

Pollen In The Air

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'You must scatter the pollen of dawn on your trail'

Navajo Oral Tale

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White Birch

Bright birch-tree in snow-barked spring:
A fly on the brilliant surface lifts, lands,
Crawls, glides; is it moving in joyfulness;
Or dancing to purpose; or simply alive
In the light? No beauty like spring; no
Air like this air, as the body flames; no
Return like Earth's return in its orbit, now.

Pollen and ash on the wind, ash and pollen,
Spirits shine in mist on voids of appearance,
And the dead, we own to, sing in the mind
So that we might perform their resurrection,
Returning them gently again to the levels
Of light, silver masks of fractured memory,
Dazzling the heart in snow-barked spring.

And the single oak sapling, with umber leaves,
Dry scrolls of winter gone, rattles and sighs
And whispers in this spring wind over the hill,
Becomes symbol to me, is life-in-death, is the
Fierce coming-again of our mortal transience
In the form, is the individual presence, bowing,
Slighter even than grass, to the vagrant energies.

Life's Irony

Gazing down through white light,
On to other hills,
Are they immune to change
Where nothing is?

Freedom is to defy that past,
To move on,
To say no inside your heart
To the unacceptable terms.

Looking down through levels
Of pine-trees to an angle
Of one blue lake,
And the rim of a second,

Stumbling on stone left by
Another century,
A downed wall split by
A sapling of its day,

Walking down through tranquil air,
Beyond suffering,
Though that's life's irony,
Nothing is.

Chauvet

On the wall of the Chauvet cave,
The oldest art,
Glistens?
Thirty millennia
Give or take a few,
And we began?

Bison, rhino, horse,
The horse
Over-painted,
By different hands
Five millennia or so
Apart.

Were they then
Free, loosed
From history, uncaught?
Or was it
That concept mattered
Not the painter?

Like those images
Of Buddha,
Or Siva dancing,
Out beyond
Individual lives
On the Wheel.

Horned bison,
Naked woman,
A minotaur
Ochres that labyrinth,
Torchlight
On vivid faces,

The essential human
Is not what
We know
Or what we feel,
But what
We have made
Of what we are.

Far East

Sun's course rising,
Earth shaking,
Heated underneath
The plates slipping,
Chains of volcanoes
Simmering in darkness,
Waves roll up sands,
And set there
Scuttling life.

Cool behind a rock,
Breeze blows
On naked skin,
Ten thousand years,
A million
Makes no difference.
Life and non-life
Vary only
In the process.

Waves flow, the heart flows,
Hills of bamboo leaves
Bend and flutter
And remain,
Lots of waveforms
In this picture,
These endless
Tremors
Of the universe.

We dig down into the Earth,
Try to hang tight,
Cling to this surface.
Gravity helps,
But only so much,
We're fragile
And light
As gossamer seed,
Chutes in the breeze.

Intensity of feeling here
Seems to vanish
Behind such still faces,
Eastern deference
The cultured calm,
But underneath
Our planet boils,
Deep quakes make minds
Blaze and foam.

Getting to Grips with Myth

The Apache said
The Creator
Before he vanished
Back into Mind
Had the creatures gather
Pollen from every plant,
And so they did.

They fetched ochre too,
Clay, white stone
Turquoise
(Always peaceful)
He drew the outline
Of Man (it's never Woman first)
In pollen,

In his own image,
Coincidentally Man's,
Set the rest inside
And made skin, flesh
Sinew and bone,
Then breathed in Life,
'Don't look!' he said,

Wise words, creatures,
Don't look at the singing,
Shouting, laughing thing.
Then Man dreamed Woman,
Both before
Sun or Moon,
So it goes on.

Pollen blows in the wind,
Man comes from the womb
Of Woman
Who in every sense
Was forever first,
The Creator always last,
In between them Mind.

Words For A Western Scroll

Far from every thing,
As far as I can tell,
I still am with myself
And every thing is well.

Be Not Afraid

I was gone there in the silent field,
Mind and heart flew out of the body,
Between wind and star
A banner of silk
Was flowing,
This universe sheer light
Falling on tundra.

I was the shaman of midnight
The creatures were minds around me
Shifting ghosts inhabiting
Absurd form;
I sang
The only language we have
The only cry.

I saw beauty there in the silent field.
You understand: no human beauty;
Far from the tribe,
And the language
Of the tribe,
The music of the starlight
Split my bones.

Simply Complex

City wavers in air:
Now there are
Equations for all
This tremor
Of wind, light, dust
That overflows us,
Undermines us,
Bifurcating process,
And fractal steep.

Mind wavers in air,
Soon there'll be
Description for all
This tremor,
Of cell, pulse, wave
That embodies us
Creates us,
Self-organising rhythm
Unconscious deep.

World wavers in air,
This lucent envelope
Its delicate sighing,
Slow-moving cloud,
Out there, black voids
And glittering stars,
Too great for our
Small, anxious, swift,
Propitiatory sleep.

At The Edge

Birds and fishes soar between sky and water,
Water and sky; mind threads self and world,
Stitches place and process. Hours a mystery,
Or say that change is; recalling, anticipating,
How everything churns through/inside being
Cloaked by all stresses, strange to understand.

The boat glides over sixty thousand feet, hums
With the flying fish, the jellyfish, the glow of
Inverted stars in the galaxies of ocean-foam,
Hangs on the clarity, swims through the light,
Navigates this skin, this boundary, this web
Broken by wing, fin, limb, a universe beneath.

Face in the mirror is surface dividing process
Of self from process of world both undivided!
Part of the body I see/feel, so part of the mind.
Self is a boat floating on water of silence, lost
Between flesh and cool air, tissue and distance.
The boat slides over sixty thousand feet, hums

With our understanding. How much we know
How slight a difference that makes to the raw
Experience of being, taste or feel of the edge,
How the limit of field and ditch, water and sky,
Self and other, elude, vanish into the complex,
Into chaos, that order in the disorder of things.

Realms within realms, far off shapes of islands,
The infinite coastlines, the sea-horse tails, spray
Of in-wrapped light, form and stress of feathers,
Stone roughness, fern-arcs, palm-trees, bamboo,
Phosphorescent stars, the Mariner's sea creatures,
Harmless beauty, coiled energy, heart's harmony.

It's there, our delight, it's there, it has never been
Other, it has never been less than the whole earth
Held out before us, then buried deepened inside us,
Sweet landfalls, and interwoven delicate currents
Of flow, not lines but planes, transformations, ice
And fire, billowing of a universe more than ours.

Scanning Deeper

Captured by
The electron microscope,
A grain of pollen,
Shaped according to species,
Has the form of a doughnut,
Or a wrinkled fruit,
Coral, a knobbly mine,

Or some strange sea-creature,
A tortilla,
A cowrie-shell,
Bread-mound, lattice,
Ribbed seed,
Eggs in a basket,
Fungus, capsule, pillow.

Lovely complexity
Out of simple forces,
How natural form,
The play of a relation,
Appears, all stresses flow
To cast the shape of leaf,
The cloud on the hill, the grain.

The Path By The Field

In the dust, there are stones shaped by the sea.
A billion years of form in the twig
All our history moves in the body,
And you linger in my mind.

Wind in the pale grasses,
Deep blue, cloud, blue
Hangs swirling, forming
Altering in the air.

No one understands the veins
Of feeling,
Ramifications of what was,
Living on.

Like the first peoples I survive
By the power of my dreams.
You surprise me everywhere
Lost, returning,

Out of unconscious being,
Sleep, gaze, image,
Memories above all, those
Strange constructs

Half-visible, half-felt,
That shake the flesh,
And coil around the spirit,
Arteries of leaves.

The track of the moving line
Separates what is near,
Brings close what's separate,
An infinite path in a finite region,

I know all the equations,
All the non-linear shifts of light,
But description's no experience,
And 'to live a life's not to cross a field.'

The Reality Inside Which We Imagine

Out of order, the beautiful randomness,
Out of randomness, some unknown order,
From some small flutter, a beginning
Unfolds in multiple trajectories.

We love the structure deep in chance,
How death is chaos, life is form:
Forever flowing, Heraclitus' river,
Standing still forever, like the fall.

Unexpected order, as if from distance
Gradually the figures, as we near,
Take on their being, reach, gesticulate,
Emerge from indistinctness, speaking.

Life's order is this movement in the dark,
Below the surface of pure tangibility,
From a distance, where all's inaudible,
Invisible; the pollen grain, the protistan.

Like Earth from space, or the streets
Seen from some high building, looking
Down, or through the night-dark glass
The incomprehensible scene, the screen

With sound turned down, some drama,
Of genesis, coupling, or destruction,
That makes no sense, or deeper sense
Of patterns of existence on the dark.

Out of order, in the un-shadowed air,
Glittering now as if all truth was there,
Bright but unseen, felt along the skin,
The in-stressed flickering of the solid,

The moving force, nearing form now
Veering away to other forms, or on
To an apparent formlessness; order
Is hidden, truth is found by seeking;

The order our mathematics grants
A visible being, not Plato's forms
But the inner flows and shapes of
Nature, constrained by what may be,

Symbols of transformation in the dawn,
As beauty opens, flowers, is dispersed,
Into its distance, change, annihilation,
Now a pure shape, now a nothingness,

Beauty like light constructing messages
From the hidden universe, singing form,
From all the mysteries of the summer sky
From wintry hills, and snow-flaked boughs.

All around us, everywhere, forever, until
We have no ever: this we were born to,
This the unmade, un-given, here and given,
The subtle spaces that steal away the heart.

Quartering

I delighted in the beauty of Inis Samer,
Shingle, hawthorn, silence,
The great sweetness;

In weathered strength
At Aill na Mireann,
The Centre of the Wheel;

White were the heights of Almu,
Birth of becoming,
Cradle of rising;

Gold was Cruachan,
I reclaimed a landscape,
Sang on her breast.

I quartered the green island,
Reclaimed the spirit,
Gathered a loved landscape
The Ever-living,

And dark with stars
Was Emain Macha,
All violence gone under the hill;

And light was Cnoc Aine:
Where the world shone,
I gazed at my shadow on the grass.

We're Getting There, Back When

What you don't write: as important
As what you do. The discipline
Of the tradition is what you learn
Slowly if at all, unless born to it,

Like those minds forced by an age
To become their age, who dream
Their work because it flows light
As pollen to them through the air,

From the world around them. Oh,
We must take a breath to survey
This Earth, what we have done!
All the old aspirations vanished,

Progress, uncanny knowledge,
Help from outside, the soul, its
Afterlife, separation from the
Creatures: time now to learn

Continuity, the first beginnings,
This universe of bright insentience,
Mind a flashing dance of process,
No ism worth a moment's glance.

We're getting there, back when,
Behind the system. Turns out
Our destiny was never what we
Thought. New worlds for old.

Not Laughing, Gloating

I cannot recall (Rilke said) the smile
Of Egyptian gods without thinking
Of the word: *pollen*. Did he mean *power*?
I don't recall them smiling, except

The lion smile perhaps of Sekhmet,
Smile of the destroyer *and* the healer,
Blake's balm after a knock on the head.
He meant Greek maybe, or Indian.

Or perhaps he took the complacent
Narcissistic godhead grin of angels
Swooping down on unsuspecting Man,
Laughingly, from medieval archways,

As a token of the mystery, like those
Basalt silences, those granite depths
All surface, those polished emblems
Of non-individual life, those *bimembris*,

In which nevertheless a whole species
Subsists and the social vegetative being.
I prefer the shaman's mocking laughter,
Trickery, coyote-like, shape-shifting,

Never caught in a statue, never carved
Into the silence of the stars, the system,
Wheeling eternally above our heads.
I prefer the naked dancers in the dust.

