

BACK IN THE COUNTRY

COLIN BLUNDELL

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Hub Editions

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Hub Editions
4 Victoria Cottages
Church Road
Terrington St John
Wisbech
Cambridgeshire
PE14 7SS

her hands wave the shape
of Chosen Hill—long way down
to the railway bridge

with a nameless friend
on the bridge where steam trains pass—
ducking from the smoke

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her hands wave the shape
of Chosen Hill—long way down
to the railway bridge

with a nameless friend
on the bridge where steam trains pass—
ducking from the smoke

talking all night long
passion for words & ideas
unspent at daybreak

going on that road
in every kind of weather—
bare feet in the mud

the frozen river—
lone figure of a woman
waiting for her dog

shadows of sunrise
sprawling across winter wheat
under tall blue sky

January woods—
executive holding forth
half an hour from town

skating the levels
in a Network Southeast train—
sunlight blue sky frost

silver streams & fog
rising from near at hand fields
silver-backed blackbird

fumbling with a zip
the drunken wreck suddenly
looks up at the sky

abandoned mill-ponds;
the gushing of white water
all the afternoon

two moorhens pick
at jumping circles of rain
at the mill-pond edge

after a mating
two mallards stretch their long wings
in wet ecstasy

with the sudden sun
dead stems of last year's rushes
in the dark mill-pond

white of the dipper
breaking the surface for air—
tree-dinosaur roots

after feeding ducks
ambling beside the mill-pond
thinking about bread

the fisherman's catch:
dead leaf bouquet—all the ducks
imitate laughter

sculptures in the park—
small boy under autumn's leaves
a live exhibit

a crow hovering
above verdigris figures
in the sculpture park

red-brick ziggurat—
she descends from her office
and we go for tea

the early blackbird
chortles—the din of traffic
and late night ravers

a black cat marches
our bold terrace at sunrise
the light in his fur

IN AMERICA MARCH 1997

dogwood avenues
& antebellum houses—
wandering all day

bedrooms full of light
in the home of the poet
the guide picks her words

prisoners' graffiti
in the old railway depot—
their Civil War dreams

thoughts turning to home
silver light on bent grasses
& last year's spent leaves

after the retreat—
just my thoughts to listen to
and the mocking bird's

under the dogwood
sweethearts wander arminarm—
thoughts turning to home

treetop mocking bird—
just standing to listen to
its strong repertoire

after the comet
Gretchen leaning into Bach—
a composed stillness

the hotel garden—
red path curving through fir trees
the taste of apple

a squirrel pausing
after its downward leap to
a more slender branch

mocking bird timing
its trills to fit the clinking
of iron on flag-poles

two children running
as if the whole of their life
depended on it

three minute bus-stop—
the lad with the tassel hair
gets off for a smoke

the shadows of trees
parallel the fallen ones—
these sunlit forests

the wound he sucked at—
got flesh;
wanted scallops
(non-5-7-5 dream haiku)

BACK FROM AMERICA

the Hale Bopp comet
quitting Cassiopeia—
our neighbour's dog barks

now the blackthorn's out
a curious lassitude
takes over my soul

shouting & screaming
down the hotel corridor—
only the TV's

out of one plane tree
crow magpie & then cuckoo—
wind blowing its leaves

in Finsbury Park
the crows punctuate the sward—
strut about for worms

early morning park—
the undulating squirrel
crossing long shadows

red athletic track
& the lone runner races
her winning shadow

a magpie skirmish—
an eeriness of leaves blows
against a blue sky

all those dead poets!
how many have sat just here
on this wooden bench?

sitting in the park
on a balmy May morning—
green thoughts by the ton

the angles of trees
both against one another
and against the sky!

the Chinese lady
doing her exercises
to a warm sun-beat

she applauds the sky
& picks up her plastic bag
to go for breakfast

linnets all around—
I lift my face to the sun
to make for the East

sit on a park bench
long enough & the whole world
passes before you

the hue of horses
under gathering rainclouds
& the fields round them

nothing now in front
but an empty avenue—
sunlit greenshot void
(HGWells: Love and Mr Lewisham)

here you are Bashō—
a great heap of shepherd's purse
unscrewed from my lawn

down to the railway
an alley of buddleia—
station loudspeaker

a woman screaming
at a stationary car—
so that's put that right!

dog contemplating
rook contemplating black sky—
congruence in black

buddleia market
on a Saturday morning—
girl with plastic frog

outside the townhall
car horns' contribution to
the modern quartet

the portly cellist
giggles at the car horn's view
of the new quartet

fog becomes mastiff
slinking round Barking gruffly
becomes fog again
(HGWells: Tono Bungay)

smoke of a bonfire
entering the speeding train—
immense gratitude

square moat reflection
bobs on the library ceiling—
hand of the mistress

Oxburgh church spire fell
out of the blue one day—
four corbels still leer

a butterfly comes
lackadaisically in
& then flutters out

hum of lawnmowers
between rows of gravestones
quickening the dead

slender ash sapling
rooted in some late one's skull
—churchyard butterfly

lichen on carved slabs—
all that's left of the breathing
of brave parish dreams

in the village street
grey people stand & exchange
ancient memories

martins gathering
in shadows of late sunlight
for a long journey

the morning after—
martins swimming in drizzle
keen for the journey

using a box set
(Handel's Concerti Grossi)
to swot a mad wasp

burying the cat
deep in the wild garden grass—
wind chimes' lowest note

the cat's last movements
recapping an entire life
of diligent quest

ZIMBABWE SEPTEMBER 1997

alongside the Falls—
an early morning jogger
pacing the rainbow

just in Zambia—
baboon posing for photo
orange peel in mouth

steam train on one side
& bird song on the other—
which way do I look?

