

Another Nature

*'Only the poet, disdainful to be tied to any such subjection,
lifted up with the vigour of his own invention,
doth grow in effect another nature....'*

Philip Sidney: The Defence Of Poesy

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Wide Skies

This is the limestone country, here light falls
through the tender declivities of the spirit,
as though bathing and healing,
though what pales the stones are lichens,
growths out of weathering,
the excrescences of time made beauty.

Here are the wide skies, the green fields,
the gleam and glitter of grass
that flows in the wind denoting richness,
as though a signifier to what hides
shy in the spirit, anxious of hurt,
needful of what bathes and transmutes.

Here are the run of trees, the line of wall,
the shadows on the field,
the long slopes gently curving, the caves
of cold, the mined-out rakes, their sound
which is a delicate soughing
of the air moving soft over dissolved lives.

The quicklime of time moves mysteriously here,
nothing demonstrative, discrete as its wildflowers,
its fields mute in winter, its misted lights and darks,
its underground soothing waters,
its ease of trees, its ash and hawthorn musings.

The rounded hills spring to a godless sky
fierce in blue intensity, a winter stillness
inescapable, then resolve themselves into
paler quiets, gripping the heart,
in a crystalline and heartless universe.

Here the stone spires hover pointing nowhere except
back into the human spirit. These are human hills,
they open out, immense, under the stars,
their collision of moistures, long sediment of tides
their risen beds of creature and un-creation.

This is not a landscape that shifts the mind sideways:
the comers stay, thought dives deep into the ground
to rise a mile distant, bubbling, covering the grass
and spreading its net of light, ready at any instant
to sink away, elusive as life itself, undirected.

It is more like star-music, collisions of galaxies
without sound, but whose colours we almost hear,
hiding the other life surely existent
somewhere in the billion-fold light of the vast bonfire;
more like a secret music on the edge of the ear,

beyond its coils, music that somehow echoes us
without assuming our presence, resonating though
with what we create from the invisible, in every space
and none, our mind-creations, marks of the fortunate,
emblems of humility, or love,

since these are the great spaces, landscapes and voids,
in whose inner cores lie the flowing chambers,
whirls of gaseous light or deep veils
that will never blaze for us, yet are our birth-right,
notes of our clef on the stave of a familiar being.

At night the hills and mounds, the peaks and shallows
seem no shelter, rather the gates at the field sides
that lead into seas of grass
not caves of the heart but veins and sinews of light
that stretch, bright tendrils, into a universe

we never fully comprehend, only suffer. If our hearts
were stronger might we forget ourselves
and leave time behind, embracing only space,
a drifting through a flow un-destined, calling
out cries like these cries of the limestone night,

strange harsh cries of the creatures, then their sighs,
groans, piercing shrieks, murmurs and snuffling,
which blossom like stars and fall, descend and fade
like stars, in the inner vision of the listener
and the watcher?

The limestone is a milkiness of the breath, a pallid
rough-smooth arc of the moving voice,
a shimmering of light where there should be none,
a careless shuffle of stone over endless seams of hills,
shrouding the sanctums of water:

what fluids we are, what fluidity of being,
shapeless and shaped, carving and still uncarved,
finding out narrow ways in the cliff-shadowed depths
of the limestone dale, no more nor less than the galactic
coiling, no stranger: no less no more conceivable!

The Rose

A melding of galaxies white in the image
draws me in.

Is it collision, or by-pass, juxtaposition,
a trick of the eye, a slight of distance,
a subtle movement of parallax,
a simple conjunction without meaning,
though it creates the rose,
like that rose in the garden where we walked
to the courtyard, cistern, fountain,
through the arbours,
beside the channels of stone
those spouting gushers
above the tinted air of the plain.

The white and perfect rose,
the rose of stars,
that I imagine here
in the green darkness
of a pure December
years away,
the out-flung light
from those flat and edge-on spirals,
one its stem, the other the true calyx,
pointillism of a billion worlds,
our rose,
the rose of time, the rose
of the ever-flowering universe
in which we melt and vanish,
rain on leaves
of eternal light,

on hills under the stars.

Its image joins us, mind on mind,
as it welded us body on body,
the two are one.

An image reclaimed, no image
of unsound gods, deceptive angels
in some blind heaven,
or battles or veils,
or secret unintelligible joys,
but image of delicate earth, an impossible echo,
in which you, all of earth to me, linger;
rose etched of galaxies:
world is form, its perception,
but mind is symbol:
lives are like galaxies,
love is their bright collision.

The Mine

Ash trees, black candles, blades, buds pointed
at the stars, naked in winter
crest the shaft veil the abandoned mine
on its distant hill
and encircle its deep quiet.

The mine went under the earth
the miners under the earth,
the minds, went down
into the chill,
into damp silence

to split the stone,
pick, hammer and wedge,
drag the sledge
wind the windlass:
now all is quiet again.

Ash inherits.
its black flame-tips burn,
black matter, black energy
move above.

We feel their gravity
their lost gatherings
their silent murmur
their lightless presence

dark as lead and heavy
though they too walked
through green fields
studying wild flowers.

Not Our Hands

There's the unsung labour of centuries
in the stone walls, mines, farms,
back to the first peoples
who moved over this land
with thoughts we grasp for,
trying to conceive in shadows
the shapes of familiar ghosts.

Stone on stone, or stone from stone,
back to the rings and lows,
not of this quietened landscape
but the sounding industry
echoing on curving hills
the noise of its creature-being
over a living surface.

Hand-axe and sled, barn
and standing stone,
ditch and field,
and then the trickle of water,
into the grey-white vale,
then the silent flowers
in the gate of grass.

Morning Song

All living creatures run
towards the rising sun.
Minds on fire with light
follow the world in flight.

Flame of the brilliant eye
sings in the morning sky.
We run towards the light
out of the quiet of night.

The Moral Man

The moral man in his gentleness considers
the maze of being in which worlds conflict,
and yet in his gentleness refuses conflict.

That is paradox. To be moral he must engage
with a world that only renders him immoral,
presents the choices granted beyond choice.

Beyond good and evil lies the real, that place
where we navigate by unreliable beacons,
or by the markers that they place on slopes

to find a direct path by in the snowfields.
Look, there they climb the hill, on either side
the dangerous shafts, the deceptive hollows.

The moral man in his gentleness, pursues
the lightest things, the dance of shadows,
grateful for music, taciturn as to meanings,

which evolve from lines of light as notes evolve
spirals of stars in the attentive listener,
not to be voiced too loudly, subtle as love

which is not measured by happiness or time,
but by the depths that fall away from us
and open the void of multi-coloured veils

in which strange objects lurk, some that destroy,
collapsed beings that suck in all matter, life;
some that give back their light, send a planet

silver and blue turning alive through silence.
Such planets the moral man in his gentleness
observes, they climb above his courtyard

pinpricks of faultless diamond, glittering
towards the distant tree, or a sombre hill,
with a measure that is more than human,

more than the moral man in his gentleness.

Endless

Here all is humble, with the humility of true things,
which save us by their quietness
and absence of demand, the things that serve;
the stone guide-post that completes a gate,
the rutted track that somehow always heals
again its mud grown firm, the creature's gaze
placid or vital, the wall, the line of trees,
that make a boundary to our hidden path
visible only by its stiles, those works of hands,
the craft of artistry, that punctuate horizons,
an up-flung post their signal, or a crest
of stone that says ascend descend,
register your being here (feel gravity
drag you down, and bring you back
from its summit, mountaineer)
or the humbler still, the blue flower by the way,
the pool of water, the trickle like the memory
of a brook, the tremor of a half-remembered line,
the moment part-recovered teasing thought
that lies buried deep in an afternoon
of your self that tried but failed to survive you.

Or the eye grows humbler still,
and quieter,
follows the softened swerve of the horizon
unbroken by artefacts, almost free of trees
the line of blue or grey or occasional gold
that deepens in the heart, the colour
of our child-being, the pinprick self
dwarfed by each cloud, leaf, pebble,
until we are nothing more than the transience
that is the condition of our passing through,
elusive ourselves as what we contemplate,
found in a right perspective,
whittled down
like the fastening of the latch,
to something usable, a form
of the mind that can employ the mind
for making and creating,
as sober minds
made these wide farms and walls,
followed the slopes, made trails
and quarried through
to ancient bedrock,
itself dove-coloured stone,
shade of the earth.

The land engenders love,
careless of its own beauty
which exists perhaps only in living minds,
a perception of what cradles the human heart
and soothes its pain and restlessness,
invokes the dark, the purl
of secret waters in discrete abyss
the hidden channels of our promises.
Nothing here proclaims in pearl-grey winter
a summer dominance,
its speech is the speech of mortal dialect
its form the conciseness of a ridge
multiplied to a long backbone of edges,
or an unpretentious wood on a slope,
mysterious by being laid full open,
as the loved is always mysterious,
less known when eye to eye
or mind to mind,

but always astonishing.
Nothing here states other than obvious
shapes and hues and tones
or is less obvious,
or why would we return
in heart, ear, eye
and the marrow of thought
to whatever it may mean
to lose oneself in landscape?
There is a complexity
the mind still reads
as it did long ago
in a text too subtle
for its understanding,
but from which
some hidden redolence,
like a forgotten scent
rises, essential
inescapable, and yet unreachable,
a fragrance like the rose
but not the rose,
further there, stranger,
alien to us, yet humbler,
essence of time, but what;
faint as the far field
we will never know,
but whose distance calls to us,
dark travellers.

The Major Ghost

Flights of birds now,
a thousand in a flight, rhythm of birds, the ghosts of light
flocking over the fields of light,
like the gone generations,
each complicated life a universe, lost universes, into which
we dare travel less than into the great universe
whose planets will only return us to ourselves
selves into which we can no longer travel.
Great flights of birds,
dark flickerings of the dale,
what birds are these
nothing here tells,
no field-glass, no bird-book defines
the unknown, the unspecific glimmering
darkness, like the dark matter
congregating among stars,
that energy that grips the galaxies
tighter than light,
defying our detailed naming,
defeating ownership.

A wild migration. Reading the legend
where Buddha says the self
like the world does not exist as one
abiding thing, but as shifting forms,
and in saying so
almost touched on process,
the life non-linear, the fractal depths
where even choice
hangs by an ash-tree thread
over a dew-pond's glow.
Migration. Not transmigration.
Not gone beyond. Just this,
the poems of time on stone,
the groves of time crowning tiny hills
from which birds wheel,
where birds rise and join
that greater flight of birds,
the major ghost.

December Fields

Bright light on the December fields
conceals the heart, conceals the mind
behind the flesh, inside the eye,
which every moment, every place
inside the space of walls and hills,
creates another universe
though less immediate, and part
not of the other, but the self,
more of the unreal than the real,
though entangled here in both.

So you, unseen, move on green hills,
stand beside me as I gaze
over the stone stile into the shorn field,
the glow, then walk between lines
of silver stubble, the gold, the grey,
to reach the mere's dark solitude,
though my solitudes are deeper,
since in them no creatures winter
except heart's creatures,
intangible, unseen.

Invisible, is it visibility mind longs for?
Some repetition of water, fixity of stone?
Or do we value too much our private silence
of which no one can know, not even
the near companion, not even self often,
what it is that dreams in this hive
of dark, this flow behind the visage?
A fair exchange, an inner making
everywhere invisible, for the clear discretion
of limestone uplands?

They would be music, the voice in me
others can never hear,
unable to critique me for revealing
too much, only for delving too deep
unable to communicate
the meaning of the stillness,
except by gesturing vaguely at forms,
by muttering incantations,
wrenched from the unspeakable,
this viewless taciturn.

They would be sound: did you not say
in words that startled me,
those casual brilliant words,
that the miracle would be for the human
to end in music, escape
the poor words which we set in lines,
unable to speak our longing
for that sweet place we get to
when they are so placed
and a strange unlooked-for music plays.

The weathered heights, the steep stone ways
rise to travel the tops, where bright
in December light the mind waits
for vision, strength, realisation,
something real from the real distance,
of light rays slanting under sombre cloud,
of green undulating ridges with tiny trees
riding their backs like windblown children,
something more maybe from the flight of birds
than their dark whirling and far cries.

Marble and quicklime are the modifications
of this rock, form and return to formlessness,
and we, like its fossils, dissolved and petrified,
change light each hour and yet are here
silent, unseen within the setting day
in our weird permanence, brief as
the flash of sun,
there, then behind the cloud, cascading
in a secret glory:
oh, guess what I am from my rays.

Down by the ginnels of abraded stone,
down by the runnels of invisible water
that flow under the ground,
I find my track,
long shadows take me,
a grove of trees groans and sighs
to this cold north-westerly;
its dry leaves shake,
in places no thought goes
still mysterious in loveliness,

since no map shows the beauty of the landscape,
nor landscape shows the movements of the mind.

The Beauty The Camera Does Not Capture

The beauty the camera does not capture,
that needs something of the human eye,
that sweep of continuous movement over a landscape,
under its arc of extended sky,

the vision the creature's denied: though birds maybe
penetrate, as Blake said, another space
between the beech, the oak wood, and the ash.
What does the camera feel on its face

of this world that rises clear in the living eye,
this excitement of the senses it cannot capture,
of this country which has to be walked through
to be known, of this abstract: Nature?

A beauty the image creates by mutilation,
to render it in its medium, to make the new,
is not this beauty the heart cannot explain
except by speaking of love; unreal, untrue,

not this pure juxtaposition of mind and sense,
like stone to the touch, a cold flame in the air,
grass-green light to the eye; not this that always
takes the heart by surprise, and holds it there.

Civilisation

The gale of wind travels the muddy lane,
between high walls, a trail of earth and grass,
but the day is flame and ice, the low sun sings
to the long silences, the thrash of branches.

I watch my shadow move along the wall
in a patch of sunlight; no winter shade
it is a shadow of the summer freed here
to slide from seasons, and abandon time.

Plunge down dale, into the secret narrows,
the thick grasses between sculpted outcrops,
the sudden shelter: here the salt-way ran,
here packed mules followed the long slope

towards the green depths, here time congeals,
and like the shadow on the wall repeats
the centuries in miniature, rewinds the human,
or fashions the one bird, replicates its flight,

and secretes it still among ash and hawthorn,
makes stream and river sound the same music
out of the same molecules of water, abrades
the stone but not in the forms of civilisation,

whose marble shapes made to soothe, impress,
or simply echo visibly in space, here lose
their resonance – we move beyond artifice,
this is the windblown world in our faces,

and the primal shadow, with its primal dance
over surface, though here is the modern eye
to catch both past and present in awareness
knowing these spaces too have always opened

into infinite space, and the night of galaxies,
that the primal shape also involved affections,
that the senses stirred here, among soluble stone,
rock softer to the hand, incised regions,

cut by sweet water, sculpted by the storm,
strange under snow, or glittering with grass,
(simple to raise a stone circle or a barn roof,
to make safe against the shiver of the stars)

conformable but rugged, with small fields
hedged in stone where the stubble lingers,
high on the slope, hidden among green tracts
in its slight rectangle of undulating ground,

harsh with a northern hardness, open though
and gentler than the south in the inner spirit,
so that the grass hides small flowers in spring,
the mere hides tiny amphibians, insects, stems,

minds hold warmth. If civilisation is truth,
acknowledged beauty, love of deep places,
here is the civilised landscape. Its shadows
are my shadow travelling across its space

of whitened wall in the gale-bright sun,
its imperfect perfection the distant detail,
its past my present, its creatures my kin,
its limestone sieve still winnowing my light.

The Upland

You could walk over this in a day,
or fail to walk over it in a lifetime.
It is the wide tract filled with detail,
that like a fractal boundary dissolves
into deeper layers, on further scales.
You could cross it, driving, in an hour,
from all directions, or miss it going by
in a moment. It yields its secrets easily,
but holds them endlessly in its stillness,
is no challenge, offers no temptation,
is not some place of power, some jewel
of ages, a storehouse of acquisition,
or the sacred space of any rite,
but will draw the heart and root it deeper
in its simplicity, the complex real,
its unpretentious being, of itself,
in the subtle region that it occupies.

It is like the path you cross,
not the path you follow. The latter
predicates a destination, an idea,
the former an embrace of freedom,
an implicit acceptance of the
fall of a purer water in the ear,
which anticipates no answer
even though it echoes inside.
It is like the light you feel, not
the light you see, a warmth
of the spirit that disregards
the superficialities of ritual:
it is the sun itself and not
the reflected or refracted ray
mirrored or absorbed in the pool
which indicate a depth or surface to be lit
rather than a substance under your hand
that almost seems to support the globe in space
unsuspended, present in the void.

