

Common Ground

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Common Ground

A woodpecker on my telegraph pole

This one-time dinosaur, this barred and spotted bird
has just flown in to top the creosoted pole
by no 47, on my street.

Angling on either side of him his landing gear —
his outsize, four-toed, grip-tipped feet—, flaunting
that scarlet undercarriage, that black and red flashed hood,
arrogant, secure, he sidles round to reach
the plastic junction box. He flings his hammer bill at it.
He ricochets, he rat-tat-tats, he drums.

Above him wires are whispering with syllables and scripts
streaming in and out from who knows where — Bangkok, New York
the guy next door — while he
raps out his own particular encrypted code
across millennia, over the roof slates of these streets
and on, to rivals in the willows by the swamp.

Ros Bleach autumn 2018

Forbidden fruit

Flop-haired, yellow-booted, his face
bright as the sun-skimmed lake
the little boy clanged through the iron gate
and onto the village green.

One hand held in Dad's big grasp,
the other clutching a bag of scraps
he was eager as the swans, gleeful
as they plunged their swan-necks
over and over after the sinking crusts,
flipping up their big blue feet.

Next, Dad found a patch of scrubby grass
and let him go, clomping in his welly boots,
to gather up new treats — a stick, an orange leaf,
a blackberry to cram into his mouth.

Until he spied, protruding from a stump,
a frill of popcorn-yellow bracts —
so succulent, it looked, so good to eat!
He reached for it but

'Fungus
Don't Touch
POISON'

shouted Dad, who scooped him up,
and bore him back towards the gate.

Set down again the little boy broke free,
regained the stump, turned and glared back,
so small, so fierce — one finger pointing
at the prize he wanted most

but could not have.

Ros Bleach

COMMON GROUND

To begin:

I open the gate of the North, the place of the ancient religions governed by the forces of nature and the spirits of the Earth and Sky.

I open the gate of the East, the place of the intellect, and the place of the Vedic truths.

I open the gate of the South, the place of fire and inspiration, the place of the inspired prophets of Abraham, Mohammed and Jesus.

I open the gate of the West, the place of the water which flows, as with the Tao everything flows.

I open the gate of the Centre, where Spirit and the Self that is within all of us have their domain.

--

At this time of midsummer, the energy of the Earth is at its height, and moving from growth to maturity. We celebrate the sanctity of sex, the fullness of the velvety red rose, the fecundity of woman and the potency of the Green Man with his stout staff.

The energies of Shiva and Shakti intermingle, and the Earth hums with the fullness of life.

In the water gardens, the lilies almost cover the pond. The breeze creases the surface of the water.

--

Why is it that there should be such difference around the Earth, such varying ways of understanding truth?

Consider the white people of the North. It is cold, they keep close. They must think of the practicalities of survival. Their Gods are harsh and warlike.

Consider the yellow people of the East. The land is teeming, they must husband the land to feed many. Their Gods are orderly.

.

Consider the black people of the South. It is hot, they run with the gazelle. Their Gods are passionate.

Consider the red people of the West: the land is rocky, they live a tough life. Their Gods are stoical.

--

So there are different races, and the environments in which they live are varied, and so they see reality in different ways. Is that all there is to it?

Well, there is time.

Time has different meanings.

There is time which repeats, like the Wheel of the Year, when each season comes round in due time...

There's the time that we call history, through which the world we know develops and changes.

There's cosmic time, where a million years are like a human minute.

And there is that place outside time, where things are known in an instant.

Yes indeed, that is the time in which Spirit works.

So, do our differences matter in cosmic time?

The intelligence that pervades the Universe is beyond such things, but the ant, the atom and the galaxy all have their place.

Back in history, the different religions grew separately, communication was slow; though there have always been those who have shared the highest truths intuitively...

It is said that Jesus studied with the Indian yogis in his preparatory years.

So what more can be said of this historical time?

The different religions grew in their own domains, their understanding given character through the geography and climate of those domains. For some of humanity's tribes, the understanding through nature alone did not suit them, and religions developed through truths communicated by prophets.

Some of these, such as Judeo-Christianity and Islam, shared the same roots and some of the same prophets.

In medieval times, the conflict between the Christians and Islam resulted in the Crusades, and killing with extreme cruelty.

In India, the Vedic truths were cognised by unidentified seers. The Hindu and Buddhist traditions also share some common truths.

