

The Llyn Writings

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Snow has settled ... bury me here

Author

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The Llŷn Writings

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SEA WATCH OVERSTOCK

1. Pieces, fragments, and notes during the writing of Sea Watches 1984-7

* * *

So calm and clear a day you could turn and face it,
and say, "My life is a mince of pain."

An earth tremor, a low rumble, the little grocery shop
at Rhydlios trembles and the tins rattle on the shelf
we thought a heavy goods vehicle had passed by.

The farm: earthen banks separate the fields, the fields
scattered with goose feathers dung and mushroom stalks
to the cliff edge, furrows of white rock.

Hollow bone, porous tuff, delicately poised at the land's edge
an industrialist's wink could crush all of it

Except the calm clear factor
spoken trembling in florescent stone.

* * *

Insane hilltop citadels on igneous outcrops
heather filling the air with sweetness, stonechats perched
on swaying bracken fronds, patches of broken stone

sphagnum grasses, bilberry, insane citadels guarding
nothing, ravings of old men, actor-politicians,
the body preserved and guarded in the mountain-top house
pride of intellect spasm of power

but wishes all shall fail thee.

* * *

Crossville Bus Company, Pwllheli 2458 or Caernarfon 4631
Route Llangwnadl-Nefyn. No go the circus.
Telephone box vandalised. A fritillary at St Mary's Well.

Buzzed by a RAF jet from Anglesey, the herd runs towards
the sea.

Enter a bald woman leading a blind child.

“The world can only be served by the extraordinary” (Goethe)

* * *

Walking in the dark night, sea sky and land
confused together. Noisy sea. Dim, clouded flickering
of house windows... again an earth tremor.

Nothing but the total gimpsed in facets
and so the fish eyes in the tree
the cars honking each other
the ground thick with crossed bone.

Phil Davenport died this week in Mozambique.

No return, a single light ahead across the cancelled fields.

* * *

Waking in the night
I see the door-light through your hair.

* * *

A faint cry in the night, of sandpipers
through the steady wind and rain on the roof

“brine stings the window” (B.C.)

The faint piping of oyster-catchers in the morning
like an aeolian machine behind the steady
rain on the roof and the wind on the corners.

Collect these details, as your wages.

2. The Nightwatch Notebook

Texts prepared in 1989 for Sea Watches VIII, then called "Eight Sea Sunsets" and the whole work "Shining Cloth", written at night out on the cliff or on returning to the caravan, in either case in the dark and not entirely legible.

A. Saturday

[In manus tuas

Between insistence and response a sudden crack
a report of unknown origin
three-quarter moon low over the farmhouse.
Imperfect circle, perfect fear.

Saturday (2)

[de Sermisy's Lamentations

The world-sheet folding the line through time
as the arm turns inward for protection
against the spread [? against the speed]

A land hump black against the silver turmoil
that advances greedily but wants no reward,
a long stone against the star, a theory that works
that predicts reliably and declares its limits
and opens the door for the singers.

Sunday

Cloudy complicated sunset, patches and layers shifting
against each other on the horizon, a dark underlay
moving gently from left to right, family of three choughs
on the headland, their hollow cries
Sitting so still "a god might enter him"
Sitting so still an equation might settle on his arm.
[...]
Patchwork of yellow cloud-wisps carpeting the sky.
Like a night watchman his freedom

disperses into echo, a proof might
pass through him [...]

C.

[Lassus, Byrd

Cirque of rain clouds. What did we see today?
A wet moth clinging to a grass stalk.
An ancient church in a clump of elms.
Dark grey turbulent sea pounding the land, you
cannot love it "To love the sea is only
to love death" (Mann) Still head
Still head in the passage of weather
A wet moth clinging to a grass stalk.

D

[Hildegard

Light is torn from us.

To end up alone in a grim seaside bungalow
(homo fragilis) smelling slightly unsavoury
and burning the night light as the spray
hits the window in outer dark, harbour [?harvest]
of the extraordinary, eyes turned back in.

The horizon blurs, a flock of jackdaws black rags
against the sky, waiting, the dark will come in
and the light will go out, the light will be restored.

The strange animals in the head will dine together.

E

[Taverner

(Eclipse of the Moon: 17th August 1989, 2:30 a.m.)

Never stop. Pause and protract. Withdraw
and separate. Lay items together in order

like a stone wall on top of a cliff, a spider's web
across a culvert. Listening for an answer.
"Death should not be a problem. If all goes well,
you pass into dreaming and the world vanishes."

Waves, wing-beats.

[F and G are lost except for one word, "lucifer" or possibly
"dulcimer"]

H

Back at the caravan I switch the light on to a chorus of complaints.
I make myself some cocoa and read Chinese poems.
The "I" of these poems is always alone.

* * *

Soul tangled in wires [?violas]
serious, uneven, alone, not-alone,
worried about the gas cylinder
the fire that flowers at the end of breath

Worrying florescence that might
suddenly go pop. And the head fire
fall into dream leaving everything unfinished.
A string band playing in the farmyard in the middle of the night?

* * *

Later the blur intensifies, moon over a black shed
glows like a light bulb through ice
thin strips of cloud in streaks across sky
like something very fast photographed
but there is no speed. Waiting to pass
into company.

* * *

I settle comfortably into bed
by the small caravan window
onto grey field edge, black shed
and streaks across the sky. Legible,
heartening lines. Too dark to
write, I write. I fill the pages.

* * *

Filtered moonlight on the bed,
serious words, some of them,
about nothing much, the head of a tree
against the sky, a wish for sleep,
serious breathing in the room, like a lighthouse.

* * *

And so calm and clear the shining cloth
curvature of [?thought] which
passes, becomes cloudy, spreads
into a width of mental movement
also in [] of largesse for
tomorrow, []ing what we keep
when we lose the moon and the sea and the whole
[two lines written on top of each other]
saves terrestrial events from waste.

7

**THE TRANSLATIONS OF
ST COLUMBA'S SEA-WATCH**

1.
To be enfolded bodily in a summit
Like the ink in a letter
And witness the sea's entire calm.
2.
The heaving waves riding the glitter
A continual singing
Addressed to a cause.
3.
The clear headland with its smooth strand
We are established at the outer edge
Cloaked in brightness, smeared in birdsong.
4.
The local waves beating on the rocks
The [—]¹ from the graveyard.
5.
Great flocks of birds hanging over the sea
Rare mammals² passing down the coast
Gods of food, gods of want, human centres.
6.
Watching the tide rising and falling, my
Back to the land, I attain my secret name.
7.
And recognise my failings, so difficult to speak out.
A contrite or empty heart, watching the sea.
8.
Honour the movers of these powers:
Sky messengers, earth cakes, ebb and flow.
9.
Read books good for the soul.
Learn to avoid power of lies.
Meditate silently, sing aloud.

10.

I gather dulse from the rocks, I go fishing
I share the food in the community
Alone in my room.

11.

So to think further the simple heights of physics
That redeem our term, and the necessities become
Lighter, and life is [prized.]³

¹ possibly shout, call

² glossed whales

³ query priced or prised