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Coming Up for Air

by Patrick Maxwell

Call it peace, if you like. But when I say peace I don't mean absence of war, I mean peace, a feeling in your guts. And it's gone for ever if the rubber-truncheon boys get hold of us.

(George Orwell: Coming Up for Air)

What moves us about this passage? It is not particularly difficult to know which literary world we are in, which part of history we are being exposed to, and even which author is speaking. In these few sentences, blatant nostalgia and mistrust of the future culminate in fierce agony at the final image. It is not so much the word 'war' which sparks fright in the narrator, but the idea of the state's 'rubber-truncheons', and their being wielded on 'us' by the military forces of fascism or communism that threatened to overrun Europe in early 1939.

We are moved as well by the direct contrast between war and truncheons on one side, and the vague notion

of peace 'in your guts' – an indefinable sensation, not like the harsh reality of the violent 'boys' patrolling the streets – on the other. The contentment of this gut feeling of inner peace is ruptured by the new threat of war; the contrast between them is striking. The writer is frightened, not angry, but perhaps resigned to the fact that whatever his conception of 'peace' is, it will not make sense for much longer.

The writer, the real voice, is also recognisable, so ordinary and so concise. Orwell's 1939 novel *Coming Up for Air* is layered with sentences like the one above. They are repetitive reflections of Orwell's protagonist, a bored, unremarkable middle-aged man, in the lead-up to the Second World War. It is a portrait not just of one man but of the generation of Englishmen who continued to live throughout the Thirties, threatened by the daily odour of failed capitalism and the 'fear of the boss', stuck between the two wars and seemingly two emerging ideals: fascism and communism. As with much of Orwell, everything seems hopeless; the stories and their characters are driven towards the inevitable victory of one or the other, his heroes merely everyday instances of a failed resistance.

There is Dorothy Hare in *A Clergyman's Daughter*, who tries to persuade herself that she must be a Christian to please her father and fulfil her role as his faithful daughter. There is Gordon Comstock of *Keep*

the Aspidistra Flying, who adorns his failure to earn money with a virulent hatred of wealth and all it supposedly represents. And of course, there is Winston Smith, who frees himself from a state-enforced system of thought, only to be rebuked not so much in his actions but in his mind.

Orwell charts the way that we persuade ourselves that we are in the right, exposing the thin veil of reason – or its outright rejection – under which monsters are allowed to pass as acceptable society. Dorothy pretends that she is a proper Christian because without faith she cannot live her secluded life (for Orwell, belief comes before the thought). It was his genius in these novels to show how and what his characters felt was simply the most rational explanation of their own personal problems, and how the unfettered freedom to think remains open to all if we only remove the boundaries of prejudice and fear – something that many of Orwell's characters try, but ultimately fail, to do.

These qualities are alive in a different way in George Bowling, Coming Up for Air's affable narrator. An unhappily married father, who works as an insurance salesman, he finds his life pointless and monotonous: a seemingly endless series of children to attend to, trains to catch, meetings to make. Orwell's initial exposition of him is almost satirical in its balefulness and dreary caricature. The novel begins, mundanely enough, on

'the day I got my new false teeth.' But Bowling soon discovers, in the midst of his life, a new freedom, and uncovers a world that has been festering in his mind from the bucolic imagination of his childhood.

And so, Orwell visits an old world, one that we know never really existed, but is created in Bowling's mind by the oddest sense of detail, by the vague recollection of some long-lost tranquility. By showing himself this world again, and trying to re-evolve it for himself, he persuades himself that he is free, that the world he has entered is nothing like the one he lives in now, and is able to reclaim the innocence of his imagined youth from the present age. This neo-Romantic delusion is shown by Orwell to be almost debilitating, as it strips the narrator of his sense of reality.

Bowling, spurred on by a memory of Og, the king of Bashan, is transported to the rustic church, the village green, high street and family home of his childhood, each coming together to form a perfect picture in his mind; one that remains alive despite the drab existence he has created for himself now (really it only exists as a contrast to this new life, a welcome antidote to the fear and boredom of the suburbs he lives in).

