



Back Page

Back Page

In Praise Of Air

I write in praise of air. I was six or five
when a conjurer opened my knotted fist
and I held in my palm the whole of the sky.
I've carried it with me ever since.

Let air be a major god, its being
and touch, its breast-milk always tilted
to the lips. Both dragonfly and Boeing
dangle in its see-through nothingness...

Among the jumbled bric-a-brac I keep
a padlocked treasure-chest of empty space,
and on days when thoughts are fuddled with smog
or civilization crosses the street

with a white handkerchief over its mouth
and cars blow kisses to our lips from theirs
I turn the key, throw back the lid, breathe deep.
My first word, everyone's first word, was air.

Simon Armitage

The world's first catalytic poem developed in collaboration with Professor Tony Ryan at the University of Sheffield.

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