

A SENSE OF PLACE

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**Master's Degrees by Examination and Dissertation
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In 2011, Thusha Kamaleswaran, then five years old, was shot and paralysed while dancing in the aisles of her uncle's shop in Stockwell, South London. Three youths had entered the shop intent on carrying out a revenge attack on rival gang members; Thusha was caught in the crossfire. The tragedy was caught on CCTV cameras and shown on the internet. She wanted to be a dancer.

Thusha's last dance

Thusha was five when she danced
in the Supermarket
It's a good place to dance;
there will always be music
and room
and on busy days,
an audience.
and it will be filmed.

Like Nureyev and Fonteyn
she's been watched
by millions
but without the accolades.
No applause or bouquets;
there will be no encore.

The three gatecrashers;
they missed her dance.
In the purgatory
of their prison
make them watch the film.
Let it be their penance
and their punishment
their wake-up call
and their night-time story.

Not the part where a frightened child
runs the wrong way
into the bullet
that broke her spine
and shattered her dreams.

No, every day,
make them watch
the dance.

Let it be their nightmare
and their waking dream.
Let it haunt their days
and give them meaning.
Let them lose their soul
and find it;
in Thusha's last dance.

St David's Hall

Tuning up
we sit and wait
as they
pick and blow their way
through this
anarchic ritual
they mirror
perfectly
our discordant times
everywhere
we hear only
the clanging
the jingle-jangle
of discrepant notes
meaningless
in their failure
to find form:
disquiet
dissonant
at odds with the world
and with each other.

and yet we listen
and wait
for the harmony
as an expectant crowd

knowing that from
that cacophony
of noise
the symphony
will emerge.

Breaking my fall

Sometimes...
it feels as if I
fell into this life.

Having landed
I stumbled my way
through tired
totalitarian schools
on a helter-skelter journey
in pursuit of nothing.

Took a roller coaster ride
through college
free-wheeled into a marriage
doomed to failure.
Aimless
on an autopilot drift.

So on that autumn day
the day she walked into my office
I don't think that I fell in love.
I can't have fallen
this was different from the rest
of my topsy-turvy life.

She is the only truth I've ever known
an anchor that has held fast
a lifeline breaking my fall.

I measure my love in days

How deep, you ask,
is my love,
as if somehow
it could be fathomed.

When I found her,
it was as if she'd always been there
but I was late
and so was she
as our separate paths converged.

She remembers days;
And makes me smile,
she says,
'That's when we first kissed',
or 'Today was when
we got engaged.'

It's been ten years
since she was given the all clear.

I count the days,
but I don't tell her.
In the warmth of her mornings
lies the measure of my day
and if I pray
it is always to say
take me first,
as I notch this new day
onto an invisible chart.

How deep, you ask?
It's not the depth
but the length.

City Psalm

Let the office blocks sing
to the City's new morning
in the absence of fields
let's cultivate these
pencil line pavements
and harvest the hope
that they bring
let's celebrate the reflection of life
in plate glass windows
framed in the benevolent concrete
that is the life blood
of this grey forest.

Coliseum

My computer screen
shields the window from my view.
Blanks out the real world
and its distractions
offering instead
its own perspective.

But I can see past my screen
to the window's reveal
and there
where the stony rock face
of the reveal
meets the plateau
of a pine windowsill
lies the arena.
It was the death cry
that drew my attention.

In the cobweb
the bee was buzzing,
aggrieved,
my computer screen
and its virtual world
losing its appeal
as the bee's lament
drew me nearer.

I arrived at the same time
as the spider.
He came
from underneath the windowsill
unannounced

as is the custom with gladiators.

There was a menace

in his presence.

The bee was protesting loudly

preserving the privilege

of the condemned

as he played to the gallery.

Although I've been there twice

in the Coliseum

on the Via dei Fori Imperiali

its majesty heavy-laden

with the memories of the past

my humanity got in the way,

separating me

from that older world.

Oh! I caught the grandeur

in Corinthian columns

imagined the pageantry

of lavish inaugurations

but the ambivalence to life

the efficacious expression of valour

and the moral redemption

of a glorious death

had all evaded me

until now.

But here;

Here is a *venationes*.

a *munera*

a spectacle offered freely.

I am Vespasian

and this is my Colosseum.