Orwell, fond in his political writings of broad, general strokes, manages to impress upon us his intellectual honesty. In his fiction, this is achieved through a grasp of detail, whether ostensibly real or phantasmagoric. Bowling recalls a world of imaginary

details that he remembers from decades ago: the writing on the memorials on the village church floor, the sweets he used to buy from the village shop, the sizes of the fish he used to catch on illicit escapades out of school. All of these combine, morph, into the greater image of his childhood, which represents for him the only point of resistance to his current state, his sole riposte to the cruel, ongoing march of the present. Bowling persuades himself of this apparent haven, self-assured, as he eyes a primrose, that the world he lives in, ‘doesn’t matter’ (Orwell’s italics). He knows that ‘I don’t even want to be young again’, but says that ‘I was alive that moment’, recognising again ‘a kind of peaceful feeling, and yet it’s like a flame.’

Bowling has let the idea of the images, the fiction of this other world in his mind, overwhelm him, just as Dorothy Hare loses her memory, or Gordon Comstock tells himself he can’t sleep with his girlfriend because it would be to give in to the ‘money-god.’ He decides to return to explore Lower Binfield, the fictional town Orwell first wrote of in *Down and Out in Paris and London*, after his experience as an English tramp, and based on Orwell’s own memories of growing up in rural Oxfordshire. Remembering the many hours fishing as a child, Bowling decides to find the huge carp he imagined in the pool of the manor house. ‘Why shouldn’t I catch those carp?’ he tells us, remembering it ‘in the dark places among the trees, waiting for me

all those years.’ He becomes almost fixated upon these fish, as if catching them would be his final victory in reclaiming the old town for himself.

Bowling’s imaginings amount to a paradise lost. The carp are of course no longer there, and the town has been overrun by new housing developments and the grisly stain of industry. When he visits the church and sees the graves of all the adults he remembers, he reflects on the world of his childhood, that there was ‘nothing left of any of them except a slab of stone and God knows what underneath.’ Finally, he comes to realise that ‘the bad times are coming, and the streamlined men are coming too.’ The details of his childhood are soon replaced by the details of war:

The bombs, the food-queues, the rubber truncheons, the barbed wire, the coloured shirts, the slogans, the enormous faces, the machine-guns squirting out of bedroom windows. It’s all going to happen. I know it – at any rate, I knew it then. There’s no escape.

Orwell was perhaps the most lucid writer of twentieth-century fiction, and Bowling his most succinct character. In this passage, Orwell shakes Bowling, grabs him out of his delusion and pushes him back into the world of the Thirties, the ‘low, dishonest decade’ of Auden’s phrase, ‘whose blind skyscrapers’ Bowling so abhors speak to the ‘strength of collective man.’

There is a point in the novel where Bowling goes to a

meeting of the Left Book Club to hear a lecturer speak on 'The Menace of Fascism' at the local hall. He is scared by the progress of fascism across Europe but loses interest in the lecturer's dry clichés and 'grating' tone. The repeated set of phrases quickly become meaningless ('Back to the dark Ages. ... European civilisation. ... Act before it is too late'). The speaker is possessed by hatred of all that he is opposed to, which gives Bowling 'the feeling that something has got inside [his] skull and is hammering down on [his] brain.' He marvels at this man, who is incapacitated with rage and unable to see past his own slogans. Orwell shows us the banality, the inherent crudeness, in the speaker's words, and the hypocrisy in his message; it is satirical, but given the timing of the novel, strikingly pertinent.

Bowling, more than ever Orwell's sympathetic caricature, feels stuck between two extremes, between thinking of 'Hitler and Stalin' as merely 'mean spanners and smashed faces.' He is terrified by the prospect of war and its components, 'the kind of hate-world ... The coloured-shirts, the barbed wire, the rubber-truncheons.' It is almost Nineteen Eighty-Four in miniature. Orwell warns us of the never-changing perils of propaganda, especially in times of crisis, and the need to think, without overt prejudice, in the face of extremes. Beleaguered by threats from either side, Bowling resorts to the idyllic world of the past rather

than confronting the hard truths of his day.

