

## Four Rooms with Norman MacCaig

I played viola in a little school orchestra.  
He introduced us, rising on the balls of his feet,  
I remember his headmaster hands lathering air  
and the side-part bounce of his impatient hair.

The second time I saw him at the Queen's Hall,  
an historic gathering of bards. He read a poem  
about throwing rocks into the sea, from the stage  
but at the same time from the beach near Arisaig.

Then one Saturday in a corner of the Oxford Bar  
he was sitting alone, for by then he had become  
Suilven. Like a crofter, he smoked his cigarette  
through a crook'd finger, an ashy quietness.

The last time we were in a room together  
I had ordered a used copy of his collected poems.  
I opened the package and inside, on the title page  
shaky blue ink *with warmest wishes from Norman MacCaig*.