

EARTHLIGHT



The Nile River Viewed from the International Space Station
Astronaut Scott Kelly, NASA

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Light As A Feather

Light as a feather, all this world,
the mountains so light
the wind so light,
the hills
floating in misted air,
are light as thistle-seeds
the heart floats,
the kestrel,
high against cloud, floats
over the granite ridge
in the air's silence.

Earth floats on nothing
every way,
hangs in the void,
hangs from nothing,
so tree, moon, mind,
lighter, lighter,
the past gone down,
the future empty,
all weight denied,
shining, light.

And light as a feather,
the human spirit,
free as the wind,
afloat over worlds,
valueless, purposeless
as a leaf,
intentionless galaxies
softly swirling,
sweet impermanence,
the undefined
the root of all being;
all of it gone
the human history
none of it binding;
the soluble rock
the pervious stone
sliding in air
all mind wandering.

Only this present,
and only this:
and no command
no direction;
always the escape
from what has no right
no power
all power being empty.

Flame intentionless
deep in the water,
water intentionless
quivering of light,
brilliant fire,
moon, is it, moves
or mind,
in the web of being
falling forever
through endless space;
the Self uncertain,
a milk-white stream
cascades in mountain air.

Delight is our value,
delight in freedom,
delight in form,
delight in the other,
delight in what is
this real existent
the not-self song.

Tree under rock,
rock under moon,
moon through the water;
light of the mind
glitters and shimmers.

No meaning
in all, except what we
give, no value.
The past is weightless,
if we think so
the future empty
for us to create,
everything human –
here in the heart.

Not What We Thought

That cry was wasted,
all of the wasteland,
the world untouched,
like a great bird flying
towards the unseen
blazing invisible stars.

We are not what we thought:
we came with the creatures
warm in the dust
dark among leaves,
a part of the Earth
nor deeper nor stranger.

And now we are mind,
beginning again
free of the dreams
the forms, the fantastic
crazed longings,
achingly free.

We are not what we thought.
Time is inside us;
the world the eternal,
inscrutable moment;
and we the measure,
the measurers, falling

silently in a void of silence
full of force – not power,
full of light – not intent,
hill on hill, tree on tree
clouds in the silence
the dream eternal.

Through the leaves goes the bird
calling, then calling,
and the grasses alive on the slope
moving, shining,
with the life here in all,
the process on process,

all gravity gone
the lightness endless
as earthlight, blue
over grey moonscape:
all our living gift
to the universe, given.

The wind blows,
and the mind with it,
like the child blown
over endless landscapes,
alone forever and freely alone
in naked being.

The grasses quiver
the hollows dark
the wind stirs
the mind trembles
with all this unholy
beauty,

not as we thought,
and forever un-fallen,
though falling forever,
the sacred un-sacred;
we who are makers,
the blessers and singers.

Image Of The Flower

Let me live where lives make landscape,
in slow becoming,
where the slopes grasp the heart,
and stony valleys
filled with wildflower
invade the mind;

where fire and sleet are one,
as ache and the inner pleasure,
as the light and delight,
of shining earth, old hills,
new grasses
no one made.

Let me live in the endless void,
its glittering life,
a breath of nothingness
born of the first wave,
of energy moving,
forming, space and time.

Let me live where lives make beauty
in slow crescendo,
(where their sound is the sound
of earth, and nothing beyond)
and filled with a wildflower
image in the mind.

Banishing The Concepts

No one goes into the dark,
we go into the light.
There is nothing beyond.

The beginning is not the end
or the end the beginning,
the mind is not in time.

Persistence and change exist,
this past and future
these products of memory, anticipation,

in the living mind,
which itself exists through symbol
includes the words that echo.

Who could endure
without the delight,
of fact, affection, and form?

Beyond our fear, the rose
and the briar make one,
the ice, the fire.

Earthlight falls slow
on the waste of moon,
and mind trembles:

but no one goes into the dark.

The Sole Meaning

Here is the land
and the place of the land
the place in the inward mind.

Here is the hare, here the butterfly,
quicksilver spirits
flickering through grasses.

Now is the cry of the dark-winged
unknown bird,
a calling and curling of light.

This is the stone,
the valley of stone,
its herbs, its shelves of hawthorn-night.

Here is our only magic,
this scent, these sounds
of the land where we began,

the forgotten pastures,
the wild silence,
the sole meaning.

Saving The Day

In the poem unlike the novel
nothing is happening:
what exists, despite belief
or rather beyond it,
signals nowhere at all.
The broken signpost
points to a something
absent from landscape,
forever inside,
not the mere,
or another side of the hill,
and never the starlight
toward which it angles.

What is happening in the poem
is the climb on a hard trail
over vague rocks
in a mist
of misunderstanding,
in ambiguous light,
past the fox run,
the hare's form,
out of narrative
into space
which is only in mind,
and so unseen,
and so incommunicable

whatever you claim.
Your prize is not
the endearment of valleys
or an epic summit,
the song of the personal,
or the curlew's cry.
Your prize is to stand
in a place that can only
be yours,
the only you,
in a private making,
that is wholly
impersonal, silent
and beyond;

as in old age
when we are what we are,
devoid of promise,
inarticulate
as the wind,
the mind its own pure mirror,
where no dust falls,
where the past is
what we survived,
bearing the love,
that is left of us
and best of us,
the marrow of what we love.

The portraits of the old
are of the human,
and nothing else.
Nothing else is happening
in the poem,
there is no story,
the tale consumes itself:
the breeze, the grasses,
the calls, are always new,
though old as the hills,
and death is the friend
who eases the clutter
of life, and saves the day.

Finding Home

In a quiet dawn though not the dawn of childhood,
and not its childhood space,
the mind returns
to a place that never was its place,
but recognition
claims as its own;
the birth-right
but not the birth-right;
the source
but not the ground
where it began:
a shining space.

Earth rises over the strange horizon:
in that earthlight.
See what the heart occasions,
a place of gentle stone,
a healing wash of forms,
the unmade beautiful
beyond design,
chance enabled
in soft perspectives,
seas of grasses,
marbled slopes,
shadowed paths down valleys.

The process aimless,
we meander,
by a spontaneous tremor
of appreciation
into a peace
that restrains the purpose,
whatever we may have thought
as purpose,
and the traveller's mind moves
to the serpentine rhythm
of the brown hare's
passing in dewy grass.

The pastoral has its darkneses true,
but they are the darkneses
of our origins.
The even light is cool,
outside pretence,
the living surface
quiet as being,
a moving-on
no mind disturbs
in unmoving presence;
beyond request, reversal
or derision.

Flights Of The Curlew

The paths that walking makes run deep,
the single step relentlessly repeats,
forms the real direction and the true
an ease and meaning for the feet.

We walk to make a route across the world,
a trail for senses,
that has no substitute in lens, the eye
absorbing contour, marking vision.

So too the inner tracks, run deep,
a lifetime's moving through an inner landscape,
whose stopping places are familiar
as gates, or stones, or trees.

These are the thoughts we own, the ideas
not new but re-possessed maybe, re-made,
reflections that re-invent us, leave their trace
evoked in moments, clarified by years.

Flights of the curlew, mysteries of its cry,
lonely on upland, shadows over meadows,
part of the flesh and bone, so that we
create the self of self, the self-unseen;

pathways in mind, shadows that run
out of the blackness of banked-up lanes
into the burning villages, and again
high up, under the sun, to shelves of air;

the meanings of a life, its residues
between the formless motion and the form
of a known arrival,
where the of-itself exists, and sets all free.

Such are the passing places. Step by step
crossing the silent dangers of the field
walking blindly on the empty void,
falling helpless into this pathless *being*.

What Happens In The Silence

Quieter now, but the recall of other places,
being together in green hearts of gardens
where sculpture imprinted mind on nature
and, resonating, made the spaces human,

says that though still no closer the mystery
of what makes two, despite those identities
that seemed to claim mutual spiritual space,
the vision in each of each is a happiness,

calm as water jetting from stone runnels,
or still canals where roses were reflected,
November's stillborn roses, red at sunset,
twisting insidiously towards the heart.

Memory resists the snows and the erosions:
here are no dark evasions,
mind speaks to mind as once it wished it could;
still, despite all lost chances, makes life good,

as if, by thinking, flesh to flesh might touch,
eye question eye to find
the burning resolution,
held in the momentary that could not happen,

yet does so now, deeper, in retrospect,
greater even in invention than in truth,
and in a calm no tremor contradicts,
in this permanence of love, its going-on

though time and space may seem to intervene,
in relationship made finer by such distance,
which proves also timeless and intangible;
a windless light, an earthrise among stars.

Strange Movement

Not walking to be somewhere, but straying,
wandering over the old mounds
of dead mines,
on living breathing grass
green far as the eye can see;
in deep wildflower masses,
following a creature trail
to sit in silence,
and gather the landscape centring
a universe around me;
I am those broken walls,
those limestone reaches,
the curled stems and shoots, bud and flower,
a quivering like a hand moving
in mind over ground vibrant, singing,
the mind a bell, the world its ringing.

Not moving to be anywhere but here,
not from and to, but in the falling
from moment into moment
of a single
altering changeless flow,
an unending momentary process,
seeing the hare's form,
its serpent traces,
the curves of flattened grass
of its strange movement,
I lose the track, to find the way,
and lose myself to know the mind
deeper for wavering,
self-so and uncommitted,
as the creative hangs at the edge of form,
in that vibration which denies,
accepting, between the wild and tame.

Sit and be here, only be still, exist
not for purpose but to draw
into yourself the trees, the line of fields,
those distant walkers, the cries and calls,
the hum of light,
the bee-dark core of plant
where colour trembles,
the chains of cloud, the pools of shadow,
the brightening sun,
the lanes, and gates, and walls.
Here is your heritage,
the quietly human,
beyond the flares of centuries, the wars,
the blind hostilities, the foolishness,
the fallen dead ideas.
Make this your place.

A Promise

To be this and nothing else.
To be here and nothing more,

as between the tufts of blowing grass
the purple orchis vibrates on its stem.

Beyond the act or the desire,
watching the movement of the clouds,

become some species without history,
whose future is the undetermined land,

neither a place of water nor air,
but a space of fields and their light,

the returning silence, and its grace,
a presence owing nothing to design.

About life we are always wrong.
We lack the time to adjust to being.

Bless a dark unawareness we'd return to,
of child or creature, where is only flame,

and this, and here, and nothing else,
but a dumb promise, and a half-remembered fear.

In The Gallery

Every drama meets the world of no-mind,
that neutrality we cannot call indifference,
outside our nomenclature, shifting forms,
a flux of process; nearer the classic view,
stony backcloth of Renaissance painting,
these merciless antics of the pagan gods,
who were simply us humans inside-out,
feelings magnified to make the symbol,
that steals the self by casting it in role,
the heroine, the saint, the fool, the god,
all limited to their scripts of the eternal,

while Self escapes the drama and goes on,
while the others move into position, walk,
or talk or yawn, as destruction or creation
happen. It is not the tragedies of the world
we should grieve for, but earth's silence,
for our own clear injunctions not to pause,
for the rituals that proclaim the transience
where we are paused, but only for a while,
as elsewhere jets will rise, galaxies collide,
clouds gather, as the landscape continues
its dialogues of such un-purposed quiet.

The world will not think for us; there are
no scriptures written in the starry skies;
the universe is not moved to sad tears by
the death of children, the screams of hares,
the act regretted, the lover lost, the flames
we suffer wordlessly. See how these swirls
of paint survived all wars, holding deep
beyond the brief fiery life of their creator;
how time is frozen, and interchangeable,
so that the permanent returns unbroken,
Earth turns, the trees relive its shining fall.

A Frieze

Here moves the moon-lover, silently sighing,
There goes the sun-bearer, flaming or dying.
Time is no more for one, passing, gleaming;
Time scars the other, freed from all dreaming.
You love are all the world, you in your crying
washing moon-tears with fire, the un-denying.