And we see that the closer the sharing, often the more violent the conflict between them. Why do the Protestants and Catholics, and the Sunni and the Shia, also have such enmity? Why should this be so?

Hatred and love are the same in a world of paradoxes.

But there was a further outcome with some of these conflicts. The British invaded India in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, to rule the country and plunder its wealth, but look forward a couple of hundred years,, and the yoga of India has changed the lands of the aggressors; the English language imposed on India has resulted in its spiritual teachers and mathematicians spreading across the world.

America was developed with the labour of slaves transported from Africa. Brutality, rape and racial intermixing ensued.

Especially in the last two centuries, ever-faster communications and travel have made all traditions potentially available everywhere. A person in the modern Western world may practice an Indian mantra meditation in the morning, Buddhist mindfulness in the day, go to a Native American sweatlodge in the afternoon, and attend a yoga class in a Christian church hall in the evening.

A great mixing-up! Is this good?

There are some who call for purity. But this variety of experience is a reality, we cannot un-make what we have become.

Though born of violence and pain, the new racial amalgams allowed new areas of human experience to come into consciousness and flower. A new music was born, new dreams emerged from the struggle:

Cry Freedom!

--

Do each of the traditions of which we have spoken hold conflicting things to be true?

Now, there's the thing. Respect is held by all for the Earth...

For the parents that bore us...

For the powers beyond us that gave us life and will take it...

And for life itself.

So what then of purity in a tradition?

Bloodlines, songlines, reincarnational history,
The resonances that make your soul sing...

The need for purity is for clarity of access to spirit, purity of intent. As a soul you may have had other lives in different times and traditions. Know also that as children of the Gods and Goddesses, co-creators with the Divine, you have your own access to spirit. When you stand on the Earth and see the majesty of the stars, and feel that experience move you, you are in touch with your own divinity. Honour that, and know that it may be sufficient.

It's like a smorgasbord right now! Nobody has the right to remain unenlightened!

Spirit moves tirelessly with infinite flexibility to bring us each towards our fulfilment. Let us all celebrate then the unique opportunities that our present time offers us.

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In conclusion:

I close the gate of the Centre, of the Spirit and Self, may they ever inspire us within.

I close the gate of the West, and thank the ever-flowing energy of Water and the Tao for its presence.

I close the gate of the South, and thank the powers of Fire and Inspiration, and their prophets, for the good they have brought to our World.

I close the gate of the East, and thank the powers of Intellect and Vedic Truth for the energy they have brought to our World.

I close the gate of the North, and thank the forces of Nature and the spirits of Earth and Sky for their inspiration from ancient time.

We are done!

© **Richard Comley**, May 2019

As a giraffe

you'd float

glide

your head and neck coming first

through white morning mist.

Under open skies

you'd take the great wide

dusty Serengeti

in your easeful stride

and have no need for a voice. Silently

you'd browse

on thorn and scrub

baobab

and the flat-topped acacia.

Giant cow, with no taste for blood.

Wendy Davies

Twiga, the Swahili name for giraffe, means 'the silent one'. A giraffe has no larynx.

Swimming with the turtles

The boat's engine, the squeals of 'Look! There!',
the remembered traffic
all along the island's west coast road
silenced
by the hum of the sea,
my eardrums' quiet liquidity.

In the pale turquoise,
the bulk of the largest turtle
rises dark
from the white coral
to meet a shoal of pearly fish
and my flailing breaststroke. I can't tell

if it's perturbed but dreamily,
diagonally,
plying its slow flippers expertly,
it swims off into outer space,
right outside my line of vision.
And I must come up for breath.

Wendy Davies

Letter on Iraq

Dear Fallen Angel,

Thanks for your letter.

I see why Iraq makes you feel better.

Your missiles did a remarkable job,

killing our troops, unleashing the mob,

missing the guilty, hitting the poor,

making an ass out of Blix and the law,

setting the looters free to destroy

removing the arms of that 12 year-old boy.

There's no doubt you're as wily as ever –

(using Bush *and* Saddam was doubly clever).

I've come to admire your Middle-East skill:

cluster-bombs - journalists – all grist to your mill

but the centre-piece of your infernal plan

was to take out the Garden where we began.

I imagine you thought it was time to update

the myth of the Snake with one of the State.

Eden, Euphrates – just names in a book

(Turn on the telly, we'll watch while we cook.)

