

## Softly upon this earth

‘The townsman envies the villager his certainties...’

Ronald Blythe, *Akenfield*, 1969.

*This is a circular poem. Start with any stanza you choose, and read clockwise.*

Now show me where soft sunbeams glow,  
Eight minutes old, eight minutes warm,  
On bumbles safe in foxgloves’ bells,  
Through pippin leaves, to goose-grazed lawn,  
Where alliums and knapweed dance  
Triumphant on a summer’s morn.

Now show me where soft blossom soothes  
Its pippin branches with its smile;  
Soft as a dandelion wish  
The knotty timber basks awhile.  
Here bold, exotic bluebells ring  
For goslings, soft and single-file.

Now show me where soft apples lie,  
Where fiery leaves and dahlia sprays  
And soft-plump brambles celebrate  
The life-in-death of bonfire days.  
Rain soft as fox-fur cannot dowse  
This life-affirming bonfire blaze.

Now show me where the ice-soft rill  
Sleeps, calm without its burbling flow.  
Redbreasts, red berries, silver frost  
Bedeck the shrubs; the sun shrinks low,  
But softening the wintry boughs  
Are sprigs of hopeful mistletoe.