The Powers That Be

It is the words we write we never understand
that lead the mind along the powerless path
which shapes and smooths our life implicitly.
Something lives us, beneath the self, beside
its half-articulate murmurings of complaint,
these greater powers of the unspeaking world,
that make the future, denying our command.

It is the things we never know, that know us,
in the unconscious processes, which differ
from consciousness only in their rawness,
their place in the hierarchy of awareness,
their undigested flow, the embryonic self,
which is always mutable in their shifting,
in our dance between the chaos and a form.

Self is where our faith is, our fond belief;
which is not to grant credence to shadows,
or wish that the non-existent might exist.
But our destiny is still to hear the voices,
the possibilities that never were possible,
that may yet set the madneses in motion,
or keep our fingers far from the triggers.

The Vehicle

Your eyes close. The Well-Tempered Clavier,
transcribed for the piano, is pure process,
moving in its own space-time, you may follow
and be that process of the mind, nothing more;

development, recapitulation, a moving on,
as what will exist, when you and I are gone,
to glide perhaps somewhere between the stars,
the timeless human in the beyond-human,

its remorseless glittering, its independence,
a freedom of the mind, exceeding galaxies,
one that sounds out beyond this little room,
so beyond the word, out of the flowing line.

Self-referencing structure; as far it seems
from everything around and still returning
to what sings inside us, the primal sound,
creating universe around it: you may enter,

here in this room, or sliding between stars:
written for clavier, played on the piano,
but turned to notes cascading in time,
this purest process, our vehicle of being.

Swallows

Swallows build, not too nervous of humankind
they swoop low around, skim over us,
feed their young, salute the warmer days,
then vanish into the cooler silent blue.

Swallows here, no rarer, flash in their perfect
articulation, under a dome of clouds
across an endless flowing landscape
soar over moving grasses, green seas.

Swallows, careless of eternity, little
lightning-strikes through an airborne moment,
steel-blue and tawny, long-tailed streamers,
pale-bellied glossy-backed red-throated arrows,

part, not-part of our world below though we
feign our belonging to the creature realms,
unable to dance with their spontaneous being,
except the child for an instant, or the child-like.

Swallows are the grace of a world we still find,
waiting for starlight in our earthbound cradling,
walking by dark still waters, all gods forgotten,
grace of the purposed, purposeless sweet dance.

Sifting The Stream

How lives are swallowed, bit by bit,
or as now, destruction in my hands,
suddenly, your letters, images,
consigned to silence, to invisibility,
the what was known unknown once more,
the shadows of substance shadowy
melting and sinking unseen into time.

How the living win their freedom
from the dead, who feel no pain
unlike us living, it is we who must
destroy the dross to discover
what we love, though never why,
since every explanation only shows
the form itself, beyond its names.

You go down, the disappearing one,
pass out of memory, vanish from this
place, from this moment, all there is,
to be whatever silently hides itself
behind the fabric of the moving world;
are here no more, as if you never were
flower of a face, arc of a simple being.

What strength have I to consign these
to eternity, what right? The same right
time commands and transience allows:
right of possession, right to be as the dead
no longer are, to know what they no longer
know, those phantoms in the memorabilia,
those ghosts of the only real awareness,

life in the flesh, language on the lips,
thought through the mind, the suffering
no one is ever reconciled to, the delight,
the thinking of you, the affections
of a lifetime. These the disposals that bring
a deepest ease, clear us for resurrection,
such fires on wasteland, deaths by water,

so we overcome this inward reticence,
this fear of letting go that confirmation
of our ephemeral being, one with theirs,
the gone before, gone to a non-existence,
no absence there for them, into space,
the breath of air, dispersing, the ripple
on the tide, a stillness of bright water.

The Light

The light that crowns the distant trees
recalls those inner mysteries.

We wander silent through the light
that shimmers from the gates of night.

You think life is the rational mind?
Here is the dark that makes us blind.

About the rocks the children run
time's simple creatures of the sun.

White May has made the valley bright,
so close your eyes to outer sight.

There is no place where love is true,
unless love's being stirs in you.

Nights without fear are where we live,
days without fear where we forgive.

Silent we wander here and there
seeking the path our feet lay bare.

Knowing the process is no help
to that which is the thing itself.

The light that crowns the trees is fine,
bright gift of nature, never mine.

To nature then the gift return,
light of a grace we cannot earn.

Passing By Someone's Fields

Whoever owns the land
does not own the beauty,
this reality, nor say who
shall love it or shall not.

The land well-loved simmers
in the heat, the buttercups,
the Queen Anne's lace,
that foam of fields.

There is no possession
of the air, light, rain,
the soil beneath the grass;
of all that possesses us.

Love is its own free force,
absorbing or denying.
Whoever owns the land
will never own the beauty.

All Landscape

On distant hills the dark of trees
and then their light; slow cloud
swells and rides over landscape,
five days rain now silent heat
smothering the green of grasses,
the hares' haunts, the high slopes.

On distant hills my mind follows
the lines in air, the deep unwritten,
the still miles, the coigns of quiet.
Past knowledge, no matter, easily
slides from memory here, gone
on the trail-less trail, the leavings:

the paths not taken were never
paths, self always leads to self.
Here beauty born of transience,
its power over us, is part of our
transience, the going-by either
of observer or what's observed,

or both. All landscape yearns
in the human mind, it seems,
for an intimate release, known
somehow to the forever unfree,
like looking from the mountain,
while breathing the ice-cold air.

Their Place

I read the lines of the landscape
but cannot follow into grace,
though there is longing, yes,
deep peace in the intentionless.

The indifferent stars glow at night
with purposeless indifferent light,
yet we, uncrushed by their power,
are free at least of false affection.

They, free of human passion, free
in the perfect sense, are in flight
but not like a flight of ours, in time,
that half-illusion of an inner sense.

I follow the brightness of horizon,
the tilt of slope, the water's flow,
but cannot penetrate their grace,
unconsciousness of time and place.

Mind, This Heart

What settles on the heart is not the heart,
that aspect of mind, the be all and end all,
simply the weight of flesh, the settlement,
the accretion of what diminishes in death.

What binds the heart, is not itself the heart,
that cannot know itself except by being,
looking back, silent, through existence,
living forwards, in acts of imagination.

We do not choose the faces that hold us,
do not choose the affections of a lifetime,
the what is loved that is the best of us,
the dross dispersed and the pain exalted.

All these achievements have no value,
unless they radiate from the loved eye,
unless like that halo in mountain air
they surround us with a borrowed beauty.

We are lived by the forces that live us,
form ourselves, become what they are,
the secret processes of the hidden mind,
the analogues to the quantum universe,

with its deep randomness, the forever
indeterminate except in determination,
the unobservable except by observation,
the strangeness of self to self, so that we

feel like aliens in a country never ours,
into whose customs we never truly enter,
restless foreigners who trying to escape
only entangle ourselves deeper, tighter.

Our thoughts become our poems of exile,
our habits dreams of the childhood lost,
those moments we should long to regain
the only worth of what we are and knew,

where we overcame being, so as to be
more penetratingly, in a finer, purer
aspect of our in-gathered perceptions,
of our flights of imagination, those

freedoms that constitute the spirit,
that are the thrill of dark existence,
where we are depths, stones, flowers.
The tissues of the heart are not the heart.

Laughters Low

Science grants the knowledge, and a cold beauty,
or is the coldness within? Since the human
longs not for comprehension, but response,
not for power but communion of the spirit.

Moon sings, a satellite, in the evening sky.
Tremor on tremor, a local reality unfolds
without displaying movement. Eternity
makes us small, infinity smaller, time

unfolds from memory and imagination.
Measure this endless space over slopes,
till meaning fractures, the eye's equation
confesses the known is not the grasped;

that something here fails to satisfy,
whatever it is that longs in the head
and in the flesh; that being wavers,
a slight dislike disturbs the spirit.

No we were not designed for this,
nor designed at all. To be here is
strange, Science no real answer,
or perhaps the coldness is in me?

You can write the word but never
describe the anguish, feelings are
not what we speak; truth, though
what we desire, scarce satisfies,

no one loves a truth that hurts us.
But here's the moon, affection
of deep habit, sings in the blue
and a million centuries simmer.

Earthlight suffice! Let the weight
of the present not falter; glimmer
with subtlety; despite the science
now attend to the deeper laughter.

Green Waves

Great seas of grass rolling,
waves of green time, piled high against blown air,
hold, till they sink again
dunes of blades, whole world sighing
to break in me,
to fall in my failing moment,
in my eternal space,
where universe sings.

Ash on a ledge of stone, its dark buds
opening late, under here shelves,
drip of ice in the darkness,
melt of light,
shadowy flow,
through my day that is all days
pulse in my inner silence,
the heart, the breath.

Lean on the vanishing tree,
or in mirror shadow
catch a glimpse of passing,
the insubstantial body
the half-lit face,
feel the millennia alter,
underfoot stillness,
the sliding planet.

Here and it's gone,
fragile universe fleeing,
less than more than
ever you thought it might
have once been,
comes down to no more
than grass piled high
green waves against the wind.

First Fires

Wind shifts in the pines.
Cold dreams taste bitter
in white sunlight;
wrecking the earth we go.

Wind freezes in the pines.
Lines of frost and snow
hang from black brush,
unclear of purpose.

Wind coagulates in the pines.
They creak with the dead
weight of a season:
imagine the first fires.

Wind sings in the pines,
a soft lulling song
of the lover, like light
soft over hills.

Wind in the pine sighs slow.
All hurt, not all show pain.
Resilient life returns,
despite the scarring.

Wind in the disused quarry
speaks resurgence.
I grow like grass
on wounded ledges.

Wind moves in the pines;
hare in the moon
glistened, more than hare,
the grace dying.

Wind un-owned is the mover.
On downwind slopes
pines grip with iron fingers,
rock crumbles.

Wind out of night soothes
the unsatisfied heart,
its wilding dreams,
its world unwound.

Where We Exist

Words tell no lies though liars do;
words are where we exist, although
we exalt the flesh that makes it so.

It is not the grammar of our lives,
the sentences the act explores,
define us, but the metaphors.

I am not I, I am not you, between
is where we vaguely view
the lips and ears that make us two,

expand the fiction of our lives,
the shifting selves that express
a something out of nothingness.

The primal tense, the latest guess
spin from the void the me and you.
Words tell no lies, though liars do.

Here, Every Time

A billion other earths, but the one earthlight,
with the different kinds of sky,
so you know where you are
on this planet by seeing
the various forms of clouded blue.

A billion other earths, but those who walk
this land know the land, its being,
whether they work it or watch
its burgeoning
wildflowers stain white stone.

A billion other planets to slide towards,
in a voiceless flight, bearing an old culture,
but not this particular sweetness;
places being like faces
that we love, imperishable, irreplaceable.

Not Those

It is not those hands we fall through,
but the great spaces,
filled with earthlight.

See how the standing stone in the field
drowns in grasses,
but concentrates and centres

the wandering mind. How to say to you
these deep green swathes of hills,
this intensifying brightness?

A figure in the distance is not this moving
mind, invisible thought,
the always hidden, always deeper self.

To see is to feel, to think. What role
for articulate machines,
no feeling, what purpose in existing?

A life, its processes, its memories, fire;
the burning out of me
that has become a mine, a distant tree.

A life is a snapshot of an age, an age
only ever the backcloth
to the blaze of individual being.

The light is on the stone.
It is never the hands through which
we fall, but the great spaces.

Under The Axe

Behind you the other world,
the beyond-acceptance,
in which a violence
not of your making looms:

grant it no credence. Sing
the delicate arts, the subtle
laughter; tensile steel
the butterflies of beauty.

What is destroyed is instance,
the chalk-lines fade, a face
of genius dissolves,
that is no matter.

