

3.3 Ash (1997)

Yield, my pale warrior, to me
thy silver rippled sap
- sublime disorder! -
and the long brown river of thy heart.
Tree thou wert, before
the giant band did open up
thy secret chronicles of growth –
which then became
so nakedly admired.
(Is this perhaps the blush
which I perceive
upon the creamy steeples of thy grain?)

For lucre I
am thy proprietor
who never picked thy leaf or
climbed thy living bough,
nor touched the roughened skin
which marked thy utmost reach of life.
I cannot tell – I wish I could –
the hill on which they came
to find thee on that day,
bright head high against the blue.

But still, my fingers know thy scars,
can try to reconstruct
the seismic shudder in thy frame,
the yawing bellow
of thy fall – that day.
And more, I know thy very age –
can count thy yearly episodes,
thy subtle hibernations all.
My hand, my mind possesses thee.

Yet just proprietor?
Wilt pardon me the
gross incursions I have made
upon thy flesh? – for now
my singing iron conspires
with thee, to listen for
the slickest whisper of thy heart.

Through me thou art reborn,
O fraxinus excelsior!

Shillingford – May 1997.