Fire Outside, Fire Within

In the hot sun, hotly, the cars drive
Up and down, the people drive up
And down, all around nature flowers
(Forget-me-nots) and the trees glow.

Human behaviour always intriguing
(This to prove you can write a poem
About anything that breaks your heart)
All unique doing what the other's doing.

But the women are beautiful in the light,
And the children even more so, and the
Flowers, hanging delicate petals into
This burning, Buddha's great fire with

Which we are all, everything is, alight.
And I'll go doing the same things if
I'm not careful, trapped in this hour,
This age, this cycle of strange being,

Before all falls apart, hopefully in a
Sweet way after the nastiness; to us
The species that does not deserve to
Succeed, succeeds the pasture and

The weed; or a thinking machine or
Two, pondering the mystery of their
Couplings, the terrors of feeling, fire
Around them in this universe all rim.

Higher, Deeper

I love you, behind the iron walls
Of our difference. Nothing alters
The way lives entangle and stick
Like burrs along the path, like ice

To the surface even after sun, cool
Shards and plates, a layered deep
Over which we so gingerly tread,
Trying not to fall through; in mind

The breathless corpse beating at the
Roof above of glassy stillness, idle
Hands, swinging in death, to and fro.
I love you beyond all glacial snows,

Love you like the hedgerow and the hill,
The dark summer coolness of those trees,
The hard warmth at the field's edge,
The trickle of the black stream, the cry

Of the plover, the buzzard, and the crow,
Everything that is life, what you were
And are, behind the fence, the useless
Wire, the deep un-passable distance.

Such Stuff

Shakespeare sings about the broken bond.
Relationship-the-sacred, our difficulty
In living on; or somehow letting go,
As Prospero gives Ariel to the breeze.

The bond of love or authority, sought for,
Lost; achieved; betrayed; ended in pain;
Comedies with happy endings, immoral
Forgiveness for atrocious paths to love;

Strange badly-crafted plots, with hard to
Credit characters, forging the end desired,
Entanglement resolved, the villains changed,
Or dead, harmony out of a summer's wood.

And tragedies with maddening protagonists,
Redeemed by poetry, cleansed by suffering,
Or brought in those last sweet plays to find
The untouched soul, still inward and eternal.

The tie, the knot, the bond is all his meaning,
Sacred or secular, sought for or imposed, man
And woman, comic; power hierarchic; beauty
Transforming all this world of delight and pain;

As in his own life perhaps, exile and betrayal;
What usurped his spirit, bent, and distorted;
All that he left, and found, only to leave again,
Unburdening, feeling the joy of that vanishing.

The Finding

White flowers layer the cliffs, on stones and walls,
Clusters embedded in turf, small stiff green leaves,
The five-fold twin-pronged sweet-centred Campion,
With veined and swollen calyxes, bell-like, pink urns,

Out of which wells a peace of the spirit, deep as the waves
Or the sound of the waves; a swish and scour of the tide,
So that I walk without memory, the sting of regret is
Eased, and even the madness, for a moment, assuaged,

The madness why the bond is broken, why relationship
Deeper than every eternity falters, trembles to earth-shock,
To mind-shock then, and the clamour of the surf. Peace,
Out of simple beauty, how, no one knows: a million years

And we grow together, we and being's tiniest distillations,
So that among the cliffs, wind-driven brine in the air, light
Falling on trap-rock, on boulders, pebbles, shale, the granite
Levels, I find myself within sight and sound of the sea.

Understanding Mind

Understanding Mind should take us,
A few more hundred years, give thanks,
We're not done yet with closing in on
How the world is so subtly structured,

And let's hope the maths holds out,
The means of mapping, the idea that
Every order is susceptible to our sense
Of order, from quirk to quark and back.

Strange though how little difference
The knowing makes to the beauty,
Except in bringing all things closer,
All from within, all form from within,

Nor does it detract from this hush in
The soul, which is the deepest mind,
Sighing its way, alight, through process,
The bird of mind on the golden bough.

What terror to contemplate the boredom
Of knowing every how, our only why.
Let's hope strangeness baffles us forever,
And yet hope too that the maths holds out.

Old-World Path

Fifty thousand years of the dream,
Hard to shake.
Coyotes, kangaroos, possum, cougar,
Gathering the net of stars
In a song and the dancing,
Barefoot life in the wild.

Moon a woman rising
A girl with light
Through her hair
Or in the light of the lamp
The cave wall glistens
With beasts tame, un-tame.

A dog howls among flowers,
Little birds pipe
And cry alarm in the gorse.
What there is no way back to
Is still inside,
And calling.

All that we know is not so
Still goes on calling,
Rakes the spirit,
All the fifty thousand
Years and more
Of the dream.

Anthropocene

All that we changed
Without seeing
Now we see.

In the too-late timeless
Sadness of existence,
Our blue world.

What use our
Fingertip tenderness
Now (we few)?

This face tipped
In our hands,
The dissolving form,

This reality
Streaked with tears,
The mirror crying?

Out of all this
Now small for us,
Will they return,

The serious true
The sweet flow
Ever-achieved?

I have seen beauty
Like a dream,
Heard the songs

Of the intellect
In moonless space
The howling there.

No mind in the stars.
We have made this
Of what we found.

For the Rest...

Pollen flows through the air
Unseen, like mind;
A tiny scattering:
Immense, its tide,

Like wild chervil
Down the endless lanes
In a white entirety
Qualitatively new,

The unforeseen, another beauty.
So the piling-up of layered light,
Or deep pulse of the sea,
Mysteries of accumulation.

Equally by subtraction,
Little by little,
Worlds diminish,
Meanings slip away,

To leave what we have
Ruined, or to expose
What we loved well,
What deeper still remains.

Threnody

No more sighing, death is on our side,
The last peace, and the final settlement,
Though death is no-thing, simply space
Echoing softly with electric passing.

No more sighing, transience is sweet,
Though time's disloyal, and the human
Heart, Ovid said long ago, was made
With far too little art. Death is no pain,

Only the long dying. Death's a friend,
Whose face we never see ourselves,
Except by reflection in those deaths
Of others, our own ache of invention.

Never our death we fear; it is the trail
Of loss, the relinquishment, the not
Being here, where things seem familiar
Despite the alien strangeness of being.

Who stand on the void, should know
Their fall, through the dark ring of light;
So that new being might re-arrange
Our atoms; re-live, beyond our sigh.

Veils and Crowns

Here, dazed by silence in the shadow-filled wood,
Green summer arches, interlacing light, a sigh
Of those leaves that flow and wave, never unstill,
Through the darknesses, and all still the one sigh,

The trees are another order of being, as valid
As ours; that is the vision intrinsic; that ours
Is no greater existence, the tiniest speck,
The insect, pebble, twig, molecule of dust,

All the same inward flowing at the shadow-less
Centre, endlessly moving, always remaining this.
And the grey wood heaves, and is intricate music,
As amazing form emerges from simple equation,

And process in the real, physical world, where we
Are not reason or thought, but a knowledge of things
Vaguely understood, a bone-deep, heart-deep knowing,
A fragile, infinitely tenacious, strange ghostly solidity,

Which is grey-green light above us filtering slowly
Into the perceiving mind, and a brightness emergent,
Shivering, dissolving, deeply coalescing, lost there,
In remoteness, in alteration, in beauty, in nothing,

Where form's part-seen, or rather form and not form,
The cavern in the mind and something beyond the mind,
The floor of the world, littered, and the void where
We stand, held in thought, as in deepest meditation.

Another order of things, the to and fro, the shaken glory,
Glitter of surface, and inchoate sweetness of dumb depth,
Where clasped fronds of space-time flicker and near us,
Shaping then suddenly sinking back into grasp-less echo

Of form, into the incoherent shadow of form, no longer
Perceived. Sensible, sensitive, oh, the vital building
Un-building of earth, of the globes and whirls of light
Of the universe, pressing in on us, falling again at our touch,

Immense weight balanced at a finger's end, massed power
The simple circling of mottled immortal atoms swirled
Through the mysteries of relation and seething presence,
To rest around us, a wall of being, less tangible than dreams.

All being speaks this language, in that sense there is no
Fallacy, empathy is real for the mindless flow inside us
On which mind sits, information's integrated flickering,
Our projection, Self, of what might be into what somehow

Is. Everything voiceless still sings to us with its voice
Of eternal shifting movement, its 'sobs and blasphemies',
Fills emptiness, blackness, bareness with green tremors,
Blue-white, citric, rubies of motionless fire, veils and crowns.

Every Constellation Only a Pattern of Mind

Our tiny order made order in the world around us,
Or the world seem ordered. Beauty our harmony,
Though bred in the bone, the gene that predisposes.

As: night by the slow river. Or: the single rose, the last
Bloom of the garden. Or: laughter on rain-filled streets.
Memories are lances hurled by our own two hands.

Even this night the stars and sea flow away from us,
And there is no voice from the sea unless we interpret
The non-human voice of the process making its cry.

Our tiny order made order spring from our hands,
In the re-arrangement of things on the surface of day,
In the form of the cloud, in the shadow on the hill.

And our brief love; where we tried to make order of being,
Of intractable relation, of the forms of connection that bud
Like the embryo, coil, as the snake weaving the sand;

Even our brief love was a symbol of brighter shadows,
Atmospheres, the enormous singing hum of air and tide,
Like the dynamo that drives and is driven by the stars,

Even we, desperate for order, burning there, clashing
Like wind on gravel, like smoke on eyes, even we
Uttered: sounded words against the unflinching dark.

The Folded Thing

Thoughts are real, otherwise how would the pain
Arise, in the quiet house as the first stars emerge,
Which takes the world in its hand and crushes
Everything except the past spun from its entrails?

Thought the perfection of time, or its imperfection.
Out of the chaos of feeling, the thought emerges,
Most often the something inexorable that changeless
Continues to rotate, a crystal agony at light's core,

The folded thing that can never be unfolded again,
The act that seems to hinge on a word, and yet
The word was only a symptom of mind's expression
A cogent flag unfurled to the brittle cold of day.

They could have wept and been happy. The clouds
Glanced off one another, refusing to merge, made
Faces and forms in the ice-cream parlour of time,
For each of us makes the incommunicable space

In which we perform an endless act of contrition,
Where we regret, as the world does not regret,
Rolls on as event, persuading us time is time
Only as memory makes in the poem of the mind.

Pollen In The Air

The pollen in the air dusted the river surface.
The river flowed under the mirror of pollen,
A yellowish flow, a mixture of death and life
That is always the world, immaculate in flow.

The pollen in the air was the vision of future
Being in the air, viscous, chaotic, ordered
Infinitely sweet and deep like a honeyed
Contour of flower sticky with the unexpected

Expected: the air hummed, the mind trembled.
The river was frozen within the river of the mind,
But always flowing, its infinite variations closed
In a boundary of concept, in a frenzy of naming,

From which the one name rises, which is our own.
The pollen in the air glittered, powdered the day,
Sifted on delicate eyelids down stalks of silence
Swayed, carrying the irreal where worlds are made

Into a green shadow under the leaf, held us there.
The pollen in the air was the drama of that place,
In which every drama; a frisson beyond the gold,
Finessed the light, as the galaxy finesses distance.

The pollen in the air was the drift half-seen, unseen
Of energy, of momentum, the far, shaping course,
Unplanned, that still unfolds to the dance inherent,
And we in time as the pollen in time unbidden.

Not There Until You Made It There

Only that it speaks your self,
Is all that is needed,
That the poem of the mind
Be the image of the mind
In the far imagination.

Only that the mountain space
Was never there
Until in rounding the dark
Bole of fir, and wind-fed grass,
You found it there.

