**A growing up**

*for the children of Penyu & Mariya Orphanage, Veliko Tarnovo*

*“Love is a battle, love is a war; love is a growing up.” – James Baldwin*

Flights above an old town: your city of small steps

with its gravelly yard. At the gates every morning

we are led by our fingers through paths of leaves,

the double doors swinging, down runways, roads,

battlefields and hillsides, past cairns, ruins, moats,

round squares. Along walls, where there are nocks

of your heights and skirmishes. Here your days, like

their composite things, are to be hewn and tossed,

chipped with hands, each implement for the next.

There are no ends to such days. In the close hours

we sit to catch your sunrises, several an afternoon

in the ageless thrill of opened blinds. Or watch as

the world ends, tilting us parallel to earth and sky,

your bent swing still believing in its broken hinge.

When there is sufficient space we even spin to lift

you, soaring and centrifugal, and in the tense and

boundless seconds become centres of one gravity.

Who are we, stumbling and large, to receive such

grace? Or such sorrow when we leave at evening?

Tomorrow you will not greet us at the gates, as if

from afar, and for the first time. In our colder city

we will find such approximate words as these: *Let*

*the days last. Let the swing hold. When at last the*

*summer comes, let it rain without sound.* But here

your own words will also keep these other things:

the brevity of flights, and all our short comings.