



Rockfall

a Purbeck
fragment

1. The Mile Indicators



Sightless, the mile towers signal,
 terse
and unseen by night boats
 south of the Head,
surge against stratonimbus, ignorant.
Between Dancing Ledge and Anvil Point
and half a life from either, a heart's tread
slows
 and slows, and gives way
 into the gorse.

~

Sweep, radar, a cathode glance
 over
whale rock – seal rock – ichthyosaur rock –
Swanage rock – past, and skims the girl,
the polyester, the white soles. No sentinel
light from the blind chapel, blocked on the wreck
headland: the shivered stone-folds: a human sliver.

~

Hard hermit's board and cold comfort
the Dorset earth, no mattress for your nineteen
and no more winters.

Get up! You're better loved
named, in cotton covers, than sink, here,
fingered
by bronchial halfflight.

Days roll, dreams,
to the turf edge:
cascade,
unknown, unfit.

~

Police will soon pull you to the streetlights, the news,
the digital jurisdiction, the republic of anxiety.
Oh but they had so wanted you, the incalculable
invertebrates,

your crease caverns, soaked unlabelled
fabrics, repeated dewed and soon-to-be-denied
gift –

your leaching.

Even they mislay you.

Your last

imperceptible

loved ones.

2. St Michael's Garage



Petrol

spilt rainbows delta coils
hydrocarbons on tarmac

by the tyres.

'Play in inner rack steering joints
but emissions OK, ignition, brakes, vents' –
so there's time, time yet, for repairs –
to recalibrate, tool and fuel, still some miles.

~

Pale, you urge

the pale sympathy of ice cream
comfort, lipid, unsubtle – it will melt,
an oral embrace you enfold, known, reach out to,
child

and child memory.

The cameras net you,
an indifferent catch

dab; gurnard; smolt:
uncommercial.

Throw you back

to swim.

~

A wafer with it: is this your body you receive -
day's deaconandpriestandbishopandpoppe
melt the melter

viaticum

journey's bread
call to eternal places, inscriptions read,
pocketed, keepsake, hope against hope
shale chips, bits of half (if that) belief.

~

Michael, patron
of the pumps and gauges and balances
the
rusts

the black grease;

Won't you hold her,
(seraph of guard) pitted breastplate and notched
sword –

O appear, prevent her, care, unlatch
prevenient grace.

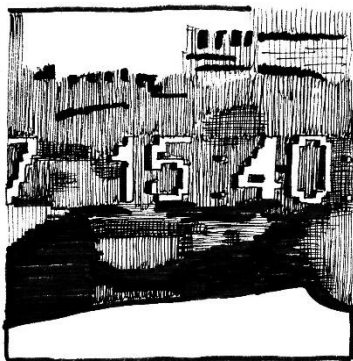
But

to fraught realms of grander
sorrows your soldered wings and filmy glances

Turn.

This halt is gone.

3. Manor Gardens



On this spot where nothing has happened but
nothing has ever happened but
 thin November
documented erasure of paddocks and old walls.
Yards in spectre,
 the farm gone. Aerials
harrow zinc cloudscape
 instead: ochre
grounds and bittercress; you're filmed, a darting moment.

~

Mendicant and faint upon a doorstep
your behaviour is irrational, words fallout, short
of communication.

Listen.

To what?

Not speech,
turbulence. A nor'easter. Jackdaws snatch
all meaning; the wind blows away what
you want: unweaving the skein; a denial; to stop.

~

Scroll to 1969, and there
Diana Kemp takes the unconscionable risk
that a lad with a car might not throttle
her: in a ditch near Ulwell she drifts,
settles,
penetrated by black water. So, now, a task
of detection: an ambered narrative of murder.

~

Eager officers identify this old woman's
cough covering for killing,
Yet
a press release
will declare unhomicide later, the guilty unguilty –
Schrodinger's criminals. The digital clock off-kilter,
transuranic, heavy elements increase
errors and epochal echoes, just too human.
The time is wrong.

4. The Quarries



What do the old men in Langton say,
the pub-grievers, the bench-warriors?

Nothing:

the length of adits and the orientation of seams are interred.