Mine is the promise of life

and the power of death

and the 'pollice verso'
can come by my hand alone.
I ponder my omniscience
paralysed by my power.

The end came quickly
as the vanquished
was dragged down
to the dungeon below
refused the glorious death
of the gladiator.

Hereford Cathedral

My life has made me wary
of those who might temper it
with dogma and creed.

These stone pavements
a sounding board
for placebo prayers
taken like a prescription
once a week
on an empty stomach.

Vestments dishonestly
camouflaging chinos
confining the truth.

Disused words
hewn from old quarries
lifeless litanies
that beleaguer the cold walls
where glass windows
stained with colour
struggle for relevance
against a grey sky.

Beachy Head

Like a wave, you came
to complete your journey.
I was here to waste an hour
a silent witness;
you came to play the clown
to the empty seats on this cold beach,
this tragic circus ring.

I watched you
move towards the edge
and found salvation in one step
for an instant you defied the law
hovering,
before falling
like a fool to a formula
hammering the sand
like a white wave
on a yellow beach.

We will always be prisoners
to the law
to this gravity
this sealed-off arithmetic
borrowed once by a scientist
to sit infallibly
in his Principia Mathematica.

Immortalised,
but he was a thief
it wasn't his to own or name
it was written, once, in an unearthly explosion
and binds us heavy to this earth

we move lethargically
like oil covered birds
who have no will to rise.

Today, like you, these waves
came here to die in this salty cemetery.
They too were born of the storm
dancing, like aimless symphonic notes
orchestrated
without a thought but to conform
tempted to their demise
by the hand of a cruel moon.

Here, this tide-line
bears witness to the life of a wave.
What storm brought you here
to lie so uncomfortably on this tide line
like an empty shell?

The cycle is complete
the man and the wave as one
conform to the rule
as they hurry to this beach to fall
and I wonder if you've been here before
watching the waves
as they break
on this unforgiving sand.

Like – I don't like

I don't like words that sneak up on you – like
the ones that snuggle up to you and – like
before you know it they're - like
all over you – like a rash.

I like to keep them at arm's length – like
or all of a sudden they've – like – moved in
like a stalker
annoying me – like.

Traffic Lights

It changed to red;
Predetermined, some might say,
Prescribed, by an unknown hand,
but still it turned to red
just as I arrived;
I could see the other side,
the other set, I mean
and that changed to green...

But there was no-one there;
No-one waiting to come through
and pass me with a half baked-smile
or a knowing look.

They mess with your head -
traffic lights,
and they'll empty your soul - if you let them.

I just sat there
waiting for a green light
just like I've always done.
Stopped, I mean,
to let the others pass
when the red light came...

The waking hours

I cremated my Grandmother tonight
in a dream,
that is to say
I officiated at her cremation.

Although she died forty years ago
our dreams
will not conform
to chronological timelines
they rampage like mindless Wildebeest
through time warps
feeding and framing our fantasies.

I did my best but I'd lost my notes
so I stood there
recollecting hazy memories
regurgitating them to a knowing congregation.
I lost them halfway through
died a death
as I stalled and stumbled
towards a closing hymn.

In a hastily arranged buffet
distant cousins - their mouths filled
with coffee and cucumber
blurted out polite thank-you's
some just tapped me on the shoulder
and said aaah!
the kind usually reserved for those
who've pee'd themselves in public.

It's twenty past two in the morning

I got up to recall the details
before they got tangled up
in the next dream.
I'm un-nerved by it.

Paradoxically
I find the stuff of dreams tiresome
give me every time
the confines and the co-ordinates
of the waking hours.

Sunroom

8:45 am

I'm sat on a settee in the sunroom
the BBC are on theirs.

Two presenters
glide effortlessly
from light to shade
three children lost in a house fire
a sympathetic smile
cut to green glade
witness the resurgence of the red squirrel
witty comment
cut to economic gloom.

A breakfast fare
presumed more palatable
when delivered
from a red settee.

Outside - the lawn is drowning in sunshine
turning the green
a lollipop yellow
onto which the house
throws its shadow
forming a green beige
offering relief.

Chimneys and load bearing walls
lean northwards
at precarious angles
whilst the shadow
creeps slowly to the south
confined by its own parameters
enforcing with a jealous zeal

its right to resist
to guard against the light.