You can follow the lines of its ancient lanes:
they all have names, who named them?
Or be anonymous in its anonymity,
(bird unidentified, or flower, or stream,
the corner of a hill, the barn, the wall,
though its trees insist on recognition),
unrecognised yourself, free of the net,
circling between villages, caught
in the boundless boundary of a single day,
the mileage of a quiet walk,
the whisper of its hedgerows, fences, ditches,
the shade of ruined, broken-backed, solid walls
that apportion vale-sides, cover distances,
like threads of stone in lakes of emerald,
or textured chains on a bright fabric;
or you can sit in stillness
on a layered ledge,
fingering the crumbling rock,
tasting its stony strangeness,
watching the kestrel pass,
the rabbit in the grass,
the insect on the stem,
the breath of air
that stirs the mind,
its latent memories.

English

The language here goes deeper into English,
back towards walls in their angles,
back towards stones,
names are a flex of older shifts of meaning
tongued and elided time,
their words are words for streams, barns, possession,
not flowers or trees
not stars or birds,
nothing for beauty all for being
for endurance,
for carving out and holding on,
for rooting in the silence
sounding a note
however brief or faint
of the familiar music.

The tracks were their tracks, we are passers-by:
to spend a life here is still to be a stranger,
whom light delights, who hears
under the ground in darkness clearer water
or at the corner of the field
might see the brown hare dance on snow,
and so be more than guest
sinking deeper
towards the hearts of words
their writhing tendrils
their nodes where meaning hangs
their soil that falls
into your open hand
and discloses
what time will never tell of its own accord.

Stand quiet here between the ash and alder,
between the upland summit and the valley,
wildflowers in the eye,
grass underfoot,
draw that deep breath
that joins both body and mind,
in the further space
where this place is,
where ideas move
through the labyrinth of thought
its sculpted channels,
ideas like dark words flickering in the sun,
with their black light
that flows from centuries
of words, of names
now silent.

The Far

Now, beloved, in this moment now
where place is all of light, and of the night
what noises now
so secretly
is what cannot, though time deceive,
be lost entirely and must leave
the meaning of the inner vow
a message of the mystery,

take thought, among the valleys slow
the sifting water shimmering there
in clearer air
persistently,
is what cannot, though time deceive,
be changed entirely, nor must grieve
the passing or the failed response
as you must know.

Now, beloved, in this evening light
where limestone wall and hawthorn brake
foam on the ledges of the night,
believe in me, for my sake,
or if not, in the deep intention here
that takes the mind beyond our fear
towards the purity of star
where mind is sated by the far.

A Villanelle for Wittgenstein – Made While Walking

Mind is the meaning that cannot be said.
Though words are a public tune we all agree,
self is the private music in the head.

Despite the bright speech of the familiar dead,
despite the rapport between yourself and me,
mind is the meaning that cannot be said.

Oh, he was right, all language can be read,
but words we speak are not the mystery;
self is the private music in the head.

There are those things that in the nerves are bred,
open to all, yet here's the sole circuitry;
mind is the meaning that cannot be said.

Though you on I and I on you have fed,
though love is communion, we still are free.
Self is the private music in the head.

If not might you suppose that we instead
could stand for each, the other each must be?
Mind is the meaning that cannot be said.
Self is the private music in the head.

The Only One

It might be you recognise him, know his name,
that dark figure that climbs the landscape
slope by slope, from the quiet village
to the upland field, it may seem
his silent self-containment is the outcome
of hand and mind accustomed to their work,
or that his stride neither too short nor long
used to steep valleys or grassy pastures,
evokes the steadiness of light on limestone,
the unspectacular under a winter sky,
light on a rock that shapes to the hand
as you climb the stile, shapes to the wind,
the seasons, and the sun.

It might be you think you know this century
is the century he climbs, though how you know
which century you travel, at this moment,
between the glittering field and the sky
is hard to say, a rational supposition maybe,
but then how much of us is reason,
how much a sheer persistence, like the ground,
which looked much the same in other centuries,
though lift your eyes to the skyline
and mine stacks, then carriages on rutted roads,
then horse and plough, then low appear,
the burial mound, the smoke
from ancient fires,
and that same climber, moving to your eye
like a familiar ghost – see him clear,
in that eye of imagination,
truer often than the seeing eye,
vision not veiling habit.

As if the track he treads, the muddy lane,
is the one track trodden, that he
is only a little ahead of us maybe,
planning his labour, rising purposefully
out of the valley, to heal, or conserve,
to mend a wall or shift a stone,
or like us here to gaze, look down and out
over the landscape, knowing that this
in some clear form will sweetly outlast us,
that we are a simple shadow on the brightness,
(a flicker no more than the evening moth,
than the brown hare's passing down
a furrow through the cold air)
a shadow seized on transience a little more
in mind, though less in flesh;
who knows how long the kestrel's minute
lasts, or that of the field-mouse,
or the horse-fly?

In the end he is only ourselves in passing,
the one dark figure that always strides
from that field gate to the further stile,
his mind glimmers in ours, ours in his,
and we breathe the one mortal being,
swifter than Lathkill's winter stream,
or the gyring flight of birds (what birds
are they) over the gleaming grass.
And we are in both places, in all places,
what Donne meant by the main, the continent
where all are separate but all are one,
and the island an illusion. The twisted spiral,
the subtle code that is the bond of life,
and its message, twines through this landscape,
to coil about the sun,
where Dante saw the human form (as
Leonardo drew, and Blake supposed)
for us the only One.

Without A History

This is a landscape where no great names died,
where no one needs to conceal the lie of the land,
or the shafts sunk in error where nothing lay.

Conflict evaded it, though it saw violence,
caught between non-strategic viewpoints,
aligned solely with the earth as it was,

and the smoke and fumes of our savage
seizure of the planet shrank here on green
slopes of abandoned silence.

Its life was rebellious and mercurial,
brief lightning of a local nature,
a robust mockery of Achilles and Apollo:

rather Mercury with his cattle, and the flute
of the shepherd rather than the lyre:
there are too many lyres.

Change and oppression might threaten,
was the message,
but unchanged we will be still and persevere,

knowing a deeper truth, that the random order
of the universe has seen far worse
but not invented better.

Which is no claim for sainthood for minds
that chose the hidden ways, old crossroads,
ancient fields, now thoroughly modern:

there are no saints, only beneficent purposes
and internal solutions to what erodes
our brevity devoid of all intention,

this cosmos, strangely free, expanding nowhere,
silently, and sprung from nowhere,
which few now find strange.

No saints, only images erected, statues
to sainthood. Whether we choose
to scatter ourselves or concentrate our love

is not the point, though they think so
who seek to engineer societies or faiths,
the truth is subtler, deeper.

Self is no mass movement. Valid lives
also turned away from intervention,
seeking no harm to everything on earth.

The interventionists of mind have much
to answer for, extolled as they are
by the public voice.

Apollo never masters Mercury,
thank goodness, the fields are free
to wild creatures too,

those who move under bright constellations
to other and more intense
destinations

not on our maps, and never
to be explained, or compromised,
by an overt communication.

To learn is to unfold what we know,
more than a rush from place to place:
seeking beauty, revealing beauty

is harder, the argument against progress,
destabilisation of old ways of life,
a too swift change that sharpens the mind

and may belittle it. The human race
is not a movement towards set place,
its purposes in the end all purposeless.

Where no great names die, where there is
scant history, the real continues,
every value a judgement still.

My Dear Sleeper

As the past grows longer,
the night grows deeper,
the mind grows smaller,
my dear sleeper.

As the stars en masse,
our bright impasse,
stretch further back
in time's dark crack;

as the tide of light
in the dead of night
from the moon at full
exerts its pull,

stirs your dark hair,
remember there;
time is the keeper,
my dear sleeper.

Limestone And Air

Oh you will have to catch the world in flight.
What waits for us is the habit that will pass.
You must overtake your shadow in the grass.
Daylight begins before the ends of night.

What waits for us is a shadow in the grass,
You will have end before the world's delight.
Thought has a mind to take the world in flight,
body mind's semblance that in time will pass.

Oh you must learn the meaning of delight.
What the mind loves defeats the counter-pass,
the swallow exceeds its shadow in the grass,
starlight and air, we meet, at ends of night.

All that has mind for shadows in the grass,
all that will overtake this world in flight,
comes of the deepest habits that must pass,
forms the sun's semblance in the dark of night.

Thought must take pains to forge the world's delight.
Oh you must learn the subtlest counter-pass,
what the mind loves is our sole means of flight,
sharper than swallow's shadow on the grass.

Sedimentary

Its reticence is a reticence of seasons,
whose progress is un-sensational,
formed of the simplest kinds of weather,
the grey, the umber, or the blue.

Its shape is the shape of cumulo-nimbus,
curves and bays, towers and curtain walls.
You can never imagine it as marble,
hard to see Michelangelo's captive slave

buried there, though it will gloss with wear.
Its scent is wild grassland air combined
with an almost imperceptible drift of flowers,
a fragrance that tugs the heart, beyond the sense.

Its mastery is the conquest of dark hollows,
the traverse of gently co-operative hills,
the rise beside clumps of trees without dissent,
the embrace of water beneath its knees.

Its sound is breeze, delicate wood-anemone,
or a hiss of wind where a gust has died,
or the vague mutter of a marginal stream
waiting to dive, unexpectedly emerging.

Its light is a curious blend of pale and dark,
a story written by lichen on slabs of stiles,
calling to distant roadways on green hills
shattering all your assumed imaginations.

Its seriousness is the depth of its own poetic,
despising the facile, weightless, ephemeral
music of what only lasts after a fashion.
Its core's the fossil meaning of lost erosions,

the coils and fronds and pens of other seas
than these grass oceans in an upland silence,
which a buzzard cry may break, or the croak
of a crow mocking impermanence, ever crow.

It has been always other than what we have been,
always stone, always the implacable non-reason
corresponding to those trails of galactic stars,
from whose whirls we stare at the central darkness.

Crossroads

Romans too idled at crossroads, and the T'ang Chinese,
contemplating the State, the confusion of their affairs.
Sacred to deities of trade, movement, loitering, the night,
a place where stray dogs attack, or sleep sound in the sun,

crossroads are permanent impermanence, something
always passes, but like a horizontal sign they point
the directions of other-where, out of what is;
to a dip and the trees, or a sloping hill and the skyline.

Surviving here they embody history, tracks
and routes that followed lines of landscape,
and crossed each other as lines of life will cross
precipitating re-appraisal of what was and might be.

A crossroad opens, never drives you on, but tempts
to rest and be at peace an instant, which is hard
for creatures born to restlessness, and re-invention.
One-track places have single pasts and futures,

you come you go, but crossroads offer options,
not the least of which is to cease from travel,
and hold still in this landscape with its slower
diminution of birds and fields, its persistence.

Then you can contemplate the ways and where
they lead: to those we loved and those we love,
or to the singing and the sighing of cities,
to creation or destruction, joy or fear;

or you can circle on the map, take in surrounds,
scan neighbours, since a crossroad forms radii,
quarters the circumference of our presence;
or meditate like Romans building empires,

or T'ang poets trying desperately to evade one.
Here we lay down power, assume our powers,
of feeling and sensation, trace creation's gyres.
A hawk in the wide sky, looks down at life.

Every moment of history is a crossroads;
humankind is free to choose another path,
to where a second Mozart comes to pass,
or another Leonardo sketches the living grass.

This Place At Evening

Now order is the order of the day,
the cello plays that Boccherini piece,
the tune he heard in a Madrid street
transformed to the meaning of its joy;

ideal order, all that art can know,
an order of freedom, outside these lives
ever-disappointed, a failure to cohere,
in the marshes where no craft can steer.

Not the order of life then which is greater,
though ungraspable; the best we can do
is lay the stone tiles that 'thatch' a roof,
or maintain the walls that others built.

Art is no subtle mystery, a sole republic
of the free, yet no society; past the reach
of that to which the heart gives no assent,
to which mind has no duty, innocent

of all the moral pressures others bring
to this sad earth where we congregate,
a benighted species, dominant and late
to the feast of natural, but lost, delight.

Art is a gateway in a curious corner,
where you must forget yourself,
all other aims, and concentrate
on the shining entrance to the well,

which may for you hold water, or
still reflect the stars, implicit order,
spontaneous, self-born, and internal,
the pure meaning at the root of truth,

or beauty, or the love that terrifies.
Any moment may, before your eyes,
reveal the sacred space, no religion
will ever encourage you to enter,

the space of the clear mind, free
of what was said or thought before,
including this; the space of being,
the one no being ever brought to be.

Now, at evening, the moment of order,
the only deep happiness, the rest
anxiety and its attendant pain,
or a joy grasped at before it ebbs,

but this the words that flow in lines,
though not of the will, only by doing,
exercising powers so strangely ours,
which might have been missed in us,

so that we killed the creatures, yet
failed to paint the caves, heard cries
but composed no sounds of flutes,
analysed but forgot the living mind.

Art is the little gate among the trees,
that leads into the green wood, silently,
to where you are, love, and love exists,
all hurts forgiven, all failures eclipsed.

Nocturne

The planet on the floor was formed of silver.
It was the harbinger of alien stars.
Confined within the orbit of Mars,
we studied its brightness by the door.

Its light was the light of Parian marble.
Gods struggled there and goddesses
to be born, knotted darkly in eternity,
as we grappled with the mathematics.

It was never important we were there,
only that the appearances were kept,
no spilling over into flagrant being;
that the night lay open where we slept;

that the senses flickering now and then,
knew the stellar music, still unbroken,
in distance neither lucent nor opaque
where the depths of night coruscated.

We needed time: to become the dark,
to understand the other forms beneath,
over which the orbs of planets strayed,
shedding a comfortable sort of glow,

reflected, tolerable to our weak eyes.
We observed the planet on the wall
turning to blueness from silvery grey,
still more beautifully than we can say.

No Emulation

You can make it perfectly,
but it will not be loved as this day is loved,
as it unfolds the valley in the light
and looses vivid wings
as though itself alive;
not loved or envied
for its carelessness,
as this beyond cares
will be loved and envied.

We are the creatures neither stone
nor water, constrained as one, fluid as the other,
rebels of earth who do not ascend,
on flickering wings,
resentful of
this forced obedience,
we cannot break or better,
far from the place of love
where time runs slower.

I might make the poem perfectly,
but it would not be loved as you are loved
or as this place is, this dale of light,
where on wild wings
time above the grasses
over all clear things rises,
the bright tongue ends,
and far beyond language
emulation rests.

Another Nature

Limestone under the moon,
is curious,
what I need;
a different perspective,
a slab, a stream,
the glittering hills
resilient grass
in bright cracks and hollows,
a clearer mind.

A way of elaborating
on mountain air,
expanding
the little mind,
the wandering senses,
freeing the weighty heart
that always wants
ridiculously
to fly.

A crystal presence
like the creek,
would be a help,
a glass existence
through which the sky,
the clouds, the birds,
might be refracted,
another form of the eye,
another nature.

The Death Of Myth

The past that we have lost
was not benign:
what artists mourn
that biased crew,
is the useful strength
of metaphor, in which
power was invested,
power now void, power
the familiar emptiness.

It is hard to achieve
the scope for every
new-born individual
free at last of the mass,
every devotee of mind,
that the privileged few
historically achieved,
we feel confined by self,
but that is existential.

Escaping from the past,
(hearing Shelley's cry)
seems beyond our wit;
war, poverty, disease
still scourge the planet,
while we, subject to age,
and death, we transients,
saw at the branch below,
erode the habitat we steal.

That world is insufficient
for us is a matter of mind,
the genetic chance of mind,
allowing us too far, too deep;
and of desire; and the need
we have for interest, of our
cruel proneness to ennui;
of that confinement intellect
experiences: self's a prison,

unless our selves make self
otherwise, with only Athene,
if we must choose, the deity
to guide, goddess of mind,
though rather choose the Tao,
the pathless way, free of gods,
by which we relocate Nature,
in the spirit, spirit in Nature,
and learn to see whatever is.

Only the social entity needs
myths to live by, blessed by
the power nexus as they are,
since myths ensure stability,
a while. But this is the age,
the intellectual age I mean,
of the Individual, not myth,
Kierkegaard its curious hero:
he, ironically, drew the lines.

It is hard for the Individual,
and always was, who must
deceive society to survive,
yet be honest with the self.
We must propitiate Athene
to abolish her, she is truth,
and only she might lead us,
in the end, to love and beauty,
saved at last from Aphrodite.