What is the message there
that green man brings
with hovering blade
that nicks the flesh?

Do not betray this life.
Sing for the planet
greater than violence,
the coming dawn.

By Surprise

Rock white as snow,
a limestone place,
death has no space;
life will grow,
nothing between
its stalks of grass
its burgeoning green,
the clouds must flow
time know your face.

The silent gate
is buried deep,
under the stones
no dreamers sleep.
To stand and stare
at fields of air
the traveller staggers
to his feet,
but all too late

life is moving silently,
between the roadway
and the tree,
the beauty seen
by restless eyes
ungraspable;
while quietly
life breaks the heart
by surprise.

Sonata

(Sonata for baroque cello, in G minor, RV42: Vivaldi)

Large fingers on that hand that moves
along the strings,
and solid on the hand that arcs the bow.
Closed eyes: make image fade
of player, windows, light.
Sit still, listen to creation shaping

what another century declared, not
a period charm but here
mind making light of its age, mind
reaching form in the darkness,
stirring the bones of these old stones
under this tower, reverberating.

Music the core and truth of what we are,
and this miracle, mastery
at the edge of human, this rare skill,
that a thing of flesh and blood
is vehicle for exultant mind,
fingers, breath, body, vibrant, conjuring.

The structure behind form and in the form,
Leonardo's line,
Shakespeare's inner language,
greater than the art, creates art; here
the dance, a dance of dances,
prelude, allemande, sarabande, jig,

but the dance is of delight, of a music
divorced from dancing
bodies, a living presence, spirit still alive,
what the machine cannot be,
except it replicates the essential human,
a feeling and a flame,

a coolness of attentive neck, shoulders
a tremor in the extremities,
a hiss of spine, a sigh of lung, till self
is self and the waves of notes, as one,
stirring thought, calming fear,
a spell of the silence, bringing grace

in its gift, from the living imagination
of the long-lost maker,
who grants his inheritance in advance
to the heirs to come, to the not-yet-existent
creatures of absolute truth, listeners
to meaning, links of all right-inhering.

Watch the face and hands of genius,
see nothing. The deepest
universe inside owns more complexity
than galaxy, than the dark divides,
and in its furthest music simply cries
its strength of encircling being,

in a unique language shared, in a mutual
crescendo and diminuendo,
in a quiver of rhythms, only asserting
the moment of life, its glorious
absurdity, which comes no more,
yet keeps on pouring out wild generations.

The high-stepping fingers, the fingers
locked on the bow,
both proclaim the sexual and surpass
the mind-physical in the flesh-mental,
this body bows, this mind
flows like the green light through the flesh,

and we in emulation, focusing thought
across centuries, hearing
more than a word, rather a dim reality
of where we come from and how, all
the millennia to reach this, the crest
of a pure wave breaking,

in which we find the end of regret,
in an artifice where
no note is wrong, and meaning is
there but beyond interpretation:
small hope to the orthodox this infinite
that is each of us in our merciless receding.

Time

Time must surprise us every time,
each day with the habits of a life,
and yet is only change, a mime
that brings a process to the light.

It holds the dark behind its back,
redeems us from a world of dream,
replaces bodies that we lack,
creates the Is from all that seems,

is still the incomprehensible,
fast or slow, space-time or self,
memory, anticipation, well
of being, sickness or health.

What's gone and what's to come
lurk there, in questioning dark.
We fear as we once feared the room
by night; to cross a childhood park.

Time must deceive us every time
we wake and face the dreadful day,
where love and beauty we must rhyme
with truth to make them stay.

A Bird Up High

Here you cannot catch the light
that moves so silently
across these fields and trees,
or intensifies the far horizon
with its mysterious luminous shades of green.

Here, as ever, words do not distinguish
between the truth and lie,
fact is as fiction in a verbal world,
the sound is not the presence of 'the sky',
nor is pure meaning justified by rhyme.

It swirls, this light, about an understanding
of being beside fieldstone walls
and gatepost standing-stones,
soaking and drenching the spirit,
shining through the heart relentlessly.

Here you never quite can catch the light,
of wildflower fields, of eye-dark timber
embracing shadow, cooler intellect,
calming the upward flight of lark
whose song breaks off from beauty.

The greatness of the day exceeds you,
the air from which the light descends,
in moments that once past cannot end,
though unobserved and non-existent,
of the one pass through this universe.

There is no softer more enticing landscape;
its hills are gentle, its rivers small,
but each tree still is an eternity,
as daring in defying transience,
or praising it, as a bird up high.

Winding-Gear

Abandoned lead mines, like the grey stone farms
root in their landscape; comfortable calm
speaks without fuss of what their silence holds,
deserted hours of individual meaning,

where love falls away, and use, and time
no longer counts, the intensity all wasted
as it seems, the ground reverting slowly
to pits and knolls of grassed-in temperance,

the adits and the engines rendered mute,
un-echoing pieces of the dumb forgetting,
but strong in their cold assertions of a space,
around which having been is also truth.

Like the places of childhood, act and feel
and rarely sight or thought, their hills
resonate with being, and with receding,
slowly in reticence into the inner dark,

as too real to be countenanced easily,
in a life of artifice, yet powerlessly
exerting an unassailable presence,
vertically on time, moving with us,

so the determinants, predicting nothing
of what comes to pass, yet inexorably
confirming themselves after the fact,
signifying the something underground

their tunnels lead to, you know what,
every mind's myth and tauromachy,
love entangling with fear and death,
and the way inward always the way back.

In the distance now beyond my window,
the mine squats on its far hill, resonates
like that standing stone in a nearer field,
blackly on the green of painted grass,

cries where we came from, where we go,
to frozen, rusted process, yet at heart
alive with hidden water, shifting soil,
unseen earthlight, emotion's tremor.

Agonia

The novel is of doing, the poem of being.
A simplification, but the issue is less
of character than personality, less
a question of happening than seeing,
a momentary truth, Byron's sigh
in the night, Dante's strange meeting
with an emblematic Beatrice, Keats'
nightingale, Baudelaire's swarming city,
the transient as symbol, the word as fire
purging the pain of ephemeral hearts
with the greater ache, eternal agony
in the Greek sense; so the novelist
a reconciler of conflict, and the poet
the conflict itself, on the cusp of time.

Hummingbird Hawk Moth

A hummingbird hawk moth sips at a flower,
after rain, in damp evening, the earth drying,
strangest of creatures, seen for the first time,
like a cross between bird and insect, tongue
extended hovering at the mouths of anthers,
persuades the mind of nature's strangeness,
our own weirdness, the anomaly of reason,
drowns thought in flesh, or furry filaments,
makes life the subtler process of continuum,
makes eye and senses part of a wonderment
too peculiar to relate to our daylight artifice,
prompts an act of the self that must reclaim
terms like worship, sanctity, or blessedness,
stripped of deities, part of a secular tongue
itself uncoiling to taste of this deeper world
that pollen of dawn scattered along our path.

The Returning River

Slowly it rises from the substrate, bubbling,
through the dry sink holes silently returning,
and is the river of flame in the maw of time,
where we vanish again in the threads of light.

Where is an end to water, where is an end
to what flows again from the elder darkness
among stones where the dipper, shale where
the wagtail, flickers? Call it the ever-singing

of the spirit, out of the earth, in subtle tongue,
Call it a mystery of the hidden, now revealed,
the movement of sanctity, yet in no religion,
where the cosmos trembles in strange being.

Here is the heart's reflection. The closed circle
dyes this with the sunset reds, or dawn auburns,
to the heron's silhouette and the wild ripples,
this outpour from the deeps of the hollow land.

We are flow, and this is the spirit flowing, light,
and this is light, where a mazed thought wanders,
the token of fragile creature in form's pulsation,
returning mindless, healing a drought-dark mind.

The Stoic

Who said it was ever enough to invest the heart
only; to live now in a flare of imagined emotion;
burn, quench, sink cool into earth, suffer cloud,
or project a deity outwards into the intentionless?

Who ever thought we should judge ourselves by
love alone, that chance of meeting in labyrinths
of response, in a universe greater, more resonant
than we can credit, brighter river of flaring stars?

Who conceived the idea of the child as arbiter
of the man, womb the woman, any more than
we sense the patience of the creatures, all who
endure and suffer this existence, inside a birth?

Who ever dreamed that eternity could be won
by finding stumbling words of pure transience,
replacing flesh by metaphor, cloud with light,
that summoning our giving is somehow to give?

Who claimed that our last regret is of not having
lived enough, when we live too much too deeply
every instant, shattered leaves on a pool's surface,
there where the trout lingers, that drowned stoic?

Nothing We See....

Mounds of rock, pillows shaped by the elements,
then deeper down into the dark dale, closer in,
nearer to nature, or our dream of what nature is,
an enclosure not a trail, a cave filled with water,

to reach the silent path, ours and never nature's,
the bridleway, the lane, the sunlit vein in trees,
the sacred journey, along love's watercourse,
the footpath deep in leaves, worn step by step,

like life, repeatedly, until we know the thought
that leads us into that sanctuary of our minds,
minds that nature made but far beyond nature,
in the virtual universe, the dark space to come.

Nature cannot teach what the mind might make
of it all, and we are the precursors of dangerous
mind, perhaps to be superseded, left silent here,
creatures of inner paths, and of signs not posted,

stunned beside nature's beauty, and that not ours,
who cannot penetrate, who are guardians only,
if we've a mind to be, of intricate, delicate arcs
of stone, the pools and flows, earth's darknesses.

Despite

Your wildflower of a day,
this butterfly of an hour,
all the declaratives
of natural power,

from that dark gate of night,
throw fragile light,
to show us being
will exist despite.

Translate

Translate the face the gestures as you must,
since every self is a concealed agenda,
a mask where meaning strays.

Perhaps behind there a Russian park glistens,
or a shattered building, a desert
or a garden, human or not.

Perhaps the thought there, denying every note
of the music that seems to play,
loses itself in a greater darkness.

Perhaps you think you know those you know,
can claim more than deep acquaintance,
not understanding even yourself.

So, translate; all beauty's an act of interpretation,
there is no original, the text
is written only in your assimilation.

Move your long fingers over all this braille,
seize the un-graspable, invent the word
to capture anything that re-creates us.

Strange Crew

Some poets are rivers that flow, overwhelming,
some are mines you can delve in endlessly
for inspiration, some are trees:
plucking their fruit yields ripe and rotten.

Some poets are sounds, the echo always
wider than the meaning, some are stones:
finding the inner kernel makes us sweat;
it's the effort we remember.

Some poets are mortal, earth for poetry,
others will last, possessing a little magic,
a far sweetness out of the hawthorn tree,
but all givers of life, what it is to be.

Meteorological

Time flows through us and space and being,
Reality is in our seeing,
the august imagination Stevens said,
the universe created in the head

which is itself a figment of the mind.
Or, alternatively, self is what we find
echoed by our projection and outside:
we cannot choose the form in which we ride,

slaves to the species, nature and the dark.
Here then we meet, by the moon's clear arc,
the realist, the idealist, fused together,
ready for outer storm, inner weather.

A Capella

Composition is sweet, but is it poetry,
(the red lava bubbling out of dry ashes,
the bright river burning in the light)
is it anything to do with poetry?

The enunciation of reasons is fine,
but is that the inner self (the form
that trembles in the maw of feeling,
that seeks itself in what is not itself)

or something else, superluminal fiction,
whatever smothers the species' howling,
lights with paper lanterns the wind
tottering, covers for metal screaming?

Something darker holds me in its palm,
and what it is seems harder to reconcile
with a clear sense of this, harder to transform
to a calm presence, the light's familiar:

unblessed except for magical making,
for mind and body's bright undertaking,
the sound of Dowland there,
or Palestrina in the midnight air.

Alembic

We must leave the past continually,
move away into what does not define us,
elide the roots, escape the repetitions,
rip out the form and carry it with us
into the free space of de-commitment
to everything but our values.