I also admire the political zest
with which you buff up the ideals of the West.
The media, of course, has been yours for a while
(the silence on protests proof of your guile)
but if I may make a point on my side,
your role is a doddle, with little to hide.
Evil's not difficult – all it requires
is young men as killers and old men as liars.
My act, I submit, is a lot more complex –
I have to juggle three intransigent sects:
Muslims, Jews, Christians. Don't *you* think it odd
they all worship me !

Yours helplessly, God.

John Daniel

Thomas Saves The Day

A small boy is released into the park.

Away he speeds, aeroplane arms flung wide. Over the see-saw, up and down
the slide

He scrambles, tumbling in the safety bark. Puppy-like, springs up. shakes
himself, runs free A bobble-hatted ball of energy.

Mother, breathless from watching, lets her gaze Slide sideways, lighting on
a gentler scene A stranger's child is cradling something green. How quietly
and contendedly he plays!

Sudden as sparrow hawk swoops to snatch prey

Her son streaks, screeching, past her startled ears, Heading straight for the
innocent. She fears A rude disruption of his guileless play.

But, in a flash, as the wild one approaches: Mutual acceptance. Now the
magic names Are traded ; Gordon, Henry, Thomas, James,
The Fat Controller, the two wooden coaches. Lines each has diligently
learnt by heart Fly to and fro, while Henry plays his part.

Pause for discussion – then from crumpled sleeve,

With tender pride is ushered into view

The treasured plaything, battered, scratched and - blue!

- The hero of this railway make-believe.

Lads so unlike find common ground in play.

Once more, Tank Engine Thomas saves the day.

Jill Elliott February 2019

A Song of the Commons

Let eager twitchers flock to see
The latest rare celebrity.
I'd rather stay and hymn in words
The beauty of our common birds.

Though, leafing through my books of British Birds,
I'm puzzled by the names our forebears chose.
Common Gull, perhaps – but Common Tern?
Or Common Scoter – who'd know one of those?
Not sparrow, starling, pigeon, rook or crow,
Yet Common Sandpiper and Common Snipe.

No matter, let us sing the praise
Of garden robins, meadow larks,
Returning house martins, and swans
Adorning village ponds and parks.

Brave botanists the globe may scour
For prized exotic, rarest flower.
I'd rather scan my little plot
For bluebell and forget-me-not.

You May Queens, fêted stars, and summer brides,
Care not for hot-housed blooms in huge bouquets –
Take common wild flowers for your posies, and
Make garlands of their casual largesse –
Great sweeps of Common meadow buttercups,
Scarlet corn poppies, purple willow herbs.

So let us honour with a song
Our common flora; yet mourn, too,
The butterflies they nourished once –
When will we see a Common Blue?

Beasts of the world may prowl our screens,
Pursued by fearless wild-life teams.
I treasure more a thrilling glimpse
Of hare, or vole, or ghostly shrimps.

Yet by the pricking of my thumbs, I'd swear
Some witchy intervention in the choice
Of native animals deemed 'common', viz:
The bat, the frog, the lizard, newt and toad –
Only the Common Shrew escapes the curse
That's doomed the rest to centuries' disgust.

But now we prize the pipistrelle,
We love the lizard, cherish newts,
We're fond of frogs, and build for toads
At mating time, safe crossing routes.

Let dreamers bank on flight to space;
I'll stay and sing this common place,
This earth, whose air, balmy or breeze,
Is kept in being by the trees.

The stately trees of England stand at arms,
Stout common soldiers on the climate front.
The ash, the beech, the walnut, and the lime,
The yew, the hornbeam, alder, hazel, larch –
All bear their 'Common' name with local pride,
Beside the English Elm and English Oak.

So hug our trees and guard our woods:
Our roots, like theirs, in common ground,
And save the common-wealth in which
Birds, flowers, beasts, trees – and we – are bound.

Phillipa Hardman June 2019

Of Geese and Ghosts. Walking back across Port Meadow February 11th, 2019

I walk home in the ice-cold gloaming, over the hugeness.

Sun gone down, on my left in the west.

Clear sky meets meadow,

Crescent moon behind me, piercing bright.

Pink streaked mist on my darkening right.

A white goose is squawking, calling a mate to fly together, up off the black glass river, and,

Circling, crashing, down, into the gathering, grass grazing flock.

At the midpoint, as the last of the day dies, tips into
darkness.

By their Memorial stone.