Down There

Dark in the deepening gloom
the moon must wait,
silent, before rising
over rock and scree,
ash and fir,
the blue groves of evening.

In some unseen thicket
the stars must wait
before emerging
over the misted fields,
the cold grasses,
the chill clefts of evening.

What holds them back
mind knows, they rise
out of some deep
involuntary volition,
white moon and stars,
scaling the cliffs of night.

Not Your Longing

The power of myth
was the tale,
combined with the power
of metaphor,
doubly powerful.

Practical people
have no need of myth,
they write
descriptive poems,
with a tweak of feeling,

express empathy
with the ordinary,
speak plain,
have no desire
for philosophy,

refuse to strain
against the given.
We must admire
the steady eye,
that rooted spirit.

But the universe surrounds,
the mind's alone,
time flies
and there is work to do,

to save humanity
from itself,
assuming if you do
it is worth saving.

Freedom is worth the cold
wind of apprehension,
the sting
of angst and anxiety.

To those who say
'Why all the fuss?
Embellish the real further,
act like us,'

the sovereign mind replies,
'I see the night
where you see light,
demand a space of self
beyond all skies.'

Lovely Paradox

The painter of chaos
still framed his paintings.

The wild composer
copied out the score.

The poet of freedom
confined his words

to an artificial
analytic form.

The whirlpool swirls,
the hurricane agrees.

The pollen-frenzied bees
perfect their hive:

Mind alive.

More Science

More science is what we need, not less.
The work of the Renaissance
and the Enlightenment is incomplete,
if it ends only in mute technology.

Yes, religion's done, as far as mind's
concerned that is (and the tyrannies
of patronage: this is the age of free
creation, the mind un-coerced at last)

Yes the old dreams and fantasies made
beauty, seduced the heart, bemused
the intellect with non-existent havens,
though the greatest masters were in love

with the material, the form, expression
of the human, that deep secular stream
that flowed through centuries of power
not theirs: and now that specific beauty

is frozen. And yes, we feel confined,
but that's an existential problem, so
did all the rebels of the ages who hit
tender hands against artificial skies.

Beware lest intellect's a matter of mood,
like poetry! We are neither more nor less
imprisoned by what we are than we were
in all those savage ages of the past. Even

though we've proved ourselves destroyers
on an earthly scale, the creative urge is
always a gateway to fresh eternity, a new
native land: the Renaissance has not ended,

expressed as it is now in science, ethics,
and if we wish in art; the sense of failure
is only a veil in which the failed conceals
a momentary faltering; and no matter why

the Individual pursued the game of forms,
the motive was only life, their art the thing,
the changelessness encapsulating change
human intelligence has always craved,

against the transience that drags us down.
It's nothing new, read between the lines
of history, don't take Clio at face value,
she's a goddess indifferent to deep truth,

who only likes to keep her temple clear
of all confusion, and hates blank walls
would rather cover them with new décor
from the more verbally expansive ages.

The situation of our time is the situation
we were ever in, the same analysis
that Buddha articulated best appertains,
but not his solution. If enlightenment

means anything it means the freedom
to open the mind towards this universe
we never chose, and practise thought
rather than diving for the confessional.

To escape from becoming into being
is our dream, but the way there is not
through following. The gate of grass
opens only for the traveller alone.

If modernity builds higher towers:
if forces Baudelaire and Kierkegaard
knew, working to stifle the individual,
intensify: well, freedom always was

a difficult road; conformity is easy,
Virgil almost said, yet at least we see
that power is empty; that worship is
for those who stumble into obedience,

out of the heaven of free invention;
that a universe runs fine without intent;
that brain is us, such particular process,
complex and subtle, lovely and strange.

The model of society where some were
born to rule and others born to serve,
was fragile as the violence that made it:
no tyranny of the spirit can endure;

the desire for freedom is unquenchable,
more powerful than submission or love
in the end. We must be free, or lose
what we prize most, Individuality.

And history was full of rebellious minds,
if most were silent. The secret goal
they aimed at was not always what
they craved or thought they craved,

but often simply freedom from constraint,
to think against the powers that were;
so science began as curiosity, love
of the liberated mind, and must be such,

and what liberated minds see, too,
just like those nostalgic for the past,
is the darkness we humans end in,
when we forget what we must leave:

the light, and fail to cherish it enough.
Nothing has altered; the past ages
were full of dumb, blind, mute minds;
the great was always beyond the state.

No, our machines are neither here
nor there, though how we use them is;
and we should beware of listening
too closely to dark religious voices,

mourning their unrealised dead gods:
a loss of false heavens is a blessing.
Juvenal's a siren too, he's master
of all the failings we can muster

but hardly the whole story. A little
science is a dangerous thing, we
need more. Truth being the thing
we still can choose to labour for,

love and beauty, all truth can bring.

Sestina - Mind's Music

There is no deeper meaning in the music.
In time we'll find the better art of being
is to consider where true beauty lies,
so engineer existence for that beauty,
refuse the empty exercise of power,
and reinvent the nature of our world.

As we destroy the landscape of our world,
not Earth itself but its more human music,
or that at least whose ruin is in our power,
indifferent to the damage done our being;
and with that human music human beauty,
the metaphors in which our meaning lies,

we must not deceive ourselves with lies:
we are not the sole meaning of our world,
nor are we the source and end of beauty.
There is another and a deeper music,
that's mute beneath the surfaces of power,
but signifies what granted us our being.

Through the in-woven process of our being
plays the deep truth beyond our subtle lies,
pointing the way beyond their sterile power.
Our bounded origin's in the creature-world,
within whose utterance was born our music,
the language of all love and truth, all beauty.

Below the stars exists an earthbound beauty,
apparent in the eyes of every being,
the tremors of the mind that are our music,
the movements of intelligence that lies
within the depths of a remoter world
where every creature exercises power,

and is unique, that individual power
to be a self, which is the core of beauty,
to find a place in world, and be a world,
beyond the sphere of our habitual being,
to express the universe despite all lies,
and turn the silence of the hour to music.

Beneath the lies always the hidden beauty.
Our being is not wholly in time's power.
Mind's music is the meaning of the world.

Myth is the Psyche Inside-Out

To enter in the river of the other,
is simple,
no clue is needed in the hand,
meeting and acquaintance
are the door
through which we stumble
into the labyrinth,
disbelieving in the Minotaur
or unaware,
of what, deeper in, moves there.

To enter in the other requires
no hard questions,
no difficult assessments,
no stealthy attempt to extricate
self from the not-self,
mind's light from darkness
and the hidden power
of the other,
its groans and sighs
with which we empathise.

That exit from the other is not easy,
we never learn,
have no strength to forget;
the nerves are bound;
there's loss but after loss
the void is full of sounds,
clashing of metal,
and the roar of anger,
the howl of pain, eternally,
that engenders pity.

No one prepares for love
or hatred:
nothing will educate the machine
to comprehended passion;
within the self,
even the lover cannot guide us,
our cowardice our fears
the only markers,
through winding tunnels
subterranean funnels,

caves of the sunken streams
that flow through channels
cut by acidic water,
following the strata,
(not in turn soluble: resilient,
but always in the end compromised)
to flow to some new place
where they appear
strangely, escape
to unknown landscape.

Metaphors of complexity.
Caught in the other,
we discover neither,
but in confusion hold
to the dark's illusion:
cradling the beast,
beauty, for us at least,
is the compassion,
that strange echoing thing,
otherness may bring.

Year's End

Love be veiled in danger where you lie,
under the scope of a December sky
wrapped in the leavings of a deepest fear,
that in this glittering we'll disappear,

of ice, in the arbour of the hostile air,
where the blue light encompasses a glare,
where tremors in the mist, of metal leaves,
shine their antipathy to whatever grieves.

Love be clothed in beauty where you are,
below and not above the wintry park,
antithesis to every fog-born star
that glows to terrify us from the dark.

Leap with the mind into another's eye.
As being and becoming, give the lie
to every heart that is encased in stone.
Be dangerous, know danger to the bone.

This Is Not Reality

No words convey the senses.
So I find pleasure in those images
I would detest in reality,
an intellectual charm,
colours and contrast,
the counter-play of forms,
but would take no delight
in their true existence,
their dirt, their odour,
or their polished surfaces,
devoid of meaning.
That's the lie of art,
of discourse, language.
What in reality I detest,
evade, is so transformed.
Light falls between
the words, the images,
and my disgust. Grappling
with life is not art. We go
darkly through landscapes
that seemed sweet below.

Erinye

It is all the voyeurism of the heart.
Though we hate violence, violence attracts,
sexuality or degeneration,
power or its opposite, torment,
delight or vengeance,
joy or annihilation.

It is the mystery of being human.
The psyche feeds on all experience,
it dreams the tale, the story,
but mind knows better,
awake to harm,
aware of the inner fury.

All That Concerns Us

After all this there's the world itself.
Tomorrow, though we may think so,

is not today, the light has changed.
Unfamiliar planets move elsewhere.

Still our decision whether we choose
to live in the ruins of a civilisation,

or re-create one, in another image.
The constellations are a little older,

but not so the eye would notice,
the breeze a little darker, but there

lovers go, the children, the creatures,
empowered by summer, in its light,

and our defeats, our failures, material
though they were, the memory harsh,

regret like ice, attributable to ourselves
alone. The universe beyond our artifice,

gleams in the night sky, sunk stars rise
through the leaves' resistance, the grass

cleanses the heart, we re-learn the cry,
in the inner mind, of all that concerns us.

Stream-wise

Green slopes in the dawn light,
and in my mind
an image of Venus rising
with the sun,
over dark water,
a tiny black
sphere on a bright balloon,
here the stream is clear,
runs thin between stones,
into the eye,
relation glimmers,
a deep concurrence.

How do we steer through life?
Not by orbit,
not by the risen metric
of the planets,
but perilously,
over dark water,
learning to ride the flows
of chance, or failing,
a stream run down
one way or another
from the sky,
in consequence.

Winter Music

Dark birds are circulating in the valleys,
Their valleys are repositories of silence.
The silence is of winter and the morning,
Bright dawn illuminates the wintry valleys.

Pale birds are circulating in the silence.
Wings flap against the solitude of morning.
The morning light illuminates the valleys,
And scatters birds along the edge of silence.

Lone birds go foraging along the morning.
The landscape resonates in lonely valleys.
The winter light encapsulates their silence.
The trees below the birds darken morning.

The misted stands of trees along the valleys
Hold birds, the dark intelligence of morning.
They cluster, minds, inside the sylvan silence
Whose dawn illuminates their wintry valleys.

Seeker

Moving matter of light leaps lunar beauty,
valleys shaken in darkness, sheerest tremor
in folded stone under white stream, shudder

singing soaring down mind-swayed channel
errant brightness crying in wilder patterns,
bold scrambling runs edged over precipices.

See, in mind's eye, now, scale green passes,
clash of the wind, seeker of distant shingle
knock of the tide, slither of shining pebble,

of metaphors of the heart, unbridled seeker,
wind-bent music, wildfire of sudden being,
or simple cluck of the stones on icy beaches,

gather them seeker, bury in moving matter,
tremors of thought, fingers of lunar beauty.

No Denying

Nature lacks all reproach, the creature
falls to another creature,
tides strip bare
each coastal feature,
Nature lacks all reproach,
though we care.

Slowly the valleys are exposed to light,
time makes them seas.
Storms unaware
dissect the trees.
Slowly the valleys alter
as they wear.

Time denies all reproach, why do we
in our remorse, too late
to disturb what's there,
think to re-calculate,
to live without error,
as we dare?

Beyond the Metaphors

Wind-scalloped juniper, bowed pine,
root on green islands
split the white fall:
all here is unsure,
foam flows,
the Tao,
is its own metaphor.

Rain-smoothed rock, pliant juniper,
hunched pine in stone
dissect the stream,
who dare ask more
than this pure
being,
its own metaphor?

Homeric

What Ulysses most needed to beware of
was his own voice singing.

The seductive lie
is already within.
Athene fights
to counter Hermes.

The wise articulation is the worst.
Better a simple cunning,
how to make
wooden horses;
stay away
from Helens.

Floating by desolate islands
is no life for a knower,
(though we do it)
even when
written up later
by some cleric.

The one-eyed giant
we blinded
was our self.
We should
have stuck
to eating lotus,

seen that Calypso-Circe
was Penelope,
turning us
endlessly
into her
errant suitor;

been more aware
of time and distance,
less reliant
on the wind and waves,
more careful
of our friends.

Between Scylla
and Charybdis
what difference;
evading passion
and emotion,
by the skin of our teeth?

At The Edge

The poem is grasped on the edge of mind,
a contour of intelligence that moves
with the line of sight, is the eye
at a peculiar angle
or the voice inside the mind
which is not the voice you hear,
I could not reproduce it,
the poem its echo,
a solid fragment
of ethereal life,
already wavering
in the stream of the other.

The poem is an intelligence of feeling,
the urge which is a form endorsing logic
and if you think thinking is achieved
without feeling, think again,
though reason is founded
in the world
its reality is endorsed by feeling,
not merely that things do as they do,
but that they do as we expect
or not,
as I exist, making, in your mind,
or not.

Poetry without intellect, is no better
than feeling without intellect,
is not this place to breathe,
where something of being-here
is transformed to place,
to object, form, shape of the mind
at the edge before the scream,
or having screamed in the space
Linus or Orpheus left behind,
a trace betrayed
of what
we swim through, gasping.

Poetry is beyond its particulars, not
as Plato imagined, but like mathematics,
the feeling of a form, the tilt
of a life, of lives,
but no greater
than its smallest element,
the flick of mind,
which is likewise the element
of which we flow,
ephemerally here,
on the edge
of something.

Poetry is an unfounded act of the primary
imagination, flight on the edge of night,
along the line of interior landscape,
a mimicry mimicking a voice,
half-heard of self,
in mind, all unqualified
to search the mindless,
except by virtue
of a certain feeling,
in which so tentatively
filled with darkness
thought comes to life.

At The Keyboard

Being is not beneath its appearances.
If only we could convince ourselves
that we were mind and let mind flow
with all the ease of these appearances,
a pianist lost at last in the performance,
free of name and form, the expression
of no audience, no self, only the music.

Being is not what mind emerges from.
If only we could be what we now feel,
a sense of the dim crescendo or the jar
of furthest assonance, slow modulation
through all these shifts of recognition,
these touches of the light and darkness,
if we could be as subtle as they seem.

Being is not the movement of the leaf,
or the fall, at once shifting and still,
form and its ephemeral manifestation,
word and its utterance, symbol in our
equations, some thing or process out
of all cognition, beyond the tangible:
being is music, being is what mind is.

Walking Late

We have time for this, in light between the trees,
the echo of ourselves as inconsequential detail,
the air in a void of space that is almost human.
We have time for our re-assertion of existence.

For a moment there we were lost in the others,
distracted by too much given and not needed,
given and unasked for, too many dull voices
like a heaviness in the body, fear in the mind.

We confused ourselves, looking for some reply
in our own clear speech from what encircles us,
expecting reason in the wildest of un-reasons,
an order where nothing has decreed like order.

Now we climb again to the rock-bound stream,
its flow pure ice, its colour the sky's clear grey,
and try to lay aside what it is we brought here.
When all else fails we still have time for this.

Out Of This Light

Out of this light did you, my lover,
deep in all history, discover
what lunar magic mind once made
here in the leaves so displayed,
to eyes' delight
at dead of night;
as at your door must now be laid?

You, was it, learned when hours are gone,
mind transformed by dreaming done,
no beauty once is beauty past,
the thread that's tightened holds time fast,
and all desire
white web of fire,
is through those endless waters cast?

That this bright arc like daylight pure
shivering in silence, gleams as sure
though time and change erode again
both face and mind, there is no when,
and all the joys
clear light employs
erase the flow of now and then?

Here, in the well of dark, my lover,
shall you, once more, such truth discover
that lunar magic mind has made
and in the bright leaves so displayed,
sweeter than all
the stars that fall
must rise again, dispel the shade?

Interrogation

There is a certain depth
associated with reality
that the mind
cannot evade,
that is poetry.

The world behind the head
is no longer relevant,
the truth is there
the mind is bare,
that is poetry.

Though we would like
to evade the sheer
effort of trying
to speak without lying,
there is poetry.

Nothing that you can say
or do can silence
what calls to us,
enrages us,
that is poetry.

It is not here or there;
in the everywhere
that forms us
and deforms us
is the poetry.

Another nature there
another world
another universe
unrehearsed
that is poetry.