That the river was mind running
In cave and shallows
Below the silent fisherman
On his rock, the field
A field in memory.

That the sun was a light
Out of an abyss of darkness
Sprinkled with stars
Of your own creation,
Expressing you.

That the moon was your own
Well of feeling, your own
Pain though known
By the ghostly generations,
Shadowing you.

Only that it speaks, the self,
The strange half-being,
Capsule of the unreal
That projects this universe
Beyond our knowing

And yet still known.
That it breathes your air,
Veins your skin
Stings like the nettle
Jars your toe.

We are the only imagination
Of what may be,
Here is the glory,
Despite time's agonies
The affirmation.

The Purple Flower

The thing we see then is never the thing we see,
As the stalk, with its cluster of purple flowers,
Is both the after-state of its withered silence
And the prior space of its non-existent being.

It is not even as it sways a thing, an object
In the air; it flickers through the dimensions,
It sweeps up space and creates delineation,
Its altering position spawning time, our time.

Its rhythms are turned to colour in the eye,
The photons sing in tiny packets of energy,
Imaginative energy, our irreal physics.
The bee sips at a well of our honeyed senses.

Amongst the thing we think we see, the thing
We see, and the thing in memory; hovers
The thing projected, its beautiful resonance
In the shining caves of delicate imagination.

See now, it waves towards me its purple flowers,
Discovers itself, despite myself, in my quivering,
My trembling at the source of impossible life,
Like the child opening the lid beneath the glass,

To touch the adult unknown. Here is my life
In the centre, made living by the bright arc
Of the sun. From truth such love, from love
The greater beauty, the thing and not the thing.

Can A Polar Bear Stare Upward?

Padding softly through shadows the polar bear,
Starved frame, the mangy lion, and the tiger,
Padding slowly through the remaindered world,
Not catching our eye.

In every way they are denied, closed in, caged
Even by our compassion. Just as the dying tribes
Are, their senseless rituals, wild imaginings,
But with less reason.

A smear of blood on the gravel, a hole behind
The lab, a half-eaten plateful of dead cuisine,
Reveals the damaged creature. How the small
Hide among the large.

Eyes pass through me, the headlight gaze,
The thousand mile stare, eyes pass through,
But not the body. Padding silently
The white bear on the ice,

Dances its complicated dance of survival,
Lifts its head, over the Arctic to the burning
Pole. With light our world's on fire, with
Pain, with death, with mercy.

The Word A Hurricane

Poetry blows through, that is its role,
To discomfort and to comfort,
To make thought inconsistent with
The life, the life with imagination.

Poetry is the tempest, space the calm
In which we are in danger of being
Becalmed, were it not for poetry,
The poetry of the word or of the thing,

The song of the artefact, or the cry
Of music, or even the star-wet sighing
Of the sea between un-illuminated shores,
In the mind freed by the wind, savagely.

The poetry of the mind is the storm
Of the mind, the self its vessel. Sail
White on a horizon, shipwreck dark
On a shoaling deep, bright portholes

Too of the disaster. We set out form,
Poetry comes to bring it to the question,
To deny the social web we have to work
To live a life, to foster our confusions,

Until we blow into the bay of palm-trees,
Tossing their mad shapeliness to the sky,
As out of place at the core of our urbanity
As the sombre 'natives' in old photographs.

Hear the hurricane blow forever, and destroy.
Feel the white force of every utterable word
Batter the bell of language, the bright tocsin,
Summon us naked to reality's pale space.

Deeper Sound

Was the book the poet wrote in empty of words?
Were the pages untouched pages like nights
Without stars, the unwrinkled delicate shade
Of earth-lit white that canopies the trees?

But the words wrote themselves on a page
Of mind, the words are from the stars beyond
That still appear in mind through the sombre
Reach of cloud, as your body through the cloth,

Or the child through memory, or the places
Burning with light where we ravaged ourselves
Beating our hearts against the walls of being
And murmuring the music of the galaxies.

Silent before the unreal, consider the book,
Beside the glass of water, the shelf, the eye
Of night grown deeper outside the window,
The tapping branch on the pane, the summer.

The page fills over and over with words of flame,
See how the metaphor determines itself, not ice,
Words of ice fade, the poet has other business,
To speak more fiercely, to burn in deeper fires.

Not Bamboo

Silent light: the old trail.
That's not bamboo
But its pointed slender leaf
Has the same beauty.

Blue distance always saddens
Makes the heart ache
Long misted bright-lit spaces
Everything tiny, real.

The Buddha's a deceit
Like all the others,
And therefore a fine
Symbol of the truth:

In razing names and forms
We get nearer to things,
By singing without self
We create identity.

The lion roar is for
Things as they are,
Which are no-things
All forms, all flow.

The taste of leaves
And dust, the taste
Of ice and light,
The cold of dawn.

Thank nature for the breeze
Of uncivilised pain
That blows through
The late soiled world

And engenders mercy.
Does logic make you cry?
Has power a face?
Is beauty a transaction?

There is a simplicity
That is the finer truth,
And summons the mind
From all entanglements

To the breeze on the lake,
And the hands touching
Of the shadows who roam
Quiet as imagined people.

The closer you look
The greater the order
The sweeter the chaos
The finer the detail.

The creatures live and sigh,
In the purity we envy.
Dispel the ghosts, for now,
The Way is never the way.

Time Slipping For A Moment

Outside the red café
An apple tree
Displayed its green fruit
To the thundercloud.

The tables were only
Able to be tables.
Lovers declared war, truce,
Light burned and died.

The world was somehow
There without feelings
And then
Revealed a feeling.

Gave out a dark compassion,
A tentative liking,
Or then a deep confusion,
A mist-like anxiety.

The sky passed over
Forms: things we had made,
Were overshadowed slowly
By those given.

The wilderness we thought
We had negated
Gathered to diminish us
In other ways.

The light was old.
Green apples shone,
Beyond the rain,
Outside the red café.

Bearing In Our Hands: Bearing In Their Hands

What would it be
The truly alien
Not the far stars
And the mist of seething.

All energy, force
Momentum, gravity
We understand that
That's not alien.

The voice of the universe
Without human meaning
Has for that reason
Every human meaning.

We understand the cold
That is in us
That also
Makes us shiver.

The cry of nothingness
We know that cry
Deepest inside us
That world cannot know.

World only is.
In us it comes to be.
Every absence, vacuum,
Silence, is a word

In our language;
Every chill of leaves,
Every far off stir
Imagination's grist.

Is dark winter alien,
Or blood-heated summer?
The waterfall of light,
Or the black holes,

Holes in what?
Our hearts
Filled with holes
Of the dead departed?

Even the cicadas' saws,
Even the lizard's eye,
Even the stare through us
Of the creature,

Even that is not alien;
Nor evil, nor the cruel
Without human feeling,
Without creation;

Even the dull banal
The sad destruction,
The way the mind dies inside
Burdened by pain.

What in the universe
Is alien?
When they come
Or we go to them

Will both not carry
Wounds of the light-years
Burnished in the twilight,
The bleeding of bright stars?

Indiscretion

The light in the grass
Warmer than anything
Warmer than the heart
If that could fill a poem.

Its indiscreet outpouring
Like your beauty
Not here for the making
Here for the richness.

If self could be subsumed
If time could matter
Not as a permanence
Or an endurance

But as a truly passing
Un-regretted thing
A flow of our shape
Among the shapes of light.

We might be glad,
And gladden the universe
With what we made,
Love truth and beauty

And not bring sadness
To the abysses
With what we made
Hate ugliness and lies.

For their essence is not
In fact, the world itself
Is - what it seems to be,
Even in cold, even if it deceives.

Their essence is in choice.
Values are ours,
Even truth, even the chosen
Reality.

If the light glowing in grass
Warmer than everything
Warmer than us
Warmer than your beauty

Could fill a poem, or two,
And make our time
Remembered as one
That gave without thinking

As the light gives,
And shines for a time
In us, have us convey
The ripened swelter

The outpouring seed-flights
The bee-ridden deep cell
Of the profligate flower
That leaves in wildness

And we be glad to have been
To have done this thing
To have sung the moments
Careless of all survival.

Some deep in us aspires
Always to be that light
Shining through grass
Beyond ourselves,

If that were not true
How would we know
Each other in the darkness
Nearer than worlds?

Abstracted

Considering the forms
Bright arcs revert
Smiles perhaps
Or moons
Or wild segments.

The painter here
Making a conscious choice
To paint
With the unconscious,
Why the green is green

The colours juxtapose
In the way the Zen brush
Sings through space
And lands
In the novice's eye.

Considering the folds
Small waves impose
On sheets of scared
Red while blues retreat
Towards an angled silence.

There is nothing to describe
Except everything
An image of the world –
Which has no need
For further elaboration.

Yet the superfluous word
Thought in the mind
Does flicker onwards
Without content
Over the canvas space.

Considering the forms
Which with the mind
Make a new whole
Which neither sought
And neither can deny

Now memory.
There is a secret
To the secret of the world,
It is unreal,
It comes to be

Singing and crying
Because we
Sing and cry
Otherwise real
But of no moment.

Until we see
That we must make
The universe always
Though universe
Is given

What shall we be?
Slaves to the formless
Un-considering form
Ears that hear only
The un-transcendent cry:

We must resist
The siren-call
Of a reality unshaped
By our contingency
This maker's hand.

At the Back of the Eye, the Whole Universe, All Time

Tonight and far ancient light falling over my hands: is not
The universe, but the universe I see, shades of the ghostlier
Ones, the absent ones, hidden behind the surface of the screen.

This two-dimensional sheet pin-pricked with orbs and glows,
Gives stars not there as they are but the stars as they once were
We infer: and here are the layers of time, the leaves of time.

Behind them what moves in slow rhythm of energies,
Or hurtling silence? The shadowy movements that will
Come to be, the young stars dead, the invisible newborn?

Tonight the scattered pollen in wheels and veils sifts
Fine dust of time over the hanging shapes of the trees,
Their dark coherence in this world of ice-etched azure.

This is the map of time unrolled in the makings of the eye,
This is ten billion, a billion years, a thousand, mingled here
Each in its point of fire, and ever a slice of past, never a now.

The only now is Earth, the only present your face a hand's
Breadth away, not even then, even then even you only
A mixture of paths, a mixture of beams of light until

I touch you. Not even then, as the voltage tiny flickers
Through the cells, and thought begins each new reality,
Each attempt to find you in the finding of hand and eye.

Tonight the scattered pollen of strange lamps sighs
With the sighing of the wind, with its low sweeping,
And beings me the universe, back to its first beginnings,

Signs, marks, cries from the universe under the surface,
Of which we are part, where we seem to have no part,
Except as spectators gazing, except as poet-voyeurs,

For whom the act itself must be reconstructed as an act
Taking place in a distance hidden in non-existence,
Of which we nevertheless must guess the inhering,

In the absence of any kind of divinity, in this night,
Brilliant with all the dance and tremor of what seems
To be itself without knowing self, eschewing meaning.

Every time falls here one time over your hands, and mine.
Every deep sings in its traces here invisible immanence,
Here all the universe collapses into the retina's shimmer,

The oldest light, never old, ever renewing, the newest
Flames, the twice-born galaxies caressing our souls,
Those dimensions of mind called spirit, body's lair,

Tonight, though we weep, everything falls here with us,
From birth to the ultimate death falls to the void,
In which we ride, silver masks of the irreal flesh.

Something Under The Stars

What are we? Patterns, ghosts, tremors,
No more than the shiver of form on the
Perfect surface, which is also its depth,
Something under the stars that mirrors

The stars. Waiting to be reclaimed, ready
And longing. But craving more for life,
For the pouring rain, the brilliant leaves,
The concert grand's soft and nocturnal sigh,

In the hushed hall, on a summer night,
Where the listening mind stares through
The frame of silence between the notes
Into the empty glass of the green dark.

