

Towards the Horizon

The health of the eye seems to demand a horizon

~ Emerson

In Swedish it is *synkrets* —
sight-circle. And the evidence of eyes
is that space is curved
and that the membrane of the sky
arches over us
and arcs around the blue silence at the edge
of vision.

There we find some sense of equilibrium,
poised between the lyric
lift and epic weight
of our existence and the world's.
Birds migrating in their lines and skeins
find it perfectly.

*The line of equality and that of the horizon
are the same, said Leonardo
marking out the shape of it on paper.*

We talk like this, turning
every thought into the filaments
which thread the space between our words
until that silence
fills the lattice-work of light,
until that blue of distance comes up close
and pours itself into
the apertures that suddenly appear,
these openings from the world into a world
awakening —
your eyes are the horizon
and this side of them
nothing ever will be quite the same again.

Flight from Bombay

Jumbo jets and bumblebees are not
supposed to fly. It's a defiance
of the ordinary. Knowing this, I think

lighter, discreetly try to levitate
against the seat-belt, to assist the pilot
get this thing up off the ground.

After all, this is India and such things
happen, though I never saw
a fakir lift off. I have seen the poor,

however. Over there, just
off the end of the runway, buffeted
by the kerosene exhaust

the shacks lean against each other
and another world. Stick
figures scavenge through the rubbish.

A woman, child clutched
to her breast, crouches by the truck.
She watches us, or maybe not.

Still, miracles do happen. We are
about to rise above it all.
The engines roar. I feel the thrust of it.

Huddled on the roof of a hut,
a small boy or perhaps it is a man
flies a yellow kite.

Lime Kiln, Easter

Beside the broken doorway
pause, recall another childhood
hieroglyphed on walls
dividing time, before and after:
images, glazed by years of
firings. Or those other
signs: lovers / looters / leavers
of their mark, the existential
I was here their familiar
riposte to the Egyptian
Death is in my eyes today.
Graffiti are these dislocations
then and now. My hand
brushes over the brick surface
like a renaissance painter
testing the fresco's texture
before applying the first colour.
In this quickened air—
burnt lime, Easter. Something
in the soul which always
thirsts. History here is too
slender, buildings such as this
must register our need
for temple / church / basilica:
some inward space for this
anhydrous culture. Something.
But it simply is a lime kiln.
Outside, the valley watches.
As though the runes of trees
along a dark horizon
might just give the word.
As though the rain might come.
As though this lime
might suddenly draw breath.

*Rostropovich plays
the Brahms Sonata No. 2
for Cello and Piano,
the second movement:*

Adagio affetuoso

The way he folds around it
at that moment, so like
a lover reaching from behind
his woman, urgent mouth

at her ear, whispering
endearments while his hands
unfasten her. We are keen
voyeurs within the shadows.

Then his head and arms
draw back: it is as though
the cello has been opened up
for us, and glorious this

body that's exposed to
autumn sunlight streaming
through the clerestory
windows on to the platform:

the chiaroscuro of the flesh,
curved air and light and
a warmth in every phrase
swelling from the quick

vibrato flicker of the heart
across the breast, and
suddenly inside the intimate
darkness we are gasping.

Drought

The mortised
red gum posts of the derelict

stockyard have been threaded
with blackberry.

Thistles floss the evening light
on the ridge. As you

poke about
the ruins of the barn, picking

over traces and the other bits
of harness crumbled

into dust, and all
those rusted lumps of cast iron

meaning something
useful, once upon a time, realise

this country's fore-shortened
history, so much

crowded up against the last two
centuries, so recent

that it's still almost the first day.
Walk on down the road.

Beyond it all
three cows press out the mud

mascara
lining the dam's squinting eye—

as they startle back
it's as if God has grabbed them.

Azaleas

I think of Japanese
maples, exhaling their
meticulous canopies
of eastern custom
over the azaleas—

the green of weeping
willows on a lawn,
water falling, always
seeking water, light
spilling into leaves...

Pessoa says that what
floresces in a flower
in us is consciousness.
I think of you, gazing
at the bright Matisse

palette of azaleas
emblazoned in your
senses, and an image
blossoms in the foliage
of thought: just this.

Several

deer in the clearing
graze with large

brown eyes, and ears
changed by every sound

sometimes language seems
so far away

and silence, just another
way of putting it

myself, this morning
music in the air

and on the water mute
syllables of light

Stones

Jedes Dasein scheint in sich rund

~ Karl Jaspers

it is the song
they keep on singing

in the rain
and in the sun

it is the song
that stars receive

and endlessly
return

◦

*every being seems
in itself round*

◦

stones
are good neighbours

generally
they keep to themselves

you can
even push them

round a bit
and they can take it

but you
should be careful

whenever
it comes to the crunch

◦

gravity
sinks into them

like shadows
into water

like thoughts
resting in a word

like song
into the ear

like love
like pain

that unbearable
lightness

of being
round in itself

o

waves
evoke their chatter

they hum
in a nor'wester

otherwise
they keep their silence

otherwise
their silence rises

upward
like a prayer