Beyond allegiances
except the one,
a challenge to
all integrity
that is poetry.

Ancient Song

What did I wish when time was young?
The tree where golden fruit was hung;
pale lamps that lit the leaves green
with mysteries of the night, unseen
but bright with that unearthly glow:
branched imagination, here below.
What will I wish when time is old?
The tree of light, its phantom gold.

Neither

The language of our morning utters us.
The substance of our universe directs us,
like puppets in a play we must perform,
although we might detest the characters.

Our tongue creates this morning language.
We re-shape the substance of our being.
Like Ariel through reality we whisper,
disposing of the elements we conjure.

The way we go is not the way we wished.
The meaning of character is this rigidity,
imposed. The outcome of the final lines
is as the first breath sweetly indicated.

At every instant this new world exists,
the old is done with in our macrocosm.
Though self is but its choices, we chose,
and not some arbitrary force beyond us.

The words of evening calmly speak to us.
The meaning of our time is what we made.
The world is not a stage, we still reserve
awareness far outside the roles we play.

Our unpredetermined voices murmur,
in a dialogue with what surrounds us,
the irreality where self and universe
become the one thing we experience.

The language of evening is this silence
in which a wisp of meaning implicates
us in the destination and the journey
neither of which were quite as we think.

White Peak

The character of this place is something beyond us,
yet inside; we assess its gentleness, its curve
of green fields endlessly retreating to far slopes
that gather cloud, gleam with occasional light;
it snares the wind, arcs a stream,
mixes bare deciduous with pine,
acquires names, remains itself,
is nothing we could have dreamed of,
eschews assertion, adumbrates
an aspect of ourselves, intentionless,
seems in motion always,
dropping into a valley, raising a hill,
complicating into detailed woodland,
smoothing slowly fine across horizons.

An island in an island, this limestone dome
has its own form of light, strange tenderness:
hard not to sound anthropomorphic; secretive,
we say, meaning folded into hollows,
declivities of shade and stone, rivers of dark
clear water, emerald weed, heron shores,
pebbled lairs of the smallest fish,
territory of the dipper and the wren,
wild flowers and grasses,
an uplift leading from the dark moor, childhood,
to this pale landscape of freedom,
where the mind is answerable to nothing, no one,
where human fate is an awareness,
where beauty is truth in Keats' sense, form realised.

Drift the long valleys, along the visible or invisible
waterways, cross the rakes, climb the slopes always
steeper than they look, the dales deeper, the cut
of tree through stone, stone against tree, sharper,
the eye led gently into finer purer gradation,
or travelling the landscape, raised
as if physically, to feel the heights
and know that shape of flow that moves
out of the dark valley there to the green summit,
the place from which unsung peoples looked west
towards uncrossed distance, setting suns,
or east towards edges of the upraised land,
south to outfalls, north to the watersheds,
dreamt of the clear silver, watched it rise.

The places of imagination, like those of love,
are not metaphors, though in the intentionless
we grant things meaning, say that a holly leaf
is a boundary between form and not-form,
identity, expression of all presence; a stone
is the transfer of time, its flaked adherence
to us, its totality of moments in the moment,
which are only the thing it is, and no more;
that distance and nearness are two faces
of the sole phenomenon, and both are real;
but these things are not metaphors,
they are the transmigrations of our thoughts
into the substance of what is not-thought,
the significances which we endow.

And beside everything we might do, the landscape
has a character; shows its own cast of features,
to which description does no justice nor
the effort to choose words that exceed, as words,
the reason for their placement and become
glittering lumps of language that detract
from the object of our love; we need
a speech as soft as the dialect of lost places
that lingers here, in long savoured vowels
gentle as pure stream-water, ash-rooted:
that might seem more fitting to a lover,
since how is that loved which is not its self,
and how can its parts be loved and not the whole
distillation of unique identity?

The False Anthology

The wrong creations were anthologised.
We missed the essence: in familiar notes,
in the endless attraction of the superficial
that represents a style and not the sense,

losing the person in the impersonal,
which is the fate of art; conjured there
an old intimation of anticipated music,
not that new and stranger shift of keys.

The wrong hands touched the wrong face,
the wrong wave fell on fallacious shores.
The landscape we love is what he always
faintly disliked, the too well known echo,

and what he loved was nothing of all this,
but the real landscape and the other music,
the one that sounded in an interior silence,
not meant for us, or any semblance of us.

Legend

Innocent, the heroine or hero always
has something of our own childhood,
the open question or unanswered call,
the shapelessness before accepted form.

There is always a resistance involved,
too pliant a protagonist is weakening,
life drags us unwillingly along the way,
though granting us its secret helpers:

the world's foolishness and cruelty,
our own perception of love and beauty
beyond the mere fragments that adhere
to whatever landscapes we inherited;

the material must be hard (or what credit
accrues to the adventurer in setting forth?)
the chisel has to rebound from marble;
or over-soft (extracting gold from mud,

is equally meritorious). There is a climb
against impossible odds, chance involved,
but that succession of successes, destiny,
and not the usual fumbling and failing,

though an admixture of human weakness
confesses the lovable nature of heroics,
that no one knows why they are done,
least of all the heroine or hero, they

are too busy with the task, the skills
required, the vicissitudes of fate, the time,
the weather, the next puzzle to unravel,
the next angle of the labyrinth, prepared

for anything but boredom, the true peril
that surrounds us, our ultimate danger.
There is a prize, even if only the sense
of order achieved, in our own image.

Everymanwoman descends the mountain
clutching something, if only self-respect,
or exhaustion, or the escape from mindless
duty into the freedom of the purposeless.

Thank goodness for friends along the way,
for our insensitivity to the ogres' feelings,
the sense of black and white, the simplicity
of journeys where right is other than wrong,

where truth and falsehood show emblems
of perfect clarity, and we can always pity.
There is no shortage of interfering guides,
opinionated knowers, unthinking ritualists,

and no shortage of passages to negotiate.
Yet for the one self, whose flag is freedom,
who cares nothing for the fate of worlds,
there is always another mode than epic;

mind makes no assumptions, mountains
are plains, prizes are stones; every thing
is an answer, and a question; moving
nowhere as challenging as to advance.

The eighth son is the one who refuses
the quest, the eighth daughter quietly
slips away before the action opens,
into the grass, beyond the limits

already seen and understood. Rites
of passage lead to the dull labyrinth
where the old roarer waits, like Lear,
to annoy us with irritating ramblings.

Thankfully there's Arden, better still
what survives Arden and renews us,
an unexpected universe dispersing
our absurd cries in its immense void.

No Return

The spaces of fluidity delight,
where form dissolves,
the water flows,
the sea, the cloud,
the forest leaves,
the grass, the moor,
moonlight and the dark.

It is not true that form
is what all art seeks,
it equally
seeks the release
from form,
sleep and forgetting,
dream deliquescence.

Sweetly we go as deep
shaking off faith, free
of past loyalties
(though who'll confess?)
once again
loosed from the womb,
ready for anything.

Old Ballad

Shall we two walk by this clear moon,
deep in the forests of the night,
despise the worldly, late and soon,
whose only lure is appetite?

In your eyes I see all that's bright,
the clarity of innocence,
unspoil't by years of foolish sense,
that from the wrong extract the right.

Shall we be free of world that never
owned our allegiance, sweetly sever
every tie that binds us there
to the universe of care?

In your two eyes I see those deeps
that nullify ten thousand years
of human interests and fears;
in your two eyes, where beauty keeps

her true domain, the waking dream,
in which all ages only seem,
a fitful and a passing gleam
along the margin of the stream.

Confrontation

She sits beside the stream and is his fate,
that much we understand of the plot,
the given, but never confuse
the why with the how,
the how is what is important
not the why, which is mere science
or Freudian superstition.

Analysis is not the life lived, is not
what burns along the veins and harms
the reason, the mechanisms
are not the revelation,
which is always self and the desire,
always more important than mere science
which explains nothing.

I do not descry the science, in its place,
which is not the place of significance
we think, there are no gods
not even human ones,
and if you do not see the darkling plain
and feel the brilliance of the stars,
how can this help you?

Climbing the mountain of the self
the heroic come to a blind gully,
where there is nothing more
to confront but the self,
that is the plot, we know it,
but the plot is not the confrontation.
She sits beside the stream and is his fate.

More Than Silence

Mind moves through metaphor,
by making more
of the world than it makes of itself,
by generalising,
until the sole self is universal,
the bloated everymanwoman of the plot,
or vanishes into the social, the sway
of crowd en masse that some adore,
though mind would make more
than a social ant heap.

Mind moves in metaphors.
The Self abhors
its selfishness that feigns a tolerance
it does not feel
as the price of functioning at all,
puzzled but admiring of those who go
so related to others they do not know
that they can see in them humanity
and not the simply more
of all too much.

Mind dies into its own metaphors.
They become moral laws
science, religion, ritual, everything
claiming to define us
who are forever beyond the definition,
instanced by those who elude always,
not tokens in the games others play,
so do not figure in our histories,
of whom the others cannot hear
their more than silence.

The Low

Limestone, also, these flat stones
they left behind;
once standing sentinel perhaps
on the green ridge
now the shaped circle seen best from above,
this ditch and summit
littered by these pointers,
unknown usage,
unimaginable peoples
all shadows here
as we are shadows here
of a different impermanence.

A long slow walk to reach here
over fields between grey-white walls,
green hollows of rain water
sun in a high sky,
the silence cool and certain.
Lots of their leavings
under the ground,
nothing apparent
but the tumuli,
these tables of sedimentary stone,
suggestions of their tracks,
though such might be younger.

All of it shifting too, under our feet.
Why description is never
enough, history being solely
what exists,
no more, if denied our inferences.
No stone axes no figurines,
no more than in passing we leave behind,
no language,
no upland art
except these big stones
brought here somehow
no one too sure how.

You can read what you wish
into such 'monuments'
all ideas are valid,
the truth no easier to read
than our thoughts
(as we turn, to return)
of spirit or matter
this place or elsewhere,
ritual or aimlessness,
dream or appetite,
why not say all of those,
humanity in every mode?

The purposes we think we build for
are only aspects of what we create,
sometimes the least.
Perhaps courtyards are greater
for the thoughts that passed through them
than themselves,
the living and not the dead function,
these stones, say,
on their green summit,
attracting transient mind
acting as nodes,
fusing the centuries.

Fire And Air

Big trees fall on the ridge.
Civilisations weary,
imagination fails,
but the view opens.

Whatever crashed down
cleared the brush,
carved perspectives,
became an insect hollow,

fuelled regeneration
through quiet decay;
wasteland or great pond
neither is here to stay.

The patch of wide sky
was never visible from here,
until the structures fell,
the ruined timbering.

Absence of thought,
the palsied silence,
is not a consequence
of lack of matter.

Plough over the dead,
exercise a freedom,
release the butterfly
from its shroud,

watch it soar as if
it never felt the web,
shrug off the sense
of the inevitable;

have we not learnt by now
nothing human is
inevitable, necessity
is as the mind requires;

boredom, inspirer
of curiosity, cries
for new horizons
in the darkness,

whatever you may say,
or tone you may adopt;
content beats style,
ultimately,

the seducer's voice
is emptiness and cold,
absence and subtle chaos,
a sense of alien dumbness,

but we, the only givers,
can never rest in style,
(our endless matter
is the far universe)

the most seductive
most to be resisted,
howling or keening,
or describing either,

yet we must hear it;
it is not in the voices
of those happiest
with world as it is,

the perilous music.
The world is not asleep,
mind has no end,
we are fire and air.

The Inevitability Of Involvement

On a day when thought is quiet,
the mind suspended, eyesight
without intention, flows instead
blue-grey fissure, layered rock,
whose thorn trees root in shallow
matted grass and moss, where
an angle of dry-stone wall runs
against the outcrop, and ceases.

The lack of anything to grasp
or feel, cool as drenched fields,
may be a step closer to what is
without inflection, is language
less, and devoid of expression,
but even this the mind interprets:
we call the landscape benign,
the weather, as it is, peaceful.

Even here the branch of a thorn
flung across its trunk, the mask
that eye conceives above, this
smoothed shoulder turned, fall
into material echo of half-seen
ancient face, some shape caught
as in a moment of odd movement,
arresting, memorable, changing

the aspect of this run of ledges,
on which it sits, a woodland god,
teasing imagination, forcing us
to declare a meaning, realise
that this is what we do, minds
indissoluble, un-resting, even
when they seem to be asleep,
forever interpolating meaning.

No, even with the mind quiet
we are no nearer the mindless
inner core of nature, distant
still from such thing in itself,
insisting on metaphor, symbol,
tracing out the boundary lines,
imposing significance, owning
recognition, anticipating word.

Standing silent to empty mind,
it fills remorselessly with forms,
fragmented shadows, memories,
interpretations of elusive darks
and lights, becomes the corner
of some old master's canvas
where a detail we're unsure of
resonates in turbid chromatism,

until we see more power there
than in the ostensible subject,
like those elusive figures seen
in formless stains, the patterns
of the virtual self we compose,
fluttering phantasm in the flow,
as we ride currents of thought,
grasping at gleam, flare, tremor.

So here despite the passive mind,
its enervation, this inner silence,
the stone is not simply limestone,
the trees are not simply thorns,
the core of place not simply there.
We seep into it despite ourselves,
without exertion, putting out no
effort in assimilation, no reach

towards the immanent existent,
all perception being a re-pass
of meaning in this afternoon;
all objects subjects that must
transcend whatever being is,
to be whatever this we realise
of their uprising; hand, eye
and mind already universe.

Say How We Failed

Pity the creatures trapped in our detritus
or worse.
The seal its liquid eye caught in the foam
filled with flotsam
rippling over tarmac.
What should they understand
of what this is, result of us
(though indirect)
Pity the uncomprehending eye
the alien warmth
out of oily coldness
briny being.

We can't laugh now at indulgence, only
feel this endless sense of recognition,
or worse.
The tanker riding high, the wave-washed jetty
are no longer simple objects of beauty;
the apercus, the descriptions
without moral significance,
except that inferred
by gazing,
are not enough.

The over-sensitive must shut their eyes,
blinded, blind as the insensitive,
an irony.
There is only so much one heart can take,
displaying empathy is not a weakness,
nor its silence something we can buy
just as no one has a price
coercion is no purchase,
mind is free.
The dying whale has judged us,

the tarred gulls stop us resting in nature,
the seal wallowing disoriented
in our sordid flotsam
disturbs the mind,
the shining lady
naked from her swim
has lost the living robe
we cannot return,
till even the dark of the breeze
troubles us now.

A Reading

Here is your heart now,
the kiss of a stranger,
the hand of the clown,
the bringer of danger.

The distance is fatal,
the darkness obscure,
that shape in the mist
is the perilous lure.

Here is your heart now,
the flurry of wings,
the scratching of thorns
the newcomer brings,

a bringer of danger,
the kiss of a stranger,
the hand of a clown,
the newcomer's frown.

Hypostasis

The object grew larger climbed from the poem and killed him. It began as perception, swelled to his words, later reached out its octopus arms, searching him for his ethical stance; his view from surrounding hills of the central summit; his metaphysics; his ability to defend pure art, rather than show the gifted performer's talent, despite that excess of skill beyond the others.

The object grew deeper, translated his history, became the succession of lies we call making, until he no longer possessed himself, but that image of self, promoted endlessly, enervating. World had a life of its own, seemed to mock the stance of the creator through the uncreated, always more copious, wider and more intense; an antithesis of the dream that possessed him,

without his knowledge, of freezing time, place, and his particulars no one else dared confute, which in time become a minor myth, the sort worth an hour or two, capable of being traded. The object loomed over his conventional grave, squatted like Fuseli's nightmare above his dust, the gape of its mindless features, the furrows in its solid face like a worn smile of dismissal.

The object, swollen, occupied his landscape, questioned authenticity, laid out for us errors, bare inconsistencies, showed him not the man he had believed himself to be, not even close. The object, which would endure long beyond his fatal evanescence, flaunted his epitaph in eloquent silence: he ended still where he began, in glittering mastery of the easy truth.

In Lieu Of A Mythology

Green pine and grey stone walls
are not your region. Time flares,
where you are, in flowing seas,
cooling the shores of everwhen.

Where we meet in dream must
be enough, where we conjoin
in words that are the meaning
of the mind, at least its dower.

You are the image of our hour.
If we owned to a mythology,
you would inhabit trees, arc
in streams, be breeze or bird.

As it is, night must condescend
towards us, this real century
lie between us like the waves
in which our passages elude.

