

## 3 short poems (2)

*by* Neil McCarthy

### **When the night is early**

When the night is early enough  
for the stars to count and the sea  
just a silhouette against the neon,  
and this rock beneath us the only  
throne we will ever own, I sit close  
to you, trying not to disturb the heron  
paused on stilts in the tidal silt,  
waiting for the water.

### **Clear as my conscience may be, you still haunt me as the brown settles to black**

sit there and recommence as if nothing had ever happened,  
your hands conducting the orchestra of your purity.

We are now at the age, it seems, where clichés suffice to  
regale the years and talk of how kind they have been,  
naivety a scapegoat for the slips.

The child in me wants to take you down, come up with  
some playground retort to send you packing;  
the man in me wants to feel nothing,

sit and run my finger down the side of my pint glass,  
and look straight through where the dark stuff used to be.

### **Laces**

*for Alex*

How many times, singing, have I  
untied your laces, pulled  
off your shoes and held  
one to my nose, pretending  
to sniff some foul odour  
if only to make you laugh?

As you grow older you will  
forget such gestures; the  
world as you come to know  
it, an open envelope of  
good news and bad. From  
dependent to child to boy to  
adult; an alphabet sung backwards.

