

Inventory

How to begin writing this down? Shall it be a simple inventory?
A list of parts. Names. Dates. Genealogies. Sound begetting
sound. Endless melody.

Coda

Along the borders, the high moors and unminded meadows.
Mired in the earth and its green machinery. Meikle's forgotten
children. As obsolete now as the flesh they disinherited. Chaff
amongst chaff. Stunted. Leg-ironed. Bound to nothing.

But rattle their cages and something still stirs. A harrowed chorus
resounds across the moors. Guttural coda to the song of a lost
industry.

Something More Than Proximity

Will Narr, ^{1,175}

Spitlers Edge, ^{1,286}

Redmonds Edge, ^{1,230}

Standing Stones Hill, ^{1,083}

White Ledge Hill, ^{1,030}

Counting Hill, ^{1,066}

Black Hill Lower, ^{1,083}

Round Loaf, ^{1,076}

Black Hill Upper, ^{1,138}

Great Hill, ^{1,250}

Brown Hill, ^{1,030}

Cold Within Hill. ⁹¹⁹

Cling

Unrot. Cling. Withered, bloody inks. Phlegm and glimmer.
She looks downwards. Centuries of the river's chatter. Tracing
its perimeter. Phials of snow. Some kind of gesture. Families
of shadows. Transits of the sky. Scenting the bones of grasses.
Bowed, plucked, chafed. *Clamouring*.

Hordern Stoops

A kestrel limns the vast banks of mist that coil around the lower slopes of Will Narr. Arrow. Rough hill. *Faierlokke*. The rowans are bearing fruit. Raspberry canes in the old garden. Migration differentials. The curlews are long gone, but swallows fatten themselves over the old hay meadow. I can hear voices by the masts of Winter Hill. Families of shadows on the moor. Bitumen. She died of drowning. A small, shallow dell.

Thing-Poems

Coil of barbed wire and string

Fragment of moss-fastened vertebrae

Thistle seed head and stalk

Bone of small animal

Mottled feather

Curved section of roof tile

Gone

The grey bird is gone. Its cry no longer frames the captive landscape. The curlews, gone. Their birthing halls deserted. The watcher, *aderyn corff*, is absent. Blended into nothing. Swifts, vanished. (In May, as I inched along Sheep House Lane in a violent gale, a swift rose up beside me, sails switching, seeming to share for a moment in my private struggle. Its arrow, I thought, had been blunted. Its scythe notched by the stony weather. But then it lurched forward, effortless, through a fissure of its own making, leaving me stranded, seasick, head reeling.)

And here by the path on Hoar Stones Brow, I find a large, black feather. *Crow rudder*. The only testimony – on this blank morning – that the air bore something on its back. Lifted high on its shoulders. Singing.

Mimesis

There is a purpose here.
Following the bend
of this small, nameless
stream, my steps invoke
the path of the Yarrow,
miles away, as it tumbles
down from Will Narr.

Mimesis. The knots
of my hands and the
knuckles of ash above.
Joints. Junctures. Cross-
ings. An arboreal sweep
of collarbone. And
beyond the blood river.
A musculature of hill
and meadow.

Abyss

I remember, in those first days, sitting on the high banks of the fledgling river. Staring out at the expanse of moor that seemed to stretch into infinity.

Aire leagte air saoghail dhorcha.

It seemed as if the earth
had tipped on its axis.
That the moor swung
teetering beneath me.
That if I didn't cling
to the grass banks,
I would fall
into an abyss.

Façade

From afar the moor is a façade.
A hanging of pale canopies:

calico
muslin
hemp

Rough cloths of muted grey,
yellow, green, brown. And
the sky a grey sheet.

But turn the corner
of the high lane above
Moses Cocker's and
the façade vanishes.
Wind-blown to nothing.

And in its place the vast,
looming earth.

And the river's yarn.

Feather

And
 the moor
 rests
on a kestrel's feather.

Brid – air-bride.

Thou thing that holds gravity.

I bore you on my shoulders. I carried you.

Line

What line did the river first write in the valley?
What sense, made over and over, now senseless?

Dissolved salts. Glacial memories.
Inklings of maternal violence
written in moraines,
in alluvium,
in pulverised rock.

(A syllabary, loosened
from grit and clay.)

What is the true note deep within the foss,
heard, straining, above the froth and laughter?

An ancient, unchanging music
that scores valleys,
intones, beckons,
ushers them
into existence.

Tenure

Grasses, sedge and bracken
recover the rootless
felled expanses.

They break ground
for birch, for oak –

finding tenure in a
skin of soil.

Gift

Where
the rowan grows through
touch, fissures become

becks rivulets gills

shimmered with light, as snow
gives way to sun.

Catch

The walls have vacancies,
interstices, vents –
they seem a pale net-work;
knots of grey rope
staked out to land
the great catch.

Those weir-men who
stitched them, laid them,
have long gone, down
within the hills' pores,
but whether by luck
or design the walls
stand still, whilst haw
and rowan heave and sigh,
catching the wind's
ceaseless expirations.