A blackbird
playing with the light
hops in an out of the shadow
opting to breakfast
in the shade.

As I bask
in the warm glow
of this new morning
in a room
built to honour the light
it is the shadow
that draws the eye.
Always the shadow.

Slamming doors

'Shit happens'

he said,

as he slammed the door in my face.

Later in a cappuccino calm,

I ponder the slammed door

I spill my coffee as the waitress arrives;

she clears the table.

Is that it?

Do we let Lucippus confine us

to this maelstrom of cause and effect

tied to innocuous circumstance

propelled by some necessary imperative.

Should we defer to Aquinas

Omne autem quod movetur

ab alio movetur.

Am I always to be moved by another

like a pinball waiting for a wizard,

a projectile confined to posts and pillars,

dumbed down by Aristotle and his mates

to a contingent rhetoric.

Am I powerless to presume a path

can I not struggle for change

strive for an impossible dream

and enjoy the adventure,

or does shit always happen,

regardless of the slamming of doors.

Once in a Youth Club

After all these years
I can still see your face.
Although I can't remember who you are
I thought you ought to know
that you set me once
on a path
that has held firm.

It wasn't much really
what you said;
not original.
Pervasive, I don't know,
pejorative, maybe,
but for me
in that place
on that day
it held meaning.

They say you should use them
sparingly - clichés.
Like a good joke
or an old car,
as if its overuse
might set it careering on a slippery slope
toward certain disambiguation.

You seemed old
to me then
but I was fourteen
and needed to hear it,

I thought you should know
it's been a safe light
in some dark and lonely canyons.
You said, be true,
always stay true to your heart.

Twittering

I was at my desk
and found his stare disconcerting
so I put my pen down
and decided to stare him out.
The connection was made.

He started to twitter;
Snatched phrases
of useless information
about property prices,
unruly children
and foreign holidays.
He held his head at an angle.

The phone rang
interrupting his flow
someone from India
determined to sell me
something I didn't need.
When eventually
I put the phone down
he seemed offended.
He decided to leave
but couldn't find the window -
so I got up and opened another one.

As he flew out
I thought
about other guests
who'd been here
without knowing how to leave.

A busker and a boy

The busker
wore an anklet
covered in bells
that he used
to tap the beat
that drove his ukulele.
He couldn't sing.
But he drew a crowd
full of festive expectation.

And there he was,
appeared
as if from nowhere
there at the front,
this little boy.
I watched him
burrowing his right hand
deep into his pocket
using the other as an anchor
to hold the pocket firm
as little boys do.

Mid-song he walked towards the busker
and emptied all his pocket's contents
into an empty ukulele case.

I lost sight of him
in the small crowd that had gathered,
looked for admiring parents
but there were none,
and suddenly
he was gone.

In open fields

I walk past the
honeysuckle hedges
that - filled with desire
harbour the hopes
and aspirations
of a new season.

Behind them
fallow fields
celebrate
this new renaissance.

My phone rings
unseen waves
heavy with technology
hover above me
clouds
of information
gather
waiting
impatient
for my answer.

Dangerous ground

What is it with slopes
that we feel the need
to define them
numerically
on signs
set to confuse.

Although I understand
the concept
'one in sixteen'
conveys little
true meaning.

A picture is added
that bears no relation
to the oncoming drop.

The descent
I find
seldom lives up to its billing.

I've done my share
on foot and in cars
nearly died once
in a golf buggy
but I didn't see
this one coming.

You could have warned me
'Fucking steep'
would have done.
Just a hint
before we started
to career down

that slippery slope
thirty years ago.

Shopping Centre

He came
on a cold call
brushed past me
mid-afternoon
in a brightly lit shopping centre;
as smooth as you like
and mistook me for someone else.

Then the pain
searing and slow
blue lights, surgeons, syringes
came and went.
A close call
someone called it
a near miss.

Today my footsteps fall lighter
and I tread carefully
especially in Shopping Centres
when sometimes
on a whim
I'll turn round quickly
just to see if he's there
lurking somewhere
in the shadows.

Leaving

Summer days
melt slowly
into an easy autumn
a seasonal lag
will not delay
this axial tilt
as the earth heads
for a solstice
setting off alarms
on its way.

