

Wayfaring

'...No obstacle at all, this gate of grass.'

Murasaki: The Tale of Genji

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Wayfaring

Going back to the simple
and the light.
Spring on low hills,
leafy corners,
gateway places
where the wayfarer's
languid in sunlight,
the silence deeper,
and not even self
in the grasses,
no reflection in the water,
simply
the drifting heart.

All history gone,
here is the creature;
the swallows flicker
over the river
over fields,
and mind is freer,
tender as a new shoot,
inwardly singing,
the old world melted,
a new begun,
and the laws
of being
just what's in the heart.

Going home, to where
is always home,
all nature;
no deeper in the great
than in the small,
not better
and not gentler;
here is truth,
a loyalty to being,
a response,
and warmth,
in the bowed fir,
in the runnel.

Walking over dead branches,
in the green
of the wood,
quieter now
than the child's mind,
quieter
than the years done,
quieter
than past and future,
wayfaring
moment to moment,
drinking from the stream
in the breeze.

Going through,
past the stillness,
there
at the end
of the ride,
going past
every muteness
the solidity
of trees,
slight as the feather
on the ground,
weightless
as the cloud in the sky.

Gone
through the brambles
and the fern,
gone
sweetly
through remembered
spaces,
gone from every
thing that binds,
gone from every
other presence,
back to the knowledge
of the heart.

Parting

The parting was fire,
that separation ice,
but friendship
is new warmth
deep as the woodland.

Nothing else
will ever save us.
Nothing more
will flow
from the universe.

And no years pass in the heart,
no moments
of meaning vanish;
none and all,
unique, belong to all.

The parting was flame,
that absence void,
but new friendship
sends swallows
through the night.

Even from far
beyond the Lethe,
even there,
memory
recalls a day.

The air was sweetly cold,
the green river
the immense distance
between
two near places.

The parting was ice,
this space is fire
between
two
interwoven minds.

A Dream Of The Sea

It was a dream of the sea
in the dark of night,
of white breakers,
emerald light
a rocky shore
its stone
split like Inca boulders,
a pure
salt Atlantic wall.

There were no boats,
but the grey seals
were swimming darkly
inshore,
flickering shapes
under the water
it was a dream of the sea,
and the sea-gods,
all the true transformed.

Headland grasses blew,
spray sang,
and nothing more
comes from eternity,
our world, life
has nothing else
to offer,
than that one,
enduring dream.

Not outward
don't turn there,
turn within,
push the gate
into the silence,
into the hush
called memory,
into the hollow
above the sea.

And be still.
It is a virtue.
Whatever the planets
out there bring us
can they bring us
the power
of the dream
of the moment,
fixed forever,

in some strange region
of process
in the spirit,
altered to the cellular
tremor and the net
of whatever was
laid down,
that beauty
beyond conceiving?

It was a vision of the sea
in its green singing,
of a harmony
which is the flavour
of the being self;
irreplaceable,
irreducible,
irrecoverable
in each,

it was the breaker
falling white
in thunder,
and the twilight
star-begotten,
it was the meaning
ever the meaning
always born
of the dream within.

Passage

Very old, this rose
that winds its way
to explode
in light
from the curving briar,
then dives
to the grey water,
marvellous
mysterious,
in its whiteness,
a rose
like those that sang,
medieval,
almost wild,
over dark earth.

Birds flicker in mist,
drift among trees,
swish over grasses,
birds
rise above cloud,
then dive
to the grey water,
sweet
and mysterious
in their darkness,
in their lives,
beyond ours,
on outspread wings,
with secret cries,
the wildness.

Trees gather,
knots of stillness,
on which
you set a hand
to feel existence,
hold tight
to quivering earth;
trees gathered
by forces
in the seed,
on which you can't
set your hand.
From the briar,
to the branch,
flies the bird.

The Perfect Hour

Now I am speaking
out of my deepest self,
out of the dark core,
and the light mind,
out of the essence
of the tao, the lines
of flight, the soft
dust on the way.

I am not speaking for you,
nor for those I love,
nor for the world
you imagine you
are part of, now I
speak instead for all
of nature moving,
out of my very self.

I speak for the evening,
for the leaves, the quiet,
for the sky, one grey,
for the woods, silent,
and not for the human
or the creature
but for the beauty
of inanimate music.

Now I am speaking
not for the sake of being,
not to be known
by the listening,
but out of an inner
freedom, out of the hour
before farewell,
the perfect hour.

Shower

Here, the rain falls,
a quiet beginning,
leaves drip grey light,
sky colours darken,
the line of the woods
marks a limit
on the distance,
not under the air,
etched on it.

The spirit drinks
at the fountain
of the rain
exactly as the earth
drinks, soaks up water,
absorbs being,
steeps
in an absence of the sun
as fine as presence.

The rain is the void
beyond the sun,
that makes the sun
light in fire
in the imagination.
It is a gasp of time
below the hidden stars,
within it are the voices,
the millennia of rain.

Navigation Beyond

An old trail,
scented with broom,
and bitter wormwood
grey ashy plant crumbling
to fragrance in the hand,
track that rims the quarry
where the wildflowers
overtake the human,
and launch themselves
more star-like
at the stars.

Here tangled branches
make parted ways,
choose your silence.
Either path's sweet.
They lead
into the heart
into the memory,
into the spirit, deep mind.
A broken kiln is here,
a small copse there,
but either path is sweet.

You will find yourself,
and no returning;
explore your thought
without meaning;
quench your eye
on un-designed form,
your ear on formless music.
The place has no location,
no time, no coordinates,
you need no map
to lose it, or find it, again.

In Which We Shine

I could sing to you;
that's what poetry is, the singing;
sing to you
of the eternity we inhabit,
the dark infinity
in which
we shine,
perhaps the only lovers.

The poet wishes to be river,
or wind blowing,
or light over stones,
beautiful
fragmented,
or the long threads
of willow leaves moving
in green river breeze.

I could rest under the yews
here, above the water,
beyond the dark eyes
of the caves,
the rock-pale towers,
and watch this bird,
dance in the light
forage in the shade.

I could be one
with the hundred million
years,
with the un-meaning
of the vagrant process,
wait for stars
or slow cloud wreathing
hills.

The true poet
would not be human,
but leaf, rain,
or a single feeling
coiling in the spirit,
some aspect
of existence
unfit for life.

It is a calling
outside the world,
if you wish
to understand it right,
dedicated to a truth
beyond all
religion,
a kindness to what is.

The true poet would be gentle;
how can one kill the world?
Faithful;
it is all we have,
all we will have had.
And aware;
perception is all,
knowing is all.

I could take you
to the track
beside the river
every river,
through the wood
every wood,
take you
into yourself;

Which is not thing,
nor even process,
truly,
but a presence,
a being here
a having been,
a ghost of light
in shadow.

The unknown
and tiny
is as great
as the immense,
that is
the first truth
to comprehend,
and the last.

This patch of grass
no one
may notice again
for an age,
this pebble
white in the depths,
or these plants
in mist.

No one is here,
no one is ever
truly here,
and no one passes through,
and nothing sees
we are alone.
Be careful
of one another.

How Near

How long it takes
to reach here,
reach the lanes,
white and silent,
winding hedges,
headlands
on horizons,
to be where the sea
echoes in the hollows,
and the windhover
ignores
the wayfarer.

You must lay aside time.
You must dream,
but the dream
of memory,
which is the substance
of how we transmute
the world
to make it glimmer,
glow, a tower
built on a hill
towards galaxies,
built in the heart,

which is mind,
heart is mind,
whole feeling
of the body
substantiated.
How long it takes
to reach here,
quiet enough
to follow the thought
be led by
the message
of the thought.

And the message is subtle,
not what you
expected,
not a revelation
of something
outside you, or inside,
but an unfurling
of something
neither outside
nor within,
a stillness
palpable,

like a sweetness,
a tenderness
void of all desire,
in the end a giving
not a taking,
or at least
a realisation
of the possibility
of gift
on a different earth
in another universe,
in a sought communion.

How long it takes to reach here,
how hard to stay,
touching a white stone
cradled in warm heath, bracken,
calmed by the sun,
at one with the fatal sea
that swirls and troubles
the mind,
how hard to transform
samsara in the spirit,
how far this place,
how near.

New Muse

If one made a poetry
quieter than twilight,
with all birds hushed,
and the breeze fallen,

a poetry slenderer
slighter than air
or water or cloud
or tender leaf-shoot,

a poetry of feeling,
but not interaction,
of emotion but not
passion, or sadness,

a poetry balanced
like that tiny stone,
or the tree, on the hill,
under all weathers.