Succession

First

the hooked mouth
of the sea

second

the drill
of the water

third

the bleat
of the heather

fourth

the dwarf
of the earth

fifth

the head
of the copse

sixth

the cut-throat
of the hedge

seventh

the little singer
of the willow

eighth

the clacker
of the gorse.

Corr Réisc

Pulled along
unseen, familial lines,
the bird glides
heavily
with rigid, graceless wings.

Eventually it will ground,
this grey, silent kite.

It cannot endure on memory
and repulsion alone.

This shy bird is *corr réisc*,
the marsh bill,
but it could equally be called
an dealbh srutha,
the river statue,
or *an chloch a stánann*,
the gaze stone –
crouching, motionless,
on the furthest reaches of the boat cove.

But sometimes
it breaks its vow of silence –
a premonitory, piercing cry.

And then truly it earns the name
corr scréachóg,
or screech heron.

tracts of land

riven

apart

ploughing

burning

sowing

harrowing

milk produced from burning timber

the forest yields

at day-

break

47,000 acres

the sky

harnessed

spun

from seven million to nearly forty
an insatiable thirst

strange new words in the chatter of mill girls
stunted and deformed

“I’d work but cannot – starve I may”

and the under-river
the great giver of all good

thrusting its head above a chain of man-made lakes
graving

“I have drawn until I have had my skin off me”

Notes on the Landscape

West Pennine Moors: the early sources have not been exhaustively excerpted. A glacial effect on phonology. O.E. *ā* becomes *ō* south of the Ribble. Some names now lost with ground-nesting birds.

The wing of a curlew paid testimony to the early forms. Its call mimicking that of riven wood, adopted chiefly to illustrate dialect sound-changes.

The curve of its bill and the byht of a river, throwing light on the early history of the county. The pre-industrial landscape preserved in egg colours: greenish-dun to olive-green (blotched with dark brown and dark shades of green, thought to intimate early forms of writing).

Topography: dry grass, heather, unstressed and dialectical variants of rushes and sedges. Nests are often the junction of streams, shielings a depression in the ground.

River Song (1)

the wearing
of water

small stones
falling

the sickle
of the current

swiftly
death-giving

After the Thaw

after
the thaw
the white crest
a snow-cursed memory
glaciers called north
drawn
by a pack of wolves
a small divinity
something between
man and spirit
cursed
the sluggish
movement of the earth
coughed and
had a vision
a form of prophecy
a spark
of small tongues
centuries yawning
ran
sudden
through the heather
became a blaze of fire
precipitous
peat splendour
blackening
moaning for the deaths to come
the river uncovered itself
curling around the hag chasm
where the salmon lay hidden

saps lymph blood
moving
humming
flowing

and the sea called to the river

the silent shore-birds
deafened by centuries of hunger
heard its faint murmuring

word spread of its plenty
legends of its fish fulness
springing up like osiers

reaping the river harvest
was the great question
an efflux of discord bubbling
havoc the only course of action

perhaps

it was the heron
cast out solitary
that first left the sea strand
to find the fertile river

years was its journey
fifty or more travelling on foot
hardship bordering on madness

but in the last furrow
it found the river
digging itself in
building a pebble dam

given its spit
to the river
and so
the river
took that
wetness
and made
water
to ease its flow of blood
the small divinity
yawning
observed the tide
the river
advancing
flowing
the time of mingling was near
but
sudden
then
a spark
of small tongues ran
through the heather
a blaze of fire
precipitous
burning
all
in its path
the river
boiling
the sea
receding
boiling
the whole earth
blackening
centuries

when the flames
 had run out
 the river
 was a burn
 the sea
 a desert

and the oracle
 that small divinity
 mourning
 murmuring
 shed
 some
 eye moistness

and
 gave
 the river
 a little
 wetness again

and
 so the river
 made its journey
 along the heron path
 into the sea
 at last

the salmon
 sequestered no more
 set about spawning
 so that
 their issue
 could

make
their wandering way
to far-off places
and
the small divinity
took to lonely solitudes
his body steaming
his fancy in a ferment
and
became
an eel
or a waterfall
foaming
falling

Saved

I have saved
these words for you
held them in my mouth
between tooth and tongue
thorn and branch
unvoiced until now
when they fall
wasted
but necessary
like leaves

Knot

by which door
will you make your entrance
how announce
your trespass?

your unwitting clamour
unnatural scent
precede you
screaming

beneath

the mute articulations of stems and branches
leaf chatter ligneous murmurs
scripts of bark and leaf
and the heretic voicings of birds

a knot of grammars

which you will never unravel

1695
Uffay:
the hill is echoless of wolves.
the brant earth silenced
of yew tongues.

1769

the fell wall stirs. muscles a rough way upwards.
tirelessly weights the waste. grows grey.
skins birch, rowan, heather.
seeks wolves.

1860

into the absented bield. the hill grave.
recover within fox memory. moss drifts.
brush soils last shaped by bracken.
worm ground. familial earth. ready.

I Know Not Where (2014)

Walked

the twisting tracks
the hollow roads:

fringed
with small life

Walked

by the black brook:

the veil of life
obscured
morning and evening

Walked

the palest current:

a half-marked
glittering
crescent stream

Walked

until dark returned:

found under
gaunt flowers