

*Glyn Maxwell*  
Flags And Candles

Flags line up an hour before they're chosen,  
wave back along the row at others like them.  
Candles sit in boxes or lie still,

sealed, and each imagines what will happen.  
Flags will not accept the explanation  
of why they were not needed as they are now.

Candles feel they're made of stuff that's soft  
for a good cause, though maybe not their own cause.  
Tall flags love all flags if it's these flags.

Small flags are okay about immense flags.  
Candles doze in xylophones of colour,  
thrilled their purpose may be merely pattern.

Flags are picked out one by one. The others  
group around the gap and say Gap, what gap?  
Candles dream of something that will change them,

that is the making of and death of candles.  
Flags don't dream of anything but more flags.  
The wind is blowing; only the landscape changes.

Candles have the ghost of an idea  
exactly what the wick is for: they hope so.  
Flags are hearing that you can't see flags

at night, not even giants in a windstorm.  
Candles have read that they can cry all day  
and go unnoticed even by old candles.

When I wave flags, flags think it's the world waving  
while flags are holding fast. When I light candles,  
the sense of something reverently bowing

holds me and I tremble like the shadows.  
Flags again know nothing and they're flying.  
Candles shed a light and burn to darkness.