

Underworld
Alice Stainer

The sun is solid gold today.
It sears her skin like press

of guilty coin on tender palm.
The cornfield, too, is burnished.

Poppies she gathers at its edge
are brothel-red. The scabious

whiffs of his wine-flushed breath. Despite
the breeze, she cannot breathe at all.

Bees vibrate in her cranium.
She already tastes their honey.

What is this force that cleaves the earth?
Below there is no molten heat,

but cool as a crevasse it gapes
invitingly. She slips beneath.

Here is no wind but a sigh
like fingers ghosting over strings.

There is no sound of speech or song.
The stillness sinks into her bones.

Darkness blooms now, petal-soft
upon her reaching fingertips.

Respectfully he lingers in the shade.
Seeds burst on her tongue like grenades.

In a technicolour flash,
like Dorothy she fathoms all:

that yellow bricks clatter the retina
and emeralds laser too deep; but

emergence into monochrome
feels for all the world like coming home.