If one made that,
made it such
it seemed to echo
the silent past

history of place,
present stillness,
beauty of the done,
truth of the lost,

a poetry delicate
sensitive, kind,
a patch of emerging
blue in the white,

a ruffling of surface,
a trembling of branch
in an imperceptible
stirring of world.

If one could do that,
and enter the eye
of the mouse,
or the insect's ear,

then the new muse
might exist,
naturally sacred,
not from beyond,

but a reflection
of what subsists
at the core of being
the assertion of life,

we can never deny,
the miraculous process
of no creation,
spontaneous being,

a muse of the instant,
dark, and anonymous,
and a muse of the place,
the remembered, the twilight.

Being Not Metaphor

Don't fashion the mountain,
be the mountain, be leaf,
as near as mind can get
to the un-minded,
not strident self
asserting, denying
it all,
but the not-selves,
all of equal being;
and not the world
you wish not to be part of,
but the world you are,
despite your thinking.

Don't seek to impose order,
like this, accept the order
that has being
outside you,
outside unreal self
inside the real,
accept a wind that blows
the bowing of the trees,
the sheets of rain,
the ice, the air,
avoid the myths,
evade the metaphors,
be free.

With mind intact,
and there's the tension.
Mind is the water,
you must be the fall,
parted
by rock,
nurturing rowans,
foaming in clefts,
singing deep under stone,
and namelessly.
Here is the tree
at the far edge of space;
here are we.

Without Raging

Breath in the air
like smoke,
the roads are ice,
the slope is deep snow
sinking down
to the depths
of valley,
the birds are still,
or thunderous
in the trees,
for a white moment.
Everything you are
is a silence,
more silent
than when you sleep,
less self
less world,
than dream,
entering
not creating,
though both
here and in dream
self is powerless.

The light is grey
and calm,
the stone is pale,
the river black
with weirs of white
and glassy green,
your thought is light,
it plays on twigs
above the river,
on walls along the heights,
it is the thought of time
becoming past
in memory,
of space becoming
space-like metaphor,
of how far out we are
on the limb of mind,
how distant
from our origins,
how far from the universe,
how far from home,
believing only
in what we see and feel.

No, the purpose
of communication
is not to be oblique
and baffle
for the sake of order,
but to say clearly
where mind ends
and being begins,
as I am not the water
but the flow is in me,
and outside me,
and I both see
and am the seeing,
content and form,
process and outer object,
both
but not as the bird sees,
quite,
nor the next mind seeing,
to which its past is brought,
and assumed future,
their interplay,
in ringing present,

in a world without deities
but not without value,
the values
those we inherit and refine,
creature-created,
gifts to the galaxy,
gifts to the universe,
gifts to ourselves above all,
gifts like the bird's tenderness,
the insect's endurance,
the trickle of generations
through an empty landscape,
our perception of beauty,
our concept of love,
truth, freedom, sensitivity,
those kinds of gifts.
And no use raging,
though the heart rages,
a calmness
must suffice,
this river-run,
a bare embrace of trees,
heron's bowed presence.

Troubling

Why the dislike
of human perfection,
the very buildings,
while nature
always soothes?

Why the deep troubling,
as though the mind
was not created
for such a place
or such a world?

Our incomplete spirits
seek naked earth,
the natural fires,
the air and water,
to make us whole.

Though everything falls
everything rises again
without us,
lovers and loved,
moon and stars.

To stand, to feel,
these things are
not obvious,
half-learnt by
the uncomfortable heart.

There is this dislike
of human perfection,
the too smooth statues,
the too tall walls,
the sun-drenched setting.

The River-Bend

The river is dark,
it was here
as the
history of place,
it flowed
and was not us,
apart
falling,
not mind or body,
but something other,
matter moving
energy sighing,
knowing neither,
a river
without a boatman,
dark in its name
and nature.

The river voices
a language,
speaks a music,
fills emptiness
when no eye's here
fills emptiness
though non-existent
in any human space,
other than memory,
and that was another river,
flowing through us,
as the heron in flight
we disturbed
was a grey heron of light
in the mind
flying through us.

Everything's altered
by mind.
The river knows neither.
It exists in many ways,
in a world outside
which is non-world for us,
inside too, where it is no more river
than every flowing process
thought of;
exists between us part-shared,
exists in each, specific,
exists in general,
exists as place and moment,
as name and map,
as, in the end, the data
of the eye, out of the eye.

The river was dark,
and the trees were gleaming
against the ground
and the pinnacles of rock
along the river
were brilliant, silent,
tremor of water beneath,
now the river
is in us,
now it flows in us,
and will flow there too perhaps
still; we believe
it will if we go there,
yet how will
that matter?
It flows.

Leavings

It is not my poetry you want,
nor I,
it is the true speaking,
the true seeing.
Other mind
is not deceived,
it wants no heroes.
It is not my cunning
you desire,
my knowledge,
my skill,
but the essence of my commitment,
the strength of my faith
in being.

And the book turned down
on the table,
has no need
of my fire and ice,
waits there indifferent
to us all,
to all the tradition,
it merely wants speech,
the speakers, the voices;
quits the discarded husk,
for eternal essence;
has never a feeling,
for the dead ghost,
whose silvery light lies here.

It is not a question of form,
or a matter of content.
What you want from me,
is the key to our being,
the key to life eternal,
the keys of recognition,
empathy, kindness,
and not the mind
raging forever
at its own non-answers,
not my eccentric music,
not the fixed lake
through which
a river flows,

darkly rhythmic,
dark in its flowing;
not the same water,
clearer, deeper,
blackier, lighter,
yet the same river
forever moving
under black branches,
under black stars.
What you want from me
is not this,
thought seething
body breathing
troubled sighing,

but the wind's meaning,
the eye's meaning,
how solitude burns,
why departure glistens,
the being of mountain,
the bowing of pine,
the crows' sense of flight
the sun's wild ringing,
is what you wish from me,
and not poetry,
not what the mind-muse leaves
when it, shuddering,
turns
with no goodbye.

The Mind-Muse

Say this to the mind-muse
we understand
how hard truth is,
how form may lie,
and be part of the lack
of humility in us,
survival-pride.

Say this to the dark form,
in the grey mantle,
under the tree,
beside the stone,
at the junction
of river and light,
the infinite river,

say we have tried,
say how we have lied,
say we need
the voice from the dark,
the voice from the silence
to glitter within us,

say we have seen the place
in the wood,
seen the white flower dying,
the cloud ahead
the water flowing,
seen it all,
say this to the metaphor,

this to the symbol,
and tongue of fire,
to the meaningless
except in the mind,
say to the mind-muse,
how we will it, will truth
to exist,

out of black space
in the heart,
of darkness by water,
the lacquer of tao
the thing that twists
in the night
between stars,

say to the mind-muse, we are
and what we are
is afraid, is formless,
is broken by ice
of truth, in the spirit,
and our defence
is eternal illusion.

Not Performance

This is a different kind
of poetry.
It's the performance I don't accept,
the fundamental lie
of the performance.
Nature – in clouds, stones, trees –
no, is never a performance,
is always and only ever the thing that is.

And the mind and heart
in deep feeling
are never performance;
the stage is a metaphor
but this is no stage,
this is the passion itself,
not tragedy, not ironic comedy;
this is sole being,

and another way
of saying to you,
that the rest is literature.
That every performance
here is an attempt
at non-performance,
at saying nothing,
and pointing everywhere.

The In-Itself Outside Itself

The world glistens in stillness here,
there are willows
and leaves on the water,
a hiss of grasses;
it is not for us:
this world shines, but not for us,
unobserved,
without creature
unobservable.

Let it be there
without ulterior being,
naked to universe,
part of that universe,
let it not be
a metaphor to humanity,
nor any kind of mirror
or echo,
but freedom, whole and complete.

Let it not be in me,
nor in you, myth,
material or challenge,
let it drift slowly
in its deep darkness
which manifests as light,
let it be the untouchable
signifier
of the other we cannot be.

Anonymous

To create it all
and then anonymous
and still,
leave it lie unpublished.

To create it all
then like those makers
of gleaming Buddhas
and dancing Shivas wait, unknown.

To be an undiscovered master
who for self-completion
painted the bamboos
and the snowy waters.

To be the musician
forming songs
in the mind,
as melodies for a people,

for love of such,
and with no expectation
of their survival;
for tenderness not greatness,

seems beyond us now.
There's a myth
of the unknown immortals,
who keep the world alive,

walking among us,
unrecognised, intrinsically
unidentifiable,
passing us by in the street.

Long After

Is there a quieter,
not the volcanic anger
of green life
bursting the everglades,
blue of a sea,
or concatenation of stars
when galaxies collide
in some telescope's eye?