The young men walk, shouting, smoking, having a lark,

All in their twenties (except the boy forever nineteen).

A gaggle of ghosts, singing of life,

Of the glorious joy of flight.

Of safe landings.

Long ago.

Into the night.

Lorna Logan



The Mead

I knew a mead wherein great burnet flowered
Attracting insects 'till the hay was cut.
Then came the war and government empowered,
We drained and ploughed and broadcast seed (devoured
As bread for factory men and women) but
All gone, the mead wherein great burnet flowered.

Cropping for fifty years, the land was soured
And set aside. Environment was put
Into a scheme and government empowered
The farmer, who ploughed and sowed. The mead re-flowered
All grasses first, then cowslips and crow's-foot
Grew in the mead wherein great burnet flowered.

Then came the rain instead of July sun, it showered
Upon the mead and hay was left uncut.
No more the mead wherein great burnet flowered.
All but this change the government empowered.

Alison W. McDonald 21st May, 2008.

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ADDENDUM 25.04.2014

Nature in time looked down upon the mead;
Revitalized the flowers the insects loved.
The farmer cut the hay, the flowers gave seed
And cattle for their part, began to breed
The calves for which the grass and flowers had proved
To be the best for growth and met their need

Beauty in the eye

Two flags were flying in the bright sunlight.
It was the wedding day and everything glowed.
No one said a word,
 No compliment,
 No argument.

Two flags were flying in the bright sunlight.
An important visitor from overseas.
How nice the flags look, the man said.
 But, they are upside down,
 Our countries are in distress.

Many flags were flying in the bright sunlight.
So many people were outraged.
And told him to go home.
 They marched,
 I watched.

Distress

There are no flags today.
Neither upright and strong,
Nor turned on their heads.

Too many people died and this act of remembrance
Will be high-jacked for political purpose.

Must arrogance rule instead of common sense?

Cathie Miserandino

The Walkers

Each morning they move untidily
Round the margin of the hill,
Taking short cuts of no consequence,
Meeting familiar faces.
The doctor, pleased to be seen a hundred yards away,
Raises his stick in greeting.
They hear his voice calling long after he passes, calling the dog.
Ivan always wants to go
The way his master is not!
At a certain time, unless they are late,
They pass the man who serves tea.
For all the people around his stall
He creates a ritual occasion in which the walkers partly share.
Water slopped regularly out of two old tins
Makes a double trail to his small out-door kitchen.
They meet shy Chinese girls giggling behind smiles,
And shadow boxers systematically annihilating
Invisible opponents
In order to harmonise thought and action.
During festivals they push through crowds of worshippers
Placing fresh fruit at ancient hillside shrines,
Buying and selling, begging and giving
In a noisy companionable Cantonese way.
They walk under the lip of hills after rain,
Water exciting the rocks, ravishing concrete culverts.

They talk.
Words and more words;
Questions asked and answered:
Looks and actions;
Wordless provocations ending in a chase.
Conversation begun with one, continues with another.
Words and walking bind them together
And a special kind of friendship grows.
On the last day, thinking to amuse them,
The man promises to write about the walkers.
As he recalls how happy they were
He is filled with sadness.
Their lives have moved apart;
The people they were, walking together,
Are no more.
The hills above the contour path,
Sacred rocks blackened by joss,
Now echo different voices.
The walkers walk with different companions,
In different countries.
Such memories are painful to the point of tears.
Only Ivan, only the dog
Running in the wrong direction is without regret,
Mindlessly happy.

Seamus Rainbird 1972, on leaving Hong Kong

What is Truth? Said Jestig Pilate

Confronting facts, he deems them fake,

The does he the tweeting make.

But opinion's not the same as fact,

And a lying tweet's a dishonest act.

So listen up! You have been warned:

Truth is easily suborned!

Bruit this aloud; blow loud the TRUMPET:

Truth is a virgin, fake's a strumpet.

Seamus Rainbird

Blue planet: from the Earth to the other worlds

You gave me lapis lazuli and other things
I did not know the names of;
You beat me, shook me, battered me until
I had a shape, a boundary, a place;

Now you are gone, and I revolve alone
Beautiful and blue in sea and stone.

Gillian Somerscales 2017, revised May 2019

Ladies who lunch

Two ladies in linen with lightly crumpled faces,
Dissecting adultery and artichokes,
Assessing with practised and slightly anxious eyes
Whether either is looking much changed in apparel or size,
And laughing politely, if briefly, at each other's jokes.

