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Green Man

He doesn't fear much: great parts of his life
live beyond the pleasure principle.
Laws fill his veins, and laws kill him.
He'll drive up through pavement to meet his needs
without worrying if he's happy or not.
"When heads won't work, bodies must serve."
He doesn't care what will stop him: fills space
around him with creation, builds a room
of leaves and light, open.

Even those plaguey monks — illiterate moles,
pig-ignorant, copying by rote —
could squeeze a drop of sap from their dry cells
to foliate a corner of the word.

And ancient, all scarred bark, their little lungs
a ragged green hanky one arm waves
above a ravaged trunk, trees' dowager dignity
commands a moment's calm: they hold time there
in a rough column, its monument.

Winds that blow through us, that blow around the world,
stir us deep, to our great cracked hearts — storms
of emotion: Van Morrison singing "Madame George";
someone looking through photographs, saying to himself,
"This was your wife; you have no wife any more."

Rock-solid in earth, we spread our arms
in love's dumb function; high up from harm,
in punky-soft dark cavities cauterized
around old damage, warm creatures can shelter.

6 October 1992

Lever

Flowing, flowing, the energy dance: my heart
lubs along, rattling the walls, learning
its room, panther; or pacing important traffic
in the stalk joining parent and child, the link
between the breather and the world of air.

Dam:

guardian of awful energy, penstock pointing
power at a turbine, saying, Move.

With a Why-won't-ye. What hand controls,
fathers the act? Mine alone? That god's
who gripped my wrist on our rare walks, afraid
I'd escape like a dog or pig? No sir:
the siren hemorrhaging to Emergency,
the sparrow screaming in the she-cat's jaws,
the silent gull's underwing, sunset-red —

all there is today takes a hand
in what I do, untethered in my field.

19 August 1992

Out of It

Hot knives, Thai sticks, boomers, spliffs,
beer after beer after beer, pitchers of it,
wine — a litre at least — drunk beyond taste,
chemical: you were like a tree
trying to be only bark.

Formed the habit of escape early; then learned to love
your long fall back into the world. Seduced
by the hollow draw of empty air, your chest
fluttered and thrilled at lofting down
one last surrendering flight.

So here you stand, grounded — still entering down
into the body you must love as much
as each aloof attainable mountain. They
shoulder your feet like allies
while you contain, and choose to live on, air.

25 May 1993

Artifact

He bicycles through the cemetery little thinking
of these grave dead who, startled, shocked, or pining ready,
one day and never moved. He doesn't know
their stories, nor make them up. Rather he senses
a universal, a particular;

that polished granite: how long will it shine?
This white stone's become all runnelled and pocked
from rain with car exhaust in. Orange burst
of lichen — he doesn't want to be dead
and will be. Oh bite that.

No wonder he so intently studies
evidence of wear and weathering;
nowhere else is proof so clear
time happens to matter.
Still he's not stone.

25 May 1993

A Sod

He has mountain fatigue. They're all around.
His energy is high, he's tired
of town, impatient with what in him isn't mountain.
If he could peel away all those hours of watching TV,
make himself better —

Some bug-nature in him,
dumb, driving,
indifferent to reason, maniacally motivated,
works unrelenting. It's essential,
yet part of him despises that bug.

Clouds are dusting the high slopes with snow,
frosting the dark green conifers almost colourless.
How long would it take to get up there?
No bug could, in a lifetime. His long legs . . .
No. Accept their distance. Hello, bug.

22 May 1993