

## cloaked sonnet

climbing up the long and tedious ascent – *Jude the Obscure*  
give me the old road— Richard Jefferies

to sketch the scene, we were chasing the ridgeway, one fifth day of autumn, from  
inside the cloaks of woods, combing a nap of shadow and nut cobble, scaling only a gradual  
gradient (southern, un-alpine) – sure enough though to soft-pedal in clearings, breath-  
pinched but tranced by toy barns and sheep flocks, river veins, bell spires and graves  
spilling away down the combe-wide—

so the long (or the short) of it was that ridge-clambering that first week in  
fall, wrapped in dark hoods of woods kindled only by birds ... we followed a chase  
of white collar pheasants, filings of goldcrest swept up into beech crowns – when  
this lavish of field-scape bagged through, and our shoulders were pushing up  
shoulders of downland and our tree-battered thought skylit open

and there you have it, the gist, more or less : way-auguring, one brief day in  
autumn, blind inside old folds of woods – Coate's Copse, Jacob's Tent, Herriot's Plantation –  
this saunter of daylight swags past us, pots branches and birds, nut shale and shade  
to frame blue cloud, breeze and chalk road just ahead – shoots us jackpot