What are we? Chance accumulations,
Transient exemplars of the second law,
Almost too precarious to dissolve from
The realm of speech to eternal dumbness,

But beautiful, oh yes, occasionally, fine
In an afternoon, and beautifully present,
In a moment of process between those
Moments of process, that chaos breeds.

Expecting what? More than the slow folds
Unfolding, more than void of the emptiness,
More than the white screen, that gold glass
Where a Chinese dragon writhes and coils?

Affirmation is what we need, now we make,
The so-hard acclamation of the acid veins,
The frames to be filled, the pages inscribed,
Our audience breathing softly in the gloom,

Though nothing of that wholly satisfies, as
Nature does, which is the immense present
Simply being, the knotted wood, the gleam
On the holly twig, the persistence of waves,

The flicker of light over the upturned face,
The steady flow of the black rain-fed river.
What are you, my patterned love, my fierce
Frisson, or I the darker ghost of your hour?

Motes In The Eye of Noon

The soft rotation of pollen in the air,
Is where the mind can also play,
Delicate as life, the irrational image,
Floating on the surface of the world.

The gentle rise and fall of pollen, dust
In the air, between the window glass
And the table with the vase and frames,
That systolic, diastolic pulse of moment

Resonates with the being no word to say
Out of the universe, the nothing to reply,
Hush and you hear it now, between my
Speech, the white spaces that intervene

As the falling light from the clouded sky
Intervenes amongst the scattered motes
And stills the heart with archaic wisdom,
Metronomes of process far outside this,

Tick of the world despite this watching,
Progress of repetitions endlessly coiled
Towards a boundary that's never reached,
A point never attained, sprung mystery,

Waves they are, trajectories they are,
Marking out the laws we never made,
In a temporal frame that holds no hope
For us, but love, beauty, truth, it holds.

Slowly the pollen gravitates in the air,
The mind grows calmer like the day,
And consciousness is almost outside
Part of the outer landscape gazing in,

Until thoughts are things, as words
Are thoughts, and the text unopened
Is a mind lurking there, waiting to begin
Always beyond the small cry of the body,

Always familiar, always the memory
The child was amazed by as the pollen
Floated through the summer air where
The garden sang, beyond the green pool,

Imagination, power of the mind, poem
Of the mind, burning, itself, in the breeze,
Conjuring spirits, because such is our forte,
Our destiny had we one, and fate for sure,

We particles, floating, likewise in the air.
Glitter, and flicker, and dance of the grains,
Long shafts of eye-specks suddenly there,
As the sun violently leans across our space.

The River

The river was always there in his mind when he wished.
Flowing more weakly sometimes, often in furious spate.
Its depths and shallows were the coolness over his mind.

Sometimes it slept, and a glassy dumbness rotated east.
Sometimes it railed, and a murmuring beat the stones.
Here was his source and here his reclamation of time.

Dark at night, flowing mysterious under the rare stars:
Winding like a woman the threads of calm possession,
Or glittering swiftly, submerging the long-trailed leaves.

It was his second self, his own and unique performance.
It was the blueness of crystal sky, the motion of cloud.
Deep in its drowsiness ran the music he half-attempted.

Its day was his freedom, its evening his confessional.
Nothing inevitable sang in its siren bonds of pure form,
But its chains of light were the strands of his bound being.

The current was itself the absence of its own imagination,
The presentation with no intention, the unwilling reflection,
Into which the stars entered, from which the arc withdrew.

Nothing in it ever succeeded, nothing failed. The river came
And went between shores of grass, and splinters of stone,
And subsided by bends, rose above sills, greeted the dawn.

The light of the river was always there in his mind when he
Wished. Its creatures were gifts of the unbound tremors
That glitter on the wheel of the galaxy, spirits of delight.

He would come to the river by a hundred different ways.
Which were all one in the end, were his conceiving.
He would come to the river by the one way of his being.

From the darkness it flowed, beautiful if not to itself.
Into the darkness it flowed, unknowing in its blessing,
A piece of the nameless: resisting all the attempted names.

Bird, Flight, Moon

Buzzard swirls over the house,
The urban wanderer, looking
For what, the crier in the wood,
In the vast white eye of the wind?

Down below these cars and people,
The houses, the lawns, the light
Blocked by the human darkness,
Shimmering with our waste heat.

Slowly power circles under cloud.
There are hidden talons in time,
There are eyes clearer than ours,
There is a fall and a call sliding,

Swift as the downed moon gone
Over the silvered rim of the Earth,
Over the horizon of our flesh,
Leaving only the poem behind.

Moving Pictures

Sometimes no way to give a whole life,
Only the single energy focused
For a moment, in the thing of mind
That goes beyond the things of mind,

Like the woman laughing, or a dance
Of impossible action, or perfect words,
The tones that are never said in the fierce
Fires of an unseeing mirror-less being.

It is art: it's the act of mind in the process
Of making, the fantasy of what the human
Might be if the human were free to exist
Not bound by its frailties, or its failings.

A man crossing the street and no witnesses
Seeing his dying. A child, constructing
Its play in the ruins of time with a knowing,
More continuous than this, more truly real.

Often we can only give parts of a life, iota
Of experience condensed for an instant
Or a precipitate, shocked white in the glass,
Something we saw, felt arced up above us,

Or buried deeper below, where the ship
Of poetry sighs in discontent's harbour
Waiting to sail, dying, living to sail,
Over the dark waves of delicate tongues.

Though we are inadequate nevertheless
The marvel is there. Mind is free forever
In stone, the grass, the diamond is light
Within, and there are no ultimate prisons,

Always pebble by pebble we can place
Our thoughts in the line, and create
The babbling machine high in the air,
Made of the artist's slenderest strokes

Of a brush that delivers pure colour,
Of a network of half-believable wires
Worked by the secret wheels of pain.
Un-watchable agony too may be beautiful,

Is that our shame? If the agony's infused
With the human, half-redeemed by love,
Even though the agony is in the end not
Worth the knowing, not the art we need?

Sometime we can't give a whole life, here
With its embarrassments of awkwardness,
Its flawed portrait, the features blurring,
Since we never truly look at another, when

We engage, we never look into the other:
Some that stare look only into themselves,
Others looking into themselves see nothing
Of the other, but the dimly apprehended eye.

Sometimes we can't describe a whole life
Truly, only conjure a life for the mind, out
There, where the other exists, a stage, a set,
A flame of the moving image, a substitute,

Warmer, truer, the inner turned inside out
The careless image of what we had hoped
To be, once, the speech that might console:
The illusions are valid. The unreal is home.

A Diamond in Every Pebble

You may be walking along in darkness
When the world flares in you in glory;
Or in light. How things are currently
Arranged is of no major importance,

You realise. Every pebble contains
A diamond, it only needs awareness,
De-focusing from immediate survival,
From the pains and pleasures, for

This, the fine delight, hidden inside
The sleeping world, or the fermenting,
Your conscious mind knowingly alive,
Or your unconscious strangely working,

The thoughts that are invisible, the cells
Connecting silently in dumb electricals
Singing your whole being, emotions,
Memories, wildness, loyalties, your self

Seething in the pool of silent glories,
With all the universe. Thought is the
Strangest thing, the greenness of your
Grass, the throbbing of your veins,

The tremor. No blank depleted lines,
No weary sadness of the endings,
No recognition here of the erosion,
Or the stillness of the muddy pond.

Listen to the distant chatter, sleeper,
To the laughter and the dancing, to
Creation, human creation, mystery
Of mind along the channels of the air.

Love the glittering, half-seen in the eye,
Of what we made. You only think you
See what we are, as we are, that things
Are less. Maybe things are more, maybe

A tired response makes a tired response?
You can be walking along in darkness
When the world flares in you in glory;
Time after time, in spaces after space.

Saying Goodbye at the Edge of the Road

In the space at the edge of the road,
On an October morning,
All the pollen silent, implicit
In the root, and stem,
Though even the stem
Carries blown husks,
And the fields subsiding

We sat and dreamed
About the first snowfall
Or the last glacier,
World in a mess and
Talked of the small wars
Lowell said would
Last till the end of time.

You can make this a Chinese
Poem of meeting and
Parting, or a reverie
On a truth lost and found,
Or a meditation on how
We slip from the present
Into other worlds like the child:

I wish I could do that
As I did it then, lost in the green
Depth of the multiple mirrors,
Or seeing the mountain
And the sky, hushed
In a magic place
Of mind's own conceiving.

We did it then with words
And not our bodies,
With love and not sex,
Time and not space,
You smiling, both weeping
Inside. That's life.
The far wells are always farewells.

In the space at the edge of the road,
On an October morning,
All the pollen silent, implicit
In the root, and stem,
Though even the stem
Carries blown husks,
And the fields subsiding.

Singing On The Shore

It's a ride on the tiger of time, this void, this light,
That fills us with fear. Though you touch my dry
Mouth, can you make it sing? Headless Orpheus
Lies by the Thracian shore, his head's at Lesbos,

The waves are flowing, the earth, the dead flow
Darkly through our world, how would we escape
Them, were it not for the body, not for the mind
Free forever in imagination's sacred far spaces?

The singing, the singing! But one stone is enough,
One leaf of grass, a true memory, one thing loved,
Is enough. Though the dead and the living darken
You so with their crying, the island fills with light.

The Lark Ascending

The lark ascends, and the dove descends,
Out of the limpid sky, delight, and fear.
The lark ascends, and the dove descends.

Beyond metaphor, our science grows clear,
And meaning gathers where illusion ends.
The lark ascends, and the dove descends,

Bringing you beauty in the rising year,
Beyond metaphor, our science grows clear.
The peace of understanding subtly near,

The lark ascends and the dove descends.
Our meaning gathers where illusion ends.

Immersed In Time

You danced at night on a lawn of light,
There were the green shadows of the silvered
Blackness, the stars of silence on your body,
Which was the flesh the keen sight followed,
Intrinsic of constellations, deeply transient.

My eye danced with you on a sward of time,
Following the contours of your earthly
Substance, the blade of mind cutting the soil
Of mind. See how I remember, the stars
Of silence shedding tears on your body,

The green shadows etching your beauty deeper,
In haunted meaning in the ghostly evening,
Which we have become, which is in us,
Hallucination of immemorial stillness,
The weeping of night dew on your flesh.

You danced at dawn on a lawn of shadows,
Lit by the unseen sun behind all horizon,
Not by the morning star that was your image,
Blades of ice in the air, winds of becoming,
Which cried to us of our unknown future,

That is here now, re-lighting me with that
Brightness of night and dawn, the darker I,
The developed spirit wrapping round itself
The silvery words blown from the shadows,
As though to invoke you, now, to declare you.

Oh, you danced at night on a lawn of light,
In the greater darkness beyond mind's moon,
That climbs the sky with steps not of sadness
But a strange desire without regret, the desire
For time, of this creature immersed in time.

How We See Form

The statue on the sand was out of Dali,
Or a trick of light. The sea bowed down to it.

Your eyes were twin doves, falling blue
From a yellow sky, into mindless shade.

Sea-creatures flickered at the statue's feet,
It represented Order, in a field of Chaos.

You were fractally beautiful at the level
Of skin, surface over your true harmonics.

The statue on the sand reigned over silica,
Porphyry, serpentine, ragged rocks, murmur.

The surf, the phosphorescent surf, foamed
In darkness, to caress your alabaster ankles.

A stone sat snugly, being, beyond the limbs,
The stone was round, or an ellipse of seeing.

Your legs were twin columns carved in flame,
Which was the dawn sun coming out of the sea.

