

ALICE

By Tim Cleal

she's a born-again kid a man holds close to
his bosom lest the wind take her breath

she's a mayfly who dances a quantum leap
tango on the day of her death

her voice is cracked porcelain that lies in the
fireplace and your heart breaks for her stillness

she's as true and as without guile as a swan
with a broken wing as she crosses Loch Ness

she's as vulnerable as a callow yellow rose
in a darkling Summer - oh!
her cry of pain is a church's shattered rose window

her errors are red scars like the craters of the moon
her hope is a bag lady who laughs like a loon

her pity is an orphan who drowned in a river
her love is a nun who never looks in a mirror

her habit is a gravestone on which there's no name
her courage is a knife-edge 'twixt failure and shame

her innocence is a lifer who weeps over and over
her beauty is a scream that will haunt me for ever