In the
swallow nest
a tale
as old as time
turns her head
towards the south
as the estival morphs
into autumnal
meddling with her
midsummer dreams.

Beneath her
hedgehogs are snuffling.
Sensing the change
they scurry,
onboard computers
triggering a trolley dash
as the celestial cues
threaten
the big sleep.

Above her
as chlorophyll drains
from green leaves
true colours
are revealed
on a palette
ready to fall.

And in her nest
she twitches
and stretches her wings.

While I wait

There is no new music
only old notes.
What's always new is the pause
that holds the silence.
Look there for the agitation;
in the stubborn femata
that yearns to let go
but holds on regardless.
It is the wait that
gives to the familiar its fluency.

In this pausa that keeps me primed
I wait,
for a sound,
to unburden the weight
and define my way.
Oh! this sweet pause;
It is the green bough that waits
knowing that the singing bird will come.

Ger y man cul

Nid mewn pamffledi platonaid mae'r tyndra
rhwng corff ac enaid
nac ar ben nodwydd y diwinydd.
Ond rhywle ar hyd glyn cysgod angau yr Esgob,
yn y man ynysig hwnnw
lle mae'r llanw yn troi
pan ddaw'r cnawd
yn drech na'r ysbryd.

Cerddodd fy nhad lawr
tua'r dyffryn du
nid fel un ar ei daith olaf
ond mewn esgidiau ysgafn.
Ymladdodd yn lew
yn herodraeth ei henaint
chwifiodd ei hydra a'i hiwmor,
arfau ei ieuenctid,
fel cleddyf dau finiog
yn wyneb y gelyn olaf,
yn ganiwt o gyfoes,
nes cyrraedd y man
lle mae'r gwythiennau'n cau
ac yn cronni.

Pererindod

Mae'r daith wythnosol
yn bererindod
a'i nod
mewn defod
yn yr hen Ddyfed.

Heibio Dinefwr nawr,
Llys y Deheubarth
lle bu Rhys
yn cynnau'r fflam
a losgodd hyd Aberffraw.

Heibio'r Tywi
hen feddwyn meysydd Myrddin.
Un cam 'nol a dwy ymlâ'n
ar ei ffordd i Lansteffan
i sobri.
Heibio ffolineb Picton
a gwroldeb Gwenllian.

Gwyn ei fyd y gweledydd
bu'n troi wardiau Glangwili
yn ddrych o Ddyfed.

Dilyn camre'r pererinion
at y cysegr sancteiddiolaf
lle mae meistres y ddefod
yn miniogi'r nodwyddau main.
Ei nod yw'r wythien
i'w thyllu
cyn tynnu ohoni waed coch y warfarin
i'w brofi er lles pob pererin.

Mewn cell
yng nghrombil yr hen Ddyfed
wrth aros fy nhro,
synhwyraf leisiau'r gorffennol pell
yn edliw cân cyfarwydd;
nad oes ymwared,
heb dywallt gwaed.

Gwacter a Galar

Colli'r llaw fu'n llywio
Colli chwyth y chwyldro
Colli hyder heno
Wrth geisio cerdded hebddo.

Teimlo'r storm yn rhuo
Teimlo'r tir yn llithro
Teimlo'r seiliau'n siglo
Machlud lle bu cyffro.

Cofio'r ystyfnigo
Cofio'r angerdd ynddo
Cofio'r ofnau'n cilio
Pan oedd ei law yn cydio.

Gogledd a De

Fe ddaeth i'n plith Ogleddwr;
bonheddwr yw Sion.

O'r Graig Wen i Gwm gwyrdd y Gwendraeth

fe ddaeth

a chanfod yn Sarah

un o'n hanwylaf.

Yr ydym yn y Cwm yma
yn gyndyn wrth ildio ein trysorau.

Cymer hi Sion

cymer ei gwên - a gofala.

Amgylchyna hi a'th gariad.

Rho dy galon

yn rhodd

iddi hi.

A heddiw yn llon, fe ddathlwn

fod Gogledd a De

yn un lle

ynoch chi.