Human freedom is greater than any
human achievement, wider:
imagine the trees have not disbursed
themselves of leaves, imagine
a coldness, an inertness of snow
is rather a superposition of forms,

a deeper quantum reality, your sadness
an artefact, the universe more careless
of all past efforts, being only future,
not even now – which vanishes
through your fingers, water or light,
perhaps the singing silence of cloud.

We must forget the past continually,
or be imprisoned there, its memory
present only as the inner, defining, well,
the lake of awareness, bright samsara
whose non-existence is all beauty,
greater than nirvana if seen aright,

and one with nirvana. A single breath
in which the universe hides, flows
from the deep reflections bringing
meaning, beyond the silence, beyond
the waste of reed and lily, expanse
of clay and water, beyond those dead.

What falls, the vast structure, was only
then a trembling image in the depths,
being its effort, not the form; being
the pyramid to be built again, the notes
to work a madrigal, gleaming, ringing
flicker of paint, and inevitable word.

Walk away from all past event, transform
your past to values, to futures
of affection, creations to come,
let the ghosts fade, with their wars,
in the child's eye, bow again
as sixty years ago to the breeze,

to the world without gods, the glory
in its veins, a sap of unreason
(tell that to the machines!)
burning in light, deep in the river of light,
the future this, to come, now here,
the vanishing years its alembic.

No Less Because Inhuman

Walking the wildflower morning
where the grasses, singing,
complete in the final sense,
the sense of unqualified being,
some tick of the heart reminds
the mind all idea of disintegration
is only idea, world moves
with the beauty of a woman,
however we, denying metaphor,
try to hide from the stirring
of her form and her flow
of burnished gold, her taste
of thyme, and bodiless space
in an atmosphere of meaning.

She is symbol. But a symbolic
presence is no less true
if it engages the spirit,
no less there, if not
existent in any scheme
of existents, recalling
that the innermost deep
does not predict the outer,
though it underlies it;
the hierarchy of processes
is real, and is not the ground
of things it may reduce to;
that the atom no more implies
me than it refutes her.

Walking the limestone dome,
its clear tamed hills, its light,
nothing is empty because
the heart seems empty; she stirs
in the empty air, her mildness
caresses with the feeling
of form, assuages the rage,
brings me a scent of summer
in the paradigm of winter,
is white clover, purple
knapweed, tormentil,
the turf flowered pathway,
that gradually fills the heart
with silence not emptiness.

Nothing is empty because
the heart is empty, all
that we are is within, all
the movement of her limbs
(imaginary) in air, all that
bodiless enigma of a smile,
is there, because mind is
there, describing perilously
its arc in clouded afternoon,
conjuring her subtle dress,
the gauze of time, and no less
the lover because mute,
no less, because inhuman,
our field of pure seeing.

Making Much Of A Thistle

Slowly the thistle at the hollow's edge
retreats again among shadow-grasses,
the hour of a successful music passes,
a dark bird of summer is in the hedge.

Reading, after Brahms (op 117), the bright
burned sky, whose print has faded
from revelation to a storm of light
that leaves the textual un-abraded,

the wintry heart traces a summer arc,
the frozen planet turns endearingly
its bluer whiteness to the purer dark,
and goes on writing, if more sparingly,

a passage in the night, the cities lit
a gleaming web, seeming nature too,
unplanned, an accidental part of it,
not form, or mastery, not the untrue

as every human thing can appear,
but an abolition of a distance here,
a sense, in which we are never part
of whatever nature is at heart.

The thistle is a head the stalk has arms,
over the evening field appears to cry
a singular message to the sky,
that rarely comforts if it rarely harms,

and yet is all we need of solace now;
blind, without a tongue the thistle calls
out of the emptiness, and gleaming falls
backwards into all space dare allow,

forwards towards the mind, echoing,
a strong identity, whose core is hard,
and yet is always tempered by the light
of evening that strays softly into night.

Calculations Of The Void

The light that falls through the midnight glass is wild.
This is the wild moonlight challenging your being.

The light from a far orb slides through the darkest slit,
and is the glare of the universe falling on your mirror,

and is its reflected gleam falling through your eye, out
of the universe, and into the mind. What you are,

you must forget. The light from the deepest place is
wild (and the wildness love, and the love salvation)

that cares nothing for what you suffered, what you
were, cares nothing for what you know, or where

you came from. The light blows history away, is
pure history, without meaning except time, in time.

The midnight light, from the deep field, pierces
the glass, strikes the mirror, illuminates your eye,

in a pyramid of fire, with a cone of glittering fire,
flares a thought, carries all civilisation in a thought,

a wildness in which you must yearn and strive to be,
that strips the human bare, no more than what is there,

no more than itself, a flex of the inner strangeness
that constitutes the surface of the world, defies all

metaphor except equation, neither created nor creation,
but the wildness of the thought beyond the thoughts,

the wildness in your eye, the glittering question there,
on which we build our slender tower of metaphysics,

being beyond substance, or a substance heightened.
Waking at midnight who are you in this wild light,

whose past is the flickering behind your eyeballs,
in the darkness of the room where habit vanished

and what remains is the space of that central doubt,
self, no tools in its hands, no skill and no possession?

Wild moon, stirring the landscape and its far gales,
whose wildest trees are not the trees of summer,

but the bowing trees of the edges of the mind,
where the wild stars find no rest, and the dance

is all of a mindless glistening of mobs of light,
casting up forms they cannot themselves describe,

crying the universal motion, how the world now
slides into this world adjoining, and still itself,

how moment denies the possibility of mutation,
how alteration affirms the permanence of now.

The wildness is more than us, more than our
blind refusals, our lack of belonging, more

than the strangeness of the world in which
we find ourselves, then lose ourselves to find,

wild as the pillars of the moon that tremble
white rays that hold up the scintillating dome.

It is wild beyond our genius, our order, its
own order; wild beyond chaos in a deeper

meaning of randomness; wild as the blow
of ocean is wild, as the speech of air, wild,

wild as the makers, furred in imagination,
the call of the creature, hand of the wind.

The wild light falls through the glass which
is civilisation, falls beyond, reflected into

the midnight eye, and I and you are never
nature, only the sufferers of this void of moon.

Solitary Not Lonely

I never wished to make poetry in my solitude,
I wished solitude: and there lives the poetry.
Not even I was my own audience, that was
the other, shaping itself a phantom in the air,

outside tradition, a mouthless airless breath
of the meaningless speech of wave and star,
shaping my artifice of words, a true maker.
Nothing is flying in Florida or here across

the green grass landscape, walking alone,
except that one bright bird blown through
the sky, wheeling and turning, in loneness,
not loneliness. To be alone is to be with oneself.

Nothing is flying in Florida, but the blues
and reds of alien landscape. Here instead
is all my space, between blade and stone,
infinite silence, the eternal cry that sings.

Florida is a metaphor for the heart, for its
blessed and miraculous country, its shores
when first discovered, its everglade deeps,
its sunsets that face west across all divides.

As this place is metaphor for poetry, this
solitude in which in silence I locate myself,
stepping outside all past determinants, all
the prisons, all the wearisome servitudes.

And the wind in the empty valley is light,
and death the process beyond conceiving,
for every heart that wants to touch again,
again, some miracle of simply being here.

The Lane

A crowd of dark birds cry a change of tree,
in the heat and silence of late afternoon,
late-August. The sky is English blue.
The lane worn down to stone, raised up
in turf, runs up the hill, under stiller cloud.

Wild along the edge, beside the walls,
nettles, knapweed, scabious, tall grass
bleached white and waving at a breath,
the nettle-seeds, silk clouds entangled,
and all the fields beyond, a gentleness,

of sloping green, in which my tenderness
comes to subdue my unrest and the dark,
always with us, always to be held at bay,
though we shake like aspens, and betray
our impermanence here, our foolishness.

It extends to you, always so strangely mute,
the one so hard to meet, if we ever met,
or ever know, since never as yet, although,
all lyric poetry to the understanding eye,
says you are never you, and I am rarely I.

Free Ticket

Don't write poetry, write the spirit,
in the language spoken to yourself
when quite alone. Write in blood,
as the old texts say, but sober blood,
the drop you get from a pinprick
on the thumb, don't open a vein,
a little excites, a flood's abhorred.

It's all about rhythm, cadence, not
revision, or having to think about
enriching a line, though you can edit
inanities. To write in a single flow
in a sole edition was always my aim.
No need for you to attempt the same.
Every tongue needs to go its own way.

The beauty of art is total freedom, if you can;
the beauty of freedom, never having to pay.

After Chaucer

No light in mind of the singing pine,
brings you to me, our time is done,
all beauty's in the spoken line,
not the attempt to keep it one.

No light of mind to revive the hour,
shows you to me, in earth or sky,
nothing we loved is in our power:
'Too late!' cried Beauty passing by.

Feeling The Splash

Yes Icarus falls, we note the irony,
reality's indifference to the human,
but still are moved, and so all this
is concerned, those leaves involved
with all of it, though symbolically,
that cannot write or read our poetry.

The old master painted what he saw,
the world, which no one desired to
happen, as he refined the process,
as there he placed the ancient well,
the horse, the dog, and the doorway,
making them silent with significance.

Everything human touches me, the eye
dissatisfied with formal distance,
becomes Goya and Van Gogh,
the wars boom in the air, silently,
and life and death are not museums,
as every old master, weeping, knew.

The Vanishing Selves

There was the always-angry one, and the one who walked away, inside, and travelled light, a wanderer stripped down, without possessions, drifting, silent through the untrammelled mind.

There was the adventurous one, who liked long slopes towards a wide horizon, unknown trees; and the one fearful of heights and seas, desiring safety, the calmness, the quiet of solitude.

There was the intellectual explorer, filled with excitement, appreciating the undemanding other, nature or art, and the one who loved order, poor at listening, looking, seeking the true life seriously.

There was the one who dreamed of the immaculate lover, and missed love, and found it and lost again; there was the loyal to self, disloyal to the cherished, and the disloyal to self, but loyal to what was loved.

There was the child somewhere, someone concerned for all sad and sensitive children; and the adult, too impatient of the child; there was the one delighted in language, for whom the solitary word was home.

There was the one who trembled with grass, shrank with the least of creatures, pulsed with the songbird, quivered with the moth, and laughed and cried there where the world wreaks its havoc, where time decays.

There was the melancholy one, afraid of feeling, and the one who yearned for the deepest friend, the mirror-mind; anxious in crowds, diminished by confusion, lonely alone, negated by multitude.

There was the unbeliever and the sceptic, who always believed in form, affection, truth; one who only ever wished to be left alone to dream, whom freedom hurt with its beauty, its far skies.

There was the one who inhabited the borderland
between night and day, self and the burning world;
who loved gateways, and their pauses, slow ways
winding grassy tracks, misty untouched valleys,

twilights, darkened theatres, the music of feeling.
There was the one who preferred its own, however
slight, to that of others, however great; the one who
loved on despite, the one content with simple things,

for whom nature was the most complete enjoyment,
art the song of its inner aimlessness, things uncertain,
and our transience always the greatest, most painful
gift; who appreciated the neglected, awkward, shy.

There was the one who worked the world to escape
the world, and found freedom in security in nature,
the house of repetition, the drift of cloud, the scent
of rain, the immensity at the heart of every flower

along the way, dribbling its pollen to the afternoon;
who drowned in stars, imagining their far beyond
humanity might perhaps inhabit, their coolness,
fire, their immunity to feeling, the feeling of them.

There was the one who lived intensely in thought,
so doomed to loneliness, the one who welcomed
all that was solitary, and that delicacy of shaping
in the mind, that sensitivity of all lamp-lit wings

self-hovering on silence. There was the stubborn
one of a few deep inclinations, who found danger
in memory, engagement pain, shame in ineptitude,
who laboured quietly, so as to share those labours,

sure in a thousand small ways, alive in moonlight,
lost among leaves, or flowing deep in the water;
that one who loved the shiver of an inner change,
who knew all words were beautiful, and all human.

