

The Enemy of Art

i

His skin was coarse and porous from fatigue.
His new poem was perfect, machine-like.
And he saw all his old notebooks empty,
As if the ink had been sucked out of them.

So simple, it was like a play on words.
He turned his hand to fiction, sculpture, paint.
No-one understood why their books went blank,
Or why their art objects disappeared.

Music and dance were challenging for him,
But diligently he destroyed it all.
Of course there was an out-cry; but he worked
With homeless people, visited his friends.

No-one suspected him, and finally
People found better uses for their lives.

ii

‘We found some notes he left about his work:
“This machine destroys art” – the most famous.
He predicted it might turn on artists,
And maybe that explains the suicides ...

His art freed us from creativity –
The paradox is now a commonplace.’
The tourists standing in his workshop feel
A delicious sense of his importance.

Recalling artists who were put to death,
They hope that history will not touch them.
Some still yearn to symbolise their unique
Broken hearts – though that’s now impossible.

They leave to visit the simple headstones
Marking places where works of art once stood.