In cut-glass tones between sips of Sauvignon Blanc
They touch lightly on husbands, on children, on lovers, on friends;
Pushing them round with a fork and a few green peas,
No topic, no mouthful, too large to be swallowed with ease;
For on lightness their poise, their composure, their balance depends.

Once they were girls in pearls, two bright young things
Of the highly finished kind—in Paris or Berne;
Repatriated for the breeding Season,
Prepared through dancing and parental reason
To be handed out in marriage in their turn.

There followed the years of their distant but parallel lives;
Of parties in gardens and houses in parks and on moors;
Of selection of schools for the newly grown heirs and heiresses
Of increasingly rare, and then more, but now faithless caresses;
Of anger, of hurt, of accusing, of tears, of divorce.

At first the rediscovered sisters circled
Each other warily, searching for the beat
By which to step new, unfamiliar dances;
Then, finding bonds in quick connecting glances,
Began to feel more certain on their feet.

And now they're back on form and back in fashion,
Lunching weekly in the smartest places;
A polished pair, impeccably presented,
Impermeably calm, their bond cemented,
Taking possession of their chosen spaces.

But still from time to time a tiny crack
Appears upon the highly burnished gleam;
A glimpse of fear is shared across the table;
A silent cry: if only we were able,
We would admit—we are not what we seem.

Gillian Somerscales *March 2019, revised May 2019*

Calm. Evening.

The garden has become a photograph.
Time caught in the act. So shocked
now might be any century. Everything

has stopped: our neighbour's sycamore,
the laburnum hanging in abeyance,
tendrils of honeysuckle motionless,
even my thoughts are slow as grass.

The smoke bush has halted in mid-gesture.
Light fades gently. The red of a wild poppy
poses against a darkening conifer.

Birdsong listens intently to itself.
Perfume from night-scented plants drifts
into self-hypnosis. Only a solitary bee
hasn't been told, cannot even guess.

Foxes

For days the comings and goings of foxes
have increased. You can smell them
where they have sidled through lanes
between villages. Their scent
clings to a bend in the road, lingers
in fields next to the woods. Last night
one crossed the lawn where we sat
wine glasses in hand, idly conversing.
It stopped, stared at us as if reading
our thoughts, then turned away.
The sky was thick with heat.
Our thoughts were large with fox.
Darkness moved stealthily towards us
from the far end of the garden.

Paul Surman from */Places/*, by kind permission of Oversteps Books Ltd

Progress

I want to be where rain falls unremarked
and bird cries eke out the vigils of the air.
Where the road fails into a rough lane
that shambles inauspiciously on
past old paint tins and broken push chairs
that people dump. Then over a crumbling,
numbered canal bridge, and a railway track
to where all sense of direction peters out
in nothing more than field boundaries,
dusty cattle tracks, pastures becoming scrub,
thistles, encroaching gorse, and poor farms
littered with rusting wrecks, whose farmers
do shady deals in this or that, and every day
begins and ends in different kinds of dearth.
Where washing is hung out to flap away
for hours on the line, looking dirty as rags,
threadbare and out of fashion, and is never
taken in when it rains. Where a dog barks
but no one shouts at it to stop, and forgotten
fields are waterlogged in winter, flyblown
and parched in summer; fences need repair,
stiles are broken and collapsed, and great oaks
grow venerable and vast in ancient hedges
that are overgrown, but full of gaps, where stock
wandered through at will and are long since lost.
Here is where I want to sit and watch
civilization slowly being ditched. I welcome ruin:
the slow growth of wilderness and peace.

Paul Surman from */Places/*, by kind permission of Oversteps Books Ltd

Losing Track

In the morning I dress warmly – the gate clangs - the sky is purple - wherever you went in winter we go now - following the cart tracks past the whitening bones of geese, broken sticks, feathers, lost trainers - allotments all frosty cabbages - horses stand frozen - steamy breath - dogs running sideways sniffing the ground - river flowing fast past the ancient hut circles - hills mauve - black crows - boots sucking into icy mud - endless cargo train heading north - reindeer on the meadow somewhere far away

Team Raf: Rafael, Jane & Simon

Changing the law

I was once the mirror of you
and you the mirror of me
but now they say we're different –
your way of being born and mine,
your way of growing up and mine,
your way of breathing and mine,
your way of learning and mine,
your way of being a son, daughter and mine
your way of dreaming and mine,
your way of remembering and mine,
your way of making friends and mine,
your way of believing and mine –

I was once the mirror of you
and you the mirror of me
but now they say we're different.

