

HILL SHEPHERD, TON-UP BOYS

An orphaned mountain boy content to greet
His twenty second summer.
He'd worked there from a boy,
Lived in,
A tousle-headed dreamer,
The creaking farm his teens and manhood haven,
The chimney corner his on yarning evenings,
Where, drowsy in a soft inebriation,
A crock of hedgerow nectar swells his fist.

And in the velvet time of owl-claimed hours,
When angry granite outcrops rage at stars,
A bed and cupboard perched amongst the gables
Cocoons his somnolent body from the night.

Then in the wild rose skies, pink clouded dawning,
His minds eye sees again the love-flushed limbs
That twined with his among the secret heather,
The wild Silurian girl an aching dream.
Morning hours spent mooning round the farmyard,
Gutting tickled trout, and robbing hens,
Intently watched by opportunist magpies,
Bobbing on the gnarled and stunted thorn.

He sets out now, the midday round his purpose,
The customary sack adorns his shoulders.
A hessian-cloaked prince of forty acres
And mountain rights,
Drooping pony mounted, drinking the summer wind,
His glass-eyed subjects, staring stupidly,
Watch his passing in trembling awe.
He sees with baleful eye the weekend brigands,
Their swift and surly steeds propped at his fence,
Mobbing the hide and seek whinberries,
Slogan-painted food gatherers,
Back to nature townies,
Absconders from their teeming concrete zoo.
"Look at old woollyback over there",
They point and prance,
The Swansea jacks,
And raise a tipsy roar of broken laughter
From Baglan fume fed sandrabbits
Swigging flagons, and pissing lead.
He wends his way towards his shimmering hilltop,
Hearing the merlin call,
Oblivious to the mad despairing taunts
Torn from town soured souls,
Subconscious envy.



This is Terry Hetherington's