Entirely

By Louis MacNeice

If we could get the hang of it entirely
   It would take too long;
All we know is the splash of words in passing
   And falling twigs of song,
And when we try to eavesdrop on the great
   Presences it is rarely
That by a stroke of luck we can appropriate
   Even a phrase entirely.

If we could find our happiness entirely
   In somebody else's arms
We should not fear the spears of the spring nor the city's
   Yammering fire alarms
But, as it is, the spears each year go through
   Our flesh and almost hourly
Bell or siren banishes the blue
   Eyes of Love entirely.

And if the world were black or white entirely
   And all the charts were plain
Instead of a mad weir of tigerish waters,
   A prism of delight and pain,
We might be surer where we wished to go
   Or again we might be merely
Bored but in brute reality there is no
   Road that is right entirely.


Source: The Collected Poems of Louis MacNeice (Faber and Faber, 1979)