Cynnau tân

Gwyllo'r mwg yn newid gwawl y lleuad
yn troelli ar ei ffordd i dagu'r sêr,
fflamau'r tân yn cynnal dawns y chwaliad,
colsynnau coch fel minlliw, brysiog, blêr;
Cym'ryd cam yn nes i dwymo'r dwylo
a benthyg gwres ei olau rhag y nos,
edrych ar y gwreichion yn taflunio
eu patrwm poeth, yn loyw dros y rhos.
Droriau glan bu'n cadw starts y Saboth
mewn crysau gwyn dilychwyn fesul un,
lludw nawr - yn ulw tân yr ysgoth
ysglyfaeth bore bach i'r awel blin.
A heno daw rhyw wewyr dros of fi
wrth losgi cwpwrdd dillad, hen famgu.

Dwywaith i Dyddewi
(Peregrinatio pro amore Dei)

Gadael y praidd,
dianc trwy dwll
yng nghlawdd y plwy'
i'th gyrraedd,
ond siomedig fuost
i sawl pererin.

Pranciodd cenhedlaethau
ohonynt,
i'th fynwes,
un ar ol y llall,
a chanfod
ar ôl cyrraedd,
dim
ond priordy
penyd a phwn.

Unwaith i Rufain
dwywaith i Dyddewi.
Tybed a fu rhywun
yn mesur y milltiroedd.
cyn gweld
fod y deinameg
yn y cerdded
nid y cyrraedd.

O Lasynys i'r ynys las

Yn ein hawydd i weled pell yn agos
gwnaethom o ysbienddrych Lasynys
'Hubble' ein hoes ni
a chreu teclyn
a'n gosododd ni i gyd ar ynys las.

Ein greddf yw ei gadael,
a'r hyfrydwch o'n hamgylch bellach
yw ein hanwybod.

Wrth chwilio'r môr du
am lawn olwg ynyswyr eraill
a ydym wedi tynhau ein synhwyrau
a chloi ffenestri ein llygaid
wrth droi y gwledydd pell
yn un ynys gron?

Ynnysoedd

Ydwyf lain o dir
yn llechu yng nghysgod y cefnfor
lle bum yn cadw fy mhellter
fel pob cymydog da
cyn dyfod dyn a'i enwau.
Bum yng Nghapri
yn ddihangfa i fola-heulwyr hael;
yn baradwys dros-dro ar sawl Enlli
yn geidwad dros erwau yr arwahanrwydd
ar Robben.

Yr wyf yn barapet o weiren bigog
ar furiau'r ddynoliaeth,
ac yn gysegr sancteiddiolaf
i grefyddwyr o bob lliw.
Ydwyf nihilistiaeth Nietzsche
a ffantasi Freud
A hud a lledrith eich storïau

Ymhell y tu hwnt i glychau dyneiddiaeth Donne
ydwyf Hitler a Himmler,
a Breivik eich hoes chi
heb fy nghymwys gyd-gysylltu.

Mewn iaith ac idiom
yn eich byd a'ch bod,
yn eich mawl a'ch meddwl,
ydwyf Ynys.

Lliwiau mewn llyn

'Daeth paradwys bach yn uffern' - Jens Stoltenburg, Prif Weinidog Norwy.

Ers cyn cof
bu gwyrddni llethrau'r Tyrifjorden
fel ymbarel hawddgar
yn benthg ei liw i ddŵr y llyn.

Ond diwrnod y diafol ddaeth i baradwys
ceulodd y dŵr yn goch.

Daeth rhai i olchi'r creigiau
i geisio tynnu'r gwarth o'r tir,
sgrwbio'r staeniau
gan ddisgwyl i'r llif gwyrddlas
lyncu'r dystiolaeth.

Ond er cyn wynnied a glân yw diheintydd
mae coch yn gysefin.
Tra pery cof yn Utoya,
mae arnaf ofn
mai'r coch fydd yn aros.

Cludo celwydd

Roedd hi, yn ei hanterth,
yn ddybl-decar o fenyw
gyda llais a dawelai pob gelyn ac ymddialydd.
Am wn i na chafodd neb y gorau arni.
Ond yn ddiarwybod iddi hi
roedd y gwifrau wedi eu gwau yn anesmwyth
ac o ganlyniad i gŵyn y genynau
rhedodd afon o gelwydd trwy'i gwythiennau,
tywyswyr negeseuon cymysglyd
i osod cell yn erbyn cell.

