**Grus by Mark Totterdell**

Plumb overhead, a scant squadron of live crosses,

their compass-needle bills in a loosely perfect

symmetry with their trailing feet, each broad kinked wing

tipped with the five spread fingers of their primaries.

The slow beats, the subtle aeronautics, the swerves.

The crossborder movements of their blotched

and exaggerated eggs, the good and huge deception,

the absurd fosterers in crane-grey cover-alls,

tempting chicks to feed with fake mother-heads,

training them up for something much like birdhood.

The brightly colour-coded plastic manacles

that chain them to a database for ever,

all the belated and equivocal making up

for centuries of draining their domains,

their carcasses piled high at bishops’ feasts.

They should spread over the agrochemical acreages,

the big sheds and the busy interchanges,

back over Cranfield, Cranmore, Cranbrook, Cranwell,

seeking the green rewildings. For now, they fly on,

pointing their great sharp heads into the sun.