

The world might have been different

There might have been no eagle
slipping silently round a cliff-edge into my life,
shocking me into awareness and awakesness, into
open-mouthed worship of animal grace.
There might have been no life in the world.

There might have been no skylark,
as I lie back and centre on its soaring rhapsody,
pauselessly extravagant invention, weaving
joy for me – for the bird, who knows what?
There might have been no music in the world.

There might have been no flowers,
tiny colorations catching my sight as I walk,
entertainment in detail beyond man's artistry,
shining their message of sun-filled optimism.
There might have been no colour in the world.

There might have been no mountain
to call me far above the scale of the everyday,
above human alterations into a larger region
of depth and height, and mind-widening distances.
There might have been no grandeur in the world.

There might have been no sunset,
starting small, then catching clouds one by one
and spreading its profligate splendour over the sky
as the all-giving sun and I give thanks for the day.
There might have been no beauty in the world.

And there might have been no world, no universe,
no showcase for God.

And there might have been no God, nothingness.

But thank God, there is, there was.

Reductionism

This poem is not a poem.
It is only a list of letters which are
linked by linguistic laws into words which are
grouped by grammatical laws into sentences,
as scientific dissection demonstrates:
no need to hypothesise a poet
for this which is not a poem
is only letters and laws.

And a flower is not a flower but only
biochemistry and genetic coding
and a rainbow is no marvel but only
a phenomenon of refraction.
And the universe wrote itself.
So science rescues us from illusion
strips away the surface
unearths reality at the foundation of things.

Unless —
unless there is a Poet —
unless the world is a poem
and its meaning is not in the making but in the being
and wisdom is not in taking apart but in enjoying
and we the readers know the Poet
in his infinite invention
in the needless beauty of nature's syntax
and a flower is not what it is made of but a flower
and a window into the Poet's mind
and a rainbow is an extravagance
and nothing is only.

Analyse the orthography and the typology,
but do not think the only view is down.
Know the power of the Poet
who makes all letters and all laws
and writes the world into being
and praise him.

The Turning of the Tide

The year is dying, drowned by storm and snow;
the sun too tired, too old to climb the sky;
days dwindling, starved of colour, warmth and light.

The stars stand crystal clear, cold and remote
from humans huddling in their cosy homes
waiting, resigned, the turning of the tide.

Or shopping.

Also cooking, baking,

writing, wrapping, sending, making,

entertaining, decorating:

children eagerly awaiting

the day, the one day, the wondrous day

when darkness is defied,

one day to mark the turning of the tide:

Yuletide, a blaze of colour, warm and bright,

meetings, greetings, music, gifts, delight

in food and drink and family and friends.

It can not last: this day of days soon ends.

The magic dies, the days again grow dreary;

the revellers are impoverished and weary.

For parties, shops and being wined and dined

are not the way to finding peace of mind —

the real peace, in which we have no part

unless the sun shines deep down in our heart.

On that same day, by inconvenience of history,

others there are who celebrate a different mystery:

the simple story of a child's birth

two thousand years ago. That night

a billion billion stars gazed down on earth

in wonder. That night

the whole created universe was still,

expectant. That night

our world was at the centre of all things.

Who was this child?

The barriers were broken: angels came

to sing his birth to men.

Who was this child?

Only the one true God, by whose command

the universe exists and we have life,

entering (who knows how?) our time and space.

Only the unseen God made actual man,

come to proclaim the turning of the tide:

to bring back to himself our failing race,

to show his love and win us our release

and fill our lives with joy and give us peace —

the true peace which he only can impart:

he is the sunshine deep within our heart.

Good God

Strange how God is usually
a mark of exclamation.

O my God or OMG
does not mean adoration.

But it should.

O my God, I worship and adore you.

O my God, who ever could ignore you?

But they do.

For God's sake seems to most to be
a way of saying Listen to me,
not For the sake of God.

An odd
mistake.

For all that we do should be for God's sake.

Thank God, they say, and only mean I'm glad.

That's sad,
for heartfelt gratitude
should be our attitude.

When faced with all God's gifts, our hearts should sing

Thank God for this, and that, and everything.

And thank God for being God.

For God is. And God is not
an adverb or a punctuation mark.

For God is a noun: the Noun,
the great unchanging eternal Noun,
giving all other nouns their reality.

Absurd to waste the word on banality.

Good God.

Exactly.

The Secret

The dream dissolved: awake I struggled to recall
How in my dream I grasped the meaning of it all:
Enlightenment – the Lost Chord found, the Holy Grail
Achieved: the secret answer from beyond the veil.
No: sleep's illusion faded and I knew it lied.
Such things are only for the credulous: they hide
Where gnostic knowledge-mongers ply their foolish trade,
Ecstatic vision giving answers ready-made.
Reality is not so simple: forty-two
Is sadly not the secret, though at least it's true.
Science's latest entry Higgs's Boson's overstated;
Go to philosophy and still you'll be frustrated.
Over the rainbow, in the stars or underground,
Don't bother searching: from the start the secret's found.

Epiphany

They called us wise:
good at reading the signs –
the ancient books, the stars.
And yet we did not know
where we were going; indeed
we wonder now why we set out
on the longest journey of our lives,
and we suspect an Undue Influence.
We brought rich offerings,
worthy of the greatness we expected.
But when we arrived, the gifts
seemed folly – too rich, too poor –
matched only by the folly of
our expectations. We had
much to learn, much to understand.
But understanding was given us,
a storm overwhelming our minds:
that the great Unknown
on which we spent our lives
should become known
as one of us? No, that was not
what we expected. But it changed
everything. When we returned home,
we were wise.

Beyond the Pond

Pond was a world rich in water plants,
bustling with tiny life, teeming with bugs,
and top of the food chain a flurry of tadpoles.

In this particular allegorical Pond
lived a particular intellectual tadpole
who did not believe.

Others trusted in tadpoles' destiny
to live beyond Pond a greater life,
to be frogs.

He mocked their hopes as wishful dreaming:

Pond was all, the world above was myth.

Sunlight? – a natural phenomenon, soon to be explained.

Growing legs? – evolved to help in hunting.

Legends of monsters from outside? – exactly, only legends.

He gathered a sceptic band of followers,
deniers of beyondness. Pond was all,
tadpoles were tadpoles, there was no such thing
as a frog.

As others changed and crawled out on to land,
he kept his faith. Until one day
disaster struck. With a sudden swirl of stirred-up water
two monstrous shapes splashed down into Pond,
planted themselves in the mud. Then again peace,
and panic passed. “You see” he said “a natural phen— “
a mighty beak speared from above,
grasped him by his tail. Up, up he was hoisted,
through water, out of water,
and in a sparkle of sunlit drops, into air.

A brief vision of grass, of trees,
of frogs,
of sky and, above all, the sun,
a shocked moment of realisation,
and with a flick and a gulp the heron
swallowed him.

Him

In my dream I was woken
by the singing of birds,
louder and happier than I ever heard.

The garden was aglow with music,
and my heart was warmed by it.

In awe of I knew not what
I crept to the window, peeped out,
and saw, sitting on the bench,
Him.

All of me – body, mind, spirit – knew him:
terror and joy battled within me.

I hid myself behind the curtain, then
dared to look again. His eyes met mine:
and he smiled.

And in that smile my world changed –
doubt banished, guilt washed away.

I ran outside, and fell at his feet.
Every bird and flower, every leaf
sang joyful praise to its maker,
and the garden was made a paradise,
wrapped in the power of his peace...

I woke to a bright morning
and the glow in my heart told me
the truth of my dream.