Beware

Being is not a medium, that's mere fancy.
Because time seems to move, be wary,
it is the world that re-configures where
you lean above the abyss on that chair.

To move against the dark flow of time,
would be to question fate we imagine,
so push against the all of what we are,
and yet we are the river where it goes.

The shining appearances, the shimmer,
are not some revelation of the hidden.
They are the depths all on the surface,
and being is this presence in the mind,

which also is a presence in the world,
and world in mind as mind in world;
the reflection is the mirror; phantom
trees stand firmly rooted in the void:

we walk between their immanence.
Where you sit the night is deeper,
but what is moving in the vortex
is no separate essence to the mind.

Being is not an attribute of things,
as mind is not an attribute of self:
you change the universe, beware,
merely by rising from your chair.

Savages

Exaltation we understood, not happiness,
which was altogether an aftertaste,
a feeling for the feeling gone by,
or for the feeling in anticipation,
but never the momentary itself.

It would have required those powers
of acceptance, acquiescence, we
never possessed. Freedom required
an always moving on from always
moving on, an unrest to be savoured,

which in the moments when time stood
still and we two exceeded time passing,
we now remembered as true happiness,
despite that unhappiness still persisting
in the other layer of our savage minds.

Wave Functions

Driving behind glass into evening landscape,
the shadows of the hills make identity
from curves and hollows; they stand
over against eternity much as we do,
flashing by to the hiss of radio static
as we lose the channel in singing air,
and the orchestra left quaintly hanging
as a resonance somewhere in substance,
in a stranger meta-level of civilisation
layered on more ancient rocks and trees.

Out beyond stacks of gulled stone lies
the flashing code of Virginia's lighthouse,
or not exactly hers, but her metaphor
for the goal not understood, wished-for
and deceptive, on these different shores.
Hear the music play! The waves return,
and into them we vanish, to reappear,
or not exactly us, rather our metaphor,
the moving wake art embodies, gleams
of complexity in a departing landscape.

The Fall Of The Convention

What frees me is not easily explained,
the loss sometimes as much as finding,
or rather the dissolutions surprise me,
attentive to those feelings that ramify,
unlock strange corners, re-emphasise,
expressing, like the trees as light goes,
their images, tremors twice forgotten.

What the world claims should liberate
often proves a prison, conventional
expectations of what hearts should
feel, or the mind display, but then I
am not the self the world conceives,
nor even the self as known, rather I
am the shifting self all this has made.

That quiet man in the corner refutes
in himself the bright acceptable tear,
that woman resting is engaging now
in slightest moves of the inner spirit
that reconfigure this whole universe,
which for us is perception, purpose,
and not its intentionless unknowing.

What the world claims should free me
feels like death, and my own self life,
not to be hidden behind, nor traduced,
but listened to in its integrity, purer,
beyond any fictions the past created,
whose ties are those I choose, there
in the depths with which I commune,

whether consciously, or unconsciously:
what will science know of what is held
only in language as it moves and plays,
in the languages of feelings, individual
tongues imbuing words with meaning,
where the outcomes exceed the scope
of the model, and exist in irreal time.

Be prepared to feel other than you are,
and not as others anticipate, be true
to what within is the unrepeatably
burning of the individual fire, not
some result of superficial wisdom.
What makes me free is not as you
may dream, nor what confines me.

Gods Of The Knotted Forehead

What god now could conceive us,
such shadows in the air of unfamiliar
beauty, like the dancing of the hare,

a dancing over hollows, of snow
and icy ground, between the fir
plantation and that stony mound,

a dancing on a bright field, through
a gateway in the rain, beyond a god's
conception, all making, and its strain?

Not Separate

That the self's created from the not-self,
the mind from matter, shows the error
of distinctions, the need to concentrate
instead on structure, the self-organised;

the magnitude of Darwin's revelation,
made more shocking by the realisation
nothing external to the means at hand
was necessary or essential, so nothing

needing adding to the elements, forces,
in order the whole thing be composed,
in one continuum from stone to sight,
the human form out of the non-human.

The constituents of ferns, the beads
of water, the layers of rock, the hand,
the eye, leaf-bound clatter of wings,
all one moving course of energies,

self-born, sifted in the bright sieve,
as if a pure winnowing in the light
gave birth to shapes, this plunge
of life like the water from a rock,

sweeping through air and shifting
in its fall, cascading in plenitude,
like an act of mind, and yet not,
instead self risen out of not-self,

the processes of matter making
the consciousness of mind until
in the glitter of outpouring light,
the human, the inhuman are one.

One Self-Portrait Among Many

His face itself being the object fluctuates
in a medium of light and dark, one eye
vanishes into liquid silence, one is hurt
and aged, the brush has lovingly moved

over the textures, but left the geometric
background bare, an old wall's bareness
filled with Leonardesque lines and form
in which anything is possible, like dream.

Looking at all these selves, which is self,
or rather how shall the substance speak
of hidden process, except by revelation,
which is a question of what life betrays

in the face? For instance a young mind
moves in an old man's eye? Age serves
better as metaphor of transience, suits
therefore expressions of tragedy, loss,

not necessarily the inner flow, which
may be responding not to deep pity
for the human world, but natural light,
and the landscapes of distant memory.

The face in a glass reflecting, the face
in a window superimposed on nature,
a ghost on the trees, knows inwardness,
a place perhaps where chasing the word

mind sinks onto what seems to unravel
the mystery, the shock of being here
and to be gone, the essential absurdity,
what the poor circus clown points at,

the impossible shoes, the giveaway nose
on a piece of stylised flesh, ridiculous
being eating away at all sense of flight
beyond, the intransigence of ladders.

Here the face of genius is exactly the face
of all of us, and the inwardness ambiguous
form. Shape suggests our true dimension.
The thistle stands resilient in the corner

of a field. The tree suggests survival,
the fractured stone vicissitudes of time.
Energies and their lack create metaphor,
in the realisation of what indicates us,

natural energies, the dark our background;
the lights that frame the head a signal;
the stance the gaze absorption; the tools
in the hand I came, I saw, I vanished.

Why One Is Many

In the green light the deep life sings.
The words on the page unread move
already in mind towards the leaves
on windblown trees, leaves of glass.

The phantom in the green light is
body not thought. Mind more real
than what is outside the process
contemplates its strange eternity

outside time, a product of time.
So all function, in its connection,
dependent on time but timeless,
that will fulfil itself uninterrupted.

The library of uninterrupted voices,
is already in the mind, the unheard
louder, as the moon is already risen
though the sky is dark and empty.

The stars are already glinting far
on the edges of a peculiar galaxy
singling itself for points of mind
flickering, small, in its immensity,

but larger than the leaves damp
with the passing showers green
with the deep light now that sings
and lives, and is still irreducible.

Near The Trees

The evening fire is gentle,
smoke blows
across a long perspective,
the slopes waver

thoughts float like bits
of bark on water,
steering them
with a breath

a leaf shakes to a leaf
the air tastes
rock is cold
frost will glitter later

to feel a deer
emerge from trees
would be good
to know it there

in the shadows
watching
unconcerned
and delicate

as the tones
of landscape
quieter
than a cloud field

quiet as a mountain
in white fog
the fields
of hollow light.

Tributary

Gradually the quiet intensifying,
penetrating to the deeper valley,
between these limestone ledges
these scaly layers, the outcrops,
until at the furthest corner where
a tributary valley falling merges
there is complete and satisfying
silence, with not even a bird cry,
only cloud, rock, bare dark trees,
and no desire to break the calm,
rather the need to intensify it all,
the muddied grass, mossed stone,
dormant wildflowers, ash slopes,
resonances in the depths of mind,
until from beneath a beaten path,
out of a crevice, the source rises,
clear gush of water into the light,
and sounds its way along the cleft,
past the roots of an ancient hazel,
heart now imagining the power
of what vast volumes once wore
this place, carved out its heights
and steeps, its hollows, formed
that angle of silence, not human,
and this constant noise, this flow
itself like quiet, the shining peace.

Need

There you walk slowly,
and there you walk softly,
bringing the hours love
needs for its calling,

the hours without end
equating to minutes,
the infinite moments,
where being is falling.

There you speak softly,
and there you go slowly,
bringing the accents love
needs for its sighing,

the accents of music
that no longer speaks us,
the infinite accents,
where being exceeds us.

There you walk softly,
there you walk slowly,
bringing the strength love
needs for time, dying,

the strength of the stone,
the light of the star,
the strength to endure
the love that we are.

Reclaim

Make no assumptions, though the words
are in a language with deep associations:
do not infer beliefs or reasons simply
because they echo your predilections.

Language is as we define it, prior use
must be overtaken, existence shaken,
by the reclamation of words, renewal,
so: blessing, redemption, love may not

be as you determine, nor the bright dead
making their claim on eternity, doomed
instead to ebb and transience, our destiny.
In speech meaning drowns as in the sea,

its wreckage moves submerged appears
to the light again transformed strangely.
Take language by the scruff of the neck
and make it express the lambent spaces,

which in their emptiness add resonance
to words that posited a hidden presence,
and what resounds after the dismantling
may be more precious now, more human.

Winter And Summer Are One

The world grows greater towards afternoon.
the sunlight brighter, the imagination clearer
as shadows vanish. What has departed was
always too faint for light, too insubstantial.

The human mind flickers now under the leaves
which also flicker, in another manner, green
eyes of assurance, structures made of nothing;
flares on the branch of day with no poverties.

What left was never as strong as we imagined,
stronger when seen as the glow of imagination.
Now the great sun rises as before, unlimited,
the gentlest word is a movement of its flames,

the slightest look a galaxy of meaning, all time
resonating in a landscape free of the darkness,
each self the self it is, calling out its suchness,
in the bright afternoon of the great sun rising.

Blackbird At Evening

There in the confines of the ear, the blackbird
high in the branches of the pear tree is making
a song out of something embedded in a feeling,

greater than self, than the dark boughs of the pear
bowing to the southern sky, than the mechanisms
of the song, the bones and flesh of the taut throat,

greater than the space in which it exists, or that
to which it cries, the outer space which is inner
and so bounded, and so equal to the limitations

of identity, no larger than a thought, less intricate
than the modulations of the song which is not even
human but which we comprehend gratuitously,

knowing the infinite spaces cease to matter, are
simply matter and not mind, that the bird is mind
singing beyond the canopy of vibrant half-light,

in a state of unconscious exaltation, unintended
grace, fulfilling the residue inside of millennia,
careless of galaxies, the whirls of ice and light.

Its song is a life flowing outwards in the air,
this trembling in the confines of the ear, purer
than matter's conjuring of light, night's sighs.

As I Walked Out

As I walked out where beauty flickered
in the dark where bright stars glittered,
I imagined you, your being echoed in
the spaces there.

Where Venus in the west hung glowing
smaller than mind would wish it, knowing
its light reflected fire, its glimmer
an orb laid bare,

I thought of you, to nothing's fabric
bringing an altered flame, fantastic
shapes of the mind, ideas approaching
that bright flare,

its silver abstract gleam no message
its meaning simply what we granted
in our mythologies and might alter
if we care,

finding the thought of you as cogent,
your being in the night as lucent;
how to see beauty and uniqueness
and not compare.

Tracks

Follow the level tracks where the rails ran,
now uprooted,
walk the bends that reveal a far green landscape
of darker coils and windings
hidden waters,
follow the margins of ash and hawthorn,
hazel and alder,
that fringe the track,
savour the clouds, flashes of sun,
the shelter of the empty cuttings,
the momentary height on bridges,
the darks below them,
until you reach the familiar place
where some alignment of sundry hills,
the angle of the fields, the lack
of roads, the sigh of wind alerts you
to a fierce perfection.

Stand, stranger here, where time
neglects your desolation,
attenuating, grasps the light
and thrusts it through a needle's eye
to fall to the deeper clefts,
to change your mood,
its offer a land of farms and villages,
fieldstone walls, soft coloured slopes,
things for which there is no analogy,
then follow the contour's curve,
the bedding planes, the fractured rock
explosives split, the camber
of a long-gone passage to the north,
past wildflower steeps to fields,
past gateway silences,
and nettled corners,
to the heart of this.

What They Do

The buzzards don't call out for something new,
wheel in the old young sky,
hang over distant dry
fields down there
clear to plummet
buffeted to slide
through the blue,
climb steeps of liquid air,
watch far below
green fields, accustomed detail,
but each new gust new freedom,
down stands of pine souging,
past layers of windblown rock.

Life brief, not complicated, getting by
in soaring fiercely over spaces,
patrolling bright ridges,
heather scrub and streambeds,
or the long
cool green
slopes leading out of stillness,
contained, absorbed in flight;
and when the work is over
end it
and survive.

A View

A child's eye view, a love of planet,
everything working, nothing intended,
the plants perhaps most
beautiful,
grass waves in the light,
no nations,
the first possessors
un-possessing
flowing through.

Million years, one year, at a glance,
the land un-blurred
a lightning
stand
of stone and bone,
of seed and stem,
languages of instinct, all of feeling
in the fading vision,
of living earth.

If we had not got here,
if we had not:
a world without purpose
without ethics,
(much as now?)
but not without pain, delight,
affection,
how else
to conceive of paradise?

Pity For The War-God

Let Ares sleep, his mind is full
of too much repetition,
his rites are brutal, see his shrine,
a world in demolition.

Let Ares sleep, his work is done,
no purpose in petition,
the innocent may plead, the plan
demands their slow attrition.

Let Ares sleep, his heart of steel
is free of all contrition,
untroubled by the blood and pain,
destruction his sole vision.

But let him sleep, for he is tired
of forcing each position,
only to end where he began,
imprisoned by his mission.

Slow Creation

The way is simply what goes,
with no end, and no intent,

the outcome peace, simplicity,
freedom from contention,

wisdom, healing, beauty,
all in it from the start,

as are their opposites.
The way proceeds lightly,

with leaves, twigs, dust,
and pollen particularly,

yellow mist on wych-hazel,
and no intrinsic errors,

everything open, all free
to give and take each other,

power slipped away,
instead a growing,

a simple passing by of what
no longer concerns us

a dream of slow creation,
its balm, its music.

Have No Fear

Dying too is quiet here, the landscape
continues, stone endures,
the muddied silence dries
or, rain-washed, cleanses,
and compared with us is always
beyond death,
under Deneb or a winter sky
of circumpolar stars,
the slow moon rising.

Life is the essence of the survivor, place
endures by presence not absence,
and if water grieves
its sudden falls its deep submergence
there is no trace of sadness
in its glitter,
equal in being to the distant points
of flickering light above,
astringent in their coldness.

Within the magic ring of settled stones,
such calm at evening magnifies
the spirit thrilling
to minute life of plants and creatures,
the going on, the endless
going on,
keeping the heart from care, yielding
nature's only meaning
a beautiful persistence.

Lodging something deep in the mind,
the message of the universe:
have no fear,
the absence of thought itself a thought,
your empty body before you were born
your heritage
the white bones of the mouse, the wren
blending with earth, and no
more dying then.

Evening Fog

The landscape under fog and the old mine
vanishes, the skyline lost,
trees gone too, no breeze, light
soft and smoky as wet leaves,
anticipating cold the farms silent, tractors,
trucks parked in damp yards,
the stone houses quiet,
the world a hollow place
but deep in there hidden fires.

Walking a long slope over Lathkill
ash trees loom, mind gentles,
the heart adrift from misted shores
floats in the lake of air
and breathes a thought then another,
small thoughts, a lone idea,
the sound of water.

Rocks are slippery, paths slide,
ice-cold source undermines
a shelf of cool limestone
flaked and crumbled,
snow hangs somewhere
off the Atlantic reaches,
dumb savage waters, here
the wet cliffs and cold stretches
of winter river dim the soul,
dark aspect of the body,
and mind waits
for sky and earth to change
for something other
and wind-born to begin.

Feeling The Nearness

It is not that the creatures are
almost there in the old sense
simply us lacking reason,
(the fox, alert, the wren,
and all the others, flexing
mind in their own way,
inferring the object of their intent,
hoarding memories, anticipating)
rather that what they do, being
their own fulfilment, is as valid
as what we do, though it may not be
counterpoint, verbal tricks,
pure mathematics, and now
we realise it.

Harder to kill and eat where you see,
if you look close enough,
your own deeper self revealed, reflected,
in the apparent sadness of those eyes,
in their resonant features, the puzzled
glare, the half-embarrassment of eye,
the seething of those feelings,
out of which our tenderness, our hatred
came, ranging from innocence
to reason's tyranny, the pretences
that so inadequately disguise our passions,
or a painful lack of passion, greed for power
over things, people, places and ideas,
especially ideas, the most dangerous.

