

4.3 Dear Leslie (1995)

Death turned out to be
your life-giver,
oblivion your remembrancer.
You taught us all a certain form
of immortality, because
the space you left
seemed less complex
than that you'd occupied.
Locked in your barely
sensate frame, you
disposed of perfect equanimity.
The form seemed all – it had
become the substance:
undeviating gaze
and keen profile belied
the unseeing eye; the opaque utterance,
the riddle and the pun –
were they designed to fend us off?

You left us all to fathom
the stern clear waters of
your dignity: what guarded
secret, private impulse, inner jest
were still alive down there?
Your long-ago expressed humanity?
Or was the depth as
limpid as the face we saw?
Your image, when you passed,
resolved itself so clear
we almost felt that we'd been walking
with a saint or even,
witless, to Emmaus!

And now that image too migrates
bequeathing us – to keep, -
your faint benign
imprint upon the air,
an indelible beatitude.

Canterbury – December 1995.