Tilly Smith, a quick thinking 10-year-old British girl saved 100 other tourists from the Asian tsunami having warned them that a giant mass of water was on its way after learning about the phenomenon weeks earlier at school.

Roedd Tilly Smith yn 10 mlwydd oed pan achubodd hi rhyw gant o bobl ar ol eu rhybuddio fod y tsunami ar y ffordd. Roedd hi ar y traeth un Indonesia yn 2004 ar fore dydd San Steffan pan adnabyddodd hi arwyddion y tsunami yn sgil yr hyn a ddysgodd rhai wythnosau yn gynharach mewn dosbarth yn yr ysgol gstre yn Lloegr.

Tsunami

Mae nhw'n galw fi yn arwr,
ond blwyddyn lawr y lein
mae bore ffein
San Steffan,
yn dal mor dywyll
a'r bedd.
Fe welais i fe'n digwydd
y dychryn a'r gwae
pan sugnodd rhywun
y mor o'r bae,
y bore hwnnw
fel rhyw hwfyr
anweledig.

Roedd cryndod yn fy nghoesau
a llais yn fy mhen
yn dweud
'Paid a gwneud dim byd
paid a bod yn ffwl'
'S'dim byd yn cwl
mewn codi stwr,
a chynhyrfu'r dyfroedd.

Ie, gwell gweud dim byd
a gadael pawb
i'w cestyll tywod
a'u syrff boards drud,
na chreu embaras
mewn bae bach clud.

Ond ar waethaf pob greddf oedd ynof
a chyn dyfod y don,
fe redais i nerth fy nhraed
a thagu bron,
wrth weiddi'r gair
a ddysgodd Miss i mi.
Do, fe waeddais i yn hy,
'Tsunami!'

Cau simnai

Ar ddiwrnod dymchwel yr hen simnai
disymwth oedd ei chwyp.
Y frenhines fu'n rasol ei gwres
cyn i'r oes newydd ei disodli
a'i hanfon ar ddisberod
i fargeinio gyda'r brain.

Am genhedlaethau
Bu'n wythien wiw i gyfrinachau'r parlwr.
Yn ddigywilydd, llyncodd seiniau
a sibrydion celwyddog y cariadon
cyn eu pesychu'n grachboer,
mas, mas i onestrwydd yr awyr iach

Bu yma faes parcio coffynau
lle deuai cyrff i syllu ar gyrff
mewn hen ddefod cyn-oesol.
Taenu storiâu fel disinfectant
cyn delo yn ddu fel bws
elor, i'w tywys i baradwys,
griddfannau'r galar yn mygu
ym madrigal y mwg.

I'r fan yma deuai'r twrnai yn eu tro
i ddarllen y llith.
Datgelwyr dideimlad y syndod a'r siom
a'r twyll yn tagu
ar ei daith tua'r goleuni
trwy'r wythien dywyll.

Er imi ddyheu yn aml
am glywed eu llais;

nid yw'r wal yn 'wylia'
yn y simnai mae'r siarad.
Tybiais wrth ei chaethiwo i'r atig,
mai dechrau pob diwedd yw cau gwythien.

'A SENSE OF PLACE' - A CRITICAL COMMENTARY

W .H. Auden first coined the term 'topophilia' in 1948 in his introduction to John Betjeman's poetry collection 'Slick but not not Streamlined' where he used the word to describe a love for peculiar places. The theme for this collection is a Sense of Place, which provides the author with the opportunity to take a look at some peculiar and ordinary places. I found both of them to be equally engaging in creating this bilingual poetry collection.

A Sense of Place after all encompasses the senses: sight, smell, touch, hearing, memory. An evocative term it allows so many different and interesting interpretations to come to the fore. Although a common expression it is used mainly by architects urban planners and interior designers. A loose translation from the Latin 'genius loci' which literally means the spiritual guardian of a specific place. Nowadays it is probably more akin to the ambience of a place or its environment. It is that realm of intimacy with its ability to inspire the senses and stir the emotion that forms the background to poems such as 'City Psalm,' 'Hereford Cathedral,' 'Coliseum' and 'Sunroom.'