Who in the past ages could have guessed
the one continuum, the seamless segue
of species into species, that the mind
sprung from the dark eye's gleam,
that patient silence, the subtle communication
would conjure, fact, affection, and delight
in form, that we would end in empathy
with what was once the prey, would see
in the questing look, the need for more language
in a frustrated world deficient
longing to bridge the void,
that they and we confined to the unreal
making this place out of the imagination
would end as deepest echoes of each other?

Et Ego

I came out into a world of silence,
past a stile, along the upward slope,
climbing a green way, beside the wall,
looking over into the deep limestone
valley, across to an abandoned quarry,
steep turf slopes scattered thorn trees,
beyond tops of ash, over the ledges,
in the bright sun of the December day,
dreaming of another world than this,
or another universe, where this place
would be the core not the exception,
its intense green, everywhere, soaking
into the spirit and the mind in balance
between the outward and inside, held
by the light, in the calm intensity, alive.

To speak is easy, to say what we mean
harder than granite, the words slipped away
smooth over marble, or sinking in quicklime,
neither this wordless communication, call
it poised (line of a cleft in the wooded slope
where flakes of axe-heads hide under scree,
or the solid profile of a stone barn waiting
for nothing, winter or erosion, on a hill
carved by winds all winter, sleeping summer
in a windless haze) call it form, solid,
stronger than words, asserting whatever
clings on to being, constitutes its pressure
against the void, resists the spatial emptiness.

When pastoral is not pastoral what shall we
call it, when the surfaces give way, when
the bright green meadow has a darker shift,
which is its meaning as existent, its flare
in the mind, the sudden fierce perception,
edged with ten thousand years of human breath,
glitter of grass, where the windhover
buffeted by breeze hangs in the air,
scanning a hillside for a beating heart,
flickering out again over littered slopes,
to slip once more into deep imagination?
There seems a foreground and a background,
a sense of scene, a sense, that is, in which
mind is other, mind placed, as if set in place
and not as in truth the work of chance,
a sense of the drama, which is only ours,
beside the drama-less working out of nature.

Or say it remains simply pastoral, framed
in the trembling shadows, the quivering
leaves in daylight, but with that intensified
which the Renaissance saw, the feel
of what is also present in the shade,
what underlies the flicks of paint
imitating stone, or the real landscape
imitating art, a sense of the frailty
of our imagined backcloths, the silence
behind the stillness of forms, those
frozen gestures, their motionless
wavering caught in the wink of an eye,
that questioning of what it means to be:
et ego, and I too in Arcadia.

Afterglow

No doubt the expert tracker would find
where the deer went in bracken
and over the fields,
or how the mice went by on the turf,
even,
but for me, delicate silence
the afterglow of something
like the flow of perch in the stream,
or the kestrel's hover,
glint of spider silk over furze,
snail shell on stone,
whatever intricate passing by
makes of marvellous chance,
insects, others, whoever
leaves no trail, so nothing to follow,
cuts across our track
without our seeing.

Lore is sweet, understanding
of the ways, but there is a sweetness too
in letting be, in not understanding,
a deep non-intervention of the heart,
morally culpable perhaps,
a standing by,
a standing over what passes,
but ranges of distant hills
make the heart afraid,
shiver of the solitary, the inhuman,
into which the deer pass, the mice,
the kestrel, with their cries,
and perilous for us to disturb
the travellers in the wastelands,
our alien kin,
their afterglow.

Moving And At Rest

The kestrel with his brown eye, ahead,
turned with outstretched wings,
towards the iridescent blue of sky,
towards what's there
forever, or a while who knows,
the souging trees in the wind,
a patch of snow,
the noise of the stream,
what all mind fears,
the stillness of stone,
the silences of years,
but wild up there in light
he lifts the heart, a kite
and we are raised on the string,
to share his rest
to share his beating on the wing,
fearless and free, we trust,
and that he will survive, his kin,
the levelling,
and soar over pine, the resin breeze,
in these central valleys,
like an act of mind,
eye of darker than amber, feathers of air,
beyond us like the gales, like the snow,
like the hills and seas,
not ours, not of us, not our ground.

Sonata No.27

If this is deafness, madness we
should be as deaf, as mad,
buried in forms of feeling,
head and heart, conflicted.
If this is where the mind ends
let it end in just such a melodious
tension, the lack of why
meeting the un-comprehended how.

Focussing on the movement within,
contained between octaves, inside
the keys, with not even the fingers
flickering, hanging there
invisible notes on unseen lines,
goes deeper: this is meditation,
as if you focussed
on a run of boundary wall,
the individual stones, the moss
the nettles and the slope
of grass where ash has rooted,
the bird in the fir,
all that's beyond us.

Control is not power, it is the open
gateway on a flow
of strength which is not us,
but is our inner being,
born of those centuries of survival,
the quieter study of everything
that exceeds us, and outlasts us
even when it vanishes before
our eyes.

If this is a foolish ageing sentimental man
considering another, it is self also,
the speech of being outside this
world of limitations where, deficient
in how to live, we live more fully,
as the eye lost in form is not
this awkward figure on an evening sky,
but has become the shine
of headlight on a far slope of road,
the layers of blue-grey cloud,
the shadowy mine, dark clumps
of trees, patterns of domed fields,
everything that forms an aesthetic,
and transforms the heart.

If this is only a human utterance,
it is wholly human,
the force denied by tenderness,
the gentleness by astringency,
logic, the inner logic at play
with circumstance, each stutter
of technique a mastery,
each mastery a means of laying down
all claim to everything,
in taming silence.

Uniquely Identical

His little mind was satisfied with power,
he found the shallowness of every hour,
filled with displays of force, platitudes
the subjugation of the ever-unsubdued,

the spirit escaped to a place he'd left
long ago, or never knew, the empathy
that might have formed a human, deft
at personal creation, common sympathy.

He had the complement of ancient gifts,
cunning, skill in obtuse communication,
the ability to rage and instil fear, that lifts
the bully always to authoritarian station.

Yet proved again the barrenness of fame,
who by destruction, death, gained a name,
in repetition of that strange phenomenon:
all such exceptions join the crowd of one.

Twenty-first Century Blues

Blue atmosphere, that tolerates our presence,
between the earth and stars which are alike
in their intentionless performance,
absorbs somehow this maddened dance;
the earth and stars combine
to ease the mind,
and set us free.

Blue atmosphere: will it survive our games,
between the earth and stars which signify
in their pure mindless void of existence,
the purposelessness of our purposes,
will earth and stars combine
so that we find
time's mystery?

Blue atmosphere, which is the secret hidden
in nothing between earth and stars, instead
it comes of looking, wary of machines
that serve and steal our souls, all blind
indispensables that combine
to mute the earth and stars,
dull our identity.

Blue atmosphere, here's the peace of afternoon
between the earth and stars, one subtle kin
of natural energies, where matter
melts to the deep uncertainty beneath;
the earth and stars combine;
life, yours and mine,
a fierce fragility.

Departing Wave

The foggy smoke-dark dense
forest, planted (since everything here
was cleared way back),
the cloud white skies
of empty beauty, pure vapour –
all of it sliding slowly
away, lingers
in the mind, out of love,
and the flights of dark crows whirling,
the creatures hidden in the undergrowth,
not yet at risk, are all at risk:
departing wave.

No more primitives; the species,
back-tracked, erasing its past living
features, leaves the spoor;
no more visions, except those
of the mad; no more drums
tapping out healing; no more
medicine-less un-science;
no dancing, singing
at divine thresholds;
no more goddesses, or gods;
worlds we don't enter.

Not for us, painted caves,
curious figures (shamans perhaps)
on hidden walls,
basic survival –
or what price civilisation?
Mozart, Da Vinci, not here
by stones and spears,
nevertheless, nature was always
breathing there behind them;
the breaker falls and out
of its green cylinder slips
a universe of stars,
and little ships,
floating in a universal silence.

The roadways kill, are not the way,
the logged wilds founder,
the white whale
buries Self deep in concealing seas,
circles the void,
prepares to vanish,
to reappear in galactic light,
Cetus, and bright beginning
out of the end of days,
the white whale, all intentionless
energy, the questioner.

Here you can watch it going, the whole
thing moving, dropping
like scree on the river slopes,
carrying the dead away,
in a reality not cognisant
of motive, error, blame,
but solely what is,
trickle of ruin, loss, but neither
ruin nor loss to mindless planet,
the loss is ours, for ourselves,
the earth, the stars wait, suffering all
without suffering,
stream ebbs from stone,
falls dwindle,
rock lip dries,
elsewhere the opposite,
some new spray breaks
from the departing wave –
richness we love may vanish,
the wealth we find in everything,
but mind has chosen
to hear the hiss,
to contemplate the slow retreat.

Beware The Simplifiers

How distinguish the conscious, the unconscious?
In behaviour, both are working, mind the interplay.
The Freudian, the Jungian explanations in the sane
are only two of many metaphors: myths are potent,
and the sexual forces since they offer a dynamic
of the passions, fears, arousals, but never the joys
of intellect, our subtleties of thought and emotion,
antipathies based on intellectual hatreds, delights
based on our subtleties of love. Few motives are
unmixed, all mental energies are moving, the self,
both conscious and unconscious, in mature beings
is also a product of its own happier choices; mind
un-explained by its components, but by the whole.

Little Lunar Song

What is that music in the eye,
that music in the ear?
The white moon slipping by
at the turning of the year.

Catch in your silver fingers
the threads of love and light,
the white moon is ebbing
in the courtyards of the night.

What is that shadow on the grass
that shadow in the air?
The white moon keeps the pass:
beyond, the heights are bare.

Snatch at the light that lingers,
all that she grants is right,
fierce ache of her departures,
deep fire that stirs delight.

In Flight

After the histrionics where did it rise from
that idea of the spirit that adjusts the scene,
as counterpoint to the spirit of malevolence,
the baser side that must always come to grief
or where's the art, or still more so the human?
Was it out of some arcane book of mysteries,
a bright Cabal, or simply the obvious, the sum
of what had been, and where the way had run,
over the fields, through woods, to the boards
where passion plays at self, and mind arrays
its dreams, doubts, insights and poor evasions,
until he found self on self's island working
to reconcile, to find cold harmony, a light
enough to call an end and set free the mind,
conjuring mercy with no rod or book, only
the parting words, and the defenceless look
into that peopled darkness, into the world?
Still no solution, though the lost are found,
the guilty forgiven, dead pasts resurrected,
simply the agony, wholly personal, unseen,
the twang of the bow as a new flight began,
from there, but not as his; for those to come,
searching for something on an empty shore.

The End Of Art

Icarus fell and was the Minotaur.
Daedalus set him at the labyrinth's heart,
the honeycomb at the windings' centre,
to roar his torment at the lost sun's burning,
the anguish of a birth to crippled wings.
Sometime the hostile blade would come,
and life, by a thread, be released to death.
Daedalus bowed his head and still created,
wax in his fingers, a raised spine of feathers,
for one more flight into the woman's realm,
to where she danced on high to ritual song,
and was not the child on fire, the crucified,
the falling angel, or that concealing wave,
but herself, in the sacred place, inheriting
the calmer, gentler earth; the un-betrayed,
not abandoned to a god, but stepping down
over limestone pavements, a dancing floor
he merely cleared for her, from his hands
receiving the sea-shell, its pure mystery,
holding intellect to the windings of the ear,
unravelling a little moving seed of wisdom,
she being the earth itself, such gifts already.

Cities

In the end it's the light
which can transubstantiate
even industrial things,
the soft shade at evening,
or the red of morning,
the flame of nature that
converts our dross to gold.

The domes and spires
of soulless buildings
acquire a meaning,
which is all of form
and nothing of purpose,
so that architecture
may be found an art.

Even where the only
human thing in them
is the obscure intent
the embryonic image
that lay in the design,
even when mad power
has so commandeered

the fabric: it will pass,
and the symbolism pass,
and the naked form
floodlit and beached
in darkness, acquire
a sphinx-like stillness,
under the swirl of stars.

So cities find a self
in light, and tremors
of the light, an alien
meaning if we vanish,
a token to whatever
comes after, of how
the forms defined us.

Live-Oaks

Cicadas under street lights
shrill, hiss, sough
in live-oak leaves,
and darkneses confound
the mind with sound,

beyond the human ear, or here
loud enough to hurt;
their own delayed
heart's music,
where is mine?

Reality alone may be beauty:
or, should we say, beauty
may lie in rough strange things:
the fierce obduracy
of how an insect sings,

that marks a place in time,
never to be returned to,
as no time can,
but is, like everything, a symbol
for us, a deep allegiance,

to what is life: an autonomous
moving through, a replication,
an intent, mindful or mindless,
no cry too small
nor any human heart.

Its Ground Left Raw

White fog on limestone landscape
pure Chinese,
the levels and the hills
a showing through
of light that flows
in white silk volumes,
sheerer,

impossible to describe, as
all nature; words
are never even music, music
too much of us for this un-form,
which is as yet
an unintended sweep
where we drown.

Far in, and deeper, only grey
drenches the mind,
belies the eagle view
something once more glimpsed
from a car,
a sight too far,
a winter-pure instress.

Not As We Had Hoped

There is a question of how far we can move, beyond the complacencies, this cognizance, towards the essential thing, which cannot be the dream of something which does not exist and yet by being named seemed an existent, that god that was, the word that made a god, heartfelt projection, inflation of pure person, the power that returned *by* us from the drama was a symbol of the mystery of this, the mind.

There is a question of how far description is the path to what we longed for, or mere data that shows like substance of a canvas, frame paint and all, but no sense there of any artist, no mind, no thought of a maker we desired, who long ago vanishing into the far human, expressed a cry, our presence, a raw texture of unequivocal purest nothing, so declared through water, lines of trees, the silent face.

All that is certain here is no former myth contains it, though all those myths grant symbols that are more or less resonant with our condition, moving among stars, on the one planet, tokens of that planet; yet, through mind, denizens of the unreal, where alone consciousness comes to be, the mirror of this universe itself the glass, mind in the world, world inside the mind.

Self And Others

Self-centred yes, but where self-interest coincides with some purpose of the other, of the group, we are often most creative. Not pleasure but fulfilment, achievement, realisation of a goal, to defeat space, time; self-centred motives, but where the other or the group may benefit as well, not wholly selfish not in the strict meaning of the word, not oblivious to the wider benefit; a bargain in some sense made with life, with others, a code to live by, whereby we come to seem ourselves, or may choose to die by; dying for a cause, a principle, another; or the image of our loves and our delights, accepting pain for a delayed gratification; or the right feeling of that choice of a delay: such things are real. Call it self-sacrifice or altruism, we forego one self to choose another, all self-centred but not wholly selfish: beyond that negative.

Momentum

Slipping helplessly down scree
thinking, self and the world are one,
this is how we go,
unable to hold on, unable to break free,
caught on a rock slide, sheer descent
sliding without end and part of this
that never ends its fall always here,
which is part of us one and the same,
this *now*, going nowhere,
out of nowhere,
shifting changing rock,
unchanging stream.

Stumbling helplessly stone to stone
past boulders, taking cliffs along,
wild by the ice-cold pool heart gone
a beating tumbling fear of falling,
on dizzied flickering slope of time,
which is a moment
ever-tilted,
never itself slipping sliding away,
the slope of mountain
which is the mountain in us,
the world in us, this whole universe
in us roaring downwards.

Mouth open to the water, the air,
drenched in the spray of light,
trying to catch self, self fleeting,
self a shadow in motion
fluid as lizard, gone like snake
out of the noise, disturbance
but still of all this,
and all this inside,
carried by gravity, moving
helpless and hurried
bound to the inner outer
slipping through void.

Clouds And Hills

Delight in the limitless
tranquility, the clouds and hills,
nothing rising,
nothing ceasing,
gone, off the wheel,
past limits, all delight.

Delight in the clear sky
peacefulness, the clouds and hills,
embracing world
releasing world,
now, at the heart,
blown clear, pure delight.

Far Out

Going nowhere, seeing nothing
vast moon over snow
makes the silence.

Less fuss, no noise, the self
that sketchy thing
black pine on white hillside.

All the fields under cold,
ice and light
held on an empty brush.

Mindless nonsense
air and stone,
going nowhere, seeing nothing.

Slant

A change of slant what is needed,
same moon flying looks otherwise,
and the brown rose is no longer
a connotation of the night,
things once more as they were,
as have always been,
independent of the mind.

