

**Stephen Robertson**

**The rain and the air**

*'Fruit tree, fruit tree, no one knows you but the rain and the air.'*

*Nick Drake*

What do they know, the rain and the air?  
The roof, the ridgetiles, the leaves in the leaded gully.  
The street between the houses, the streetlight,  
the sign on the wall, the sign on the post,  
the white-painted sign spreadeagled on the road.

What do they know, the rain and the air?  
The drystone wall slanting across the moor,  
the heather and the bracken, the moss, the lichen,  
the cropped grass, the sheep- and rabbit-droppings,  
the bare rocks and the ridge, knife-edge against the sky.

What do they know, the rain and the air?  
The glistening mud left by the ebb-tide.  
The moored boat listing on the mudflat.  
The salt-marsh, the sedge and the samphire,  
the oyster-catcher, the egret, the gliding gull.

What do they know, the rain and the air?  
The hedgerow, the field, the rapeseed and the corn.  
The five-bar gate, the muddy track on the tarmac road.  
The walled paddock and the orchard,  
the apple on the tree, the windfall in the grass.

What do they know, the rain and the air?