

CUTTINGS

A sort of cutting taken from one person and grafted on to the heart of another continues to carry on its existence even when the person from whom it had been detached has died: Marcel Proust.

In the visible breath of early spring,
you'd sieve leaf mould
onto the potting shed bench:
sifting darkness and sunbeams

beneath the cracked skylight
where sycamores swayed
broken shadows of their limbs
in risen sea winds.

On the paraffin stove,
a pan of loam would steam
to sterilization: all impurities
transmuted into clouds

to darken the rafters and hang
globes of moisture in the embroidery
of the spider's loom.
Across the stone floor,

you'd leave records of your steps
in the crushed orange
of clay pots, making intricate
markings that would remain.

In the white dust of hormone
rooting powder, you'd dip the angled
cuttings of carnations and ring
each filled pot with grey leafed stems,

lowered into fingered hollows.
In tiny polythene tents, they'd sweat
until translucent tendrils of root took
hold as you took hold of my hand

in that tented ward where all footprints
were swabbed before they settled:
all traces of grief removed;
above you, panelled roof panes sealed.

Days later, I helped lower you
into frosted loam that steamed in
misted sunlight: the dressed cord leaving
angled markings on my soiled fingers.