Standing by the roadside differing
perspective makes cars machines,
gives a vision like a cloud's
coasting in the blue; strange
to think medieval people saw
the same grass, leaves we do
and not as in their paintings.

Don't see through history or art,
look through the eye; your thin
music was not all there is,
and weariness is time-specific,
the song of the universe goes on,
beyond our aberrant metaphors,
the insufficiencies, form is light.

In another moment alter being,
walking field-side trails by low walls,
far from the alien ominous congregation
of assumptions, assume another guise:
here the dumb moon flies down
again an elemental, the blank rose
lifts from the ground pure substance,

stems of grass are again stems of grass,
we free-fall, down-slope with time,
or with our perception of a flowing, flow
without resistance, such is ease,
ease of the moon in its flying there,
ease of the rose in its secular being,
the text forgotten, the soil scarified.

Grass Without Leaves

Say to me something, critic, that is not
there in the poem, or in the beyond it
that its presence signifies, say
to the reader: become the writer. Talk
of the widening imagination
in a space, that is in the end, purely,
a sign to return to the power of things
that have no power: say
or be silent.

Say to me otherwise, critic, than repeat
words out of words, or in the dusk retrieve
volumes of grey-black cloud,
billows of sombre majestic light
on a shore of sky, talk
instead of the cogency of thought
that defies, that is, in summation, held
a flame in the hand, pain and joy
a sheer feeling.

Say to me, critic, say what individual being
makes of the speech of wholly secular
worlds, dead gods abandoned;
makes of the rose without the name,
the grass without leaves,
the sun over ice, still more beautiful,
of the summer free of phantoms,
say what the sunflower says
in its secret turning.

Sailing Close

No the imagination is not enough,
can construct itself but not
the summer night –
the rain is drumming on earth
beyond the heart, and greater,
and our love a humility
that makes peace with things.

Nowhere the dead return but in mind
too late, nowhere their speech
other than time –
the wind ruffles the river surface
beyond all thought, and free
of the fear in us, our anxious
clinging, to world, each other.

The human tale is our sailing close
to the wind, is the delicate navigation,
through intangible seas –
the snow blows on silent water,
beyond the mind, and here
is neither cold nor beautiful,
and yet seems both, in truth.

Northern Lights

Eerie above us,
but not the phantom of things,
'energy is colour' we said
and the world's flickering,
as if purpose flickered, there,
over our heads,
feel of the ghostly opera,
the blind backcloth appearance,
a shifting there
of a substance-less fabric,
shape and not constellation,
heart-troubling, like white foam, like wings,
like the opened hand, or an eye,
with translucencies beyond us.

The play of intelligence
over the world is not this
swarm, this ethereal dancing,
uncanny as of the galactic swirls,
out of quantum depth, or the inscrutable
void behind the black entity
whose boundary sucks light,
whose rim eats matter,
and is not Melville's metaphor,
is no symbol
of our abstraction,
but the powerless real of magnetic powers
the undirected gleam,
mindless and sweet.

It is the tremor of the feelings,
the shifts of thought,
as if the blank sky of the familiar poem
came alive in the hour
when the mind engaged,
showed living words, idea
trembling in a dome of seeing,
the hemisphere an eye open
on a universe, and we beyond the eye,
or the universe inside,
it's the quivering of consequence
inconsequential,
it's the sweep of unearthly green,
shade of a polar ice, a frozen ground.

Beauty to us, as the poem may be
beauty, though not to alien glance,
beauty out of human perception,
beauty we make; our gift
to the universe of form which is only
beauty in embryo without the mind
the maker. The poem
must speak of itself, in itself,
or be dumb, as mind must give
of itself, in itself, that is beauty,
a framing of flash and fire,
the threadlike glow, the sheets swirled
of those veils, the far
motion.

There is no cold north, no frozen tundra,
lights climb the pole,
time's visible being
the un-timed tremor of vibrancy
coils about the arch,
over a whiteness, a vacancy,
a void that is not a void, an expanse
of the lonely and the fearful heart,
un-housed, burned by a kindling,
not overseen, but by an unseeing-ness,
a masterless flutter, a pageant blazed,
theatre of doing and undoing,
idle of diamantine, pearled adrift,
space of no person.

The named fell behind the eyes
to be the nameless and the non-existent,
sight opened again on cloudless clouds
of a bright concordance,
of a being, an attendance, an indeterminacy,
found us wedded to intelligibility, fused
to the meaning that defies obscurity,
after a path into the world, not over,
and transformation
of the thoughtless stage to performance
for the self, asserting self,
to a non-assertion,
whose gemmed singing spell
is of our singing too.

The fluted walls of wild space-time
carve themselves from light,
our mystery these glittering cloaks of cold
their frozen straws, their smoke and shine,
the all-transparency
in which we must believe,
who live by faith
but not by the faiths of any past:
these are not masks these movements,
these patterns, these chaos forms
our deepest kin,
barbarian hordes across the frozen lake
the inhuman out of which the human
comes, that into the human falls.

These lines are not the lines of any scenery,
are not landscapes to the given,
are not injunctions for the indebted,
these scrolls, swerves,
levels, planes of the greater nothingness,
the ground of us,
its in-wrapped webs and columns,
throbbings and extinguishings,
are our crystal echo in delight,
a bareness of our beauty to affirm,
are the fate that is no fate, no destiny,
and the innocent roads of our contriving,
that lead into the thoughtless free,
doffing the mind.

The Nameless

Ours the black shadow of the moon,
the little sighs of fire,
between the two, we stutter
the terms of our desire.

Night shadow under leafless oak
flicker of raw flame,
between the two we utter
the nameless name,

that is the best of us,
a darkness and a light,
black universe inside us,
and a constellation bright.

Another Way To Say It

The way is not a way,
it neither leads us through,
nor out of, nor into,

it is un-music, alien
to the human that desires
human response from all,

least of all appreciates
our cleverness, our
intellect of chaos.

The silence of the house
dissolves its walls
through greenest glass,

becomes unspoken word,
the mindless reader,
finding leaves

the insect chews,
the walls fall down
and were pure vapour.

Of void and void,
the empty path
invites us to begin again

one foot in front now
of another, the light
sharp as our intellect

to slice through calm,
and swinging there
to perfect quiet,

its tremor over.
So in the empty space,
left behind,

which was no space or time
but simply being,
keep still.

The way is not a way,
the path goes round,
or is no path.

The house outside
is the inward room,
a library

of inarticulate texts,
in a summer night,
no longer physical,

written in air,
or in the electrons' presence
not of orbit.

We are the house outside,
the house without walls
or doors, windows

or foundations, without
history or owners,
past or future.

We are not the way
except in faring
without ceasing,

except by what
we cannot help
or hinder,

the un-remorseless
un-ground glittering,
that never asks

the way, the careless
something other,
something over,

that going never leaves
and leaves -
nothing behind.

Communion

Words make the world more vivid,
world the words,
so your utterance
in the darkness,
which is not an utterance
in this central world
of the present night
but a prior speech
codified, a singing,
unseen, silent,
so beyond the real
but part of a real.

Say, shall we, we do not
believe in the unseen
intangible, grant hoary sense
of limit, metaphysics
vaporising world;
go close the ear
to passionate mewling
or this subtle flight
of something understood
not simply words?
Or say words vivify
are filled with life, our life

that meaning needs
only the slightest of mediums,
bird-tracks on clay,
or O's and I's of time,
white cloud-or-water writing,
rosetta'd leaves
that speaking eye,
its secret semaphore,
wild bark of trees
or these
the faintest tremors of an energy,
to lever universe.

Mounds Of The Forerunners

And these were the ancient peoples,
the ones who never
were asked their names,
the ones we rendered silent.

Here is the space they lived in,
never owned, skimming
the land, of the slightest layer
between earth and sky.

Here is the dust they tilled,
the birds they loved, the grains
of pollen like those they scattered,
the lost dreaming-grounds.

Here is the silence:
they saw the beauty.
Here is the breeze:
whose are the trails?

Here is the ant,
the beetle on a stone,
and time will tell –
who clings here longest.

Nightfall

Black silhouettes of trees
in motionless blue evening,
their dark bare farness,
my branched awareness,
networks that bind
the labyrinthine mind,
sing dark,
make resonances.

Blue deeper
as light passes,
the gleam across swaying bushes
now sky goes green,
and cars slide by,
a birch in distance, lace,
the upswept pine
are fine.

In The Telescope

The ghostly universe is bright,
let's dream of distant stars
no longer as they are,
bathe in light.

No the universe is not our dream,
it is outside us and it is inside,
if not quite in the forms
that we imagine.

The ghosts are ghosts of something there,
as we are ghosts
of something past
only less ghostly.

If this is an act of faith
then it is the trust
in what free intellect
can make of being.

They arise together,
what I make of things
and the things themselves,
the unreal and the real in the unreal,

which is in turn a faith
in their unintended messages;
that what I make of things
is and is not the things themselves,

the tangible but not the intangible,
the given not the un-given
which eludes (why should
we expect it all?);

that the solid and in-solid are one,
the act and the theory
in a deep connection,
that we too are the universe,

the ghostly light,
and are still
the sole real presence
in the sole real moment.

That Despair

To accept the evil is the broken only
is difficult,
the mind would like
to see a purpose in the pain
that brings despair;
in the mind awry.

We cannot relieve
things that are as they are,
cannot extract
meaning from unmeaning,
the irretrievable
has no restitution.

That longing like despair
is damaging weakness,
somehow we must make
what we are out of what
we are, the good
offset the bad,

without rationale,
without a name for evil:
the malice of the crow
was not intended,
the old dead satanic
has served its time.

But it is not easy,
to accept blind moves
also inside us.
We still desire a name
for evil, some
powerless redress.

The Transmuters

Without the evergreen meaning,
bound to tundra,
or losing the jungle in the mind
the lush actual,
would be death to the imagination.

The instrument of the feelings
will suffice,
the intricacies of the heart's sonata.
Make out of love and truth
the singing beauty
transcend the stage.

Winding the green leaves round us,
we contrive
person and person, in the gold
of sun or sheets of grey,
delineation of a leaf,
delights of creature.

It is about a confidence,
a letting-go
not before time,
of the depleted symbolic,
an acknowledgement
that all beyonds are inside.

It Affirms

The no limits us to what we are,
who are nothing, the skandhas,
and everything, the wild flashes
of hurricane light, form, affection.

The dead magnificence slides away
to become some period of imitation,
the pastiche of an imposed meaning,
(and not the life itself) for no audience.

I sing the private self, offering nothing
except as a resonance of the universe,
a realm time touches, of pain and space,
not to be caressed away with words,

needing no reader, an essential freedom,
no listener, and no eyes, the silence as
when Mozart sits there growing a sonata
letting it breathe, without the intervention,

hands picking half-conscious at the keys,
but with the full force of mind-awareness,
until as in poetry the secret yearning, that
which underpins the reader's inner voice,

reveals a feeling, and gently surrounds it,
becomes the yes that extricates the self
from selfhood and embeds it in the flow,
this delicate yes that affirms the universe.

Say that the final faith is in the duality,
the reverse of the metaphor in the mind
its opposite, and the wasteland gleaming
there, the creature of endurance leaping
with flickers of sand or a rotation of leaf.

Say that the breeze of death brings renewal,
that the colourless winter is full of colours,
that form stirs everywhere, and solids flow,
that even the feelings that obsess the heart
can change or be changed, that the galaxies

are not waiting for their youth or their age,
that the moments of the outward universe
are each eternal and undying, if forms fade,
other forms mutate, each makes a difference,
beyond our weakness, our inner limitations.

However great a use of words, it is the ideas
that order us, and style gives way to content,
that not the voice but the thought is judged,
the worth and not the person, who recedes,
far from the howling or the sighing, becomes

the persona not the self, the observed and not
the unobservable. The image cannot sing
without human meaning, mind has no edge,
and its dark circumference is always central,
a point in seeming from which world radiates.

The in-itself is the boundary where we hover,
mystery the stop to imagination, exhausting
all attributes, mistaking being as such, held
to the instant where the music ceases, void
becomes alien, reason ends, and self other.

Yet say that the void is never for us a void,
but the seething of innumerable potentials,
that out of the icy waste a tiny figure grows,
or in the black leaves there's a fleck of light,
that implies our presence, is our projection.

The Human

Our beauty is often inwards, mind beauty.
Not outer dancing grace and form of wild
creature, the tiny one that scuttering runs
its track from the predator that plunges by
and misses, not a beauty of line and form,
which when we see it in the human almost,
even then we look for a mind behind, find
a wall, or the conventionally un-revealing.

We are not the aesthetic species but simply
the species that creates the aesthetic, beauty,
always recognised in the forms outside us,
the ones we are not, though we might find
them and display them, in a mind's creation,
but never the mind itself. A beautiful mind,
what would that be, one free of its own flaws,
an inhuman mask beside the forms we make?

No Meaning Without Meaning

There is no who in the green eye of summer,
the dream of earth dissolves in the real of her,
and it is the extent to which mind and meaning
penetrate and project that makes image of her:
there is still the dream, but a dream of meaning.

So in the darkness if we give the poise, warm
presence of the multivariate, the many-coloured
regions that embrace us, of her clouds and veils,
her substance and her sighs, it is our own speech
we wish her on her tongue, our self in her selves.

The cloud is a text, the cry a syllable of our eye,
the leaf the hand, her emptiness our abstraction
from her, the winter we inject into august veins.
This is the sending-out of mind, the embedding
of human in what can no longer stay inhuman,

detail of dream in dream, and a greater clarity,
that no obfuscation, or hankering-after serves,
the things must be words as well, though we
long for the outside language, for the music
that utters further than those forms we heard,

still all too human. We have need so to place
in the great outer void that rises with us, the one
that contains reality and is contained, we so need
to set there, the sole gifts we give, those of mind;
what earth's minds have created, echoing selves.

Obstinacy

Obstinacy, Pope said, and Byron quoted,
and strength to resist the human stream,
or ignore it. Obedience is no freedom.

There's an inability of the creative self
to take orders, it's need
to exercise its own clear potential.

A world of obedience, yes, achieves,
but to what purpose, unless it liberates
the individual being?

I am talking of creation not destruction,
of liberty not the irresponsible,
the flowering not the harming of the self.

Getting Down To It

Nature's honesty, that beauty,
of pines at night, and larch,
of the slow sweep
of rain and wind across the slopes,
after the hawk fall,
lovely lady,
to a further valley,
the scattered flowers, white
stars in the grass.

The un-pretended and the straight,
the right, even when awry,
in the places we can
no longer live without appurtenances,
sites of a truth
we cannot match,
as here the stars
in glittering pines' dark boles,
strong occupiers.

Clarity of water, peace of truth,
the oldest wisdom simply
a going straight, a levelling,
nothing pretentious,
no fuss living:
but how can that compare
with sweep of wing
or air, or the silence
at the centre of the flower?

Free To Become

The human is no god, but nothing needs
the arbitrary tyranny of deity,
the mind is free,
to be within its bounds,
to yield the gifts
we give the universe, the mindless:
love, truth and beauty,
our inheritance from the forerunners,
the grain here from the winnowing,
our uniquenesses,
that otherwise
the universe would lack,
and don't ask the need
for giving, that runs deep,
the creative must live beyond itself,
the moving on requires a divestment,
a disbursement, all renewals
that sing the green soil.

The human has no temple, has no need
for what religion preached,
the rites
of subjugation, if only to a concept,
an idea.
Sartre was right in that;
account for the genetics, for the sieve,
for culture, language,
all we carry,
but then our fate is in our hands,
and all codes our own to unmake,
not in contempt for life
in the name of life,
our existential freedom,
beyond the dark roots' solidity
which is not ours
and in another body, it may be,
forging another nature.

A Season Everywhere

After all the defeats there is a speech,
quieter for those capable of speaking,
closer to us maybe, of the colour of us,
shaped of the human, its deeper figure,
and not that alien language in the stars.

In January beauty the trees grow still,
accustom themselves to burgeoning light,
a blue beyond the hyacinthine shadows,
a hint of crimson in the dissolving frosts,
a spangled a new-fangled weight of air.

It is of the black figure time, its silvered
presence under the moon, along the field,
an absent jiggling of the stalks of things,
an unseen spring almost we send toward
your east coast shores, Floridian dawns.

There are words on the tongue that tell,
forms of another bird beyond desolation,
the wren it seems, a continuous music,
on the rim of the pool, over the stones,
and another form of moonshine, subtler.

What is beyond cleverness is a moaning
of the surf, your tide's soft foams, pipers'
beaks prodding sand, adamant clouds
barring the reaches, a glistening of world,
turning again, shaping the human regions.