The statue, faceless, was a sheet of the water
Green and bare as the wind caressing your hair.

Night and day were under the statue's power,
Light was its tides, silence its endless howling.

Your thighs and breasts were the melting of air,
The cooing of breakers, the tremor of the shore.

The statue on the sand touched the white clouds,
It gave nothing to the continents of the hours.

Time To Come

And it won't be our dancing feet in the new dust,
Not even the barefoot San with delicate bows
And their dark presence at the sip wells keening,
It won't be the dark-faced fore-runners spreading
Out through the wind-swept grass in sudden light,
But after the hurricanes and the random tremors
The soils will grow rich again and silently fertile.
The creatures will look each other deep in the eye.

Tiny Manifesto

Who said Reality was solid? Nor is your World,
Nor mine, fragile as grass.
Poetry is of no final consequence,
Nor war, trade, nations
Prayer or power,
Illusions of sex or race,
It is freedom of mind,
Of spirit, desire for love
And truth,
Cherishing beauty
Of nature and form,
Cherishing being,
Creating in the unreal,
That is our heart's future.

Make the machine serve,
And not the human,
And be wary that every system
We ever invented
Resulted in our enslavement.
Who told you reality is solid,
It's fragile as grass,
And what we created
We can un-create.
Universe, nature is given,
But not our place in it,
There are no places,
There is no time,
Here and Now.

That sadness in the heart
Is a form of our chains,
The coldness of winter
In the heart
Is a form of our dying,
Seductive and sweet
Dressed in the words
Of the singer.
Beware the sadness at heart,
The island of bird-footed ones,
And the wasteland
Replete with the imagery
Of the un-transcendent
Transcendence.

Universe is not meaningless,
Only without intention,
The meaning is ours
And made,
The universe given,
Cries in its movement
With the un-particular
Waving of form,
The caress like the wind
In the leaves
Neither divine nor
Human,
Of what we are shaped
And not us.

Who said Reality was solid? Nor is
Your world.
Oh but you must be subtle
To break the unsubtle,
Be minded
To shift the un-mind.
The final cry is the call,
The cry to create,
Which is not a cry
Of nothingness, our cry
Is not the universe's cry,
Our world is on fire
With a deeper liberty
With the shaper's oraison.

The Place He Built

The place he built he had thought to stay shifted under his feet.
The mountain is never a mountain. The word is never the word
He thought he wrote, or he the one who touched the ancient key.
His sanctuary was open to the wind, strange birds alighted there.

The direction he thought to take was not the one where he ended.
The way is never the way he thought, in the mind never the mind
He imagined he possessed. Identity proves more elusive than his
Pile of rocks and pines, or even the clouds vanishing above them.

The landscape was never complete in the manner he expected its
Pure completion, the heron kept lifting and landing on some new
Bend of the stream, trees rose and fell, constellations subtly slid
Like the generations. The tablets of stone: tablets of blancmange.

The root was a perishable, gnaw-able thing. The precise placement
Of the cliff gave him the true angle of landscape, but not the eye
Unchanging. The man was never the view, the sky never the sky,
But only a backcloth to mind: making, always a new relinquishing.

The Pure And The Impure

Down the edge of the land
Foggy hills,
A misted seascape,
Bright stands of firs
The forest remnants,
Extraordinary
That elsewhere
In the world
There are wars,
Mad humans.

I could think of bears
And trees,
That weird hum
In the woods
Hawks rising,
Ancient peoples,
The allurements
Of our histories
That never
Leave us.

Instead I consider
The symmetries
Of physics,
The lack of intent
In nature,
The beautiful chaos
In order, and order
In chaos,
I contemplate planets
Palettes of stars.

Instead I remember
Your features
Far down summer,
Beauty of light,
Truth of light,
Love of the light,
Follow thought west
To the sea,
Dive with it
Into the waves.

Meadow Meditating

Sun in the grove,
The black rock pool silent.
Tin can slides on stone
With a rattle of being.
All the swallows
Swoop low and click
Their beaks with timing,
Nature in beauty,
And the heart still.

Sift of pollen in the deep
Grasses. Honeyed summer
Sings in the veins
With the tremor of being.
All the swallows
Rise high and turn
In the air, veering.
Ice-cold water,
And the mind still.

The Phantom On the Path

No, we can never possess what we wish of the other.
The space of moonlight is only a space of moonlight,
And not the silvered gate into the grass. We never
Reach the phantom on the path. That depth, profound
That complexity of thought and feeling, further, beyond,
Approachable only in the work, not past the work, there
At the core of mind; in the mark, the note, the word, not
In the flesh: which is only a substitute, a tool for being,
And not the edge of the mind itself, eternally flickering.

No, we never pass through the work to the creator.
Though we yearn to be close to whatever engaged us,
There is only a sigh in the darkness of leaves and turf,
A shadow across the stream, the ghost of a passing,
And when we meet we meet only in illusions, while
The sovereign mind goes dancing in stranger places,
Spaces of intricate feeling, inexpressible; thought alive
Only in the construct, in the furrow of intellect; fields
Of unknowing, in the substrate beneath the overt idea.

No, I can never hold you as I wished to hold you, beyond
The failures and frustrations of hand and heart. The light
Is haunted, by emanations of those we know, and love;
By their hallucinatory presence within our own fantasy
Of delighted finding. And the longing is anguish, to merge,
To be as one, with the only mind that might know us, now,
The mind that might see us, naked, as we are, the shining
Spirit. For we are all equal in spirit, in feeling, all ghosts
Of our ground, all outer husks in which a universe burns.

The Pine Being Pine

A space of light delights the heart.
It is pollen-filled dust-grey grass
That waves at the back of your eye.
It is the form of the pine being pine.

The pebble under your hand, is white,
With the whiteness of non-intention,
Six hundred million years being stone.
The pebble in your mind is a diamond.

Rarefied air breathes itself in your body,
In this final space where you may seem
Complete, though without understanding
How you came here, to this strange view,

How you examined the back of the leaf,
Composed the silence, smoothed the soil
And felt the needles sift under your palm,
As the stream finally sank itself in hearing,

How you recognized the sound of your
One and unique existence, from within,
Became the tree, became the far horizon,
Drew them across the inner space of sky.

Pollen of light scatters, the motes in air,
Until the clouds of your inner landscape
Illuminate with the done tracks of time,
And what suffices is what the heart loved,

Transubstantiated into a texture of scene,
A kind of homeland and a native region,
Though self-created, cut and solidly hewn
Out of the vagueness of the once lived life.

It is your abstraction. What, in you, gleamed;
What, in you, shaped itself in inerasable form,
Mist in which you dissolved, water where you
Moved; quivered; threw back that winter moon.

It is imagination conceiving the thing that is
As a metaphor for the thing that comes to be
Out of the deep attractor, limiting itself, then
Suddenly flying away on the cloud-wet air.

It is nothing bounded, though it has territory,
Though its fences, walls, wires sing in silence
To the strum and hum of wind on these heights,
To the dark boulders that are one with this place,

Pure as the bent-backed thorn, the curved yew,
The paths rutted by rainfalls, the pale slabs,
Grit and mill of the weathering fall of beauty
In pillars of vapour, in white gods of the eye.

It's a space of light that delights the heart,
Line by line. It's the text of the dust turned
Inside-out, the pollen that spells your name,
The truth, the biddable truth of what you are,

Where so much is un-biddable. The precision
Of the imprecise, merging and melting in all;
Vanished in distance, absorbed in the whirl
Of the vast wheel of the power of the stars;

The certainty at the heart of your uncertainty;
The lost terrain, found; the space disposed;
The vision set firm, in no particular season,
As pebble, under your limpid hand, is white.

Spirit's A Bird Of Bronze

The bronze bird in the morning tree
Sings its particular mystery;
Byzantium is far away,
A silent breeze informs the bay.

Wasp and hover-fly progress
Through the herbs, the dark caress,
That propagates eternity.
A cloud is dreaming of the sea.

We know the reason for the song,
The realm to which its notes belong,
But not the meaning: that's the sense
Of being in the bird intense.

The reason for the song is plain,
Part of our own discrete terrain,
Where our covert feathers gleam,
And we are other than we seem.

Spirit's a bird of bronze, alight
On the branch of purple night,
And in the morning leaves green,
Where we move, unheard, unseen.

Say It Plainly, Not Grandly

The Universe is not indifferent to us,
That would presuppose an attitude.
The Universe is not purposeless, simply
Beyond and before any sense of purpose.
The Universe is not hostile towards us,
The tsunamis, the volcanoes, the typhoons,
The hurricanes, tornados, all the quakes,
Are not directed; not divine mistakes.
The Universe is not without a meaning,
Since only with us does meaning come to be.

The Universe is intentionless, then. Delight:
Ordering nothing, claiming nothing, owning
Not a thing. When did the Universe last ask
A single act of you? So why seek orders,
Why make claims, why long to possess?
There is a beauty of the simply given,
There is a magic of the wholly mindless,
To which we may grant our gift of mind.
The universe is not without a purpose,
Since only with us does purpose come to be.

Not Quite As You Think

The electron orbit is a strange attractor?
And its path through space, too, if space
Is anything in which electrons move?
Like us confined in unreachable limit,
Boundless inside the eternally bound.

Time is a scalar, it has no direction?
To travel backwards in time would be
Simply to travel nowhere differently?
We are only partly confined in time,
If time is anything in which we move.

Mind is a shunt of processes, a hum
Of cells unaware of their activity?
And yet it's the shift of concepts too,
Spirit in me, and spirit also in you:
If form is purpose, form in entirety.

Two Sighs For Cold Mountain

The light on Cold Mountain is clear.
A horn of moon hangs on a rock cliff.
Wherever I live, I live here, watching
Pines in the wind, listening to grass.
What do I know of the heart? My heart,
Lost long ago, floats high among clouds,
Still dreaming what it might be, to be.

White streams tremble in green pools.
The silence here can make you shiver.
Climbing, though the body feels afraid,
Will take you to places beyond knowing.
Life goes, the mind endures; moonlight
Fades, the darkness hums. If pine trees
Could speak what they would be saying
Is how the wind blows, how stars burn.

A Borrowed Day

Along white-water stream, a borrowed day,
When sound of the mind becomes the sound
Of the fall, its seething inwardness the clusters
Of bubbles forming that bright foam, endlessly.

No one can describe the landscape of the heart,
Its granite rocks, its stony shallows, cliffs where
Trees hang; peaks rise; rivers slide over shale,
The slow green depths, the cold, the darker flow.

And yet the mind distils the mind in flight, sound
Becomes cry and cry becomes phantom music,
And everything involves us, who are the anxiety
Of the whirling universe, dancing in ice and fire,

Still the mind distils the mind in flight, a borrowed
Day, along white-water stream, the phantom music
Underlines the cry – among the stars we'll find,
Among the stars, the landscape of the heart.

Native Land

We ought to know by now,
The figure half-obscurd
At the edge of tapestry is
The one we want.

The tiny speck of paint,
Signifying woman or
Man at window, at the tip
Of the artist's brush.

The distant point, at which
The receding shadow
Fades from recognition,
And heart turns.

Whatever resists the mind,
Maths without physical
Concept, the line between
Being and knowing.

The no man's land all ours,
Beautiful twilight hiding
The worst of us, chaotic
Motion never ending,

Fractal depths, far flung
Distances of the universe
Beyond us in that space,
Which is always time.

We ought to know by now,
We long for the shadowy
Depths of the running river,
Mind mystified,

And not the clarity of truth,
The burning fire of love,
Or the final solidity
Of the painful real;

More, sound on the verge
Of music, half-meaning,
Vague rustles of touch,
Taste's promise,

The landscape in light,
Rain-veiled, white with snow,
The something looming,
Far hill or near person,

The remote uncertain place
At the rim of silence,
Full of its whispering,
Is our native land.

