

Lightning in the Fall

From morning light I stayed out in the fall air
never wanting to come in, to miss anything,
how the sun shone, how the clouds travelled across the land
the cold land and the golden trees
once were green pastures of quiet.

I walked abroad as far as I could
I was surprised at the calmness of people
in this sepulchre of bright days
this burial ground of lions.

Everything was ordinary, only a murmur on the wind
and two strangers, bent old women, walking
slowly raised thin hands in triumphant style.

All the day long history had cleared its throat
preparing at last to cough out long-collected phlegm.

I stayed outside to wander in the night
to see what beauty might still be hidden
after the day had gathered in its toll of deaths
and marvelling, marvelling at the stars
and, suddenly, a leap of lightning in the sky.

Ian McDonald