

**postcards from Italy**

by Robin Mitchell

*composed and edited between July – September 2010*

## spade

I took up my spade to dig a hole in the ground.  
the earth was very dry, it was a dry day.  
I caught the scent of water.

on the hill, a tree waved branches,  
in the vineyards, baby grapes slept in rows.  
the house lay deserted, *no chair on the porch,*  
and the barn, *flat as cardboard,*  
*stuffed with hay,*  
*dead through its guts.*

I kept digging until the day ran out,  
sweating hours until a hole, big enough, became.

## **ants and stars**

the ants climb up  
and don't know how to stop.

it gets hot under a blue sky,  
hot under a white sky,  
hot under a red evening sky;  
even in the depth of night,  
the ants climb and don't stop.

\*

three stars make a picture,  
slightly skewed.  
if those stars were an instrument  
they'd be a penny whistle,  
trying to fit all the notes in,  
thank goodness  
they are just stars.

## **bells**

our prey was a strong young hare in the eye of sundown,  
closed by pine woods and the clasp of the hill,  
sat twitching and bobbing  
with the breadth of evening at his ease.

in silence we kept, knew his split-second's chance,  
but our futures did not agree,  
and shortly before the hour  
we called the airstrike in.

## **rush of the trees**

a stone turned from grey to red  
on the riverbed,  
a stone turned over  
a shadow.

the branches shook with twitching, croaking, hissing  
the very air was rife with it,  
the air at our ankles shimmering,  
the air at our necks alive,

then all in their millions fell still  
as thunder rose from the bowels of the earth.

### **Mary fast asleep**

Mary sits atop the stairs,  
her dreams are prayers.

she watches as we come and go  
and lie on our beds in the dark,  
the white walls are as still as Mary's heart.

—

the only road runs several miles  
through flat and weary backwater towns,  
trickles to a halt in the hills.

here the grass tears at your feet,  
flowers bite and dust stings.  
the midday sun is black and silent,  
brooding over the ravine.

a body lay, softened by vultures,  
cats and foxes, gentle creatures,  
but the ground is cruel  
and swallows you whole.