

# **Tombs**

**Gautam Verma**



First published in the United Kingdom in 2006 by  
Shearsman Books Ltd  
58 Velwell Road  
Exeter EX4 4LD

at [www.shearsman.com/pages/books/ebooks/ebooks\\_home.html](http://www.shearsman.com/pages/books/ebooks/ebooks_home.html)

Copyright © Gautam Verma, 2006.  
All rights reserved.

Cover: 'Neolithic Tomb' by Thiery Maffeis,  
copyright © Thiery Maffeis, 2006.

# Tombs

– for AP, LT, those who knew

*By the dream . . .*

how we come  
to words *by the dream*

the spirit of it  
hovers in the room

and no sleep

“but I do not trust this” *what*

*it is* you are searching for

to read as rooms, moons

what pours —

who?

through the porous letters  
of our names

his death made

a hollow in him

in space of his

excavated lung

in an angle  
the sun

a tree set  
into the sea a splash

of leaf

2 birds with red beaks



on waste brooding:  
*the remaindered remainder*

death your excavator:  
what it has left in the taking

your last breath  
a stone

lodged  
in your left lung

the stones are smooth:  
*green-glass heart, tear drop*

but there is no shore

*come*

*a milk-black sea come  
over me*

in 2 panels

“but I did not know him”

the sky is white

you went out  
it was  
for a moment  
lodged  
a stone in  
your lung

*Say*

birds on the brain / stem

winter withered the lung branches

a belly-full of cloud

the sky dressed in sleeves



singed  
by cold of cheek

*“& no sound of syllables”*

fingers of  
the writing hand

the birds are not blue  
the birds are not white

they are not mackerel  
they are not parakeets

the parakeets are green  
they have red mouths and

yellow beaks

in angle of  
the page

*which is white*

the sun is  
no star

in the sky

in the street: dead leaves  
bits of foil, scraps of paper

the sun's focussed  
but the wind's polar

guilt, you lug it / *let it go*

and as for what  
carries across

*the ocean's a teardrop  
in the void*

the poem breaks  
upon an absent shore

say he was a paratrooper  
say he was a saxophonist

say he navigated locks of the Loire  
say he pressed his own cider

say he was a photographer  
say photographs show it

“but I did not know him”

everything said (and not said)

“my stomach is full of him”  
partakes of him, takes  
(apart from him a part of him)

who takes no part at the table

dead, live on in the living

*tilt of chin, turn of shoulder*  
“choice of words”

what he has left in the leaving



debt

2 wives a daughter  
parents bent a house  
above a church the hill  
his ashes scatter

*and as for what  
may be learned from  
a corpse it depends*

*how read the raised  
eyebrow the wink*

face

a-mass (a mask) spongy & cerotic

from industrial / chimney

plume of smoke

frozen to air

in a winter / landscape

*blues to the tune of evening*

and the dream birds will be  
where you dreamed them, again,  
in the morning

*Tombs Temple Bells Syllables*

*where you are*

gone

the one in gone



under

hard crust of words

“but I do not trust this”

*nothingness*

lurk

numbers, tally

*the keeper of scores for what score  
does she settle?*

“who did what” how much how  
many “all

scorekeeping’s maniacal”

free from clock, you

cloak of dust

drape these stones

in dusk & dawn

in Llangollen  
on velvet hill *undone*

– limitless death –

untied in the one  
united in all

what lives: his death  
is all (of him)

that is alive

remembering “he loved bridges”  
“he would have been surprised”

risk

no possible thing to say  
to wear grief away

“to wear grief away”

tombs

temple bells syllables  
in air words

on the hill

ninety nine times the poem each time  
aloud  
takes light differently differently  
dies out



syllables, words

*all speech is violent speaking*  
*(all speaking violent speech)*

part lips utter / tear

temple bells on the hill  
tombs in air

*Epitaph (for his grave-stone)*

home on your hill  
in womb of earth  
you begin again  
under a caul of stars

*In Memoriam GPB*