this is the village—
that's the crematorium;
dust swirls in the sun

clicking of cameras—
afternoon of a zebra
minding its business

coming through the bush
to the malaria graves—
colonial dreams

a tropical night:
the band playing Yesterday—
Lennon looking down

islands in the mist
& swifts carving up the sky
& the level lake

what are its chances?
beetle in the airport lounge
between waiting feet

FROM ZIMBABWE TO MAURITIUS

the dazed travellers
& Stephanie flourishing
in the darkened room

pairs planning their route:
discussion about gorges
temples & markets

looking at a week
from a Monday perspective
many years ago

ten naked women
walking past on the white beach
—pineapple carver

island in the mist
beyond the white coral reef
ultramarine sea

under the fir trees
the smell of suntan lotion
and foreign birdsong

the expanding man
raises his arms to the sky
feels sand between toes

yellow coconuts
easily within arm's reach—
the fingering leaves

heavy beach silence—
only the roar of the waves
on the coral reef

busloads of tourists
in & out the sacred shrine—
birds sweep in & out

the Earth's crust thrust up
in seven different shades
worn by many feet

policemen chasing
the slaves on Le Morne Brabant
to give them freedom

all morning the boats
on the ultramarine sea
& sometimes swimmers

the glass-bottomed boat
window on vast coral growth
and the damsel fish

beach volley-ball game
frantic shouting & cheering
as though it mattered

in the clear shallows
I remove your swimsuit top
and admire the fishes

sand sea & blue sky
looking up gradually
from these small fir-cones

couple contemplate
the still water & retreat
put off by the thought

the constellations
unidentifiable:
crickets & dodos

dancing till the sweat
pours into my glittering
eyes the size of plates

while we are paddling
our deviant white canoe—
the long silver fish

the maniac singer
launches into the darkness
of a southern night

after the dancing
the air-conditioning hums
and thoughts turn to home

long days on the beach
& memories of childhood—
the advancing waves

at the end of day
reviewing mental snapshots—
mosquitos gather

the Centre de Flacq—
words with an Indian soldier
proud of fourteen kids

suddenly the town
full of the vigour of youth
greenly uniform

then the wind gets up—
seeking the shelter of black rock
out of the tide flow

fields of sugar cane
punctuated by rock heaps—
the far-off mountains

in the villages
between eucalyptus groves
the smell of incense

smiling warmly at
the unresponding husband
she tires of smiling

the pretty woman
keeping up appearances
in the lunchtime group

forcing her kisses
on the husband who forces
her away from him

the expedition
of multi-coloured people
along the black rocks

the breaking of waves
on the distant coral reef
a lonely fisherman

French wireless babble
from the ramshackle beach shop
clearing the clothes racks

sixtieth birthday:
feeling that all is to come
embracing the sky

through a whisky haze
painting the mountains again—
the wind in the palms

mountainous sunset—
remembering those long past
on this special day

three different views;
mountains: two in the morning
and one at sunset

waking to the roar
of breakers on far coral—
the very last time

the sparrow tree wakes
twittering into daylight
the distant mountains

the day's long travel
ends in the deep mystery
of what darkness hides

late night arrival
concealing a clover lawn
lake & tall mountains

FROM MAURITIUS
TO NYANGA ZIMBABWE

the patient people
waiting by the dark roadside
for a lift to town

whether to just read
the compelling book or to
walk amongst mountains

by Tsanga river
scavenging in the bracken
the white-necked raven

up at the World's View
the buzzards float—feeling like
floating with them

walking at sunset
all around the level lake
the burbling of frogs

wandering along
where Trout Beck enters its lake
ducking mosquitos

eyes turning brown with
deep cushions of pine needles—
the light of the lake

along the main road
forlorn groups of people wait
under great rock forms

two men in a field
carrying a long white pipe
to sink it somewhere

reaching out a hand
to touch you in the night
I contact myself

jacaranda drive
through thatched hut villages
lone men just sitting

BACK FROM ZIMBABWE

& at Littleport station
on the wet asphalt platform
yellowing ash leaves

where do the drunks go
leaving the park to pigeons
when winds turn icy?

three boys on one bike
on a fine autumn morning
busy being boys

in a hotel room
where the early morning call
is the first tube train

deliberately
the crow & its dark shadow
black-beaking bread crumbs

London autumn day—
racket of police sirens
through bunged up traffic

back in the country
under long slanting sunlight
& the dying year


HUB
EDITIONS
Hand-made
in a Workshop
in Wingland close by
Belloc's
Walk round the Wash



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