Coming Up for Air helps us to see that disillusionment with the present, through nostalgia, can lead only to further delusion. Orwell's work, written in the midst of the rise of fascism and economic depression, can help us to see the importance of rationalism in opposition to idealism. As we face more problems at home and abroad, this message remains significant as ever, and the consequences of our failure to live up to it just as colossal. ♦

Budapest, 1984

by *Marcella Hunyady*

Cars whooshed past as I stood on the narrow median on Erzsébet Street, my three-year-old sister gripping my left arm as if it were a rope. We were to cross the street and return to the Hungaria Café and our mother. She had a meeting there with other journalists and was waiting for us to bring her cigarettes. I clutched a pack of Symphonias securely in my right hand—unfiltered, in red-and-white packaging (“Remember, Olimpia, red and white,” my mother had said, her brown eyes intent on me as she squatted and tucked a húszforintos bill into my overalls)—but I couldn’t move.

It was morning, people were rushing to work. The cars raced by in four colorful lines, two moving in one direction and two in the other; some carried boxes and loosely secured bulging suitcases, ready to plummet and knock us over. The harsh winter light bounced off the cars’ windshields and mirrors as if thousands of angry fairies had been released into the air.

I heard the tram’s bell in the distance, behind the

corner to my right; it was on its way to Gellért Hill, where the rich lived and where Anyu, our mother, bought us caramel ice cream during the summer. I saw a woman not too far away but far enough that I couldn’t ask her for help. At the sound of her voice my heart quieted for a moment, she seemed so kind. She was saying to someone, “Come over in the evening, I made paprikás csirke for dinner, we could watch Linda together!”

Cintia asked me, “Aren’t we going back to Anyu?”

The car horns hurt my ears and the gasoline fumes made me dizzy. I lifted my gaze to the café entrance across the street, seeking comfort in its gilded queens and lilies. The gold lettering above the two Roman soldiers read New York, a reminder of the time when a miniature Statue of Liberty sat proudly on the roof in her robe and spiky crown, holding up the torch. The Lady didn’t mind the wind and the rain, not even the pigeons and the bird poop, but the Communists renamed the café and the Lady up and left. My mother, who knew everything, had told me that the New York Café—she still called it that—was the most beautiful café in the world, the most beautiful example of Italian Renaissance architecture outside of Italy, and I imagined her mouth forming the word *gyonyoru*, the two o’s and the long u at the end, lips pursed as if she were about to blow a kiss.

When we had stepped off the tram earlier, the late-

February snow, melting in gray, solitary cones on the dirty sidewalk, made my leather boots wet. Now sleety snow fell on my gloveless fingers, and I realized I was freezing. Cold blue mist enveloped the building on the other side of the street, creating an unbearable distance between me and my mother. She gathered with other writers on the second floor; I searched for her there in the bright glow that emanated from the windows.

And there she was. I instantly recognized the outline of her back as she walked across the room in front of a lace curtain, a soothing shape passing by like a beloved toy that once belonged to me but no longer did. Something went wrong—a gesture, a shape, a line—and Anyu became a foreign land. I watched my mother, now a stranger, as she moved around inside the glitzy café, a woman suddenly owned by others, owned by the crystal chandelier that bathed her cheeks in amber radiance, the brown cigarette smoke that floated around her like an evil spirit, the gaping mouth of a man who stood up laughing, wearing a white shirt with rolled-up sleeves. He had long arms like a spider. And my mother was laughing too—I used to own that laugh. She glanced toward the window and stopped. She put on her coat, the one with the coffee stain at the bottom, her movements smooth and steady. The men watched her walk toward the door. Was she leaving without us?

“Let’s go, Oli! I’m cold!”

Cintia. I forgot about Cintia. She looked up at me with clear blue eyes that sometimes made me think of our father and at other times of the Mediterranean Sea, neither of which I had ever seen. Her wispy blond hair was thinned out in small patches from some illness no one could identify, giving her the appearance of a vintage doll in need of repair. I looked like a boy, but Cintia was always dressed in soft pastel colors; we spent part of our Sundays at the Kerepesi flea market scouting for velvet and silk gowns for her. Cintia’s pretty dresses were wrinkled and stained, the yellowing thread at the seams running loose near her underarm and on the hemline, because our mother had no patience for domestic chores, but Cintia didn’t mind. She just wanted to feel like the glamorous, beloved women of the classic Hollywood movies we sometimes watched on the black-and-white TV in the coatroom of the New York Café while waiting for Anyu.

