Explaining the Circumstances

Christopher North

(Some of these lines quote statements made on actual motor accident insurance claim forms)

Coming home I drove into the wrong house
and collided with a tree I don’t have.
I crossed a garden that receded and receded
and met some people who chose to remain silent.
Time braked and the clock hands fell to six;
a drop from the tap hovered an inch above the bowl.
I saw a slow-moving, sad faced old gentleman
as he bounced off the roof of my car.

Then an invisible car came out of nowhere,
struck my car and vanished.
The road became a fan of streaked permanganate
as my left hand took flight in a cloud of feathers.
These events ceased with a clatter of Chinese thunder
as coloured rain showered through the greenhouse roof.
I stared and stared at the rising waters
and a pedestrian hit me and went under my car.

Later in an attempt to kill a fly,
I ran into a telegraph pole.
The hay field rolled over and went to sleep,
spores of bracket fungus seethed from the old oak
and a rain-coated female person said repeatedly:
‘You must stop this! You must stop this!’
I had been driving for forty years
when I fell asleep at the wheel.
Thrown from my car as it left the road,
I was later found in a ditch by some stray cows.
I could not understand what the fox
was so earnestly trying to tell me.
Why were those men burying the cemetery gates?
I became convinced that the church was melting
and I collided with a stationary truck
that was coming the other way.

This poem is the title poem in Christopher North’s recently published full collection
(Oversteps Books, www.overstepsbooks.com)