No More

Disentangling the emotions embedded there,
a wistfulness, a resignation, the sweetness
of a memory, the affection, time's erosion,

the persistence unchanged of things external,
this world that takes us up and sets us down,
the beauty of the deep experience, its gleaming.

Disentangling the murmurs of the heart, life's
imperatives, our inability to cling to the summit,
the thrilling of an exhaustion, the depth of rest,

and beneath the sadness the strength of being,
a firmness of the spirit, this endurance, how
a life's emotion makes form, the essence clear.

Ad Plures

Leaf veins cling to the rock, pale skeletons
of leaf, layers of Shelley's leaves, metaphor
for us, and the west wind ruffles the water
of this clear pool between sills of limestone.

Mind after mind, this intricate inner making,
then our one descent to a thready simplicity
that might as well be the life of a lizard, less,
the life of those fibres in the grass, a passing,

if it were not for the trace mind leaves behind,
fragile as the spray of stream blown in the air,
wet skeins of leaf plastered against the ledges,
the layers on layers of stone stained with being.

Headland

No there is nothing of us in the darkness,
the you that I am, the I you make of me:

in us the minds that can declare the self,
the minds an empathetic force discovers,

only in us, and only these subtle instants
where we construct a universe, or render

what is a darkness and a light beyond us,
against which we are silhouetted, making.

There is nothing of you in this conjuring,
nothing of I myself, but in our communing

the principle of form transforms to process,
the potential world becomes so actualised,

in our resonance reflects itself unknowing,
that we are not mirrored but the mirroring.

Such is the something of us in the dark,
the you that I am, the I you make of me,

flares of the far light on the midnight sea,
heart-stopping meaning, instantly undone.

Confines Of Freedom

On the south slope were ancient fields,
you can still see them in the low sun,
places where the predecessors
carved out a life, sank in,
sank deep,
to strips of existence between stone walls,
or following in summer light
the flow of pollen.

Pollen is life, the light,
echo of the sky, air,
at the mouths of caves,
child from the dark
the makers
of human meaning in hidden valleys,
in the soft green of the hills,
now, gleaming grasses.

Do you pretend, do I, to some
greater being,
some more refined existence?
More forms, true,
more products of the makers,
knowledge like fire
that lacerates the spirit;
but more being?

Time bows to time,
all ages own their foolishness,
life-wisdom,
truths astringent,
deep affections.
Did they love this landscape
less than you?
This beauty?

At The End Of Speech

There is self and the universe and this is freedom.
Here starlight grazes the surface of quiet water,
I gaze at water, and am aware of starlight,
in darkness of sacred air, in the earth's moment.

Say to the purposeless: how quiet you are.
Sound is intent to us, and not the stir
of the intentionless, trees, grass, air
moving over a hillside. World is hushed

and goes on, in its own inner working
of which mind will never be a part.
Grace though, in the sacred. I become
one with the untouched universe, its light

at the end of speech, where the word succumbs
to a reality which is not word, and gives
no sign. The quietude in me is not the world's
but this stillness for a time, and a time only.

The stream moves soundlessly, the leaves
flicker beyond me. I ache for their being,
for beauty not mine, for a fusion beyond
the tongue, for presence without knowledge.

The stream moves soundlessly, a bright flow
at the end of speech, the un-aching being
whose beauty is not awareness, not self;
in a not-nature free of memory or love.

Enough Of The Wise

In the end who is to say how others should live.
Enough to live true ourselves, or try to do so.
Since the only way back is the journey through,
and the only home for the human is the mind;
enough to search out what may help the process,
and restrain the violence, destruction, erosion.

To do for the sake of the doing not the reward.
To give for the sake of delight, and give freely.
To find again every flicker of the silent earth,
to cherish its creatures and find grace in being,
and not in the foolishness of invented deities.
To recover the self despite the irrecoverable.

Freedom is already there and not to be granted.
Restraint is a denial of movement not freedom.
The self, the mind are free by the very reason
of the universe's non-intention, and its silence
which we must fill, its stars only we aspire to.
We, out of our heritage, create love and truth,

and are compromised by our being human, all
trapped in ownership, selfhood, fear, loss, pain,
but all a part of the world graced with unreason,
the mindless world that glitters with pure being,
the world where the grass is, where the trees are,
but where mind is a ghost, self a process of time.

It is enough to understand that to err is human,
and to focus on our ethics, not on our failures,
ignore the blame, see cumulative consequence
and that not everyone chooses the same path.
So we may find a way through not a way back,
and a road to the future, out of our tortuous past.

Tributary

In the limestone quietude, the small stream
flows below birdsong, and blackbird moves
in a place which is also mind, but subtly other.

The stone is the stone, and the place the place,
solid in time, where silence is a deepest calm
out of which clouds and trees and hills quiver

to be as they are and no more, secede from time
under the breeze among the sounds of the flow,
and hush till they are the breathless statement

of what trembles in you and me, what shudders,
faint as a thought against the sough of breeze,
a motion of acknowledgement, an acceptance,

of the slightness of all this transitory selfhood.
Be quiet in the limestone quiet and listen there
to the conversation of things, their communion.

The smallest tributary creeps from under the lip
of a fractured shelf, and is almost a statement
of what you are, a glimpse of being's fragility.

Ethics And Aesthetics

It is not the revolutions of power we need,
but the revolution of ethics and aesthetics.

Who builds a world they wholly hate? Assume
your hatred is your hatred, perhaps not theirs.

It is not the close community of interference
we need, but the space of decency and justice.

Who allows community to lapse but all of us
who value privacy, interests, our selves more?

It is not the reality that fails us but the dream.
To see history you must listen to its message,

that all was not happy, life is not some poem,
that ethics and aesthetics were often lacking.

Don't hope for the revolution unless it comes
bringing ethics and aesthetics in its very being.

Do the best you can in your own life to create
love, truth and beauty in the world around you,

but don't blame those who bow to other forces.
Hope for the revolution of ethics and aesthetics.

The Song Of Delight

Listening to the knower speaking of what they know
in an act of love, is to be in-gathered,
to words that share, to words that give
in the grace of understanding,
live in the life of the best of what we are;
is to join the communion of spirits,
not ghosts, but minds,
the meaning of souls if the word has meaning,
bent on the pure particular, on the act
of creation, interpretation, true translation,
to invoke the intense light
of another's flame,
and make that your own...
No the audience is not less than the creator,
both are a pulse of being,
and the created, the score, the text,
the artefact once made are givens,
only great in that all must freely share them,
diminished by restriction,
lessened by any breath of ownership.
Chopin, for instance, no longer cares
to possess the outpour,
but here for us in a breathless flow,
like the bright pond in the moonlight
like the small rill that slowly feeds it,
sounds like the natural sounds we call silence,
being there, free of anxieties,
for a while
under the stars of an uncreated heaven,
making the singing ours.
This is the essence of the human,
the gift of the other, given;
the truth for its own truth's sake;
the little sliver of beauty
that outweighs the pain;
the flower of discovery;
the sharing of what we love;
the song of delight.

The Gift Ungiven

There is no they, there is only ever us .
Not all of the destruction was intended.
Mostly it is a slow erosion, an accretion
of the un-beautiful, untruthful, un-loved.

The violence too is mostly a foolishness,
a product of fear, a lashing out in anger.
We drift towards the silence of the fields
and hills, the way to the wasteland easy.

If we accuse others we accuse ourselves
of the laziness, the selfishness, the greed,
though subtly hidden. There are all these
appurtenances we need, all this possession.

Values are at the heart of our problem, all
the things we believe in but don't perform,
unless by accident, or a slow convergence
of quiet intent on the better ways of being.

To elude is fine, yes the way is for the lone
adventurer on the trail of true self-creation.
To evade false belief is fine, not to follow:
but we need more, we need the gift ungiven,

which is a form of love, or rather of delight,
source of all ethics, the real mother of beauty,
delight in form, delight in the shared delight,
delight in speaking as true as the word allows;

delight, a form of grace, like nature's grace,
the uncreated, un-designed, the unintended
in which we can plunge to restore the heart,
which we must accept, being still beyond us.

There is no they, there is only ever us, only
the flawed species. Be kind to all the others
if you can. We need what is in us, and yet is
never ours, a performance in and of the self,

what is not sold, what transcends language,
that implementation of our deepest values
that makes the soul, the mind, that is, alive,
with the heart-felt music of the gift ungiven.

Nothing To Do With Power

Giving has nothing to do with power, there is no fight. The revolution has already been achieved in the gift, its afterglow is beauty.

Love has nothing to do with power, there is no conquest. Unless the mind has already let self go, accepted loss, we impair the beauty.

Truth has nothing to do with power, there is nakedness. Defenceless against what is we learn the true meaning of a remorseless beauty.

Freedom has nothing to do with power, there is no freedom in subjugating others. Liberty once gained gives liberty, its sanctity enhances beauty.

Nothing of what makes us human has to do with power. Grant no allegiance to any entity or force beyond you: touch the earth, learn beauty.

The Song From The Tree

In the moment of love
in the heart's surrender,
in the moment of truth
in the silence, tender,
we hear a voice sing
of impossible being
possessed by a vision
that's lost in the seeing.

Its the sweetest of songs
that floats from the tree,
to drift on the water,
so perilously,
the voice that delights,
that soothes this poor heart,
with a song beyond all
the seductions of art.

It's the song beyond body,
the song beyond death,
the song beyond meaning,
the song beyond breath,
its time is the moment,
its life is its presence,
the space of a grass blade
is its mortal essence.

There no one is theirs,
there nothing is mine,
there the mirror is broken
where sad stars align,
and the fields flow green
to the endless sea,
as the sun sails on
mysteriously.

The dark of believing
the shadow of living,
vanish in light,
in the gift in its giving,
there is only this sound
for the music's sake:
as the eyelids must lift
as the sleeper must wake.

The World Of The Spirit

I was re-born to the worlds of detail.
There, in the silence of unruffled water,
a spectrum in the raindrop on the wire,
glittered in all the beauty of the rainbow,
the blue of sky, only a brighter, deeper,
the emerald green, the warm leaf-yellow
in February sunlight, in the lake-silence.

Water flowed in my spirit, that reclaimed
from those who claim to know what spirit
is, the sole possessor, wishing a stillness,
wishing to become the intentionless world's
own lack of speech, the gracious, graceful
earth's own mindless singing; mind-rending,
for there, at the heart of death, life resurrects.

I waited beyond word, the free unbeliever,
with faith undiminished in the natural fire
inside our theory, outside our understanding,
the eternal bonfire, that festival of the light,
ice-stars, red stars, blue stars, veils of green,
risen unseen in an outer darkness shimmering,
when out of the far end of the lake, travelling

a kingfisher flew through February sunlight,
flash of a hummingbird, rainbow on the grey
ease of a voiceless water, and leftward gone,
downstream to holly bushes, to the shadows,
glittering in all the beauty of the rainbow,
the blue of sky, only the brighter, deeper,
the emerald green, the warm leaf-yellows,
and I was re-born to the detail of the spirit.

An End To Indulgence

It took only a slight shift of vision to see
the lilacs as lilacs, yourself another being,
and the sea the sea and not the sound it made.

Only a moment to be a mind beyond mind,
feeling the planet, feeling the unseen tremors
of insects among leaves by diminished rivers.

It took only a change of attitude to recover
intent from the intentionless, but our intent,
to banish the sadness of a waste of meaning.

An instant to regain the vigour of evening,
the remorseless sky's unmitigated gleaming,
the forms of cloud under the form of moon.

And you were present suddenly like the lilacs,
the ocean was present no longer lachrymose,
the free light shone rebounding among stars.

Of Green And Civil Life

It is a mistake to view the human as body,
our earth as body, our universe as body.

Whether the human will survive depends
not on body but on the mind, not on this

landscape that I love, this limestone valley.
It is a mistake to confuse our own desires

with human intent, the billion-fold fires,
even if our own vision end in silence.

The body of all I love will die, and I too,
and nothing maybe of all this will be left

even for a season. Though I too cry, re-cry
the desolation and the desecration, the loss

of the civilised, that slow accretion, recognise
we are not body, as the universe is not mind.

The Unfamiliar

The familiar is diminished, we unravel it
and it's gone. The knot is un-knotted,
what seemed abstruse, once shaped us,
only a re-statement of the dumb obvious.

But you are never the familiar, nor this
place of water and wind-sculpted stone,
whose pure light gleams on a landscape,
explains to me a beauty of permanence,

one that I never understood, the mother-lode
that yielded, the ground that gave, created,
and became self, all that hidden from me
buried itself where waters ran sunlessly.

Not you, nor the quiet pool, the grey heron,
the evening planet above cliffs of starlight,
the scents of the darkness and its meaning
to me, a freedom that is grace of the mind.

Not you nor the meaning of the universe we
grant it, the integrity of flow never familiar,
as clouds surprise, as the movement of trees,
how the creatures gleam in worlds beyond us.

From Nothing

Daylight is quiet by limestone streams.
Earth's powers not our powers still belie
the white inexpressive silence of the sky:
the blackbird and the wren return again.

Energy invades us, shadowy winter lapses,
and the trees glitter with a rain-slick promise
of fresh infancy, old minds rehearse new birth,
strangeness warms, becomes the commonplace.

Being is always in eternity, and so our freedom
is guaranteed from nothingness, blank vacuum,
which seethes with all that may be, and dictates
nothing but self-creating self-perpetuating form.

The budded leaves cry in the mind their potential,
cry with the realisation of their appearances to be:
the river of being does not flow, it falls, from here
to here, out of the moment in the moment, falling.

The planet we were part of goes on singing, light
is quiet beside limestone streams, dark meanders
under white cliffs, this is new knowledge, beauty
of the far intentionless seething, undirected being.

No I will not be what you wish, I will be myself.
I will be the paradigm of silence, in other nature,
acknowledge the nothingness all this came from,
other power than ours, a reality opening cleanly.

Burying the gods, the bones of the world tremor
with that notorious absence, with sudden denial,
here where the nothing changes and is all change,
where what never returns is a perpetual returning.

Daylight brings freedom by the limestone stream,
I live in the flight of the blackbird and the wren,
held in no hands, un-graced by an outer regimen,
no less part of the circle in the trees, the mysteries.

The Poem Is Mad

In the belly of the whale the world glitters.
Reality is swimming from somewhere to
somewhere, these ribs a skeleton stillness.

The jungle spoke green fact, wet as it was,
against which thought of the city ran mad.
There the ice of the poem melted, and left

behind, a damp spot; emotions skittered
over the dry leafage, over the forest floor,
entangled creepers twined, the sad lianas.

In the belly of the giant whale, the world
is beached and far from the sound of water,
Will mind find a ground of contemplation?

The poem is mad and drowning in the green,
dappled by purple butterflies, whose shadow
posits appearance over which beings flicker,
a forest of seeming in the belly of the whale.

How It Is So

At the level where a quantum flickering lies,
de-coherence finding one world from many,
order exists, like this glittering of the leaves
that leaf by leaf declaim the being of the tree.

In the quantum silence, entangled, non-local,
where what we do predict, our only seeming,
describes it may be some other kind of nature;
in the randomness, free, pure, and undirected;

the mystery of being is encapsulated, the mind
is clear again. See through the world, go there,
go deeper, to where the sum of all this matters,
matters supremely and only as we proclaim so.

Know the gift, mind in the mist swirl holding
the world as world in its metaphors, equations,
marvelling at miracles of order, out of a chaos
like the chaos of winter, without thought for us.

The wave in the wave equation is neither real
nor unreal, is form like a ghost of further form,
a hint of a something in the deeper continuum,
which not to think towards is subtle cowardice.

No we cannot grasp space, time, energy, what
these forces are that whirl endlessly through us,
not their substance-less substance, nor their life
not ours, in the uncertainty of their reflections,

our measures, as they the mindless have no grasp
of mind: what we grasp is form, the conservation
of measures; action, event, the macroscopic given;
the desire for word and meaning making meaning.

Not the world, we do not grasp the world, never
the summer shining its way through veils of fire,
not the sun in splendour, nor the far cold where
we are lost, all those not the tongues of language.

For us is the tremor of relation: this against that
is beauty, delight is the dower of truth and love,
to know things not as they are but as they are
for us, to the furthest detail, to the end of being.

Cradle Song

Render the 'child',
the unspoken light.
Be the pure fall in flowing.

Walk with the shadows,
mind in night:
knowing is deep unknowing.

Render the 'child'.
Beyond the end
of being, is all being.

Not what we are,
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