay
With shovel and hand and whip,
Painted all on this English brick.

And the boiling cow, covered in flies,
Floats on the flood.
And the shelf of shit, past low houses,
Floats on the flood.

Great sword of labour cuts the dam,
Bathes the body in hell tides,
While burning the cradle of profit,
Borne backward along the sides.



Beyond Portsdown Hill

Already passed in the golden light, falling
Long across well chewed grass. Violent mound
Already inert, useless before sealess eyeing.

And bold is the soil: thin, dry dust, here found
Resting a moment on hot air. Danced veil,
Hand on the warm mist, stretched across this valley's ground,

Joining each body. From the fine earth, pale,
And interrupted by teeth, jump energetic yellow
Petals, stout orchids, purple in green palm limescale.

These sharpened teeth of flint, skulls of flint below,
Almost rounded flakes of flint underfoot,
Black, blue, orange, white, prone in crops' shadow.

The teeth are aching in the coming of the night, put
Closely upon the hills and our dark eyes
Where dies history's flashing hill light dot.

Next to the dark green verge, butterfly's
Shadowy spray, the chalk path in this light shines,
Tempting the future with old names and skies,
Having called me out, skyward, along chalk lines.