The Idea Of Cold

The winter mind is cooler than the trees,
That have no feeling for the ice and snow
Under which their frozen branches bend,

And lighter. Mind dances like the star
A few degrees below the crescent moon
Encased in only metaphors of frost,

That gleam in veils of far galactic hues
Containing no misery that concerns us,
Devoid of every form of consciousness.

Our words for feelings cannot clothe the dark,
Which has no place for sentiment or dream,
Being the form that is, and not its image.

The winter mind flows in a deep clear space:
Imagination is the poem that is, in which
The whole universe is populated; its moan

Of leaves is not the scream of pain, though
It may serve as a correlative of wretchedness,
Nor even the cry of indifference, un-purpose.

It is simply the sound of those forces at play,
The stir of the everything that contains us,
In which is the mirror of our final selves.

This landscape we feel is not the landscape,
More than the mental elements that make it,
Is not the larch and spruce, their shrouds of light,

Nor the solid fall, the sheeted pool, the creek
Glittering with whitened boulders in the dawn,
The veined rock, nor the shadow of the moon,

More than the cold idea, the idea of cold,
Congealing in the substance of the mind,
Beyond the February afternoon, the wind

That free of meaning blows intentionless,
Outside all values, unless we set them there,
At the burnished centre of the nothingness.

Widening

Slowly the irreality widens,
Every creation, every knowing,
Extends the virtual space
Inside-outside us.

Slowly mind will migrate
From cell to circuit,
Till the human
Is eternal beyond body.

Slowly the values deepen,
Slowly the beauty,
As age finds significance
In youth's background.

Slowly we leave behind
The old corrosions,
Nation, race, religion,
Slowly truth conquers.

Slowly we open ourselves
To the galaxies,
To the far radiance,
Already in ourselves.

Aware

The outer world; the inner world are awake,
But only in mind is universe aware,
Though both asleep seem darkly identical,
Mind and world dumb of their eloquence.

The inner world contains the outer world,
Threads of perception, processes of thought,
Your loves, your faiths, your necessary being,
Here the tremulous flicker of universe aware.

And outer world contains the inner world,
Energies bound, unbound, forces shifting,
The form, the flow, the silence and the fire;
The dark within burning in shadowy light.

Now these two meet: the Moon is not that mass
Circuiting Earth, nor the flare in your eye,
As the leaves are more than leaves, that quiver
There, symbols of other place, in memory's air.

The Miracle Of Flesh And Bone

Eat my words
And taste my breath,
Life to life
And death to death.

Nothing of us
But shall be
A tremor
In eternity.

Write our names
In water, air:
Transient, love
Without despair.

We, the miracle,
Are light,
Shining
In the depths of night.

Speaking Of The Loved One

Soft rain falls on the hills, and eye follows,
Dreaming in light over a loved landscape,
These folds, and creases, ribs and slopes,
That calm the flickering eye to set it free.

Can we ever stare fixedly at a single thing?
Beauty seems still a movement over form,
Not yet the form itself; the vision, a touch,
Straying in deep affection over its object.

Soft rain falls on the hills, the water springs
From every crevice, washes every dry gully,
Becomes that trickle, torrent, rush to river,
Fills with white flow the darkness of the heart.

Its music sings beyond the ghost, this phantom,
All its anxiety, its pain of being; music of water
Sighing in the eaves, shining on slate, on granite,
Flooding each cobble with bright intricate detail,

As form sings, and flows. You must look again,
A moment, to see the branch sway in the eye,
All unstable, all that you thought was solid,
The self, the other, the world, its substance,

Beautiful, the slopes in the gusting rain, green
And violet and that pale grey of the wet scree.
Fine the delight in trees, fine pleasure in stone,
Following the delicate, far, anonymous lines,

Climbing the peak, falling fast to the valleys,
Gathering a farm in their tangle, throwing off
A wall, clotting to a patch of fir in a stony bay,
Rimming the lake, then, carving a clouded shore.

You who know pain of being, the existential
Pain of feeling lost in the vast universe, go
Feel the quiet lines; that order of disorder;
The flesh of this planet, its bones and limbs,

We echo. A secret joy, a stern joy unfolds,
Heart beats in the rain, a shiver of vision
Illuminates a fell, pale light reveals the rigg,
Those lines of love, in the body of the world.

Glitter Of Language

Four thousand years of the dream,
Or was it the quest,
The dragons over the hill, the unicorn,
The beautiful girl transformed to a bird,
Bardic vision of a cave on a cold shore,
Labyrinth or tunnel to other worlds,
Whatever the heart conceived:
All that now over,
The possibility of myth is not equation,
But a fancy of archetypes
To fill the unknown,
A shimmer of transformations,
And the mind's longings.

We cannot toy with our origins forever,
Mingling the moon and sun,
Making music of feeling, the honeycomb
Or the temple, the dancing floor
Shining with the veiled ones who hum, the bees
Of devotion, bare feet on stone:
The fairytales are done, the old religions,
But not our spirituality, myth falls away
Or becomes the deeper myth of humanity,
Its changing form: since myth
Is metaphor, there remains
A glitter of language,
A realm beyond belief.

Mountain Meeting

It's good to get back to simple things,
The smell of pine-bark,
The soft breeze through the grasses,
The sift of pollen in the August air.

And good of you to come, to trek
A hundred miles and sit
With me in the mountains,
Two Taoist sages – scarcely.

Can we see each other at all, in all
This flow and form? As we are?
Can we fix ourselves,
At this juncture of stone and sky?

The kestrel is skimming the field.
Outcrops shine dark in the sun.
The eye is drawn to beauty
As the mind to affection.

And gentle hearts are the same
In every century,
Soft turf, and leaves, and running
Water, against the rock.

What use are the heart's regrets?
Well, to sweeten us,
To make our farewells depths
In memory's pool.

Musing

Yes, we know the world is real,
A landing on Mars too intricate
An illusion even for the god
Of all illusion, even for the self.

Yes, we know we exist in the unreal,
Neither the world nor its inventors,
Process of thought, shift of idea
Through silent cells that scream

Our blueness, in our peculiar sky;
Silent pathways that articulate
The gates of the body and end
In words, from infancy upwards.

Yes, we know when delusion is
Delusion – mostly. Prone to adopt
Un-provable entities though
To bolster us, bridge the vacuum,

Which is a curious anomaly of reason,
Or rather the blind heart's longing
In sublime disguise. Prone to consider
The unseen earth, the invisible others

Known only by speech, sight, sense
And the miraculous un-miraculous
Empathy of the coincident species,
Exemplified in our jot of spirit,

As real, though surely the finest
Construct of all, what problem
To extend that to golden mountains,
Invisible spirits, un-evidenced powers?

Prone to consider values relative,
Though fools for beauty, truth
And love in essence, while prone
Too to consider values absolute,

Imposed by mad inside-out deity
Conceived in the poet's womb;
And foisted through pyramidal
Powers onto conscious creatures,

But not on the vulture in the sand,
Not on the cougar, or the antelope,
The rabbit, or the ape. A puzzledom
The unreal, a ragbag of consequences.

Waiting for humankind to be reborn,
Is this tedious process. But reborn it
Shall be, man and woman and every
Other sex, under the empty sky;

Reborn beyond the phantom existence
Of the transitory real, the falsely solid,
Beyond the lonesome heart, the dumb
Machine, the errors we have made;

Reborn in irreality, in the sacred
Imagination, and not my poor light
But the flame of feeling transformed
In the new endless fires of the future.

Half the world's energy is wasted
On the violent and un-sane, who call
Themselves the only ones who know,
Yet vanish identically into history.

While the sage knows nothing, sits
By the rock-wall gazing at frosted
Veins of glittering dawn diamond:
All the free being greater, deeper.

At the end of war there'll be quietness,
A long sigh over steppes and prairies,
Down all the rivers, above the forests,
And even in space, in the un-hearable,

The materialistic will subside in love,
The mechanistic will be imbued with life:
That's the dream, pursued four thousand
Years, and from savagery to savagery:

Tenderness in time, and ourselves in
Eternity, which is every person rising
To walk in the silence of existence,
Sad joyful bodies in the mind to come.

The Great Pond

The desert was not the end of imagination
Which we thought we had come to, nor
The forest's dark, nor the glitter of space,
Nor the echoing chambers of the ocean.

The snow was not the blank of our thought,
Nor the creature cold under the ice, no beat
Of final wings in an absent sky, no white
Of cloud from the plane, or the green leaf.

The metaphor for our sadness was external
But not the wretchedness itself (the moan
Of the abandoned rock-dove in the tree,
The howl of the coyote on the dead trail

Were beyond us, never the scream inside):
What was diminished in one way, opened
Portals for us in others, the writers of words
Prone to consider language ultimate being,

While perhaps simply relation is the true,
Above the supreme fiction, perhaps love,
The affection of the animate heart after
The wind has fallen, not domes on domes,

Or the distant spires, or a rhetoric rolling
Irrelevant, beside the pool, whose phantom
Shadows are such, merely phantoms, parched
Ghosts of its yesteryears, the dry sources.

Perhaps what we proved ourselves proves not
The standard for all others, merely a variant
On what some human effort might construct,
Amongst the scattered remnants of the stars.

Perhaps there is no failure, or always failure,
Indistinguishable, in the transient, from success,
And the repetitious echo, the long-seen image,
Only a silence which is always done and dusty,

And not the future of the mind. Perhaps we
Should guard against the negativity of ghosts,
And comprehend the repetition of children,
Lovers, dancers, singers, speakers of lines,

The performance and not the deep analysis
Which is often superficial, and rarely lasts,
For this altering creature, about to flee
Into the meld of tissue and machine.

Are we poets the legislators of the world,
Or its lost followers on the beaten track,
The voyeurs and observers, mimicking
The real, our sadnesses without cause?

Oh, language ripens: the tongue's a bud,
And distance flowers, the mind exceeds
All things in our grasp. New ripples
Cross the great pond's silence there.

The Ghost Tree

Mellow light of late September in the trees.
Here the great carcass lies, in ribbed silence,
A trunk that weighs a ton, dead but unburied.
This is the ghost tree, dove tree, downed
By rot and wind, by both, by the disease inside,
By the outer force sweeping the world clean.

Barked like a birch, ribbed, leafed like a lime
Once: now naked timber grounded, weathering,
To the darkness of mould, and the whiteness
Of the shrew's skull bleached by the brightness,
On a carpet of pine-needles, oak leaves, beech.
The poem of occasion is the poem of the mind

Seeking empathy in the space around it; echo or
Resonance, from a universe dumb and undying;
Beyond the buzzard's shriek, the rook's dark cry;
In the leaves' stir; in the form of the fallen giant
And its lingering name. See how the sun flickers
Like life, how the rain sighs like life, persistently.

News About The Sky

Today, photos of the electron flexing its quantum states.
News of a satellite falling to Earth, or rather to ocean
Hopefully. We glance up nervously at a sky still the same,
Pale with September cloud, lighting tall trees, their leaves.

Today, dilatory justice, blind injustice, inhuman savagery;
Pure indifference in all its thousand disguises: one mask.
An experiment showing neutrinos travelling faster than
The speed of light, apparently. Shadows stirring the grass,

Which are creatures possibly, or gusts of time and space,
Passing softly. Limits are not the only things violated here
On this planet (the blue-green one whose alter ego we seek
Among the stars: not nice to be alone: uniquely conscious.)

Today, we age, dreaming of anti-ageing, fearing mortality,
But immortality too, when you think about it, merciless
Implications. Today we are richer, poorer, sure, un-surer.
The sky is marbled; the evening light is gracious, blessed.