From the obvious geographic meaning which gives a context to many of the poems in this collection there are many deeper meanings waiting to be explored which offer an opportunity to create metaphors for poetic effect, 'Traffic lights' is one obvious example. Inspired by a sense of place and at times frustration it lent itself as a meditation in the way we respond or fail to respond to life choices. 'Dangerous ground' is a poem which moves from an obvious geographical and physical understanding to that of a deeper symbolic interpretation of a slope in an emotional context. The inner places of heart, mind and soul are also featured in this collection as places which give meaning as well as the unexpected extraordinary places which can only be understood as that of a state of mind and yet it is incumbent on the writer to attempt to make concrete even the most abstract of thoughts.

The poems in this collection are an attempt to investigate a few of these places that we sometimes find not only haunting but occasionally bewildering, sometimes enchanting and yet ultimately always engaging. Yet, my aim throughout was to examine some of the themes and address some complexities with my own voice and in my own way. I decided as a starting point that there should be no exclusion points, no-holds-barred and nowhere that I could not explore. Much has been made by existentialist philosophers about the inauthentic in language, literature and philosophy and many have suggested that the same

applies to places arguing that there are some places that are by their very fabric and nature, inauthentic. Places that are pretentious or false. In 1976 Professor Edward Relph in 'Place and Placelessness' where he looks in detail at the human experience of place. Rooted in modern-day existentialism he investigated peoples experience of places. In the latter half he considers the way that it is possible to experience places authentically, maintaining that authenticity of place is in danger of being eroded . The consequence of that erosion would be what he calls placelessness which he describes as a standardised landscape. While I concede that there are some places that are more distinctive in nature or spirit than other 'lesser places' it does not necessarily follow that they are diminished as a consequence or less significant in any way. I would suggest to the contrary that far from being inauthentic in any sense of the word these are often the most fascinating of places. Oscar Wilde certainly thought so when he used the ballad form to narrate the execution of a fellow prisoner in Reading Gaol in 'The Ballad of Reading Gaol' as did Hugo Williams in his poem 'Toilet' where he offers his audacious take on sexual fascination that happened on a train journey. Even Descartes in theorising about the separation of mind from matter had to concede that our existence binds us to places. These 'lesser places' provided the impetus for many of these poems, places such as Supermarkets and Shopping Malls because they are places where people meet and come together, and in those gatherings, events take place - worlds collide and poetry can emerge.

Some of the poems came along almost inadvertently, while others were inspired by events or specific occasions. Some were crafted from a single line or idea, but most of them were simply poems waiting to be found. William Wordsworth in his preface to the Second Edition of the Lyrical Ballads said,

'All good poetry is the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings.'

As a child, one of the first poems I ever committed to memory was Wordsworth's 'The Daffodil.' The incident that inspired the poem took place in April 1802, however, the actual poem wasn't written until 1804 some two years later and in the poem he states honestly that it was the inward eye that provided the inspiration. Likewise, on the 24th June 1914 Edward Thomas, while on a train journey wrote whimsically in his journal about blue sky and haycocks and willows. He finished with a short sentence, 'Then we stopped at Adlestrop.'

Six months later on the 8th of January 1915 he was laid up in bed with a badly broken ankle when he happened to open his journal and came across that entry. It was that

recollection that led to his writing his most famous poem. His opening line reflects that delay,

‘Yes, I remember Aldestrop.’

In much the same way the initial impetus also stayed with me in that the inward eye experience grew in my imagination also and the spontaneity was delayed until its eventual release. Many of the poems in my collection fall into that spontaneous overflow of creativity.

‘Thusha’s last dance’ came as direct result of the images of her that appeared on the internet - dancing to the supermarket music seconds before the gang members enter and she becomes caught in the crossfire and as a consequence is paralysed for life. In that sense it was an emotional response as well as a spontaneous one. In these poems that are an emotional response I find that the words seem to flow a lot easier. The poem leans towards a didactic tone that wasn't planned or constructed but was simply the outcome of surfing an emotional wave and when I read it out loud it almost takes on a psalmodic tone towards the end. Many of the poems are in that same vein in that they are emotional responses. ‘I count my love in days’ came as a result of a task I'd set myself because I'd forgotten my wife's birthday. Not the best start for a poem perhaps but the words once again just seem to flow as if in a stream of consciousness. ‘Breaking my fall’ and ‘Ger y man cul’ are other examples of poems that were spontaneous when they arrived as concepts but were all waiting to be found, stored away with that inward eye.

