

Like shaven skin grows first a hazy fuzz, their skin grows grass, in isolated patches, almost imperceptible, at first a hint of hairy green suffusing them; like algae grown in flowing fronds on pebbles in a river, meadows quickly cover all, transform their penetrated bodies into undulating scenery.

Tapping the last reserves of moisture in the bodies, lotus flowers and poppies blossom, bloom in ragged blots of red and crowns of blue that decorate the burial mounds scattered on the plain,

Though underneath they're wide awake, the pain in red-hot threads searing through their frames.

And yet, enmeshed and trapped, penetrated by the tendrils, stems and coils like parasites, inhabited and minced by knots and leaves of hostile growth, they do what they are best at: rest, accommodate, discover how the pain is least, deceive themselves the agony's supportable, come time;

In this they fail, of course they fail – they must.

With failing sun and dusk's cool moisture, wet and black and fleshy like the tongue of sin, a host of yard-long slugs starts grazing on the mounds, rasping with their tongues of leather, studded with ten thousand barbs of horn, as ceaseless as the bucket wheel which crowns an excavator gouges out a cliff.

Their work is slow, meticulous; methodically the slugs progress: lick by lick, leaf by leaf and inch by inch, omitting nothing in their path.

The poppies, lotus flowers and grass, insensible, are mown, their threads of cellulose chewed up and mangled, fibres frayed and left to rot if not ingested;

Underneath, the bloated bodies feel the shock of plant life torn apart, the recoil of the stems within their flesh, as searing pain bores through their nerves again, in chilling sweat await the grinding drill-bits they can hear inexorably approach, draw near as meadow mats are shaved away;

At last the tongues are at their skin, the spikes embed themselves and with a flick more cruel than being flogged with knouts the

Pride



King of the Mountain

On tiny heaps of ash and dust they kneel
Amid a plain of excrement and trash
Unworthy of the lowest swine, survey
The other desperate hillocks spreading to
Their curved horizon like goose-bumps on a monstrous
Skin with trigonometric eyes to check
The others humbled on their piles are lower,
Much lower than their own abasement. This
The least they might accept. The warped
Perspective of their little world lets each believe
They are on higher ground, just like their minds,
Though equal, share the same inflated sense
Of their own self's importance. Soon enough
One peacock-necked, and nosed with heron's bill
Whose calculations covered fear, forgets
His place and stands.

All copy – that's why they
Are here.

Down the inverted telescope
Of noses raised disdainfully they gaze
With scorn at all the puny cockerels on