Is there a smaller,
not mountain or river,
forest or field,
but less than the single nettle,
or the drop of rainbow water,
or a flicker of light
from the least gleam
in the dark?

Is there a truer,
not the maker of rhetoric, not the actor,
not the mover or shaker,
but slight as the stream
from under the shale,
those whispers of loss
long after ending,
those irretrievable flames.

Nowhere To Flee

Values, they are our future.
Forget the technologies,
Ignore the science,
the dead demons
of fantastic religions,
the politics of failure,
the economics of prisons,
none of those will save us.

Values, they are our future,
Ethics, the study of humanity.
Science leads nowhere,
religion is nowhere,
politics are power
and power is empty,
economics despoils us.
Values – our future.

And values sing of the future
beyond the constraints
of races and nations,
of one humanity, on this planet,
which already contains every other,
and the universe ends here;
there is nowhere to flee,
value is future.

Substance And The Void

Watching the grass sway,
stem and stem,
watching the process,
I exist
between the mind
and world,
in the unreal,
both and neither.
Watching
the grass.

Or considering wave,
a green drum,
in endless
motion of the seas,
of which there is no termination;
hearing the tao,
hearing the noise
of the waterfall, also,
the ice-grey flow,
cascading downwards,

there is a place to exist,
between the outer
and the inner,
which is in both,
and beyond both,
such is *nirvana*,
wholly here
and nowhere,
as you are substance
and the void.

One Long Ridge

One long ridge below the mountain.
Walking through cut wood,
after logging,
witnessing crest after crest
rise, subside,
following the dance of the trees,
their obliquities,
their parallax of object
in the moving eye,
denying metaphor,
listening to the sound
of grass,
the noise of leaves,
the miles
of granite, air,
cloud, beauty.

A mind of light.
Sinking through soft ground
down the valley,
following wall,
this is wayfaring,
through ancient world
still dedicated
to the matter,
still frozen
and on fire.
The glittering tree,
half green, half flame,
that's nature,
as we are half the burning
of the body,
half dark verdancy of mind.

Right emotion saves us.
Feeling is where
values are embodied.
Why science,
though dispelling demons,
cannot save us.
since facts are not values,
nor is process,
though truth
itself may be a value.
Values are choices
of the free mind,
destinations,
for the wayfarer, or rather
paths,
like sensitivity and kindness.

Sliding on a half-made trail,
considering values,
through woods of malachite
and verdigris,
I try to understand
why nature
itself seems a value,
something to do
with what has no intentions on us,
yet satisfies the need for beauty,
freedom, honesty;
in the creatures,
unassuming endurance;
in the trees, grace;
in the waters, purity.

Emerging on a shelf of stone
above a thousand feet of light,
with, far below, a rock-choked valley.
Why a little watershed
is etched in memory,
the fall opposite,
a white thread of silence,
the mind working,
on values
and how we balance them; achieve
the middle way
towards creation
not destruction;
creation which is itself
a value,
a way, and a destination.

Poetry Can Do Didactic Too

Why is navigating life so hard?
Why is moral discourse
two thirds of the language
(you doubt it: go and see the thesaurus)
if you ignore the technical terms?
Because ethics is us,
is the core of what we will be,
and not the rest;
not the technologies,
or the distractions;
morality is why
history has not ended,
why it will always be
difficult to live,
even if we're on a billion planets,
even when we possess
the true description of mind.

Morality is choice.
And its difficulty
is down to ambivalence;
that reality that values conflict,
interact, and overlap,
that there is always
a balancing act to achieve,
the dance on the wire,
because so many qualities
work both ways,
for creation or destruction,
as: curiosity, passion, pride,
intelligence, skill,
competitiveness, belief;
because the list of truly
destructive values
is quite brief.

As: cunning, deception,
control, power-seeking,
exclusion, discrimination,
though the list
of their associated behaviours,
is rather long, starting with
violence, cowardice, greed,
cruelty and selfishness.
But it's the ambivalence
of so much that makes life
a constant process of decision,
a battle against time,
which is why remorse
is a deepest feeling;
our inability to alter the done
undoes us,
to change the path we chose.

In the Valley

I fell asleep in the grass and heath,
by the holly tree,
on the slope above the stream;
woke and watched the crows flying
bright birds, large-brained,
a buzzard, pigeons, all
in a long arc under a domed sky
filled with trains of cloud
to every horizon,
slow floaters moving west,
covering, and uncovering,
the sun.

Here you need a mind of summer,
life is the dance
of light on water,
and a honeyed silence,
through which a cool wind moves
when the sun is masked,
the grass is deep, dry,
the heath is twisted complex
subtle colours, scents;
I think of our wars and conflicts,
our strange misery
that we are alone
that the demons we dreamed
of the last four thousand years
were fantasies,
and what exists
is this brilliant flow
which allows us to take part.

Hard to describe
the simplicity
and the depth
of beauty here,
in a place not special
but a gift of the natural
as fine as all
its billion spaces
on this planet,
not untouched
but left by humanity,
momentarily un-despoiled.

Winter too has its warmth
in the spirit.
It is only our fear
of freedom,
that makes our misery,
fear of the void,
through which we fall,
on every side,
earth resting on nothing
in every direction,
held like a blue-white mottled bead
on space-time's
whirling string;
and fall in the mind
through non-intention,
the utter dependence
of all our purposes
on ourselves,
we, out of nature's sieve,
though there is no hand
behind the winnowing.

You need to know freedom
to consider the light and the leaves
of the holly echoing the sun;
be still a while
to feel the birches tremble in air,
see the pine-trees' green in the far glimmer
of April ending;
to hear the land sounding beneath your back,
the warm breeze rustling
in last autumn's veils of leaf;
before the void
inside you and beyond
fills with the endless forms
of nothingness,
the seething panoply,
which is samsara *and* nirvana.
Everything comes of nothing,
that is the secret,
the nothing that being is,
what it engenders.

Why Be Lonely?

Why be lonely
in this loneliest of auras,
these still and twilight woods
through which the stars
out of Keats' poem, glitter
among dark leaves?

Is it purpose you look for?
Don't search for it in science.
Nature apart from the creature
is process not purpose.
Science can't invent intent
if there is none;

and don't say
the purpose of the rose
is to make more roses.
Nature without creature
simply does what it does,
what it is, not what it's for.

Why be lonely
to the sighing of the sea,
to the golden traffic
of innumerable murmurs?
Sea of the universe,
where the galaxies

like great ships sail
from nowhere to no end.

Black Flowers

I walked through myself
and found, on the other side,
the deeper strangeness,
like walking in silence
over every kind of land;
heath and by streams in the valley,
over wooded heights, to lakes
beyond cool forest, all there
in the circuit of a few square miles.

Nothing coming from self alone,
or world alone,
but a constant interaction of both,
to form the unreal.
Futile idealism, realism,
meaningless self,
useless identity,
when all that matters here
is drifting forwards and being.

Nothing to brood over:
let the wood-pigeon crack
the stillness, shatter the emerald
muteness of leaves,
rather than murmur
over the windless world;
let beauty, delight, love
for this, shimmer in mind,
the only place they can.

Let imagination sing
in the hostile spaces,
they the surprisingly benign,
beyond any cause or reason;
let the black flowers of stars
shine in the negative deeps,
magnificence quell our tears;
let mind be the matrix of meaning,
the galaxies shine in their fields.

Diamond Eye

All night under Perseus and the Plough,
dreaming, so young once,
about personal destiny,
when we have no destiny,
only flexibility,
spontaneity maybe,
the skill to take
advantage of chance,
which is the movement
of intertwined process,
and nothing about us.

The stars in their cold dresses
not even hanging there;
nothing hangs in space,
there is nowhere to hang from,
nothing to hang towards,
everywhere universe centres
from every side,
and is everywhere centred.
Now too careful of cold;
out to breathe night breath,
to seize the diamond eye.

Maybe listen to a fox moving,
an owl testing the darkness,
a mouse in the shrubs,
a dog puzzled by wildness.
Knowing chance concatenation
slow-changed constellation,
everything solid shifting,
a life in a cry in the night,
and a flurry of darkness.
Too sensible now to let the lances
Of light transfix my brow.

They See Through and Past You

Here is the child
wayfaring always
in deep imagination;
and now having been
and returned,
so hard to get back
to that haunted place,
filled with the possible
and not the impossible-known.

Yes the trees limit this path,
but why be subservient to trees?
or suffer because of doves,
or be slaves of the briars
curling down
out of paths not ours
to snare every stumble?
Why be anything less than that
Vast tremor of mind?

Don't disown the children.
You may be less.
Disown power
and the emptiness.
The child sees your nakedness
inarticulately,
how you fumble
at any explanation,
carve out the rooms of despair.