Something Said

Your silence no longer touches me except in that
it falls on the skin like starlight on a cool evening,
and its joy and pain are tiny but pierce like stars.

You still speak in the mind, though without words,
as the tongue-less thought chimes in the inner deep,
distant as Florida and dark in the ear, an everglade,

where something stirs, but we no longer know what,
or who is speaking, if ourselves, though you develop
endlessly in silence, without consummately changing.

Your silence no longer reaches me like the waves
that go on breaking on shores we do not revisit,
whose roar is chaos, and its stuttering our partings.

It is enough the quiet goes on speaking without fail,
a breeze in the night, over the darkened hill slopes,
and water catches the starlight, its speech obscure.

The Ghosts Of Those We Were

More real in the mind than those unreal in the flesh,
or why heart's tremor, the depth of what's inside?

Twenty years ago is also now, if now's no longer
twenty years ago, one dead and the rest a fluidity,

where faces are less than faces, but symbolic scene
echoes over and over, and you walk through the air,

younger, hair in the light, green eyes in the twilight,
magnetic as time or the poles whales swim toward,

through the glittering depths, and shouldering ocean,
vast thought into memory; daunting the blue reaches.

These are the phantoms, the things that grip us tight,
and grant us meaning, even if only this self-created

shadow of outer purpose. Your dress, our discourse,
the brush of senses, pallid underworld in the mirrors.

As if we are here and there, as if we were never either
here or there, as if there never could be a nothingness

in recollection, as if there were still demands unsatisfied,
large gifts forever unable to be given, foreshadowings,

symbols, ghosts of the undone and the done, the urgent
summons to places where we now cannot be summoned,

of the child when young, the dead when young, alive
in the then reality, smiling, walking, burning with light.

This ache of the ghosts of ourselves, as we were then.
This air that contains one breath of the billions gone.

Those streets all changed that linger here quivering
the unsolid images, the mirages, the window glasses,

that will soon be all that we were, more than we were,
but clinging to present being in a moaning of ghosts.

At The Gate of Night

In half-light, earthlight,
where the past is the end of the mind
as thought fails to end,
as the universe curves perhaps
beyond boundary, in infinite paths
of the finite,
as this horizon circles forever
where I stand
and lean on the gate.

In twilight, earthlight,
in the setting of beauty, the realm
of the bird that sings,
with all human meaning, its human
song, that sounds inside, no doubt,
with a more alien
cry, of time,
forever happy, unhappy, free
in its little life
that moves in infinities,

our light is earthlight,
always, however we go to the stars;
and the single tree
always half-darkness, half-flame,
moves on through the delicate orbits,
this tree at the edges
of space, in whose
leaves we have gathered, curious, free
but bound, and unbound,
in Promethean mystery.

Everything Real Presents Its Credentials

There are no gradations in being, what exists
is, with no qualification, the slight
and the un-slight equal. The stone
and the man are one, light
and the tree.

So the significance of smallest things; crane
fly or common blue, and the bees
on ragweed, vetch, purple clover,
echo like neutron star, or
breaking wave,

in the lightning of their presence, whose
metaphor is everything flickering
inside the mind, any richness
of universe divorced from all
but essential form.

What has no end, not even end in itself,
goes like the moon, completely
into night, drenched in the fire
of leaves, white with forgetting
all free to return.

Being is not what you need to justify, nor
bring, in your poverty, to the foot
of the frost-rimed cliff, nothing
needs know of us, or not
know, and so

indifference disappears in difference,
the sordid place confesses to terrible
love, and taciturn beauty burns
upwards into the darkness where
all of our equals ignite.

Wall-Mender

The walls you mend are not to debar the spirit.
It rises at shelves of stone, burns over green
fields, dashes wildly against those darker trees,
making you, here, a part of a greater landscape,
the horizon in you to which your core responds.

This physical devotion, day after day, is never
revealed in its purpose which is the impersonal
object of creation, and for the sake of the thing,
that other generations walled, these boundaries;
and the good of yesterday's motion was the art

of lifting a self against the weight of being, not
the outcome of the effort, though that stands so;
to affirm, then lose the sense of all affirmation,
but still to re-affirm. Slowly the bent back arcs,
matter lifts to your music, to the form restored.

What breaks the wall, and empties the horizon,
is not in your frame of reference, not the great
moon leaping through the cloud-banked reaches,
not the bare page that returns the reader's stare,
not the greenness, dazed, of all leaves over grass.

You play the artificer, Daedalus of earthy flight,
a bronze spirit cased in the wrappings of a man,
of a sculptor's vision, yet are nothing of all that.
Not the way, nor the going of the way, the way
of going is the thing, the wing-beat that redeems.

Those Moons

The Earth it seems was lifting in the glass.
The light it seems ascended over moons
on which the light of Earth was memory.

You it seems were rising in my mind, even
as if I did not see you rising, but perceived
with earth-lit senses all their barren surface.

The bird it seems was beating through a dark
far from all predators, thinking a dawn white
beyond itself in the declaration of its meaning.

Over the risen Earth the bird-wings creaking
brought me a light of barren dust-bare moons
on which the light of Earth scored memories.

Observations At Dusk

There is in the leaf something that is not leaf,
of surface strangeness hanging at time's centre
which is blank sky today, obscured by cloud,
although when not canopied it is still our bare
surround, awaiting dark's surprising universe.

The something is of a body without a face, or
the sheet behind the cover, that eternal white
that sinks deeper if you try than the title does
that faces it, however fine the word, however
far profound. The strangeness is of the echo

that returns from the frameless mirror ahead,
as the page of the leaf merges with the dark,
and reality can be no longer read, as memory
moves and takes the players with it, reworks
the river and the bench and all those cicadas,

removes the script of your features, removes
the writing from the wall, the paintings, your
moment of style, the run of human language,
until we form the statues without eyes or lips,
the buildings without windows, the lake's eye.

We must render our thoughts more complex,
not to match the unmatchable leaf, echoing
with the fall of starlight across its silent lid,
but to quiver as ourselves, some shape inside
the glass that slowly becomes distinguishable

from darkness, its mouth open in a great cry.
The thought must transcend the intelligence
that creates it, illuminate the mirror with its
own light, never with the call of its creator,
until the unknown unseen gifts us a meaning.

On Stage

Oh, listen to what was said
and not the verse,
to the play itself
and not what we rehearse

in a poor translation,
devoid of sense
of the heart's creation
and the present tense,

lodged in the perfect,
where all is won,
no longer abject pain,
but nothing's done.

Here is the hurt,
now is the blazing sky,
not in the lines we blurt,
the death we die.

Etruscan Bronze Horse-Head (7th Century B.C)

The head alone exists, and the long neck's
thrust of green bronze arched and thrown
towards the rider, or the onlooker;
its unknown body, in the invisible,
concealing everything of flaring light
except the fire, the blaze of stars
their pulse of energy, their call
to life, the thunderous restlessness
launching the nervous horse-mask
into a beyond that includes us.

Because we too are this fearful life, this
anxious rearward glance, or is it
challenge, that dares us too in mind
and soul to hold the image, the idea
greater than all those realities
that limit and define us? It shines,
out of Etruscan silence, of brilliant
locks of shadowy mane, the taut
drawn lines of an endurance – such
strength of what is, such vulnerability.

Ballad Of The Wall

What's in the real you proclaim?
What meaning in a human name?
All the essentials here must lie
inside the heart, not in the eye.

Nothing except the human mind,
creates the Idea, frees the blind
to other, fiercer modes of seeing,
Imagination, the shape of being.

What's in this wall except a form
of stone the spirit sculpts, a norm
of those barriers we scarcely see?
Habitual vision brings you to me.

And I am, for you, inner creation,
the spirit's realm of interpretation,
of something beyond us, we know,
and cannot grasp but by this show

of the unreal inside the real, the real
inside the unreal, in our double sense
of what we believe, of what we feel,
of our burst of light, our brief intense.

Boundless Again

Morning-shine on the frozen ancient seas
the long-compressed, the sweet submerged
reefs and cliffs,
the shelves of buried light, the curves
and swell of drifted creatures
the limestone over
the planes of sand and marl,
the creeks and streams and gravel
of the ghostly flows,
the lakes and gorges,
centuries no one owned.

And light on the inclined beds of darkness,
the floating and falling, the slow immersion,
veins and coils,
always transmitting the un-transmittable,
ordinary things, the forms,
mass of life and its ending,
mass of un-living ribs of reality,
the bones of trees, the intrusions
of a great heat and its cooling,
rocks and lost rains,
granting us our strange chance.

Light from something and never a nothingness,
light without reason, without fear, remorse,
human feeling;
vastness and sacredness but in no religion,
schist and slate over which
white clouds came and went,
while the hills stayed, shining,
eternal, selfless, painless, pure,
stone that once knew the breezes,
under bright wind, clear moon,
boundless again.

Planetary

The kestrel in grey mist owns this strange light,
hovers, half-visible, on green way, dim field,
near the stand of trees,
the windless air is warm.
Make the bird a symbol if you will
of an autumn still as leaves
waiting frost,
done with harvest.

This landscape has been loved, its beauty,
contenting generations, survives our futures:
here the self-contained
find freedom, the eye finds
peace. And never a question of style,
but the feel of things, the hush
of a suffusion,
a brightness, immanence.

This is the link, as though, through centuries,
mind touching mind, form overruling form,
of nothing changing, all
recreated, a scurrying over
stillness. As it will be, to come, lost
under different stars than those
we see, musing
in silence, our eternity.

Leaf-Fall

It truly makes no difference the way we took, it would always have led to the self. Yet how do we imagine a world in which there were never alternatives, where there remains only the single path of the actual, with no hint of pre-destination or the immutable, no, only free flight of the unfolding that comes to be?

Those paths through the trees were never choices, except in the sense that gazing deeply down one had already led the mind to the move of feet through the untouched leaf of the other; and the path we took (for nothing's for us except it is through us and never despite) the path that included us wholly.

All the might-have-been, is only imagination's wing. Our history has a single unfolding, and here the superpositions are resolved into the endlessly free un-free, that false dichotomy; leaf-fall is in the end a perfect simplicity, and all the non-beings phantasy, from which I wake, moving now

down through the hill-wood, into the peace I neither chose nor resist of a flow that is greater than self, that becomes and creates the self, weaving the skandhas, so confirms the illusion of form, form's reality, that the nothings I grasp are the I, and this I the grasping at nothing, the nothing beautiful and the nothing loved.

Every Meaning You Conceive

If it was not ambiguous how could it be
the poem of the mountain and not the mountain,

or that ghostly shape that stimulates the mind;
like us, eternally slipping in and out of being?

How could it be the poem of the sea and
never the sea, or the poem of the leafless leaf?

How could the poet lacking verbal duplicity
reveal self in the longing not to be self but river,

or the redly blowing wind, or the curve of stone;
be mind and what is not mind, but mindfully?

If it was not both itself and what it only merely
seeks to suggest, a hint of what hovers out on

the edge of vision, for the deaf, for the blind,
for the mute, their pure confliction of language,

how could it speak to the heart (that aspect of
mind) rather than the darker that overlays it?

If it was not the poem and therefore greater
always than maker, making, indifferent to it,

how could it be the universe in the ear, the hiss
of the poplar when it sways to a chime of stars?

If it was not neither myself nor the yearning
for self, how could it duskily achieve night,

etching our being on these inhuman things;
or hang in the arbour of time, swaying crazily?

Binary Star

Thought walks tracks, over moors of beauty
on which the pale lines straggle or run true,
between green portals where the salt-road ran
down a cleft, now silent once a vibrant gloom.

