

Hedge Fund
& Other Living Margins

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Once upon a time, there was a hereafter.

—The Children

O children we are robbing! turn away!
May
we have left you not just dirt and dearth
on scrapheap Earth
but each of you the proud eye of a dream.
— Jonathan Griffin

The most remarkable feature of this historical moment on earth is not that we are on the way to destroying the world—we've actually been on the way for quite a while. It is that we are beginning to wake up, as from a millennia-long sleep, to a whole new relationship to our world, to ourselves and each other.

— Joanna Macy

Compassion is an act of imagination.

— Lindsay Clarke

...Change the myth in order to change the wider reality ... that is the way in which serious changes are eventually brought about.

— Mary Midgeley

Nature Story

Natural history—the lexical preserve of stretched skin, glass cases, curators in drab ties. Dusty, lifeless, atomised, it's Nature boiled down to a Whale's rib, air breathed through the dehumidifier's teeth.

It keeps neat accounts and classifications, but cannot imagine the latency of woodland, a fallen trunk rife with spores, the rhythms of Lichen. In its dreams the future's stuffed, and taxidermists rub their hands.

Hedge Fund

Little lines of sporting wood run wild
where hands heaved stones
to enclose—drove John Clare crazy.

Today those walls left to crumble—
cracking bark, and Hawthorn
boughs once plashed,
now ancient elbows' fold
and sinew; Hazel, Ash—
all create a delicate asylum.

Money markets usually lie
at the core of the financial
system, functioning quietly

Colonies of Snails,
feathers, crush of brittle
lime—a Song Thrush
sings up its midden.

Startled mouths—
White Dead Nettle flowers
open where a shot Fox
crept to die; here lies
minus an eye.

Maggots;
rubbing its feet a Fly—tip,
the yawn of a fridge;
Autumn leaves, debris
rots, spawns Hips and Haws
to feed the Songbirds and Badgers.

*and so efficiently that they're
barely noticed. Like the human
heart, which beats continuously*

A few bushes on,
the Elm where a Barn Owl
stared, burped its pellet—
grey ossuary of Mice,
Amen.

Still, Life finds its niches.
On rocks Lichens crottle,
and warty Elder stems
ooze with tar-black berries.
Below—cutting corners of tins,
and soft, ambulant Toads.

*without conscious thought,
their global operation takes
place night and day, while*

Gusts, tendrils—the scarlet fruit
of Woodbine flowers,
which lured Moths
on warm, moonlit evenings.

Glossy black plastic
stripped from silage;
Pheasants, beaters,
ha-ha,
shots, Retrievers;
coats hooked with Burdock;
shocks of electric wire.

*a seizure of the market is like
a cardiac arrest, threatening
the orderly rhythm of the system*

Dog Rose—thorns
like bloody fangs;
memories of blooms
that tea-cup Butterflies in June.

Cocoons, gossamer-stretch
between stems;
new risings of Ivy up old posts;
a Wren's nest tight as a child's fist;
Spindle, Holly;
and snagged on Bramble,
these newspaper flags.

*on which the modern world
has come to depend. Now
it seems it's on life support—*

Switch mechanical,
stink-horn diesel,
the implacable wheels and reach of a
tractor's machete. Random execution,
the insane-making crunch,
while the contractor sits
muffled in his cab,
on the wheel his hands
stiff as supermarket quotas...

*share values in free-fall,
as investors predict their own
dwindling margins and returns.*

Marginal, i

Very quaint, very Emily Dickinson, all those shouting nouns—
but how else to see sisters and brothers in margins and ghettos?

The Worst Winter in Thirty Years

A single Winter doesn't break
the pattern. O Fern frost,
iced webs, branch stipple-
engraved with Squirrel prints,
snow in swags and drifts
our kids had rarely seen.
Stillness, respite from
the relentless—
abandoned cars, time
to walk in wonder. Yet
hand-wringing, the calculated
loss to the economy, salt hills
dwindling, impasse, gritted
teeth. A single Winter
can break the bank.

Treasure Trove, *Survey of English
Dialects, Northern Counties*

In a country of the past
a young Bird,
freshly shocked
from its shell,
was no standardised
date-stamped nestling,

but a bare-arse,
biddy, gollop,
bare-golling,
raw gorbet,
lile bird,
pudding kite,
red-raw kellick,
new hatched one.

A Wake to the Kittiwakes during London Fashion Week

A collage poem inspired by two articles juxtaposed in *The Guardian*, 16.9.06

Sprats are out this season
and Lerwick feels absolutely the new Cannes
now the North Sea's turned Mediterranean.
This is how it looks:

gaunt forms,
breast-bones protruding,
they strut and posture against a fabulous cliff-edge location—

and it's a muted palette:
Kittiwake white and grey
jostling Guillemot penguin suits,
with narrow neck-bands and those Cleopatra eyes,
o, and lots of retro ruffles,
feathers decidedly dishevelled.

An avian style of heroin chic,
it turns the spotters' heads
as the chicks lose their grip,
and, like Naomi on platform heels,
totter
and slip—

all
the
way
to double zero,
body-mass stripped,
make a splash where no flash-bulbs ever venture.

Bee

What do you feel
when you enter
the flower—

Love,
a lover,
a long, slow
linger of light?

The Fallen

A growing number of wildflower species are on the edge of extinction—according to *The Vascular Plant Red Data List 2005*, nine native species have been lost within the British Isles.

Here lies Ghost Orchid;
once haunted Beechwoods—
rest in peace.

Here lies Small Bur-parsley;
legion pot-herb of wastelands—
rest in peace.

Here lies Alpine Bladder-fern;
crosiers lost from damp highland rocks—
rest in peace.

Here lies Cottonweed;
assieged from Britain's beaches—
rest in peace.

Here lies Purple Spurge;
eternally procumbent—
rest in peace.

Here lies Marsh Fleawort;
ditched from fens, unrecorded—
rest in peace.

Here lies Downy Hemp-nettle;
the deceased passed unremarked from fields—
rest in peace.

Here lies Summer Lady's-tresses;
style totally outmoded—
rest in peace.

Here lies Lamb's Succory;
succumbed to high-yield wheat—
rest in peace.

And with each plant, its embedded companions,
the Unknown Biota lost to steady human pressure—
may your souls also rest in peace.