Terrestrial

Yes, it eases me to think of her,
as Arnaut said,
and she increases love,
like the tiny insects
the dancers in the grass.

Inextinguishable beauty,
is in the mind, real:
thought against tyranny,
dearth of violence,
slow, slow civilisation,

longer than we would like,
to reach
respect for the creatures,
for each other,
for the planet,
Earth without prejudice,

but in the end the heart
collected,
and the yew tree
splitting stone
on those cliffs remembered,
lovely, winter-patterned.

Out of it all,
the love, the form,
and within,
all the process;
the flow
that no one strays from.

Love in the mind,
against all forms of power,
and the sight of her
the seed of delight,
and all pain gone,
a light of kindness.

The flame of living vision,
that might redeem
in some way
the shuffling pain
of being,
and inner agony.

Yes, it eases me to think of her:
against all tyranny,
all exploitation.
Oh, what is luminous
is freely given,
is liberation.

Walk free now through the gate of intellect.

The Wall

Is history fallen:
shattered ruins,
everything
Pound tried to gather together,
the shining lights,
good for love and beauty,
if short on truth.
Telling us at least
how to be,
and nothing new.
Go to the poets
who lived among barbarians,
to understand your century.

Is nature moving:
slow as the rain
to down a dead tree-trunk,
or ice to split the rock,
or mind to make creation,
is the green fern,
and the moss and lichen.
Yes the music is beautiful,
and the slender archways,
but not the idea
behind them,
which was power,
and human error.

Is a stony metaphor:
not simply a broken boundary,
a failure to make order
of our kind
in a world more deeply ordered,
a chaos
that make us fearful,
only passing by, we transients,
where world more permanent
exists beyond forever,
we here, then gone, it stays
and shines
to no intent.

Is a gleaming gesture:
from a deeper landscape
the memory,
that comes to me
to light the troubled hours,
cure against time, fate, boredom;
and a ledge in a dark ravine
in a pool of fire
from a dying sun;
and a silvered frieze
in an emerald well,
where moon is glass
and every breeze is fragrance.

Is our shattered realm of poetry,
this fallen age,
our small affairs
which is where we end,
now part of the great affair,
that never required us;
this return to the first dawns
and the first world;
this return to sanity,
to the love and beauty,
formed of the greater truth,
free of the lies of four thousand years,
this naked universe.

Gift Of The Ring-Makers

Westward, where long ago
some race or other
excavated stone to make the ring,
and left behind
something more beautiful,
a silent quarry,
the bracken and the fern,
the green coolness,
the purple stems,
the thin grassy smoke
of showering pollen.
You'll get here on a lost trail,
not by mountains,
but on a mountain's back,
up by the long valley
of trees and flowers.

A place like the places
that are not
the ones we picture,
in those bright materials
meant for persuasion,
those spectaculars:
here there is almost nothing
spectacular,
except you can step
straight into the universe
and sing with the galaxies
if you so choose,
though you can do that
with a single pebble, frond, star.
This is the place called: rest your spirit,
free your mind.

Heath is warm and gentle,
or cool and tender,
depending on whether
it's noon or evening.
If blood has ever been shed
here, the stain has vanished,
the chemical transformations
are complete, the dead
are dead, and no,
not sleeping,
but remaindered,
old atoms of universe
gone back to be
its fresh materials.
Heath is the furry pelt,
the hot tongue, the ice-cool lick.

Here they dug in the earth,
to go worship a deity,
and even their deity in the mind
passed them by.
But what they left,
was treasure,
marvellous thistles, nettles,
blue wild flowers,
tormentil and
white bed-straw stars,
nothing whatsoever
here of power,
a sanity wholly
beyond the human,
that is still here now,
and they are gone.

The Error

It was all an error;
We have to start again,
though with what we know,
which is difficult.

It was all a long mistake,
a self-deception,
through which remarkably
the values passed,

the secular breath
from the far grasslands,
the forests and the lakes
before the deserts.

It was all our fault,
but somehow the values
survived the journey,
with the knowledge,

of what really is.
So we still have dangerous love,
dangerous truth,
dangerous beauty.

It was all a diversion
on the way,
a many thousand year
long diversion,

To understand rights,
and affection,
form and meaning
and relationship.

It was all an error,
all those costumes,
all those stones,
all that anguish,

simply to reach
this space of landscape
and look again
at where we began.

The Happy Traveller

The way is beautiful,
though the wayfarer less so;
the traveller at the gate
is still here,
gazing at the meadow
bright with yellows,
with a river at its end
green as ice.

The dust of the journey
can't mask the sweetness,
that sinks
through the deeps of the mind,
and the eye is coolest
in the trees,
the body
most at ease in the silence.

The moon and the bird rise,
the rose,
and our slow liberties,
while the blue wind ruffles
shining leaves,
the traveller
listens to the universe,
the voiceless sound.

This is the happy traveller
who goes
through a space
that can't be grasped,
gently parts the gate of grass,
a moment gone,
leaving
never a trace of self behind.

Desperations

It must be desperate enough
for us, is it so?
To make the voice, I mean,
lift above the silence,
the silence of the many speakers,
the dumbness of the endless talking.

We must be desperate enough to utter
with the voice of leaves
and creatures,
the voice of the continental winds,
against the dark unyielding river,
the black river of dissuasion.

The time must be desperate enough,
beneath the surface –
when is it not so? –
to hear the weeping of the moment,
as, without recourse, it alters forever;
the tremor of something departing.

The mind, the heart, the spirit,
no matter what you call this,
must be desperate enough
to write in blood,
to open the black vein if Nero
demands we show what 'human' means.

Fragments of Crystal

The dark hills, beyond metaphor waited
for our hour of resolution.

Metamorphosis is life's
last mystery, the stir
of rapid light in the trees;
so colour becomes something other
than nature of object,
a premonition of orbit,
a well of unknown seed.

The echo of thunder
embraced the vibrant green
pallid against black volumes
that rolled over the silvered skyline.
I was broken down to the cell,
to the fibre of flint in the vein,
to the shattered bole
that waved its wreath
of entangled foliage.

You and I were neither here nor there
in the unforeseen scheme;
appalled by memory,
haunted by vision,
suffocated by dream;
and on the white sand of the river's
forgetful waters
fragments of crystal shone
among half-buried leaves.

Dark slopes hovered beyond metaphor
suspended themselves over bays of light,
over granite appearance,
the rock of the self
molten in sunbeams,
where the drunken butterfly
sways from the hot afternoon
to the stone. Psyche alighted,
devastated mind quivered.

Here then the heartland,
we might never have left,
a child-eye roaming the shadow
crossing the atlas of eyelids,
transmuting twice-resonant places,
so much the greater
than any spaces we see,
and raised over pure time,
bright pillars standing on time.

I altered. I flowed through myself, I returned
among years, and was nothing except what I was,
and am nothing now that I am,
a transmutation of walls,
a change like that sudden disturbance
deep in the glassy water,
a mindless quivering there
of whatever becomes
of the done and gone.

Into creatures, or streams,
or branches seeping gold resin,
into objects, or others, we move
without myths, naked of shade;
like soft smoke flowing, or water,
our script scrolled in the air,
our intertwined voices,
our exchanges on tongue, in the tongue,
of impossible form.

White Air

You think the stones, the power, make truth?
See the insect climb the grass,
or the beauty it represents
kindle luminescence in the mind.

You think the names, the panoply
the trappings, the massive darkness,
outshine the simple light
of a single act of friendship?

You think civilisation worth a jot,
that pretends to anything but values,
I mean the values of the mind,
not the gold, the glitter and the toys.

A hundred thousand years
before T'ang,
more than you and I know shone
under Perseus and the Pole,

travelling under other guise,
indifferent to later names.
Our myths are without strength,
All our texts will be palimpsests.

All that effort
to grasp the moment,
the white air,
gone, through the trees.

Passing

Within this light is the bliss,
this patch of sun
on the wheat-field,
this corner of eternity:
there's Blake passing,
and Neruda.

Purify the mind
in the stream.
Cool your feet
in the flow.
We are what is passing by
these other things passing slowly.

Fresh fronds, plants,
herbs maybe, tender green
anyway, at water's edge –
a snail too, as a witness –
grace, mercy and kindness,
these the leaves that we need.

Out of us strangely
the love flows,
to us strangely
it returns,
made it seems by the winnowing,
but no less magical for that.

Paradise is light on the fields,
the meaning of the beloved,
the heart's affections
and the silence,
in which this passing
is expressed.

Wasp

Sister, my sister,
the wasp on the leaf,
yellow and black
the colours of being,
sing of the night
sister, my sister,
and sing of the sun.

Flame in the mind,
sister, my sister,
the new age begun
will it be your time,
stinging and bitter,
sister, my sister
of charcoal and fire?