I was once one whole
but now I am divided -
my English half from my Polish half,
my Litvak half from my Gateshead half,
my agnostic half from my believer half,
my caring half from my selfish half,
my clever half from my stupid half,
my right kidney from my left kidney,
my right hand from my left hand,
my left ventricle from my right ventricle –
I was once one whole
but now I am divided.

I was once the mirror of you
and you the mirror of me
but now they say we're different.

Jane Spiro

Folly Pool, Bladon

After Dylan Thomas

I see the boys of Bladon in their August camp
on the fenlock meadows droughted in late summer
shouting, plunge into the current looping
through willow curtains, into the pooled bend of the river.

I feel again cow-trampled dung-mud
suck at my bare feet, and launch
into the eddy and curl below the outflow
from the industrial estate at Hanborough –

and now, if I walk past the church to the footpath crossroads
and my dogs set up a conversation
with a stranger, a smile-shape or set of the eyes
or a phrase, might remind me of one of those boys

Sarah Watkinson

Habitat Loss - **original version**

Was it lost, or never found,
the thousand-flowered tapestry
the public good, the common ground?

The bay where herring queens were crowned
the quiet sky, the fruitful sea
was it lost, or never found?

Small city squares to stroll around,
accidental, open, free
a public good, a common ground.

Translucence of a glass-dark pond
amphibian diversity
was it lost, or just not found?

A wood where chanterelles abound
that's not some shooter's property,
a public good, a common ground.

A stranger welcomed to the round
untallied generosity
was it lost, or never found
the public good, the common ground?

Sarah Watkinson

Habitat Loss - 'Wolvercote Villanelle'

Was it lost, or never found,
the thousand-flowered tapestry
the public good, the common ground?

The bay where herring queens were crowned
the quiet sky, the fruitful sea
was it lost, or never found?

Small city squares to stroll around,
accidental, open, free
a public good, a common ground.

Translucence of a glass-dark pond
amphibian diversity
was it lost, or just not found?

Ah, **Wytham**, where blue-bells abound

You're not some shooter's property,
but public good, and common ground!

Port Meadow, in the river's bend
is green as far as you can see –

so all's not lost!

They CAN be found -

the public good, the common ground!

Sarah Watkinson, Sunday, 23 June 2019 ; adapted for Wolvercote Fun on the Green, from 'Habitat Loss', in *Dung Beetles Navigate by Starlight*, Cinnamon Press.

I Like Insects in the Outdoors

Emerald shield bugs on the oak leaves,
ladybirds, their sudden take-off,
plume moths like the ghosts of crane-fly over bindweed in the evening,
bees in all their colourways of black and gold and brown and yellow,
burnet moths in red and charcoal, lacy commas, damselflies.

Why would I use pesticides?

.....Clad in drab and bent on plunder,
clegs and fleas, ticks and mosquitoes –
these are quite a different matter.

During news on Channel Four,
the dog at hand, I stroke his fur,
detect the tick-shape like a squash-pip
flip it off on to the fire.
Watch it burst without remorse.

Sarah Watkinson

Elephants

The elephants' bodies rot, the herd lies where it was smashed;
the pile becoming formless; red ants crawl out of the grass.

But the ivory trade is dwindling, the tusks are not half
the length they used to be; elephants have a shorter life.

Pour water on the earth, watch their flesh melt away;
palmleaf ears, trunks, great legs into African clay.

Fabulous beasts they've become, sealed in some glass compartment;
the dodo cut in coral, the little jade elephant.

Keep applying the pressure; their heads are half gone.
I am a chocolate elephant that melts in the sun.

Blind Man's Buff

I hear your dead stick tapping on my pavement
and mark the outward signs of the blind man,
white stick, dark glasses, well-trained dog, all three.

I see white chalk marks on a healthy tree.
Walk through these beechwoods, trees are overturned
with dead-white chalk in huge lumps clogging their roots,
sprawled in dog-mercury, looking at the blue sky;
dismantled trunks, and boughs lopped off to burn,
twigs deep in nettles, giants brought to their knees.

I rub my aching lids. The trees must die,
and men with dogs walk through the bright green shoots
carrying guns, mark down the doomed trees.

Merryn Williams