

**The Intake Wall**

Inasmuch as sheep respect the ways of men  
The hefted ewe, observes this ragged wall  
Boundless boundary between the known,  
The nibbled, nuzzled sward and fastnesses above  
Where savage things scowl, where wolves still slink  
In bouldery fields, where wildcats yet eviscerate the luckless lamb  
Where crag walls rattle to the badger's bark

The lands beyond, the most industrious farmer  
Yawning before dawn has blushed the eastern sky  
Admitted limits he could never tame  
High-water mark of a distant tide  
When Bess was but an orphan princess  
Atop a windy tower, sighing for a wedding day that never came  
And men believed, with window-draughty souls  
That later ages would advance to claim these slopes; they never did

So the wall, though clawed by March-lion gales, remains; lichen-spattered  
Highway of time, cobbled by men with quartz-veined arms  
Pulsing with surges of Nordic blood  
Yan-tan-tethering rocks into rhythmic place  
Delineation of order from chaos  
Though chaos has since reclaimed its own

**Intake Wall Part Two**

It's a dream frontier where adventure's clock is coiled  
Feel the transit as you breast the ladder stile  
The heaving off of low-lying cares  
Ingest a breath of air that's yours and yours alone

Straddle the line, do walls divide or bind?  
Fore and aft are poles apart but left and right remain the same  
A garlanded contour that cartographs the ancient edge  
Where glaciers lapped in frozen waves  
Connecting all the thousand points you ever started up a hill  
A wefted thread through space and time  
A border, yes, but also fragile lifeline

**Isaiah in Lakeland**

I will lift up my eyes  
To hills once Himalaya-high  
Now worn to stubborn stumps  
Whence comes my grit.

I will sing among mountains  
Older than the raven's croak  
Whence comes my larkish youth.

I will flounder through grievous mires  
Whence comes my earthly ease

I will sink to the scales of abraded knees  
Whence comes my upright bearing

I will dribble with the rains of Ararat  
Whence comes my dovish joy

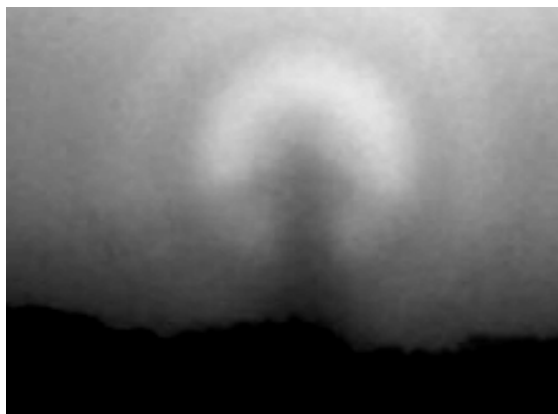
I will vanish into broiling mists  
Whence comes my clarity of sight

I will tread the heights through the longest night  
My heart bauble-glossy and tinsel-light.

**Missing**

Somewhere up here, I lost myself  
Have you seen me?  
Twice my height, my darker double  
Shadowing my wanderings in silhouette

He's no direction to call his own, just follows  
Where the wind and I are fated to blow  
Seeks to magnify my misdemeanours  
Claims credit for navigating obstinate pinnacles  
Tightropes over vastnesses on spinnereted threads



Soon, he'll shed this ill-becoming halo  
A glory he's unworthy to wreath round his head  
As I stoop to the clarity beneath us  
He'll linger behind in the kingdom of dread

**My Wake**

I trod a mountain down, I confess  
 Smothered it with boot-prints  
 Pressed it down with all I am  
 Conspired to make its stature less

In grace, it forgave, the turf returned  
 As earthworms stirred the turgid mud  
 Straws restored, easing straight  
 Erased my traverse so no trace remained

Except upon the higher slopes  
 Squeaking through silvered snow  
 I tamped the substrate down  
 A cold compress upon a milky skin



At night, the whipping winds  
 Weaving the stitches of my prints  
 Took flutter-loose flakes to a feathered cornice  
 To remainder my trail in negative

Can I ask this tiny thing of my passing?  
 To elevate this place of pathless ways  
 To leave a mountain higher than I found it  
 With this, my fleeting bruise of praise

## Hanging On

I plummeted from the summit  
Scattering boulder-scutters  
Swishing snow smears  
The winter whistling in my wake

The slope was steep, a headlong rush  
Through layers of air grown warm and dense  
Hung prehensile from the back of the bike  
Reluctant to brake and risk a gymnast's vault

A season passed in a finger-snap  
To Hartsop's clustered cottages  
Where daffodils drowsed in cat-sunned corners  
And titmice busied in the birch-branched sky

So suddenly was Spring upon my senses  
Such is the rhythm of recent years  
Snapping awake to an urgency of falling  
And time a roaring in my ears

**Drawing In**

Should I be sad now?

Sirius is out over Ambridge

Shadows toy with my teatime plates

Should I be sad?

Should I withdraw within, like a diffident crab?

Cast off the expansive shrug of summer

Regret the months outside in carefree shorts

Should I be sad?

Should we retreat behind red brick battlements?

Walls mediaeval thick, slighted by no Yorkist siege

Armoured curtains creaking rusty shut

Pull down the portcullis of the year

Should we emulate neighbours along the street?

Sweeping copper leaves into plastic graves

Casting desultory nods, waving mournful hands

Until the return of hazy hedge-trimming days

Should we stack up a pile of animal hides?

Crawl, naked, burrowing into musky strata

Nestling in foetal scrunches

While the roof tiles rattle and the gutters gush

As hedgepigs, snoring in a leaf litter lair

Drifted high as the fallow deer's trembling thigh

Not yet, let's button in our breath

The sun is unextinguished still

We can rootle in the ancient dingles

Where boar once soundered on the hill

For even as Nature takes a dusky yawn  
Leans and drops her teeth into a rusty cup  
This shivering invigorates my all-consuming lust for her  
Though she lies furred in Pre-Raphaelite curls, I am waking up

This poem can be seen on youtube.  
Search for "Grizedale Subtitles Removed"

**The Furthest Farm**

The family called him fool, a lost frontiersman  
His brothers shepherded lesser pastures  
While he headed to a windswept crest  
Where the road-brow reveals a surprising horizon  
To a dale where the family name is unknown

Just before the top, he turned a sod  
Clawed a rough foundation  
Laying slabs in serried ranks  
Set a comfortable chair to a wing-backed aspect  
Then walled it in to reframe the wild

And when the roof-slates rattle  
Shedding skins of papery frost  
He'll lean a shoulder to the storm,  
Wait until the marrow starts to clot  
Then thumb the clumsy latch,  
Duck beneath a creaking lintel  
To a fireside all the warmer