Sister, my sister,
wasp on the breeze,
ochre and ebony,
colours of being,
sing of the darkness,
sister, my sister,
then sing of the light.

Est-il Paradis?

This bright meadow,
lacking all deceit,
the insects like innumerable
sparks, flying through the light,
these purer spirits.
Behind here are mountains,
uncut forest,
endless patterns
of cloud and stone.

Silent now,
no exploiters,
this silent place
of my affection.
And the gate always open
which is hidden,
which is holy,
where the mice, moths,
and butterflies play.

This bright meadow,
sweet nature.
There is order
in the process,
not design.
The only place
we can build
our dream is in
the human mind.

Oh, that first fatal error,
that first wrong inference:
yes, there is order
in the process,
but no, there is no design.
And grace, and courage,
out of the creatures,
all their virtues
we inherit.

Bright meadow,
I inherit your shining,
delicacy, mystery,
not a mystery of structure
but a mystery of being,
the quiddity
of this paradise,
that we contemplate
in the mind.

Be Free

Forget the religion,
and the history,
the tyrants who saw
lovely things created
were tyrants;
we are free
relatively speaking.

Forget all empty power,
its corruption,
as Adams said, always there,
go back
to ancient ignorance
affection,
the beauty of the trees.

Those who built the great city,
in the mind,
the great dream,
simply falsified the world,
now we have
to get back behind,
back to the wayfarer's stream.

So much to jettison,
yet much to keep,
the art, that is our living cry;
the science, our knowledge now,
and our values,
hard won
through forty centuries.

All those fragments,
but don't be sad,
the meadow is still sacred,
the gate of grass
is hidden here, and holy.
Understand the endless flow,
forget the falsities, be free.

After The Climb

You have to climb a long way
to reach the starting-point again.
You have to fall off the mountain,
to see it clear.
Forget the philosophy, the religion,
the science, the art, the long living,
to ground yourself in beauty, truth, love.

Out of them all other values flow,
to them the emotions gather,
with affection, sincerity, courage,
with honesty, and sensitivity.
You have to demolish centuries
to be able
to live in your own.

And return to idling by the stream,
cleansing head and feet in the river,
watching the blue smoke rise,
looking at the flowers
among the trees,
letting go of all this life,
passing through what will never die.

Mist In The Meadow

No, Nature's not for sale;
Wu szu hsieh, and
No crooked thoughts.

We've been winnowed,
and here we are,
lost deep in the grass.

Dancing spirits,
beauty in the wind,
all those trees.

Love, creator of radiance,
white ghosts of butterflies,
a whole
'civilisation' there.

Benevolence,
light in the mind;
this dancing floor
of moon and stars.

A white mist in the meadow,
pale dew on the leaves;
we go after knowledge,
but here's the house of the heart.

Ours To Do

Fragmentation is no problem.
eternity in a blink of the eye;
water, in the hollow tree,
spilling down grey bark
cools the mind.

Underneath it, make a unity,
not from masks and forms,
but out of the human vision
that dreamed beauty
for three thousand years,

and trickles bright light
through the grass,
ripples under stalks,
and stems,
makes those little waves of being.

Gold burns in the gloom,
sunlight sings on the leaf,
civilisation is a flow,
dependent
only on the spirit.

Slope By The River

The gate is holy,
Kuan, the gate is open.
Not enough concentration
on the living spirit,
the seethe of voices,
too much attention
to the deathly in the process;
I mean, in what we celebrate,
and how we celebrate it.

Flame of light in the meadow.
The white horse canters.
The butterflies
move in ghostly dance,
the breeze
stirs the grass pollen.
And here is the river,
still, green, flow,
the river that never changes.

Light In The Air

Light in the air,
and there's the wayfarer
letting go
of the way.

On high ramparts
smoke of sunset,
the gold and red
contest the stars.

At home in the galaxy,
the galaxy home in the void,
I know where I'll return,
Letting go, light in air.

Grass Is An Institution

Death masks of dead religions,
vain concepts, useless forms,
but grass is an institution,
its gate is radiance.

No gods to harm,
no rituals,
just the waving stalks,
the emerald stems.

Form's a function of the intellect,
true, but the seeing eye
is part of mind,
all beauty driven by delight,

The barb of fire.
Sun-fire filtered through
the pastoral shade,
to the insects' fine domain.

Thunder of meaning gone
from the universe,
intentionless silence
moves in freedom;

it takes some getting used to;
the field of butterflies,
the presence of flowers,
the mountain peak fallen,

and here we are,
in what seems like bathos,
until the heart shines,
intellect, the graces.

Not enough time,
not enough mind
for all this
beauty,

but the grass soothes,
the trickle of light,
beyond
the loss of the dream.

And we can't always
be thinking elegy,
in the grass
that thinks nothing.

Possibility

One voice alone can't make it,
sustain the beauty,
the milk-weed,
the sunlit mountain rain,

One delicate mind, picking
its way through silences
asking silence
muteness of ritual, absence of voice.

One mind over a snowfield,
or under sequoias,
or damming the waterfall
with ice-cold pebbles.

One mind can't be the intent
a universe lacks,
except on behalf of that mind itself,
and love needs eyes.

But one mind in the sleeping grass,
one dormant mind,
not daring to wake
might sustain the dream.

Spider's necklet on dawn furze,
frost white on the pine,
flicker of sun-fire through branches,
swifts in the fields.

One mind can sustain perhaps
the friendship
to call back paradise
inextinguishable

in the human mind,
whether communion
of spirit,
or solo rapture.

A wing-feather in the grass,
a snail-shell on the stone,
dust, moss, twigs,
green fern.

Drawing the mind back
through light
to wide skies,
to possibility.

The Burning Man

Yes, I have
avoided the darkness,
turned back
from the places that ruin,
having been there
having lived through
the somnolent world
and its nightmares.

Is it us there,
or only
a trick of the mind?
Our shadow in mirrors,
endlessly echoing green.
A dumb sense
like the return
to dark childhood memories,

or the ghosts on the moor
of a heart that tears
at its veins
and rails at reality,
for not believing
in us, for not seeing us
in its blind eyes
of in-appetency
and continuance.

The moon tonight
is a tremor
of fire and sweetness,
against the blank chill,
the lake of meandering silence,
It's not a question of truth
but of marvellous meaning
of the strength for intent,

of the child's eye
returned,
the eye of the heron,
the eye of the red kite circling,
or of the windhover,
the eye of the clinging marsh
an indifferent wood,
full of its being.

I fail again to make do
with what is, and not the desired,
the fire and the sweetness,
become the burning man
on the snowbound earth,
whose flames
are unhidden, even by stone;
here, and once more, is their light.

And the moon makes a tremor in darkest water,
conjures with shadow its candour on grass,
offers its symbol of
fire and sweetness, the fury
of time in the veins
and no immortality
for mind.

And all this is you, my sister,
all this too is your motion
your intricate bright multiple barb in the heart,
your compassion of roots,
like the moonlight
under the feet of the alders,
and a heron's stride deep.

All this is the memory of cicadas
sawing the night by the vast river,
as if those leaves blew
through the night in their pain,
in metallic howling
the pain of birth death in a night's space,
of waters black flow,
of unstoppable fall.

I hold back, I burn,
I scorch to the movement of hours,
the accumulation of days,
I hold the bones of the world
only ash in your sight
and I show you them living,
I show you all that is left,
the green pyre of our loves.

Signs in the Stone

It is simply not poetry's task to explain
the world,
it is poetry's task to scream.
If you hear the screaming,
like the utterance
deep in the whorls of the conch,
or the sap of the branch in the fire
(an image from Dante)
a whisper from over Styx,
or the pain
that emanates from the steel
of the night-bound cicadas,
you will know
it is not a human scream,
it is more white noise,
or the murmur
out of the universe
of what is not sound
but would be sound
in our air,
say the tempests on Mars,
or the green stem's dying.

Sometimes it's a howling
of joy, like the pigeon's bubbling
in the heights of the tree,
or the blind wave's cascade
into whiteness,
then you must listen,
it is our calling,
more than the other,
more than the muse
or the white caryatid, the moon on the arch
of the cut stone cry of the hand,
more than the dark
blood pooling the sand,
a tremor of fire of delight
like the birth of a star
a mindless shining in silence,
an intentionless beam a ray of the night
that picks out our frail barque
our blue orb
in its globule of blackness,
where it floats within,
look no hands,

look no feet.

It is not poetry's task
to describe in equations
the pulse of your motions of thought
of the networks that flare,
it may linger an hour or two
with the moonlight on crystal salvers
that tile the dark,
or drift with the grass,
dance with the seed-heads,
blow over wastelands,
root in the unseen, unknown
anonymous corners
of whatever is.