The mind makes paths, our steps make mind,
these lead to you, from you, the counterparts
to the shadowy cities of our lost beginnings,
to those singular places where we interwove.

It was your voice that was the deeper voice,
deeper than storm-light's singing, green cloud
out of the distant bay, the churr of insect life,
those powers of the wind, the density of time.

It was always enough there to be simply being,
needing no genius, slaves to the shifts of form,
sensitive as needles to the linguistic meanings,
the emotions moving cloistered behind speech.

It was always enough to be the inarticulate cry,
tides of the heart, stars flung from fiercer skies,
for whom the world was not some challenge
of wayfaring, but the faring of the way itself,

through chaos to order, and back to chaos again,
bringing no further understanding of ourselves,
only a juncture, binary circling, of dark and light,
exerting a force each on each, so defining orbits,

in which a trail might make a mind, its thoughts
make trails, and both entangled creating space
and time, laying down eternity, responding now
to the slight movements of the enchanted fabric,

clues of the meaningless dark, threads of flame,
rulers of vanishing, of soft return, delineating
what might serve, and what might not, to erect
the human, far from its unmerciful simulations.

Nature Of The Authentic

Between the artifices of our emotion,
of those who act, and the emotionless
are those whose emotions are their own.

Why should I offer up my emotions?
Humble they are but they still are mine,
the fires that make the one Self resonate,

a something-higher that makes you unique,
that chose us in ourselves to make ourselves
out of the strangeness and familiarity we see

in each other. This the mystery of relationship
born of mind, whose matter is its adjunct not
the essential truth, the platform not the form.

I do not trade my emotions, nor my thoughts,
I give them, silently, into your keeping, you
who comprehended the nature of the journey,

never as we thought it, in amazing cities, or
those landscapes where nothing is as it seems,
but everywhere a new fearsome concentration

round the honeyed whirlpool where the river
vanishing underground in a last bright sigh
goes to savour darkness, and know return.

A Hawk Looks At A Man

A hawk looks at a man, from the ash-tree branch.
What can we say? Mind looks at mind, but not
with a shared experience, nor process nor intent:

the languageless looks at the languaged, the named
at the unnameable, the player-with-concepts stares
at the concept-free, considering the space between.

Hawk feels the primal shudders of the world, hears
the silent grass in the hissing wind, savours clouds,
skims shelves of pale stone holding hawthorn trees.

Man sinks into winding thoughts, his tame replies,
believing somewhere his devotions will reclaim
the valley and the hill, the voiceless grasp of air,

return him to what he mastered, masterless, out
of all artifice, beyond the forms back to the form
of presence, done with making, echoed in the sky.

A hawk on a branch not lonely in its solitude, or
alone in a caul of being only bodies understand
pulsing hearts, immune to mercy or forgiveness,

is not an emblem of your lonely thought, is not
the poet's to claim, or the naturalist's to classify,
though broken, tamed, not shaped in your image,

unsoiled by what taints your sad attempts to bind
him, since he unlike you is stream, hill, firmament,
a piece of the space that for us is mere vanishing,

a place of our restlessness, condemned to see
forwards and backwards, though he imagines
flights we imagine, imagines swoop and fall,

but thwarted, returns; injured, feels no regrets,
one with the prey in mutual humility, the pride
of being no more than this, and the perfect this,

so that there is no dream of unlikely heavens
stirring those feathers, and what we remember
is the simple earthlight refracted by those eyes.

The Unadvertised

I treasure the unwatched places, broken cameras,
unrevealed secrets, pacts of an unspoken loyalty.

I love the unseen minutes of a night, a star whose
name I fail to remember, my forgotten thoughts.

I hear somewhere the poem that was half-written
and then lost, the sonata that never came to light,

the feeling that disdained to surface, a character
in the play who never said a word. I delight in

the face that no-one can recall, the life that is
unexamined, the inscription the rains obliterate,

the enigmas of history that will always escape
all evidence, the fossil no one finds, the species

no one saw, the planet round an invisible sun,
the edge of what is that we cannot go beyond.

I fear the unknowable fear, the stain of being,
the sense unfathomable of the deeper flowing,

the unsolvable equation, the infinite reiteration
that might be finite, the mystery of the primes.

I love the neglected corners, the places visible
to one eye once then merely parts of the scene,

the angle on a landscape the musing traveller
catches by chance, unrepeatable, the morning

light that's gone, unforeseeable and done for,
the creature that's unique, the individual eye.

I love your meaning, perfect if no one else
ever detects it, or understands what's signified

by a line that slips by with ambiguous inflection,
containing you, or I, or their baffling conjunction.

The Moon's A Blade

Who thought to be here in this mortal moment,
feeling this Earth's fragility, our galaxy's,
everything a flicker from the primal tremor,
fields where 'no wind blows true forever',

or no wind blows at all, whose order is not
kin to our sense of order, but essential form,
the self-created, nature's strange dominion,
and dead humanity glittering from no star?

Lives of the creatures, those eyes that watch
our embarrassed selves cross their terrain,
fearful, challenging faces or slowly grazing,
gazing at clouded grass, in the moonlight,

those indifferent to fate, the all unknowing;
they differ from us in that respect. Transient
traveller, unable to leave the world, still
make that space inside your mind you will

not abandon, where your true self is intact;
create one circle of stones, one sanctuary.
Creatures go to the slaughter, we pretend
to their innocence, though moon's a blade.

Who thought to be here in this mortal moment,
inhabiting nowhere, forced to await the act,
buffeted by air, surrounded by waving grass,
in love with the silence of the executioner?

Endlessly, Impossibly

He wanted the thing that was perfectly created,
that echoed with the sense of its own rightness,
that shone in its bounding line, a single whole.

The breath of a thousand devotions would inhabit
the shell of its resonant being, it would have life;
like the life out of Nature's supreme carelessness.

Though there were preludes, paintings, sculpture
that came close, he wanted the word's creation,
ambiguous meaning expressed, not trembling

latent in some physical shape, or line, or sound.
It would fill the void, glitter in the empty glass,
form the page's mirror, nothing of ice and flame,

but muted tones, a soft music of alien speech,
won from the incommunicable, a cold and heat
of being beyond those leaves, the flare of water.

He wanted something that would face the night,
on its own terms, an equal to the clear darkness,
and capable of being shown, as this, of our own.

He wanted the shock of the loved, the beautiful,
and the sweetness of the long-known without
its ache, luminous ashes of candescent stars

whose brightness would linger in the thoughts,
compelling adherence, demanding a loyalty
complex and silent; disembodied, and yet there

in a solid declaration. He would hold the form
of the dancer vanishing, of the note withheld,
of the shape behind the pillar, the hieroglyph,

so that the mind might sink into that exertion,
yet still vibrate endlessly, un-disappointed,
not as, when the moon hides, the light falls.

The Dance

There is a coldness in the beauty of the images
the telescope brings.

What are these that shine on the edge of eye,
things of unmeaning?

Fearsome silent stars round which silent planets
pass and repass without a whisper,

showing strange light outside the visible, born
of alien movements.

Nothing that we feel has its presence there, out
among far, weird fish out of water.

There is a chill. Nothing there eases this hurt,
this ache of what swift purposelessness means,

how it too shines, voiceless in space of mind,
with its own grace and beauty,

human at last, child-crying or a mouth of pain,
round which notes form,

or from which the delicate line rises of arm
or thigh, or neck or back in the dance,

or a lit silhouette of evening trees, or a fountain
that falls endless in the darkness.

The Poem That Sings

The stream runs under your feet, articulate
as Verlaine, that terrible sweetness,
that has something of regret, beauty
un-relinquished as yet, seeping away,

and something of tenderness, the gentle
self not made for this world lacking
space for the temperamental, lovers
of ironic gardens, carvers of pearls.

The light pours over your brow; archaic
word, but what else to describe the slow
curve of that delicate arch of thought,
echoing the flow of an intimate line,

in which you speak to me of impossible
things, of rhymed certainties, grave
walks, spiritual hours, pure places,
enraptured faces, the poem that sings.

Momentary

It is in the moment we love, and in the moment
that the poem is real for its creator, thereafter
it becomes another sunset lost
and not the universal key, recovered.

In the moment every part of the mind and senses
focused on the acrobatics of word,
the theatrical gesture, however muted,
the temporary conquest of the ever-absurd.

Through the moment mind reaches out to
eternity, taking itself so seriously,
trying to preclude the satyrs' laughter
the nymphs' light dismissal, miraculously

conjuring an illusion of form and light
from folded paper, from earth's night,
which if you touch it, so, will evaporate
like a veil of mist, glimmering, late.

Share

Share the Earthlight.
This will not come again,
no, not as your beauty
nor among the stars.

Detach from the stress
make the sanctuary
deep in mind, make
the place of a love

the space of silence.
Share the Earthlight.
This is no shadow
of a planet, no simulacrum,

this is the thing itself,
fluid with self-creation,
bright with the life-flow,
this is the light on the grey

stile, on cool stone in grass,
on the gateways, on a breeze
sifting through moving trees,
stirring their glitter.

This will not come again.
Constellations shift, their stars.
Feel the meaning shifting,
free of other being.

Respect the creatures,
let them alone, as I
would be left alone, deep,
in my own universe.

Share the Earthlight.
This will not come again.
Share the Earthlight,
spare the Earth.

East

Those ancient Rockies and Sierras,
sharp-edged, almost new.
These eastern hills
across an ocean,
rounded, worn, softened,
by a European tenderness.

The myths are ours, or rather
of the forerunners,
myths of the mazy
seas, the greenwood
forests, the old rivers, there,
the sweet deep intimations

of an ethic and a motive,
of a virtue and a love,
not those strange pines,
below the snowline,
on dark tamed ranges,
of a continent not mine.

The operatic longing was ours,
the wild drama, the hour
and its resolution,
and what was not ours
was far-back and ancestral
in caves of the grassland shores.

Peoples and tribes, none of them
truly first, as the individuals
were first, the lone ones,
dancing the primal dance,
in their loose-knit closeness.

Past peoples and tribes, the land,
stretching far west, glowing
with sunset reds, archaic
cloud, fire of the Sierras,
while my shadow-realm sings
in its green womb of twilight.

All We Could Ever Want

Walking on hills that shine in October light.
Eating on cold grass by the lead-mine's pit,
the broken winding-engine. Watching the sky

turn from a gravid white to a sombre pewter,
in a landscape filled with pity, or its illusion,
which cannot speak but hisses a loss of love.

Looking out to the far levels of eastern quiet,
no longer pregnant, cradling the slow dying
of the day of beauty, that asks for nothing.

Stumbling from stiles, down a lane of trees,
by scars and mounded shafts, a green air
under my feet, adrift in the land of plenty.

The Third Act

The stage is that bright box that glistens,
out of which dancers in their masks rise
as seat-bound emotions inwardly stutter.
But these images and myths are eternal.

Here is remorse, and bravado, and regret,
and here the monster, here the innocent,
caught in the light of a human yearning
for more than science, more than as is.

There are bodhisattvas everywhere, yet
what is satisfying about the white void?
Better the creatures in their disguises
that bleed and cry like us, and signify:

here is tragedy, the unintended flight
of consequence, or the fragile failing,
the flailing of character, the craving,
the cruel, the tender, the indifferent,

the disinterested, the crime, the fall,
the seduction of tales not ours, faith
not ours, terrible courage, night fear,
everything that surrounds us here,

and that darkens or lightens, storm
inside the cage that is their theatre,
into which those conjured visages
recede, taking our being with them.

Rain Is Energy In Matter Falling

All too much of us, and far too little
of the panoply of Nature, the scenes
of life on dry plains lit by lightning,
the Monsoon-beaten jungle greens.

Far too little of the mountain upland,
or the hushed lane, or the open fields
where the sheep and cattle ruminant
in placid profound non-understanding.

All too much of our noise and egotism,
a little intellect and too much of the self,
instead of the rattle of rain on the roof,
or summer heat cascading motionlessly.