Today, the dying fall: the living rise. A starlet, bare arms,
Smiles and sighs. A star, naked light, explodes and dies.
We wait for the neutrinos, then the brightness. The satellite
Descends, the leaves wave high over the western whiteness.

Today, the networked world flickered; we moved a little
Closer to the realm of artificial consciousness, sweet
Cyborgs playing; human freedoms were silently sold.
An invisible breeze is lifting the pale backs of the leaves.

Tonight, the satellite is falling more slowly than expected.
We imagine the ponderous fall, the intense heat of its ruin,
We consider the sky. Tonight, there is beauty in the trees,
And the clouds are gathering slow, the pale flocks of night.

Severance

Oh, where are you now, under my dark sky,
Under your bright sky, in the promised land?
Oh where are you I still see receding,
Before I turned and retreated, howling?

Oh where are you, beside rivers flowing,
On the hills, the plain, in the jewelled silence.
Oh, where are you, at the lonely crossroads,
By the echo-less prairies of ghostly future?

Oh where are you now under immense light,
Like all the wraiths, the phantoms, haunting
The drowned stillness of birth and death,
The meaningless repetition filled by meaning?

Oh where are you now, and why? Beyond value
We make in meeting, in real and virtual space,
In the uncertain end flowing out of this life
To sleep in an elsewhere, far from the aching.

Oh where are you now, in the void of silence,
As you bend to your life, the form dispersing
In memory, your voice retreating, in the far
Deeps of the great continent, under bare stars?

Oh where are you now, and how? Imprisoned
By freedoms, shining, sorrowful mind, sad
And beloved still in day-lit streets, by night-lit
Waters, illuminated between past and present?

Oh where are you now? Where are you breathing,
Crying, singing, laughing, sighing and dying,
Where are you sleeping? In what blazing deeps,
In what abyssal voids of the turning globe?

We turn with the Earth, we make the circuit of sun,
We flee with that sun round the galaxy that flees
Into the web of the darkness, into the gaseous veils;
You and I fleeing from each other into survival,

Emotional survival, remembering the energy
Of our season, the long-lost power of sight,
The seeing, the knowing, the recognition.
Oh, where are you now? How are you being?

Crossing The Shoulder

Uplands pale as dry grass, after snow.
Tired of destruction the trucks
And the lumbermen gone,
Out of this stillness,
In which there is only
A delicate sigh,
Of the dry grass after snow.

The warm earth winter mild.
The seasons shifting whether
Or not the icecap's melting,
Still beauty will
Be here (potentially)
After the minds have gone.
The wastelands will re-seed.

After the wars in heaven,
And on earth, the ground
Absorbs the dead. Our sad
Truths glow in history,
Which is vanishing memory
Of a previous state of being
Of this one planet.

The past is no more or less
Than the burden we carry forward
Over the soil, the weight we
Hold in the nerves, cells, synapses,
The balance of the ledger
Of the strangest species.

Uplands in dry air, frost on the cliff,
The wind blowing us all away,
The pines shaking under the stars,
The surfaces of the world shaking,
And its body too, down to the smallest,
Down to the unimaginably tiny
Tremor of deepest real.

The Double

It was not you, the Other, that he looked for,
That ever-unsatisfactory refracted surface
In which he saw himself in fractured form,
Sad instrument mirroring the music badly.

Yours was not the sound half-heard in his ear,
Echoing from the cliff across the lake, or soft,
Stirring the undergrowth, the rustle of deeper
Being, finding itself in the bitter realms of this.

You were not what touched his hollow flesh,
(Dimension of grace, not stress of performance)
Space into which he entered, time that he knew,
The private country where every hill's unnamed.

No, it was his own image he imagined, shape
Of a second self, a kindred form, a replica
Of his own discreet existence, that might see
As he saw, hear as he heard, melding bodies.

It was a dream he had, of his own double, come
Towards him slowly over the real grass, as he
Walked in the autumn silence, over real ground,
One who would feel as he felt, in every instant,

One who would duplicate himself in essence,
And yet be strange and not identical, conceived
From the one experience, intuiting all: his fears,
His hopes, anxieties, affections, loathing; all his

Tenderness; all his yearning to be loved, and love,
But in some deeper way of identity, not the fire
Of two distinct bright blades flickering; two selves
Meeting but never-meeting; silently, brushing by;

In a dream to embrace the dream, and the familiar;
Be no more lonely in the immense horizon, speck
Of nothingness crushed by the magnificent outside,
That over-arching weight of Earth and Star, huge

Universe squeezing in from every side, or out
In diastole to suck from mind all its substance,
Leave humanity blind; crawling over the planet;
Locked in transience; chasing the shallow minutiae.

It was a second self in self, a form of man or woman,
A double-sex, an infinite resonance inside, rendered
External to him, but his own self dumbly magnified,
He sought. A semblance that might slowly approach,

Pressing, like him, real soil, green turf, breathing pure
Gusts of the real air blowing from the clouded west,
Until it faced him; spoke to him; called his name,
As he might cry to himself; and in ghostlier tongue.

The Narrower Profound

The woods extend by degrees,
Seedling after seedling,
Dumb first, and then the whispering
In moonlight, or light breezes,
The delicate shimmering
Light undergrowth seeping
Over heath-grass, heather, and bracken,
To consolidate dominion, and grow free.

The path of such wide horizons,
With view after view rising,
Bright to the far distances in silence,
Now closes in, and the shadows
Deepen, far down dark in the trees.
How to explain the sunlight
On the floor of the wood after rain,
The beauty of the narrower profound.

Bright Roar

Only the Truth-speakers
Within the supreme fiction
(That paradox)
Only the ones mad with passion
I love: present tense; death
Does not matter,
The best of us
As Ovid said, remains,

If only for a moment,
Considering the immense hoary
Old age of the Universe,
Considering its youth:
We're somewhere in the middle
Of all time,
And hopelessly lost and gone
On eternity.

Afloat on the waves of immensity
Hopelessly, movers and shakers,
(Laughter)
Phantom cities echoing
In our eyes, traffic lights
Flickering over our empty roads
Of outer silence,
The deeps for robots.

But oh what we have made,
Despite the destroyers,
Beyond the corrupters,
What we have made
Of each other and this world:
Fragments of grace,
Divine godlessness,
Bright roar from emptiness.

Intensity

When I stare at the strangeness
Of life, I grow anxious,
Repelled by its fleshy, scaly,
Otherness, its dark intensity
Against which I push
Like Sisyphus at his stone.
I drown in its seas.
I smother in its envelope
Of not-self, diminished.

The way other poets grasp
The world and describe it
Can't work for me. Beyond,
I still ache with eternal spaces,
A flow and vibration electric
Beyond the stars.
Who knew that life was ever
Enough for the living?
The shaper shapes itself,

And the earth in its image.
That heavy dappled weight,
That dense fleshy curtain I fear,
The matter of it all, the
Winding loathsome roots Sartre saw
Nauseous in their being.
Fire, air and water I ache for,
The flow and the flame,
All this at last consumed in light.

Gathering

Pollen at the core of the late flower of the season,
That's the pollen I longed for,
The bee loaded with its little yellow sacs
Weaving its six-footed circuit,

Among the crumpled, wrinkled aftermath
Of the summer light, the secret burden,
Private in its world, without expectation
Of anything but nectary, petal, anther;

Free of our heaviness, light with its own,
The progeny of flowers, incipient sweetness,
The future generations of scent, the palette
Hidden inside, doomed and transmuted.

Pollen at the core, and sublime guiltlessness,
That's the pollen I longed for,
The humming at noon of each intricate sense,
The delicate patience, the sudden flight.

Get It?

Gilded Buddha on a plinth of stone,
Neatness, grace, the half-closed eyes,
Not bound on the Wheel,
Lost in the flow.

Lao-Tze on his bullock heading West,
Into the Taklamakan,
Beneath the Tian Shan:
Amused silence.

Kids playing in the mountain stream,
Build their miniature dam
To break it,
Let all go.

Swift life: and granite walls
Seem less solid.
Bright tinkling laughter
Scattering in the trees:

The Lesser Selves

Last night I was erased by others,
I gave too much,
This morning, in the bright September air,
I exist again inside myself.

Last night I was the mask of space and time,
Bled into the universe,
This morning, under blue sky, in the stillness,
I contract once more to the centre.

I gave to you and you gave to me,
Did we betray,
In dark of night, what the morning promised,
Yearned away long beauty

In desire, watching our true ghosts dissipate?
Cried too much,
Laughed too much, uttered too many things:
The unrecalled?

Last night too, I lost myself among phantoms,
The Lesser Selves:
This day in the heat of a spent summer,
I am autumn, reconciled with leaves.

Cold Snap

In the photos how calm we seem:
Smile, it's the artefact, all chaos hidden,
Not only outside time but inside art.

How quiet, certain writers in their poems,
Emotion, redirected in tranquility.
The level eye conceals the tangled heart.

Unforgettable lines of the Pharaoh's mask,
Akhenaten in the cool hall of the museum,
Gazes across all that marbled floor:

Not burning, as no doubt he gazed in life
Over the wastelands towards the sun,
Like us, penetrated and undone by space,

Dissolved by universal time, time relative,
Beaten and destroyed:
The shell survives, gives pleasure:

Like the weathered white skull of the mouse,
The bare ice-cased structure of the birch,
Framed history, our frozen gaping mouths.

Wild Life

That image of the Scorpion on my wall
Glowes green, injected perhaps,
Its genes manipulated, or the lens,
The lighting, or the reality.

All those glowing glaucous appendages,
Grass, apples, leaves and seas outdone.
Curl, coil, claw my lovely symbol,

Stab at the universe, embrace the worlds,
Scamper delicately over voids,
Survive, in the stillness, after the bombs.

Clear Air

Blue fog across the valley,
Wet rock gleams, a breeze rises,
At pine-tree heart a resin scent;
One million insects is it, a square mile,
Shining alien wings, bright clatter?

All I've read eludes the mind,
My learning only made for prisons.
Cold creek satisfies the heart,
White water,
Down hill slopes: in clear air.

What's Outside

Our own voice
Is the one
We would escape.

Shakespeare,
In his sonnets
'Ever the same'

The incantation
Holds then
Wearies me.

There's always,
Fortunately,
What's outside.

Quiet

It's a quiet country.
Small farms in the silence,
White stone walls,
A good place to rest.

You can walk the hills,
Grass trails by ancient caverns,
A mountain top where
The blue sky glows.

If I were not like cloud,
The wind, the water,
If my mind was peaceful
I'd be there,

In that country
Wrapped in calm,
Crossing the fields,
Walking under trees,

The valley hush
From end to end
A true reflection
Of the human heart.

A Soft, Persistent Fall

There must be a way
To catch the pollen in the grass,
Like pollen in the air,
Before it falls forever
Back into black soil
On the edge of the field.

Swirling patterns
Over the surface of the lake,
Fall in a yellow rain
Like a Chinese scatter
Of eyelids, petals, butterflies,
Falling forever,

Through the spaces
Of the heart, all those lost
Empires, spinning beauty
Despite themselves
Out of themselves:
Iron vessels full of flowers.

All their pollen falling,
Surely there must be a way
To catch it, sifting through
The grass, the air,
Before it falls back
To the Earth forever?

In The Dimness

The World's illusion
And the Mind's a fog,
The Taoist smile
Itself lost in the flow.
Watching the great wheel
Of the stars, the planet
Turn, to which we're bound,
Blue flower in the dimness,
Chance form.

Blown like the dust,
Drifting like the weeds,
Like pollen falling
Over the floating world.
Nothing to think of, to think
Of nothing, blown
From affection to affection,
Powerless in the dimness,
This bright form.