There are also places within places where a certain aura or aroma can lead the mind onto other places. ‘Pererindod’ is a poem inspired by the decision taken by West Wales General Hospital to name the wards after the place names of old the old Principality of Dyfed. These remembered names of special and significant places invoke a sense of a weaving of history with all its national and cultural connotations. ‘Lliwiau mewn Llyn’ is an example of being moved to write about a place which although unvisited still holds a special significance because of the events that took place on Utoya Island in Norway. Like many others I searched for poignant images of Utoya and was inspired by the beauty and tranquility of the island before the mindless bloodbath that happened there its contrast with the images that flooded our newspapers and television screens. It was these 'before and after' images that led me to reflect on the way that places can often become defined by particular events and I attempted to use the idea of colours in a lake to emphasise further the red stains that cannot be removed. That in turn signified a deeper philosophical question regarding the relationship between memory and place.

Elsewhere in the collection, place is defined as an emotional state or at times an intellectual viewpoint. In *'Dangerous Ground'* I attempted to venture further in defining an emotional state in terms of a physical location. In *'Like I don't like'* I speak of words *'moving in'* as an example of the way words re-establish their place in an evolving continuum. In *'Simnai'* I was attempting to describe a connection between two places. The chimney is the artery connecting the old Welsh *'parlwr'* with all its cultural connotations as a private place, a room set aside for lovers and coffins and the reading of wills, and the wider world and more honest space beyond.

As I write this I have just heard of the death of the celebrated sculptor Sir Anthony Caro. Interviewed this autumn on BBC's Radio Four he said that, 'Rhythm is locked inside us' before going on to explain that the craft of the sculptor or the artist and the measure of their success lies in their ability to release that rhythm. I believe that it is that rhythmic value that also becomes the main driver in my collection. There are examples here of rhythmic structure as in *'Cynnau Tân,'* an Elizabethan Sonnet as well as a song in rhyme and meter in *'Gwacter a Galar'* which is based on the tradition of the Welsh harp verses. Most of it however is in free verse and it is the musicality of the rhythm that fascinates me in all poetry whether it be structured or free.

I started my own poetic journey by writing songs. In popular music structure and rhyme are paramount and that which often gives a song its distinctiveness and provides the relief is the musical break. It is often in the guitar solo that the structure is broken and notes are stretched and doubled, and as such the pauses, the silence between the notes are introduced as dropped beats. I hear those rhythms in words and syllables and enjoy the rhythmic freedom that free verse allows. What I was attempting to explore in *'While I Wait'* is that suggestion that musical rhythm lies as much if not more in the pause than it does in the note. There is no music on the page, the language has to be released and voiced in the interpretation. Such is the case with poetry and so many poems lose their impact because the reader fails to find the rhythm. Many eminent poets have emphasised the importance and the necessity of reading a poem out loud, amongst them, Jorge Luis Borges the Argentinian short story writer essayist and poet who said, *'Truly fine poetry must be read aloud.'*

It might well be that the blindness contracted in middle age accentuated his view but it is one that is commonly held. Borges also added that poetry, *'Remembers that it was first song.'*

Its roots are laid firmly in the oral tradition and Billy Collins the American poet laureate even ventured to suggest that,

'A poem will live or die depending on how it is read.'

That rings so true for me as well and the rhythm, that measured flow of words and pauses is crucial. The architecture of a poem, its shape and balance are elemental in that I have to hear first and foremost in order for the poem to realise its full integrity. Every word has its own sound and accent and taste and its place has to be earned.

This is also a bilingual collection. My first language is Welsh and my natural inclination is to write poetry in my mother tongue, but since I wanted to workshop as many of these poems as possible I wrote many in English in order that the whole class could understand. These poems subsequently earned their place in this collection. Much has been said and written about the advantage of bilingualism in terms of cognitive development. It has been argued that it promotes mental agility and that the ability to recognise and appreciate two different language systems enhances both one's appreciation and dexterity in those languages. In the context of my poetry it has given me two windows on the world each one unique but complementing each other. The ability to see things from two different linguistic perspectives enabled me to widen the horizon and produce a beneficial effect in that constant struggle to fuse sounds and wrestle with words.

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