

*From Apocalypses*

**The King of Nothing**

Perched on the edge of a disused palanquin,  
Bumpers rusted, litter half-eaten,  
Poles aslant and rickety,  
The curtains holed and weather-beaten,

The little man looks off to the side,  
Scratching his uncrowned head,  
Waiting for an old, slow herald  
To bring some news of war-dead.

The branchless trees stand like sentinels.  
The landscape comes to a halt,  
The only sound the pass of air,  
The only taste of salt.

There was a time, the little man thinks,  
As he stretches to feel the heat,  
When the days marched merrily along,  
And even the sun would gently beat

To the cadence of an inlaid stick  
Unholstered from his thigh.  
He could summon a parade or a palace  
Or a perfect storm from the sky.

But all of that was yesterday,  
When his subjects deserted their lives.  
The present's a blighted perimeter,  
And tomorrow never arrives.

Since he is the ruler of nowhere,  
With no one around to scoff,  
He hoists one end of the palanquin  
And wills it to carry him off.