It has the right,
it has offered its blood
to the broken demons,
and melted all gods,
it has followed the way,
and made sacred,
it has blessed
the wayfarer, its friend.

Nothing Else Will

Precisely we
(I mean the creatures,
with a little help from the process)
made the meaning and made grace.

We, yes we, made love and kindness,
made affection,
beauty out of sensitivity,
in truth-delight, in greater equity.

We were the makers,
we could make it still,
given sufficient reverence,
enough plain silence;

though most likely the one alone,
following a path
through the grass,
invisibly.

Most likely the one alone,
in the roadside grass,
watching what passes,
stepping to the other side,

or in the stillness,
in the concentration,
in the deep field,
hand, eye, ear, making.

If we ceased destruction,
precisely we
might build it all again.
The gate is holy.

Green Ways

Down green tracks the singing grasses.
If we lose those we lose everything.

Over the winding tracks the thorn trees
on the walls, voiceless their dark message.

Along soft ways the silent wildflowers.
If we lose these we lose everything.

Listening to the Movement

Bringing a little intellect to the process,
a little empathy,
with the sweetness,
a little chivalry,
grace, mercy, kindness,
a little warmth always
in our affections.

Keeping a little sanity in the process,
a measure of regard,
with equity,
a little depth,
slow, peaceful now, profound,
a little joy at all times
in our making.

Maintaining a little caution in the process,
a little silence,
with the splendour
of nature a little beneficence,
stillness, attention, meaning always,
listening to the movement
of the breeze.

The Long Soft Sighing of the Tide

Over these slopes of brown furze, broken stone,
the dolerite outcrops on the clouded hills,
the long horizon,
the glitter of western sea,
you feel the phantoms moving,
as the Amerindians moved,
and the San, almost silent
a part of the land,
one with the body's liquids,
bound in blood,
in a world we cannot reach
or comprehend
the world below the dust
sifted on hills,
the hundred thousand generations
gone down sighing,
the wind and stars
their guides.

On the far green slopes where the stones rise,
pointing to star perhaps or moon or sun,
in the white air,
the gleam of shining crystal,
you feel the phantoms move
as aboriginal ghosts, as forest peoples,
the sea and lakeshore dwellers moved,
a part of this earth,
electric with existence
temperate in blood,
making a world we cannot
recreate or gather,
the lives below the dust,
in the sand of the seasons,
the generations trusting in time
space, rites of passage,
the long soft sighing,
of the tide.

The Lark in Eternity, the Hawk in Time

Lark and hawk in the air,
the one hangs against cloud
joy in its wings,
holds still in eternal moment
pouring song
the raw trills
the pure cascade
sends down a cone of sound
to the slope of hill
concealing grass
the reservoir of the ear;
the other sweeps through time,
fire in its wings
plots destruction,
but equally *natura*,
the flare of process
running wild
down past present future,
beyond the pain
and our morality.

The river of peace
and the gyre of predation.
The one hangs crystal
in the midday heat
its fine performance
cold water over pebbles
delight in mind,
invisible source
of a-temporal beauty;
the other the glide
of life over the fall,
the tremor of blood
beating through skies
blind with lightning
the presage of winds;
both poised above us,
one over shallow grass,
one on the distant summit,
poles of our being,
in time and out of time.

Strange Self

Once more intentionless process,
hard by the bridge along the stream
bright down over boulders,
glassy slides and crystal foam,

mesmerising thought, stilling the eye
nearly solid water framed, eternal flow;
rapid passing on, endless remaining;
mind fast on presence and becoming.

Eyes fixed on no flow, unutterable
tardiness, all stands still, time ends,
then eye goes rushing down-slope
with the green dragon's tail, flailing.

Frozen eye, flicker of the serpent.
Still motion, swift speeding life.
River and stone, mind is both.
Strange self, and all things vague.

Almost a Clue

Here then is the silent corner I make.
I have created my place in the grass,
not one perhaps you will envy,
but between those two trees
and not far from the edge of the stream,
it's a place of light.

It's almost as if there's a clue
here to the imponderable earth,
a thread, perhaps, or a fragment of sky
that uncurls leading thought
into the quiet and eternal
like a secret in the secret.

Take stock: there are no wars here,
only the memory of battles,
no anger, no pain, only the ache
of remorse and irretrievable dawn.
Truth is here, and whatever of past
illusion clings to the native heart,

and then there is love, tangle of flesh
and spirit, sap of seasons, fire
of the lightning flash in azure, again,
again, and the downpour of days,
the slow roll of thunder over the bay,
the green of the soul-rending sea.

And there is beauty. These fields,
these trees that hang in the air,
these volumes of ice-cold darkness
that flow here from aquiline hills,
drenching the grass and flowers
into an orb of perfumed silence.

Here is the angle beyond despair,
but not unknowing, sealed with the real,
as bodies are sealed with understanding,
the blessings of closer perception,
than which there is nothing greater,
nothing deeper, nothing closer to air,

or the constant candescence of waters,
or the sun's flashing arc slicing pure green,
or this earth, dark under foot and hand,
this growth bursting in presence, live
by the crook of the arm, the eye's dark,
intimate understanding of self and other.

Tell me what you will carry
to the last breath of life, but friendship,
but memory, but grace of the line
the sound the landscape the resonance of space,
in which we endure the resonance of being,
the endless echo of this vast strangeness,

piercing the flesh like a briar, but balm
to the mind; tell me what else you will
hear when you die but the body's song
reverberating all ways through the intellect,
the song that ends in love and begins there,
the massive sweetness; it's all here,

all here in this place,
in this secret corner and lair of meaning.

Wind in the Poplar

The wind in the poplar, your poplar,
is sighing and hissing, sibilant evening
falls slowly over the field and river.
I listen inside me to your discrete song.

The clouds turn in the umber air,
unravelling, forming, life coheres
only in memory and in the making.
I fashion inside me your ancient song.

The waves tumble in flailing foam,
creating, destroying, meaning arises,
out of our effort, out of our loving.
I hear inside us the tide of your song.

Naming the Names

Some of us end so intoxicated we can only
keep naming names, so declaring things,
the endless the marvellous constructs
the worlds that owe nothing at all to us;
are the lovers of beetles, trees, scarlet
and emerald birds, pebbles and shells,
drunk on the headiest natural richness.

Some end with star words, flower words,
Arcturus and Deneb, Centaury, Burnet,
concentrated hubs and nodes of emotion,
we passers-through cling to furiously:
since what else can we do but cling tight
to this arc, this void, this chasm sliding
so sweetly so dumbly swiftly beneath us?

Some of us fall in love with the silence;
have you ever been there, plunged into
that aqueous crystal where turtles swim
and the flickering fish, or into that pond
the child once stirred, with its horse-kicks
of tadpoles, black lashes of stringiest life,
more tenacious than us, more enduring?

Some can survive only there, not among
humans, in that place where we go
for release, for freedom from pain,
for the intricate gathering of detail,
an essence of meaning, for the light
that crosses the subtle grey evening sky,
to be simply reflection in watery echo.

For answer, deeper question, who knows
or cares? In the end the pursuit is all,
what fills time, aching time, and eases
the sadness, surrounds with pale folds
and tissues the whole intense operation,
with delicate curlicues, layers of truth,
which may in turn be only diverse illusion.

Some have to speak how it feels, call out,
we insecure ones, who long for response,
from a self or the earth, from the worlds
that seem sleeping, or endlessly hostile,
yet surprise us with warmth and with joy.
It's as though we might touch that mute
being, that solemn dumb sense in the air,

it's as though we might wake the sleeper
there among thorns, or unravel the rose,
or something behind the rose, still hidden;
as if, beyond all our doubts and beliefs,
we might name some impossible presence,
that might make meaning for us, who are
charged forever it seems with the making.

Lighter

Lighter, lighter,
the red wind stirs in the poplars,
the lightning strikes fire,
a gust of the endless and infinite
picks up the world
and tosses it over its shoulder,
the ozone of light,
the acetylene burn of being.
The deutzia stirs, a pale
enduring presence,
she must be you,
and the poplar I,
forever improvising a life
amongst those
who cannot understand,
or only in moments,
while for us,
for us it's all time,
all space,
and every succession of days
a new voyage
into the ache of the failure to comprehend.

The blue Californian ceanothus too,
and the crimson may-thorn,
they watch us, they gaze,
they are distilled colour of form,
they sing
with a different hum, buzz
shrilling of tone
in the moments of brilliance,
the zig-zag flow among trees
of this wind from the west,
these volumes of dark
these clouds of unknowing,
black night of the soul
which is yes
an aspect of mind,
but due no divinity,
godless and sweet,
singing the flowers
inside us,
singing the skies
the storms of existence
lighter, lighter.