Buddha said Maya,
Samsara emptiness,
But what price
Passionless being?
Sun-glare, snow,
Wet peaks and ice-fields,
Mountain freedom
Shining mist-grey in the dimness,
Mindless form.

Dive to the flow of Tao,
Deep in the vortex,
Let thought hum
Inside the mighty roar.
Rise in the silence,
Smile, exercise
Your skill,
Spontaneous in the dimness,
Create form.

A High Ridge

On the empty ridge above the far valley,
Birch, yew and heather in the gullies,
Green, gold, purple,
The buzzard rising, the rooks skimming
Over the sloping meadow on to stone.

A high ridge, a steep ridge, dark, eroded,
In forty years no change I can see,
Gleaming, lowering,
Harmless in sun, benign; fierce in rain;
The place the spirit loves the most.

Far off dumb cities, far Samsara,
This too illusion but a form
Of everything
That makes the mind solid; soothes the heart;
The dust below, and nearer the universe.

Eternal Revolution

Old poets relax but it's young intensity
We need to free this log-jammed world,
Break through the ice-cover, plough the
Bones, naked of civilisation for a while.

Old poets in bandanas rock on the porch,
But it's the first fire we need, first scream,
First sex, first plunge into the deep other,
For each thing taught new sceptical denial.

Old poets complacent, spiritual, at coffee,
Bless like old priests the young at whom
They smile, but already with them dreams
The destroyer, among the bright green wings.

Un-met

I am impressed: you've been a doer.
Little disturbed the surface of my life:
I lived in depths, unseen by others:
It would bore them, to hear of my days.

Truly beautiful your arc of motion,
Traveller, seeker, maker, builder,
Part of the new movement, now
The old. I never join, I watch the view.

No, I can't imitate you, still I know
That we are only forms in the void,
Chance coagulation, fleeting structure:
I'll mourn your passing, your affections,

Because you truly loved, people, Earth,
The scents and sounds, the passing by,
A sort of Kim of your age, childlike, true,
Cunningly wandering the dusty Way.

Mind As Shadow

Mind too is shadow, like the world,
The internal mythology of the unreal,
A shadow of a shadow of the wheel
Great, gleaming, turning in blind sky.

Red as our blood, white as our mercy,
Blue-green with our brooding thought
The shower of frosted stars: cold, cold.
A wintry silence may best express time,

Which is the not the thing we utter in
The tongue, not the wild fierce season,
Or the inner fire, which are timeless.
Activity is eternity, dance of shadows,

And mind too a shadow, like the world,
A shadow of the shade without creator
Creating in the shadow of the mountain,
Within the mind and outside the mind.

We are all shadows seeking our escape,
Into the light that flowers between minds,
Into the stillness perfect between lovers,
Into the bright reflection of ourselves.

What is abstract is abstracted from pure
Shadow, distilled, congealed; material
In the solidity of deepest thought; held,
Fine suspension, in the stream of being.

Mind too is shadow, like the world.

Again, Autumn

Again the pigeons flock upwards, beat
Through the tall archways of the wood,
And the buzzard coils on upturned wings,
Wheeling, gyring in the ice-white sky,

Again the pigeons scatter mind through
The leaves, dark-gold, burned, of the wood,
And the buzzard mews on dark-tipped wings,
Circling and spiring, circling beyond dying.

Again the pigeons moan and howl; howl
And scream; in the leafy caves of the wood,
And the buzzard plummets downwards wild
On dove-tailed wings, out of the white sky.

Again the pigeons congregate in the shadows,
Scouring the mute glowing floor of the wood,
The buzzard crashes overhead in the branches,
Fierce with hunger; fierce with living-through.

'Myself When Young'

Your keen profile slicing into the future.
Tawny eye flickering against the hillside.
Flapping coat the winged youth's angel
Presence, ephemeral as fog.

Intellect unfocussed but a bared knife.
Wild explosions of opinionated will,
That might change worlds, or spin
Disengaged above our silence.

The never-to-be-again energy of unknowns.
All unreasoning passion, passionate reason,
Embodied, electric in the deeper darkness
Of our black subterranean seas.

Shining Void

The void the Buddha talked about
Was not a thing,
But a state of shining emptiness,
Shunyata.

Ah the beauty of his analysis:
Irreality
In the unreal mind,
Its net of process!

How to escape the Wheel,
Which is every moment
The moment's
Unrepeated repetition,

The reiteration in the mirror,
The echo we detect
From time's distance,
In our every sound?

How to escape the Wheel?
By catching the moon,
In the water,
By impossible non-action.

Down the pool of causation
Goes my ripple,
Unable to stop clinging
Reach shining Void.

Safari At Midnight

The wild dogs go racing
Through African bush.
They pull down what they meet,
Swift slinking shadows.

Dingoes, coyotes,
Good as us
Go hunting too
Through the diminishing silence.

Will they ever come back?
Their gaze should break
The camera in your hand,
The powerless gaze.

The creatures are all hiding
In the darkneses behind us,
In the grass and leaves
Inside us.

Can you hear the wild dogs
Running in the night?
Is humankind
Ascending or descending?

Why is every dream
A dream of the past?
Even the dreams
Of the future,

Shiny in space
Summoning Odysseys
The Hero quests,
Wandering by desolate shores?

The creatures hide
In everything not sold
Under every stone
Deep down the wasteland.

Inside wherever
We've not declared war,
Beyond the virtual flicker
In the 'real' world,

The wild dogs race,
Surround the antelope
On three legs,
In the pool of water:

When we have left
They'll pull her down.
We know
Where the creatures hide,

Whose side we're on.
The side
Of all the pain
In the world.

Moth

I blew the little moth
Back behind the screen,
Lifting my hand from the keyboard
With the worn N,

Saving a little process
Of life by an act
Which is causation's tremor
In the action-less room.

I am wondering why
Sitting here
The ambitious noises
Of great lines

Seem so much less
As a result;
So much less of a way
Forward in the dark;

Why language resonates
And is still idle;
Why nothing we do
Is right except the mind

Sanctions a value
By its rightness;
And so the great
Are still the small,

And certain ways
Of being preclude
Honesty, humility,
Though their aim

Was simple truth.
Fame is the slur.
The moth is equal life
And total anonymity,

So, greater than us.
Total in its humility,
Which is merely being
Without trying.

If Buddha had no name
He might be Buddha,
And awake,
And gone beyond.

I vanish into the moth;
Into the silence
Writers love;
Mind's sweet silence

They say little of;
Where all they are enacts
The all they are,
Moths on leaves.

The Recital

In the half-light of the summer evening
The room was playing Brahms, Opus 117,
The deeply-human shimmering in darkness
And on to light, the tenderness that is never
The voice of the dharma, instead a musing,
A little singing of the spirit, the gentleness
Of its creator, a bloom, like smoke or cloud
Drifting, strange form, over the inner hush,
Lilting its melody to itself, in pure openness.

There were leaves beyond the window-glass
Swaying in silence, there were leaves alive
Breathing, tumbling, gathering, alight in air:
Under it all there was a yearning, there was
A wistfulness, the mind without reference
To the body, as a child's mind in the adult,
Or an adult understanding in the child; that
Foresees all we become, the later unfolding,
Everything already known as it will be known.

There was a wind blowing in the outer evening,
Empires fall, wars end, still we have the music,
Delicate emotion dreaming, moving in memory,
Over the darkening chaos, down ensuing calms,
Without boundary, without country, landscapes
Of feeling, in deep physicality of such utterance,
Beyond the outer form, a feature of the inward.
It is the passionless passion for all we are here:
The room was playing Brahms, time's epitome.

Now Mortality

Now mortality is poignant. The valued life lost
Is likewise Keats dying in Rome, feverish Mozart.
Not to come again in space, the universe ended
Is the metaphysics of transience, an impossibility
Of being realising non-being, or mind not-mind.

Lonely in existence, the stones and trees seem
Kinder, to be a part of what persists unknowing;
Luminous true identity always unaware of self;
The diamond silence of the open fields all rapt
With the bare sky, though rapt implies sentient,

And the loveliest metaphor is profound illusion,
Which includes the metaphors of fond religion,
Gods dying or undying, or the undifferentiated
One, or even the self-help solution of Nirvana,
Tacit withdrawal into passionless bliss un-bliss.

Mortality is poignant, that is our truth. Form and
Stillness now the sole defence, citadels of twigs,
Built from the fragmentary detritus, the plain bed
Of the wood, and gleaming oddly under the stars;
Pure communication unconcerned with audience.

'The Rest Is Literature'

'Here is the myth of the sun,
Here it comes with a delicate
Deliberate scuffle of leaf-shade
In the bright zone of autumn.'

That's the poem I might write,
But I leave the words unsaid,
To linger here in the head,
And go out and walk in the sun.

Slow News

Now the gods and the false solutions are dead,
Though the news hasn't reached the many,
As Nietzsche said,
Truth is Science; Love, Human Relationship;
And Beauty, ah Beauty,
The forms that accompany the trip.
You can choose the ones that appeal,
We may disagree,
But those in conflict with Nature, Science,
Or our Genetics, we'll see
Wither away in the air,
Dry leaves on a temporal tree,
While we go back to the start
Where the human mind was free,
To invent *and* obey what it knew.
We've exhausted illusory paths:
We ate of the tree, and we find
Ourselves surprised by the view.

Exactness Of The Vague

Existence is not precise this winter evening.
Slowly potentialities stir like veiled leaves.
At a distance the figure is indistinguishable
From the secondary, from its background,
Merges uncertainly into vague non-identity.

The particles are not particles, the particular
Is a matter of approach, undefined we exist,
As shadows of our imaginations, shapers,
And fractions of others' imaginations, other,
Floating things, drifting over peculiar oceans.

Carving the air the snowflakes gather wings.
Being is an endurance; beautiful as the crystal
Boughs bending down to embrace the ground
In an apotheosis of anthropomorphized feeling.
The boughs are beyond feeling, inside feeling.

So much that seems given is not really given.
The outlines of trees might be offered otherwise.
A clatter of wood might raise different echoes
In a mind still not solidified, in what's awake
In wild awareness in the depths of ice-fall.

The man would be inexact, as would the woman,
Nothing of what they understood of one another
Would be understanding: hands would be vapour.
Eyes would contain glacial silences, cataracts
Of whiteness, in a landscape still formulating them.

Like poetry, ambiguous and elusive, the mind slides.
Winter twilight though hard and cold is soft and deep,
And the darkness between the leaves is a form of light,
The mountain slips, the star blurs, heart and mind erode
As all relationship, nor are those equations definitions.

Art is not only content, but the cry of content: the maker
Is bound there too in the stone; the metal; the pure ochre.
The word is not simply its meaning, but also its presence,
And the meaning depends on the presence, what signifies
Is always shifting its ground, always a scurry of leaf-fall.

Existence is no longer implicit on this winter evening.
The solitary walker may be a trick of the eye, that white
May be sky, or land, so little is real, a shade on a sheet
Of blankness in which comes to be a writhing of forms.
Nothing is final, none touch forever, no meaning is lost.

Tonight life lives in this exterior inexactness, and not in
The fine equations. The space to the moon, unmeasured,
Is an aspect here of my heart. The indigent slopes are your
Mind, dwelling on silence, who knows what stirs beneath?
I no longer wish to be stone, to sit mindlessly beyond flow,

Tonight, I no longer wish to be the frozen lake, the symbol
Encased below in the mirror, a perfection of icy branches.
Tonight the imperfect gathers, the stars are in movement,
The aurora mixes its palette, awaiting all transformation.
Time's glittering surface is alight with the diamond Future.

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