

Thiepval Monument

This is the topology of pain,
the undulating alluvial, and the dust below
of the thousands hidden here.
And there, tall upon the Ridge
is the Arch of the collective, commemorative tear
shed against words too much of grandeur,
yet too little the sense of remorse and fear.
But the autumn light is kind
And cushions the effect
of the names piled on names
upon the chiselled tabular.
Their columns and strict precedence
call order to these deaths unfound
for these 'Unknown' still silently parade this ground.

*Slight drizzle from the Arch
of frost scalped brick
lie cumulatively at our feet
and you gaze up and wonder -
How long
Will the Commission 'In Perpetuity' meet
the repair bills as the payment
on behalf of a nation's dead?
Lutyens was big in 'twenties style
and so complimented the grandiose desire
to remember in that vein.
But no blood,
no memories of each mother's pain
- but something more of heaven
to where the each had been removed
as if no shells had scattered
nor shrapnel splattered
no gas that mattered
the tissue into gel.*

Remorse is unconnected
to the anguish that had flowed
and the ghosts of PBI
still are being crumped
over by the Bapaume road.
And while the August leaf
surrenders,
we privatise our threads of grief
yet suppress a strange envy, an
undertow
for those that once were there
because we were *not*
- and can never know and share.

Nicholas Deacon
of North Hill