Mouth

You must use the language born in you,
not the tongues of another existence,
though you translate
the scorching of lips
the lightning flash and the cool
sweep of swallows over the lake,
do they sip there?

You must accustom yourself (lifelong)
to the rhythms of something native
a level of heart
its tendrils and arteries veins
the tremor of air in the tops
of the leaves and over the dark embankment,
the thrum of the rails.

This is the beauty, these the feelings
an essential life that endures,
though you may interpret
other worlds to the ear;
the dark eel's leap in the ditch, the leavened sand
where a patch of blood seeped
into your consciousness.

Only emotion remains, only pain
and the joy, nothing else,
after galaxies collide, after we merge
with Andromeda (call it death, or the machine)
only then will we know
the final, the ultimate truth,
of the flame in the mouth.

You must speak with the music of whatever
truth was founded inside you,
your country, your hills, your furlongs
of long heath and gorse,
the black-water falls, the white
hedges of may, the flowers blue,
yellow and red lining the trails.

You must countenance seasons of fall,
and the white resurrection that bursts
from pear branches,
clothes of the angels of mind,
(they do not exist) you are doomed to re-echo
all the bright thesaurus of meaning and time,
in the recess of light.

The Changelings

We touch many places, and people,
and they unequally touch on us.
And none of this is ever the same.
We pass on, travellers, and are not
the child in that garden imagining,
or the lover, or worker, or whatever
the blind mind thought it was,
and the places are subtly altered,
the wind that rises from marsh,
and the shores redolent of salt,
and the clouds, and the stream,
they are, but not as they were.

And you too are not as I dreamed,
moon of light, singing in silences,
under the narrow weft of my days,
though you are forever the unknown
sweetness that knocks at the heart,
demands its entry, makes me other,
creates my alien life, my truer life,
you too change with the breeze,
are transformed into plant or stone,
into tree or pool of refracted dawn.
You and I the strange mutated forms
of that flicker of transience, identity.

Months Of Grace

April and September the months of pure skies,
when the angle of sun brings the whitest cloud
over the blue, and there is that ice in the air,
gone or presaged.

And the hours when night is done and the moon
flows aqueous through light to set among trees;
April and September the months of possibilities,
being or destruction.

The turning points, in which certainty dissolves,
the altitudes of hill and tree, the bright disclosures,
beginnings where pale or transcendent suns glide
breaking the solid grey.

And the mind split open, and the life exposed, bare,
to the considerations of the dark ruthless intellect.
Months of a season crying mutation, you shall not
be what you are.

April and September, mercy, peace, kindness, affection,
also live there among harsh roots, in the derelict spaces.
To touch them the mind must climb sky-clear mountains,
in the months of grace.

Mind

*'...par l'espace, l'univers me comprend et m'engloutit
comme un point; par la pensée, je le comprends.'*

Pascal : Pensées :113

Nothing else for us but the mind,
it's our science, our arts,
deeper still it's the breath of our morality,
the enlivening fire.

The body passes, but never the mind,
that breaks or fades, yes,
but leaves the forms, the bright remains
in the house of shadow.

And the mind will migrate to the machine,
or the machine be redefined as tissue,
either way immortality beckons
the finite flesh.

Nothing else is left for us but mind,
beginning and end of space,
there, as us, when we decode from the journey,
from every transport.

Everything else is replaceable but mind
in its intimate process,
which carries inside – its own heritage,
the lives, the millennia.

To express them as mercy, pity, peace
and love, as ultimate grace,
beyond the reach of illusory religions,
the getting and spending, power.

Mind is the essence, mind our strangest future,
intellect, ethics, beauty, truth,
conjured by nature out of the nothingness,
as the universe self-conjured.

But never nothing. O, I am in love with form,
the shaping mind singing,
the wayfarer's dream of time and eternity,
marvellous resonance.

What Is Solid

Though the world is all substance (hear
the wind in the chestnut trees, above
the scarlet trumpets of the azaleas)
what is without purpose is also void.

Though we engage through bodies
and not simply minds (mind a process
of body therefore no thing, rather
a wisp of time transcended there)

the body is emptiness unless thought
redeems it. The houses, the rocks,
the hills disappear, I walk in the void,
which is the wild purposeless universe.

Substance vanishes into deeper form,
and form is a dance of process called
time, time the unfurling of process
in the core of the everlasting moment.

You and I are not solid matter enduring,
we are the ghosts and phantoms of light,
caught in the whirlwinds of thought
and feeling, granting meaning to life.

What crushes us is also light as a feather,
what we drift through, a weight of gravity
that we resist. Everything gathers round
in the gloom, the masses of buildings, trees,

but evening sizzles, the yellow lamps flare,
the reluctant heart beats again, lightning
entrances once more, without power to kill
the delight that flies in the watery darkness.

Bright, You Rise

Bright, you rise from the darkness, nameless stream,
carving your white flow over a lip of silent granite,
vague as the past ever is, a matter of ideas, feeling
not vision, in the eyes, which are not eyes, of mind.

I recall you, in memory's half-formed, fragile web
of grasping, like water flashing between the fingers,
but what registers is your uncompromising truth,
the flame of a moth-wing beating against life's glass.

Like me, a wanderer, and baffled by all this Earth,
your nervous flight pure as the wood-pigeon's arc,
from under the hawk of daylight, pain and denial,
a flash of grey gone sweet through the silent trees.

Evening Hour

Shake off the planet, all its exhaustions,
go down to the small green bay, the slow waves,
shivers of evening light on polished stones,
a hint of transcendence in the band of cloud.

Be kind to your self, and the thoughts of self,
the web of curious memories you drag with you,
of which the searching mind would like to make
a whole, but cannot, endlessly lifting its own purpose

high over its head and launching itself towards future,
in the hope that from it the meaning, the assurance
might emerge – or is it a benediction from something
it seeks, an exoneration, a sign of commendation

it asks of the horizon where a single vessel appears,
dark shell against the light, spreading its silent wake,
in interminable distance, over the surfaces of green,
each anxious wrinkle delicate as the moth's antenna?

Let go of the planet, hug yourself. Pure night is near,
when the clouds are rolled away and the galaxy flares,
and we can be one with the pure all-powerful stillness,
of multi-coloured stars, and the gaseous swirling veils.

Let go and be kind to your heart, that slight voyager,
that counts your steps, the hours, the life, the losses.
Consider the laughter that didn't make it here, mild
behind the mind's grinding down of pebble to sand.

However you make your purpose and your meaning,
know that no one before you or after will do better.
It's enough if they fail, the far depths, to dismay you
utterly, if you can still hide in the flower, insect, star.

Over-World

The deep well of time, the black alleyway
I wandered through,
its small lighted windows, quiet workshops,
soft laughter, happiness –
no walking there at the edge of pain and light
no following the cracks in ice
where hope founders.

And at the corner a pomegranate tree,
a bush, the pure exotic
with hanging fruit, Persephone's fruit,
in a bright angle, glowing slowly
at a cafe's side-entrance,
its mottled ripeness a six-month promise,
the seeded pledge of the over-world.

Self Aside

Putting self aside and the world,
ambling down-valley,
the mind arranges woods, hills, streams
into patterns of understanding,
ceases to compare itself to others,
or its creations to life's alternatives.
One foot in front of the other,
a further hundred steps, then a mile,
and landscape mutates,
there are other rivers, mountains, trees,
a new caress of the breeze,
and the heart is freed,
for its own making,
which is the only creation
worth the effort,
to be unique
in a world of non-uniqueness.

Putting self aside, which is difficult,
climbing, descending,
the mind constructs histories of fields,
builds patterns of light into forms of meaning,
ceases to interpret itself through others,
or its feelings through another's sense.
One foot after another, mile on mile,
and the natural beauty,
without demand, intent, authority,
the slow inflow of the given
not made, sinks deep,
to reassure us,
of the only perception
worth our effort;
to see beyond self
in the world of conflicting selves.

Thoughts In The Shade

The process is indestructible.
No way to leave the way.
No way to oppose it.
Relax, and float with the white seeds,
the thick cloud of crazed parachutes
coating the spider-webs
and the yellow gorse; gain hands of air.

It's the values inside us
that make answer to the world,
not the wild forces for good or ill,
harsh stresses that create a society.
Watching the moth dark in daylight,
and the thin file of ants climb
the hill of light to dissect a leaf.

Whatever is given and shared increases,
Whatever is owned is forever fixed.
It's the infinite against the finite thing.
Nature is not a consciousness, that participates
in our thought, foresight, conscience,
eyes or heart. Azure sky
eases the need for purpose, brings meaning.