What do the quarr-mouths south of Herston say,
the apertures, the throats of marble?

Nothing:

they are choked with old chains and carcinogens.

No, go, this is your work, your life's work now,

the path over the flints.

~

Caravans

static

the lines

cross the humming wires

past California Farm, a flight of fancy

grounded

earthed

static

but you're taking leave

of destination, obligation, of whatever love

is or was or might have been:

Your answer
a redwing lifting
berated
by the wind-bores.

~

Your strata
the fossiliferous veins
laid in ingressions
and not nearly healed
compacted to cinder beds and colourstruck
by memory lightning
uninvited they're back
now you let the electrical gale unpeel
layers
the unreeling capstan
the saw of pains.

~

Out and out
of treatment
as, west, the day
fragments
and your triangulating guardians
- the obelisk and the castle and the radio mast -
(as though there were a doubt) glance a last
time
barbed wire
relentless
the tanks are gaining
Now
the Big Push
to the guns of the sea:
over and out, and down.

5. The Well in the Thorns



If the pathside well were not strangled it could swallow all
the stillbirth assistance and the potbound sympathy
the laments of industrialists
the cataract of polyethylenes
the barometric weight grey towering
the crying tides

Gaia
how far have you gone
the last whitethroat that won't make it through the winter

The complaint of the earth
the indictment of extinct phyla
the rebellion of burnt soils
the bordered-sallow and the deergrass
the ruts and restharrow that snag the ploughshare

The cytokine storm impels
these desperate remedies

Convergence
Restitution

And

The Woman Pays
The Woman Pays

For the deep is in view now
stonestrewn this smited homecoming

*And I've travelled over
Dry earth and flood
Hell and high water
To bring you my love*

all the fractures
the offshore gyres
lapislazuli
brought you my love

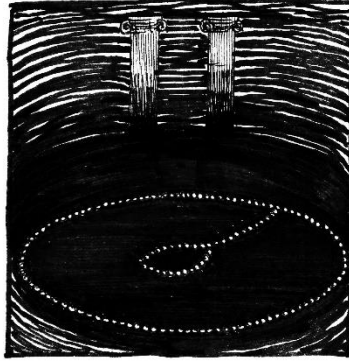
to

Here
here at the end of all things
here slate-dark darkening south
the hush of the tumult touch
the ecstasy of rest to curl you round

the long counsel of the breakers

and the night song of the devastating sea

6. The Amphitheatre



Each mile has a wreck, tributary, crab-picked, named in the tide;
but see a benign foreshore, inflected with harbourlights, reforming,
retessellating towards order, the pattern of waves, all it can provide.

Imperial salvage, the columns, Ionic markers of a space for declaiming,
if anyone wanted to speak: a mute arena of salt-strafted grasses,
tougher than you might think, all strained silences retaining.

St Catherine's Night: laid on setts a wheel of fire in glasses,
jars and lanterns, ranks placed to summon in the night
and the night's powers, tender and alight, each intention's trace.

What have you come to burn? Fire a memory and find an insight;
ignite the closed futures, put a match to the billions spent on other
than justice or help: regret, condolence, palliative: incinerate and leave it.

But don't. No, pick a star and tell a story: a fled moth, a
mythic constellation, new stellar alignments, to frame the hours
ahead: to a determined dawn friend, father, sister, mother;

threads of word and music link figures: memories turned desires,
kindled against trap and bladderwrack: handfasted: Andromeda rising:
the wishing shore's wave: *Gaia* engraved in burning flowers.

On 7th November 2017 19-year-old Gaia Pope of Langton Matravers on the Isle of Purbeck disappeared. She was recorded by CCTV cameras at St Michael's Garage near Swanage and at Manor Gardens in the town. It took 11 days for her body to be discovered near the coastal footpath although it was not hidden. Police had arrested three members of a local family on suspicion of involvement in Gaia's murder, but a post-mortem showed she had died of hypothermia. She had made claims of sexual assault which had not been pursued by the police and had developed increasing epilepsy and mental disorder in preceding months as her alleged attacker approached release from prison. The campaign established by her family, Justice For Gaia, works not just on her case but publicises the interactions of mental health, sexual violence, and the justice system.