

Three Poems by Robin Skelton

Spurn Point

Broken banners
drag at the
wind.

The stones
of Ravenspurgh
clash under
climbing heels.
A dead man's grave
haunts drifts of
sand-dunes.

Gaunt
becomes a word
cut by the
razoring grass
I walk here as a
boy.

Skulls touch my
hands
that gather sand.
Beaks clack
at fallen horses.
Inheritance
appals the sea;
it holds
reversions of the
dying
villages.

A Spot of Trouble in the Rockies

for Herbert Siebner

Every inch of last night's clarity
has obscured itself; a muzz of cloud
fumbles the mountains disappearance; grass
has dropped its green assurance; mud is grey.
Calona Claret bottles clink and rumble
round our shoes as we unburrow, writhe
up from tunnelled sleeping bags, blink out
on Easter Sunday.

Sugared by the cold,
the sliding river's bed of bald stones alters
whiteness of its ribbons as snow starts
to flicker dazzle-patterns on the swart
solidity of trees and eat away
the bars of broken twigs, the wheels mandalas,
and the brittle tyre-tracks.

On the Radio
some-one soft-sells hymns; a stiff-limbed prayer
lumbers like a bear across our road,
black out of black to blackness.

Turn the key.
The engine gives a dry whine, coughs, won't cough
again, gone dead. Steam gathers on the windscreen
that is gathering snowpiles. We need help.
The battery's dead, and that's for sure. We have
to flag down someone travelling East, call up
the nearest tow-truck, wait.

The bottles rap
and clatter as we buck from rut to rut
and heave back on the highway.

The next stop

is Calgary for coffee.

Calgary.

Strange
to see that name, those girls in Easter hats.

Spilt Coffee

Yes, she is sure. It's two weeks late.
Spilt coffee makes a sluggish pool
for fingers to trace out their past
and lose the future. He's a fool.
Of course she knows. How could she not?
Her eyes are questioning and cool

as they glance up from underneath
the mop of bright transfigured hair
she's hung above the coffee pool
her brooding guides. She has sat there
above the pool for half an hour.
Pools don't get you anywhere.

And that's a comfort. She is done.
Life's caught her out. And why resist?
She tried some pills but just got sick.
Her other hand trapped in his fist
knows that she'll always wonder at
what she was aiming when she missed.