

## A Martian Sends A Postcard Home

Caxtons are mechanical birds with many wings  
and some are treasured for their markings -

they cause the eyes to melt  
or the body to shriek without pain.

I have never seen one fly, but  
sometimes they perch on the hand.

Mist is when the sky is tired of flight  
and rests its soft machine on ground:

then the world is dim and bookish  
like engravings under tissue paper.

Rain is when the earth is television.  
It has the property of making colours darker.

Model T is a room with the lock inside -  
a key is turned to free the world

for movement, so quick there is a film  
to watch for anything missed.

But time is tied to the wrist  
or kept in a box, ticking with impatience.

In homes, a haunted apparatus sleeps,  
that snores when you pick it up.

If the ghost cries, they carry it  
to their lips and soothe it to sleep

with sounds. And yet they wake it up  
deliberately, by tickling with a finger.

Only the young are allowed to suffer  
openly. Adults go to a punishment room

with water but nothing to eat.  
They lock the door and suffer the noises

alone. No one is exempt  
and everyone's pain has a different smell.

At night when all the colours die,  
they hide in pairs

and read about themselves -  
in colour, with their eyelids shut.

-- Craig Raine (1979)