

when i was very young



*ration books
she was always
a bad cook*

When I was very young skies were filled. Always. With fire smoke and gun smoke; with Spitfire aeroplanes and Spitfire bullet lights; with sounds, barrage balloons and their ropes, ack ack guns spreading bullet tracers. Later were the new shape and sounds of 'doodlebugs', deadly precursor to Space flights. Worse, the sky, when I was very young, was filled with their silence.

snowdrop time

but not where i live

Near the sky, when I was very young, were the flames of burning buildings, the sights of burning buildings, the roasting sound and pains of burning buildings.

fireworks night

sky lights up

with bombfires

When I was very young these sounds above the earth were everywhere. It was different on the ground. In a camouflaged hospital the maternity ward and operating theatre spreads rubble. Splintered bodies, ruined bodies were visible. Sometimes, in endless clouds of dust, only bits of entangled greys remained.

where I lived when I was very young were no untorn sheets.

We borrowed a wireless, when I was very young. Youngest of a relieved, guilt-ridden family group, I, too, listened to the sentences awarded Nazi Party leaders at the Nuremberg War Crimes Trial. They were called out in the trained deadpan voices of the legal trade. I still shiver at the sense that, latent,

hanging by a thread, was the possibility of a huge explosion from within a boiling cauldron of emotion. It never happened. Restraint was a necessary and effective part of the drama. *Tod durch den Strang*. Over and again *death by hanging death by hanging death by hanging*, like a heavy line of blood-cleansed washing slowly swinging in a purified drift wind.

*first day of peace
i still do not know
what it means*

Laughter was rationed when I was very young.