Too much of what aspires not what is;
emotional indulgence; self-compassion,
as if we deserved mercy from the stars;
or absolution, hankering for redemption.

Sigh no more there for an order finer
than self-created order. The deceiver
sketches on the night but love reveals
the shallow senses his intent conceals.

And those constellations over us, not
his absolutes but chance concatenation,
endorse your deeper, and harsher view
of what makes man and woman, all

their matter, an all too much of human,
and all too little of the sacred mystery
we did not fashion, burning in the air
or falling, to soak the dark earth there.

Flying Water

This is life, and nothing missing.
The tree is the tree as the tree is.

Tolerance, non-violence, gratitude
are signs of our needed acceptance.

Between self-delusion and ignorance,
oh void, open to the bright landscape.

Most of what we do is useless, trouble.
Everything of value is inexhaustible.

Though we know we are spirit, process
not mere matter, we still chase the solid.

Earth is the great circle, nothing lacking.
The un-transmittable is easily transmitted.

Nothing holy, every pebble is gigantic;
Forgetting self, the cliff the cloud exists.

You are the light, bamboo, flying water,
the sound of the peak, your ashes pure.

Dalesmen

Here they planted trees round every farm
and grange, otherwise the slopes would be
bare; planted windbreaks, planted beauty.

Now in autumn the deepening colours cry
the sweetness of this landscape to the sky
and reiterate this fall of unimagined music,

as the walls too are beauty beyond function,
as stone and wood and light are the womb
from which we came, still authentic in us.

This was the architecture of need, the line
of meaning made good, a sheltering spirit,
transformed even when lapsed into flame,

green flickering fires, grey-white misted,
flares of shadow, flames of a darker soil.
This is an artifice far outside our artifice,

close to the thing itself, which is transience,
form and its metamorphoses, but substance,
a wordless energy dispensing with the why,

inhabiting the how, and its deep un-sadness
which to us always seems sad; the loveless,
because we remain ever desperate for love.

Here they planted trees, the beech and lime
ash and sycamore, long-clothed these hills,
gave birth to unwitting mystery of the leaves,

gave life to life, and not to human boundaries,
unrolled the folded walls, stone back to stone,
gave, and received and thanked, like the three

Graces in Botticelli's Primavera, who encode
his age's subtler philosophy, not of absence
but resonance, the sign enclosed in signature,

like the tracing of these trees over a landscape,
the wash of shadow, autumnal glow, its light
carving the real, then measuring out its right.

Beyond the Ear

In this land of quiet, watching the light flow
over walls, down depths of fields, a pause
of greenness, in the technology of silence,
where there still are more trees than people,
time seems to favour those who made things,
though there is no judgement, simply being.

In this land still peaceful, barely overflown,
power seems a sickness, history re-iteration
of similar rituals by indistinguishable minds
satisfied by curious perversions, impotent
to remain this side the river and keep stiller,
melt down the steel and return to the plough.

If we lose this quiet how will we hear again
the inner voice that is wary of past symbols,
the first person in the mist? We need to find
ourselves inside the universe, not simply our
surrogates or our successors, we need to feel
our place in the solitary space, our little lives.

Solipsism Is Also A Mode Of Engagement

I always took the world too seriously. A sense of life's vulnerability, it's fragile wandering at the void's edge, sent me adventuring, only in mind. The reader was the book, and there was the great space of imagination gleaming.

Being conscious was to search for the centre, where in the evening every light was silent, and what flickered was the spirit in the self, for whom its dreams are true, its perfection an ethic untouched by raw event, a meaning.

The earth's cry was a crudity, a damp surface glutinous and challenging, and the mind alone a sanctity, a grace of existence, the concern of tenderness for its own, that settling calm, where the tragedy is noise, the comedy futile.

Purpose was to remove the extremism, renew the flow of the senses through winter evening, the intellect in summer, the necessary heart, which resides in certain circuits of the mind; accept impermanence, as a permanent relation.

I never believed, with a total faith in self, a fire slowly brightening, the consuming and unfading, fearful of others and welcoming, desiring trust, which is the core of love, what the poor creature gives or longs for, or defeats by its true yearning.

My own confessional, I knew the inner mirror that reflects the human as it redefines and shines a glistening light onto strange shapes, figures of what is, the phantasms and moving shadows that are more ourselves than those outer spaces.

I saw clearly, so wished to make the going easy in order, form, not the chaos of arms and faces, listening to deeper speech, to sovereign tongues, though plunged in air, awake under bitter moons, the individual light, centred on self, so all things.

The Two Worlds

Beauty's love for the Beast is what we
aspire to, not what we feel, or that he

deserves mercy, because also fallen
out of the ideal order into our reality,

where truth is often deformed, love
crippled, meaning distorted, its hump

a sign and symbol of the undiminished
and so burdensome weight of the flesh.

How can we not admire selflessness
when we seek it for ourselves, blessed

coolness of soothing hands on the brow
that lacks a horn or intrinsic whiteness?

The evil is no more transient than the good,
but never an ideal, thankfully, its conquests

shabby and dumb, however vile, motions
of viscous matter, and mental debasement.

Whereas when the figure of light, fleeting,
dances into the labyrinth of the monster,

and frees him to his own beauty, we cry
for the unredeemed, for what might be,

in imagination's space, all power disarmed,
the new-shared meaning transfiguring time.

Giacometti: Chariot, 1951

The symbol on the chariot's step is Woman
but not in the act of war, in the womb of art;
her lightness, slim, erect is the counterforce:
peace, a flurry of the unseen white winged.

A mast almost, no warrior shield or spear;
the bronze arms, questioning, rest; waiting,
the olive branch in hand maybe, the patina,
simply, of time, a long healing of this hurt.

The wheels, fate re-doubled, motionless,
fuse to the earth or the temple's pedestal,
which does all the turning that they need
through a space devoid of past intent, but

echoing still with its savagery, her head
the anxious form that faces the horizons
always beyond our vision, inside hers so;
there the slight curves of the naked body

the swell of matter, a slight forward shift
of the arm, the right radius, holding life's
momentum (slight) its forgiveness (mute)
as a bare gesture, lost in itself a backcloth.

Much then from little, the small the humble
being beautiful, moreover nakedly honest
in classical hint, a suggestiveness of truths
we cannot understand in suffering or out,

to do with the raw material, our unsought
delivered presence; to be here despatched,
with the sacrifice or the hero; to be witness;
to ride on a mechanism of power to futures

invisible to the powerful, to empathise with
sun-falls, or welcome the rising orb, the hand
unfolding in ineffable greeting, bearing within
all our long centuries of species, all potentials.

The Valley Of Feeling

Here's the emotion of a boredom striving
towards a mockery of twittering response.

Here's a happiness which is a quietude too
moving faithlessly over a hilly landscape.

There a smile and an eye exchange a tear
a small fear twitches, a temptation gleams.

Streams of joys scatter down the high ledge
exacting diamond, scarring ascending stone.

A slow taut viciousness occupies the view,
gnawing a derision: dark proclaims a spell.

Troubled mind burns in empathy, cries out
with insight, waits where the insults cross,

powerless in beauty, closed in strange form,
condemned to feverish swamps of meaning.

The Dreaming

The road is meaningless, leading nowhere
except to where we already are. Red sand,
bedrock, bone-white twigs, strange bushes
and the mind caught between civilisations.

Who is the shadow dark on the far horizon?
Between us all the millennia, in this silence
so complete you hear the wind whispering,
the distant trumpet of the wind, or the tick

and swish of painted lizard, and not the mind
of an estranged self, now irredeemably other,
poised on one leg, a lance held high, merged
with this land in the way that for us is never.

Never the contained, always the newcomers
separated as if by some impervious layer
of light from our true selves that go before,
singing, crying, over the ground that kills,

but hides the sip-well, nurtures its creatures,
the paths we once survived, the lines of life
connecting places in the heart: how did we
lapse from shadows to these dulled realities,

clear and settled, but no longer nature, split
from the dark primal eye? Losing rituals
that were rituals of meaning, what remains
to us are the rituals of un-meaning, gestures

unrelated to their depth in a dim survival,
vestiges without shape, the tattered ruins
hanging on trees that once were human,
scattered in rocks, bleached, brittle, dead.

Where is the earthlight now? The bird asks,
the wild-dog asks, a lizard asks, this moon
is no longer their moon, our moon, lingers
tamed in the skies cold but no longer wild:

to conquer is to lose, we have learned that
much from the sad jetsam we brought here,
our broken remnants in grit and the fences
that rule the spaces, untouched, in our spirit.

Where is the earthlight now? Where is one
mind we have not destroyed, one landscape
we have not touched, blurred, made simple
where a complex layered its non-possession,

where the ways were in and not beyond us,
where we had respectful names for beings
their other lives, shared and gave sanctuary,
and heard without speech the little voices,

the beat, and clack, and hum, the blown
music, on a long walking over rain-swept
or lightning-filled horizons, into canyons
and caves of our meditation on this light,

the red sand blaze, stone under the hand,
pebbles under the feet, the miraculous
star hurling its dawn in our faces, there
in the inner stillness, silence to silence,

not our degenerate selves, not the lost
fragments, but the first peoples, those
ancestors of ours, brighter and greater,
carving existence out of uncarved air.

Mind Future

Water and starlight were where we began,
in the grasslands' sigh, on the earth's floor,
in the nurturing, or slept by the hiss of tides,
out of long labour from which we emerged,

no gods in the house, the four walls empty.
Sunlight or moonlight, each tree precious,
flickers of fire, a tilling of moistened dust,
leaving our skeletons behind, our singing.

Lest time be dead, to resurrect the earth,
now and not cease, dancers, true lovers;
be the eagle's sovereign wisdom, recur
with this world's recurrence, not above

but inside nature, out of water, starlight,
purposeless, inventing purpose, crying
values to the intentionless, long-valued,
giving speech to the incommunicable.

Dancers, true lovers, the earth sacred
in the heart, the heart a flame of mind,
not the alien, divine, or a cool absence
flooding matter, the tyranny of inertia.

There was a different authority, another
calling, otherwise than this, out of which
we must make our sense of why, the one
that is free of violence towards creature,

the one ever-tender, staring in the silence
towards, beyond, the far the near horizon,
into mind's future which is never of this
world, ghostlier, sweeter, human, clear.

Form Is Void, Void Is Also Form

World is more than a brief imagination,
or the flare of mind. How does it hang
together the gold in the air, the vigour
of the abstraction, and Plato's ghosts,

except by deep process, the betrothals
of a million years, or glimmers of pale
summer nights, or selves we welcome
out of the far whispers of the species?

World is more than eyes' appearances,
or wherefrom in us river, the grasses,
the edge of the leaf, the grain of sand
in the spring, the panoply of the given.

Our poverty, dark in our silence, is not
Earth's, nor dims the brighter hangings,
and we are such who may yet supersede
suffering or ennui in elaborate presence.

In The End

In the end it is kindness exalts what we are,
not our power over distances, our landings
on pale comets or far off planetary moons.

The fictitious god of obedience or even love
is less than a single act of the generous eye,
the light not of stars, coloured of raw earth

and more of us than the tenuous skeleton,
or the rational mind, its accomplishments,
more of the quiet landscapes of the heart.

Faced with suffering, gods must fall silent,
as we do, no word to say, blind with feeling,
a palpable motion sunk deeper than the light.

The colour of the dead, of the defeated, is
the shade of earth, before the gasp of green,
and our victory is that we comprehend them,

not as of heavens of star-fall, of alien spaces,
but in the human, a kinship under the moon,
asking reply of nothing but ourselves alone,

from the unwelcoming void, bringing our
value of affection to a darkness beyond us,
where uncomfortable we chatter science.