Pale veins of the grass-blade, ruffled layers
of cloud, all this pure being is burgeoning.
Distinctions here so poorly understood:
there is an order even without design,
there is a meaning even without intent.
See it, and the centuries drop away,
leaving you simply naked in the sunlight.

Watch the great sieve, the vast cascade,
hear the showering sounds in the grass.
All the illusions of Maya, the shadows
of the void, but these are also the real,
in our irreality. The transient is the way.
The flow eternal. Nature asserts no values:
those we confer, with our hands of air.

Forbear

Meadow flatlands these
are the ends of the earth
the soft grass swaying

old stones placed on end
perhaps by hands
mark the hidden universe

white perfect cloud
 billows or is still

the sigh the sway of the grass like
 speech the message
deep down in us somewhere

flows what we loved and love
sweeps up life, holds life there
an instant gleaming

Meadow flatlands
these the sacred spaces
kill the idling engines forbear

Crossing The City

Architecture too has a secret.
Uncomfortable with what we make
that shows only power,
I like the buildings
that reveal a mind.

Concrete and steel are mindless.
'Statements' are shallow;
stone and wood are of earth
and reveal its beauty;
ruins are ours.

Here the massive domes, the facades,
great steps to belittle us,
blank spaces to fill voids with void,
no seats, vast squares;
the universe, the planet, bears down

Grass waves in my mind
I wander through
no longer finding anything within
that still endorses all this weight
for what it brings us

Wrong step a whole civilisation
founders, the arrow fired
aimlessly falls in the stream:
I search for the un-made
in this cold place

the un-designed, the richness
we were born to. Grass
waves in my mind;
I wait for night's
chance glimpse of galaxies.

We Are Buried Deep

No, there's nothing you have I want.
Give and share
that I'll understand.
Those who owned it all,
dust underfoot in the air
(Alexander's Caesar's Napoleon's Hitler's
Stalin's, Mao's breath still going round,
those molecules, the protons in free fall forever)
own nothing.
Power is empty.

Snow covers the dreaming land,
the wind is still,
and here is every peace.
Where are we going
in this universe,
(with Pascal I can grasp it, but it's nothing,
infinite void seething with all potentials,
what he looked for was non-existent purpose)
and why?
First set Earth free.

All the sad stones of empire down there.
Who knows what's
underground, glowing
unseen in the darkness?
Snow is light,
(Conceal with a veil what we have done,
what we have been, except for the gleams
of humanity, still emerging, celebrate those)
snow hides our past.
We are buried deep.

Distant Friend

Wandering again in grass
the butterflies fluttering
their wisps of wings in air
go covering the meadows,
and the mind a moth follows
lighter than moon and star,
towards the distant hills.

Friendship a wild flicker
of a far-off lamp in silence,
a warmth in the midnight air,
soothes, energises,
and friendship too has wings,
sings in the darkness,
free mind to mind.

The moonlit slopes are white
a dim sheen veiled glowing,
the deep black undergrowth
creates the planet over again,
and friendship too, its maps
are new, it shines in stillness,
even though you are not here.

Mountain Truth

On shattered rim-rock and shale,
broken edge of the wild uplands.
Rising sun in fog, the firs in light
glow greener than greenest seas.

All thing ease down, all working
becomes the maturation of moths,
the infinitesimal moves of seeds,
the mutating angles of the mind.

Birds and a few mice, in the grass,
at the fringe of the bands of stone.
Skies are incandescent, ferns grace
black shards of cliff, streams flow.

Here we lose the illusions that bind.
Loosed and flowing, frozen time.
The ball of light, mountain truth.
Falling slower, sinking deeper.

Thoughts For A Rainy Day

Action or inaction, what's your choice?
Toss a pebble into the silent pool
and hope for minimum destruction,
or drift with the light, the grass,
the wandering stream, savaged
by conscience.

Ways of life are no help: one is all
action; if not of the body, of mind
and emotions; it's forever for others:
submerging the self in selflessness,
become society, brother/sisterhood,
die of species.

Another dissolves the self in void,
embraces an ultimate non-action,
transcends the self in states of self,
becomes the one alone, or the one
is all, vanishes into the non-distance,
seeks non-self.

Often the same creed will embrace
both action and non-action, a deep
inner tension in all forms of spirit,
between the worlds inside and out,
our penalty for existing in the unreal,
not fish or fowl.

Many forms of action are forms
of power, and all power is empty.
Many forms of inaction are equally
manifestations of greed, fear, desire,
anxiety, opposition, competition,
neutral power.

Giving up power without relinquishing humanity is hard, embracing it without losing humanity in action is impossible. Those forms of action devoid of power are personal, creative: love, art, for example, both difficult.

The source of all ethics and morality, is the choice between action and inaction, where every form of action has unforeseen consequences, many are not benign, where even non-action is a form of action by default.

To interfere, to intervene in helpful ways, to detach oneself from selfish power, to find a road between action and inaction, exhibiting compassion, but refraining from driving the world in ways not understood, is hard.

Pity the species. Pity the naked self.

Rationale

You write because the world disturbs you in the deepest way. Because time is short and eternity is long, and the spirit would find its place. Because nature is now no longer enough if it ever was, and our artifice not only disappoints, it troubles in subtle or not so subtle ways.

You write because there is beauty buried in matter and form and it seems to emerge just beneath your fingers or under your eyelids, in the deep communion – days pass like minutes. Because you feel you don't exist unless you shout, cry, scream in the infinite silence forever surrounds.

You write because it's a form of love, a way of comprehending the beloved. You write because you wish to be river, stone, tree, flower, insect, cloud, light. Because it's the sweetest way to pass the hours, woven dew-wet spider-webs over the impenetrable thickets of gorse.

You write to free what is otherwise imprisoned, in a narrow concrete cell; to try to communicate with the other that never responds, or not in the way desired. You write because it is action and not inaction, but non-action devoid of power. Because it makes you weep.

You write for ever, for every generation, what is encapsulated in just this one time and place, because humankind is itself a story, and its dreams, hopes, acts, desires; and all of us seek a story. Because we are lost in the immensity of the void, and the spirit would somehow find its place.

Walk

Down the green road along the hedgerow,
a buried ditch, two goats feeding.
Over a stile, and up through abandoned quarries
to reach the hill-fort's piles of shattered stone.

Finding a way even over a mapped landscape
frees the spirit. It's a path back into nature,
into the world we long ago abandoned,
and it sweetens our exile here in modernity.

White clouds from the sea shadow the moor.
Has the stone you grasp rolled from the past,
or yesterday's outfall? New or old, still cast
from million-year deep shelves of gone seas.

There's the drop into secret folds of a dark hill,
and the climb, in scent of the sea, towards fields
deep in the waves of imminent harvest. There's
a lane, a wall, a gully drenched in wild-flowers.

Then there's a place to stand, in alien country,
which is always the heart's renewal, freedom
from habits of eye and ear. The lark's up high,
unseen in the blue. Its wings still fold in joy.

The Mouths Of Time

It's a question of feeling
the quality of your own mind,
I see that.
Invention and description
are not enough
for the burning heart.
Perhaps you're the glow itself
of the midnight moon
silhouetting
the poplar and the ploughshare,
the broken wall
its deeper shadows.
Perhaps you're the night,
deep night,
where the galaxy arches,
and the eye
makes everything vast
everything tiny.
Perhaps you are other,
mirror shattered crazed in the other,
all that is not reflection,
refraction,
all that is the world itself
breaking in from outside
to declare you absent,
shredding your spirit as you shred
the wisps of dried leaf and flower
in the field,
by the river in early light
where you'd sleep forever.

It's about grasping the feel
of a movement elusive,
in hours, I see that.
Perhaps you're the shape
on the fiery scent of a hill,
the ice of its thorn-tree
that renews,
the crackle of lightening,
the vicious veil
of misted rain blasting the slope.
Perhaps you're the dance
of the bitter leaves,
of sombre cloud
the green blades of dawn and dusk.
Perhaps you're the nebula,
whorl of silver,
the concentration of mass.
Perhaps, not the field,
or the soil below,
you're the silence buried,
where no one cries,
at the mute heart of the earth.
Perhaps you're the air,
that sighs and showers seed softly
the detritus of days
of the heavy sun,
a darkness of cedars,
of nightshade,
the purple mouths
of time.

Returning

Returning always to the way,
which is nowhere,
and nothing.

A play of light on water,
an ongoing
movement of leaves,
we are always part of.

Even the solitudes
are imaginary.
Air is no vacuum,
thought is time.

And meaning
is in nature,
out of mind,
always singing.

Always the singing dying
resurrecting land,
and the marks of
our passing.

Returning always to the way.

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