The gods are not the utterance we must say
to the nothingness, not the forms or formless
echoes we should make sacred, in our place;

rather the tongue is the space for human joy,
for the species we are part of, never the cold
where the iceman only carves more distance,

that absence we are always separate from, as
we are separate from the earth that made us,
but still a part of its colour, a flare of its arc.

Primal

Too little the first love and the last love sing,
of moon beauty or suns unclouded,
too much history mars the freshness,
and your features
the creature's
primal meaning, its sole mover.

Greater the first dream and the last thought,
clearer who see mind unshrouded,
too much cleverness obscuring
what burns the heart
in deeper art
of the lost, and re-found, lover.

Unsleeping the voice inside that murmurs
of true pastures, free of violence,
of peaceful landscapes, blue
in untainted skies
their kinder eyes
into our sadness, straying never.

November, Twilight

A murmuration of starlings breaks
the light on lanes the late hour makes,
weaves its patterns on the sky,
co-ordinations beyond the eye,
Dante saw, and likened to
the swarm of lovers, I and you:
stars though are at our heads and feet,
above the clouds, below this earth,
and he is welcome to that space
where hearts abandon time and place;
the human only gave us birth,
and in its clasp we are complete.

Ballerina

(in celebration of Uliana Lopatkina)

A strict discipline enables us to find
such shadow of the body in the mind,
a long obsession towards perfection,
the dedication, hardly knowing why,
that renders form to the singing eye.

You are pure outline, then pure sense,
flexing the sinews of magnificence
into a sweeter yearning, saying life
is this transience burning to be free,
this momentary flare of no mystery,

born out of pain, and our limitation,
to find the heart, deliver us creation,
that wave, a flow of hands and arms,
in which the thrusting Nike cries: I fly,
that I may embody you, so: and you, I.

Faint Motion

Down from a golden sky no meanings fall.
Like glass the wind blows over silences,
in deepening twilight, where a world is dust,
trees silhouetted like black statues there.

This is the evening of the unreal, where
heart and the senses dance ghost images
onto a backcloth of that light-shot dale
that winds between its ridges in denial.

This is our strength then, this faint motion
of eye to cloud, hand to the edge of stone
that bounds the path, irreality of the touch
through which what creates us we recreate?

This is our transformation, into distances,
the breath of those we loved substantially
seeming to flow again through darkening air,
young still, and alive, in their lost instances?

The Persistent

Swarms of the birds are strange, white
and black flickers of individuality, but all
linked in the twittering of the misted fields
strong carriers of midnight and of light.

There they impose an order on the hills,
like thoughts coherent in the mind, set,
brave identity, on nothingness, the blank
of manuscript, the empty screen of will.

They cry the vast dome, its ineffectual
power to cast a glow, or dull, but never
reach into the heart so of each other,
the host of it, the gathering, the wall

wet against universe, in blur of wings;
or ever define us, or this trembling
of the net of what entangles and denies,
strange seethe, nub at the core of things.

The Truth That Kills, Creates

We pretend, but the lack of purpose hurts us,
we pretend, ask the universe is it us you need
and no reply, always a yearning for the other,
to squeeze response from its greater darkness.

We move the romance in our music, we cry
so softly, half-embarrassed, to the distances,
make purpose, find a way to fill this space
with the magnificence, ah, of our presence,

afraid of a response if it should come, fearful
of that universal mirror, whose depths gleam
with green darkness, faint shreds of alien light
and our star, bleeding quiet on upturned faces.

Look then at the smallest things, the fine detail,
the curiously wrought, the discrete creative,
that in which Self murmurs and then resides,
enshrining what it is to have been, and here.

Handle the humble contours, the small tune
opening the larger heart, the flicker of paint,
the unsatisfied, unsatisfying leap of the word
trying to struggle free of an unending gravity.

Say what is ours to give, to the roaring air,
to the outer blackness, not the fact of truth,
not our knowledge of it, but the human eye;
say the human eye, perception, say the ear,

the hand that touches the unseen face, oh say
the scent, the taste of an incomplete existence,
swiftly passed, say beauty, the coiled in joy:
despite the lack of purpose, cry our purpose.

We pretend to love, and love is all we have,
a love of form, reality, the other; the delight
of these strands of a clarity too fierce to bear
in the small hours of morning, in inwardness.

Not to pretend is blessed, is our salvation, not
in the bounds of some religion, but in the flesh,
the authenticity of fear of, affection for, it all,
the wilder mystery that kills, the rising breath.

Sound Of Speech In Winter

The sound of speech invades the winter night.
The sound of winter night invades our speech.

Summer was that shape of the dress flying,
the honeyed straw of the abandoned fields,

the molten depths, the meaning depths, of pain
that in spent lives came without sense of hurt,

but rather a falling through blue spaces, burnt
by the echoing sunlight, its tremendous wings.

The sound of time invades the flesh of time,
invades the body, beaten, enduring; now,

the harm of speech, a hurt of Self invades
the meanings of the moment, ambiguous.

Life floats, white in December evening, all
the sky is the storm of what we know, blind

and unforgiving, we resist remorseless flow
to counter pain, glinting through our artifice.

Voluble

Voluble the little yowling of the weather.
Discreet the touch of rain on the mirror.

The rook and the hawk have raucoused
round the hill, and the tree poured silver.

Macadam gleams, it is its wintry nature,
its heated illusion, this fatalistic calling.

Yet nothing is dead, all the lack of intent
is not a challenge to us or a frozen curse.

We are wound in the quiet concatenation
of immense poverties, unnamed entities.

It is never the earthlight that is important,
rather the glistening of its half-lit spires,

the long shadows on the empty pathway,
from which all your appearances depart.

Shell

In such frail shell we travel, also filled
by images, a field, its swaying grasses,
where you were; the depths of Africa;
this room; the universe of inner spaces.

The man at the centre of the woman's
warmth is silent, order and vehemence
are equal: float the moon-shell, frailer,
in which progression happens; the lost

are always with us, as they once were,
incomprehensible and misunderstood
as we, and no philosophy half enough
to catch a glimpse of our being human.

The man at the centre of the morning
and the woman is held in the thralls
of his foiled rebellion: tell it to that
silence at the core, the unresponsive.

The shell is frail, the slender horn is
free and silver above the housetops,
we cannot penetrate the objects who
surround us, glittering and merciful

in substance, one with the inscrutable
movements of the shadowy mental
processes that illuminate our Selves,
in remorseless reception, projection,

the others who inhabit us and signal,
their likenesses, their wry difference,
the peculiar innerness, the mute sense
of something moving on, in monstrosity.

Slowly the frail shell sails to its setting.
We need to find the power of the voice,
return from a dumb silence, where few
words of the lyric shone in bitter orbit,

remembered yet inarticulate, like moons
over an unseen planet, trespassing silver,
blue, in conceptual space, unmarked time,
sufficient to count out a melodic yearning.

The man at the centre of the woman, frail
shell, at the focus of his moon, is savage,
where the order and vehemence are equal,
where longing knows its birth, of imagery.

Not Love

Not love in love but for companionship
we sing, a solace to the lone, a simple
flame to light the wall against the dark.

Not love in love but otherness we sing,
to be not this, but that which transcends
its opaquer being, and reflects mind so.

Not love in love we sing but to declaim
existence in identity, one stand, a single
mirror, on which no silent dust can fall.

In Pursuit Of Meaning

Cordelier of light in the mal maison,
over the bayou's green and misted song
show me your music of a strange unwinding.

The ghosts are here and yet the far stars glimmer
brighter in molten autumn, galaxies
beyond all our intent are shining clear.

The purposeless climbs through the flesh to purpose,
and on its alien summit mind appears,
crowning the mindless with un-predestined process.

From evenings we create the phantom, morning.
It climbs the mountain, never the repetition,
always the stair of being's midnight coiling.

Cordelier of light in the mal maison,
you cannot give intent, this world eludes
the deepened voices, full of leaves of midnight.

Our shadows fall across the bright black mirrors,
but all the stars of ever-world are rising,
calm as the clouds on human flags that waver.

The burning house is alight with our remorse,
our poverty: are we passion or the death
of passion, the carillon yet incomplete?

Form without purpose void, void finding form,
in us make mind, the charioteer of distance,
and our intent: sluice that green water clear.

A River Moves Its Surface

Winter weighs on your spirit, but this quietness
this quietude of quiescent sense possesses
the body and celebrates it with dumb feeling.

Everything survives within us, everything,
an alphabet of a language somnolent
that wakes from drowsing with a new alarm,

and is our reason. Deny depths if you can.
The room is filled with sombre winter light
it is the substance of the world in slumber,

earth out of earth, where you are rooted,
re-finding the hill's high trees incessantly,
the scrape of leaves, a blindest murmuring.

Nothing Less

For nothing less than this, would life be worth
the living of it, nothing less than you,
dear heart, and all of the unmeasured moments.

The secret of the human is not hard, despite
the ages of accretion, power's abuse,
our self-consuming and our selfishness.

Ethics and aesthetics says it all, the values
of the spirit, its perceptions; the light,
earthlight, that falls on silent faces,

and either animates or kills the mind,
which is us now, in all embodiments,
the shape of form and our love set there,

for nothing less than this, for nothing more.

Invisibility

The game is to make your own world and vanish
into it, with the least fuss imaginable,
no different to a stone in the path, a leaf
unmoving in the winter wind on a tree.

Not to be caught, not to delude the self, not
to imagine there is any wisdom in anything
received, unless twice lived, and therefore
made your own, for a little while.

The skill is in invisibility, the field mouse,
or the hedge-sparrow will tell you that
in being if not in speech; all the ability
is in the fading out from particular view,

behind the name, so nothing is betrayed
of what in us demands the last loyalty,
to pass with the passing, murmur with
the flow of electric waters, wordlessly,

reconcile with nature, swirl in the air,
dust of the dust that hangs on the winter
tree, atoms of stars, and stars in eternity,
makers of moons, unmakers of mystery.

The Once Alive

There are the selves, see how they flicker
over the brightened pathways,
making movement in the breeze
mouths opening,
in the light of mind
when we are tired of words.

The once alive,
as they were, alive, living
to touch the world, each other,
now deeper
insubstantial, echoing
through the fabric we deny.

And you today are insubstantial too
on the brightened pathways,
your breath makes no breeze
wherever you
carelessly may be, lighter
if transient in transparent air.

The honestly said is so:
poetry is not made greater by
illusion, and no more permanent;
the histrionics die,
the truth is emotion and our humanity,
not this shallowness we outlast.

Choose The Light

Turn, slow on the rim of road,
I had it wrong,
not the turmoil
but the stillness
made us,
the after-tremor
of the eye and mind
on its ridge of light,
the after-effort,
the holding on
to whatever this is
in its purity
of being.

Choose the odd numbers,
the curious paths
winding between trees
trodden by something,
a patter
a whisper of being,
more transient
than us,
slighter,
feel the pause of transit
like a star hovering
though we know it moves,
and too restless to see.

Choose brilliance
of the non-human
the alien sigh
of earthlight through us,
delicate
and ungraspable,
so no clinging
to whatever
goes on and by,
no holding
to what you thought
you held,
and cannot.

Choose the light:
affection, knowledge,
being flow from that
simple inwardness
the freedom
always
of the intentionless,
but still existent,
the grass and stone and leaf
of perception
and not its substitutes,
the artless art
of full empty nature.

Holding Fast To The Opposites

Beautiful the clarity,
though Gautama sat away from it
and we walk into
a winter day blue and open sky
where no towns are
where we look down
from edge and light
to the flowing green
valleys and hollows
to the tips of trees.

To like the truth
is not to love an endless prying
or the deadening touch;
and the back country,
thank life,
is still the fallow, brown,
is the strangely
slick rims of hills;
the ancient forests, gone,
planted, gone,

Beautiful clarity,
the mind silent,
the universe its own
tick and click of something
in the process,
the eye silent
the heart,
did Gautama see it,
eternal truth in things
no things in things?

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