Despite the cold Cintia was smiling, and the expectation of something grand awaiting us made her face radiant. She cocked her head like a chickadee. It amazed me, how my sister had no fear as long as she was near me; I was only four years older, tall but thin, often angry. Or maybe she was simply too young to understand that if we took one wrong step, if I miscalculated the distance between us and the cars rushing forward relentlessly, we would die.

My mother said something about waiting for the red

light, but there was no light here and we were supposed to cross at the green light. What had she meant? I felt the first hot teardrop roll down my face and got angry with myself for being so cowardly. Anyu hated cowardly, and I set my jaw and vowed to abandon the median the second there was space between the cars.

Cintia squeezed my arm.

I looked to the left at an approaching red Volga in the right lane and a gray Trabant to its left. I thought if we ran, we could make it.

I lifted my foot and closed my eyes.

“Stay there, Olimpia! Wait for me.” My mother’s voice reached me, bold and strong from across the street. She stood in front of the café with her coat open, in a checkered wool skirt, brown leather boots, and a maroon turtleneck, her long black hair flowing around her in the wind like a cape.

My knees went weak with relief. I stepped back to the median and watched my mother look to the left, wait, and when the green light turned red above the cars, cross the street. I realized then what she meant by wait for the red light and felt stupid. But feeling stupid didn’t matter anymore, because Anyu was suddenly next to us. She gathered Cintia up with her right arm and me with her left and smiled. The smile was brief, only a little turn in the corners of her mouth, but it was enough. A stray strand of her hair flew

across her mouth, sticking to her moist lips; I reached out and freed it. Her hair was silk between my fingers. As we walked to the café, I glanced at the cars passing, now as harmless as matchboxes.

We stayed until midafternoon. We took the number 15 bus to go home, like we always did; Anyu preferred the tram in the morning and the bus in the afternoon because she liked to gaze at Budapest from every possible angle. She rarely talked to us while we traveled, and if Cintia or I said something to her she didn’t respond, not because she wanted to shut us out but because she was too busy listening to her city.

I never fully understood Anyu’s love of Budapest because Budapest under Communism was drab and ugly. It was as if all the glorious neoclassical and art nouveau buildings had gone into hiding, leaving only their ghosts behind. The cream-and-white buildings turned gray, and the polished wood entrance doors cracked and blackened until they looked like they were made of plastic. We lived in Angel Land, one of the poorest of the twenty-three districts of Budapest, the Proletarian District, as some people called it, because it was mostly inhabited by laborers who worked in factories during the day. The number 15 bus was always filled with people who neither spoke nor moved, only stared out the windows with vacant eyes, not seeing what was to my mother, and some days even to me, a beautiful sight. We passed Andrassy Street, lined

with maple trees and always freshly painted embassy buildings; Heroes' Square with the Millennium Monuments and archangel Gabriel and the seven chieftains of the Hungarian tribes that, led by Árpád, conquered the area that became Hungary. There was the Museum of Fine Arts and the Palace of Arts, with their Corinthian columns and giant frescoes, and later the Parliament, once elected one of the most beautiful government buildings in the world. I knew a lot about Budapest's history because when Anyu was in a good mood she told me about every street and building we passed, until they ceased to be streets and buildings but became friends who could console me when I felt sad. Even the last stretch of the road, when we were getting into poorer areas and finally into Angel Land, held some magic—I loved the sight of the Piac, where I spent Sunday afternoons with Anyu and Cintia, bargaining for potatoes and onions and, on rare lucky occasions, a chicken.

As my mother watched the city, I watched her. She had a long nose that, when she was angry, looked witchlike, stern and forbidding; but on summer weekends when we went up to Gellért Hill on the Libegő and made chaplets out of daisies, it rendered her oval face as heart-stoppingly beautiful as the marble busts of ancient Greek statues at the Palace of Arts we just passed. She had a very small waist and large breasts, a combination that could freeze men

midstride when they glanced her way; I found the intensity of their stares frightening, but my mother barely noticed. Her hair, silky and so deep brown it appeared black, reached almost to her waist, and she wore it either parted in the middle or in a careless bun or ponytail. She liked to dress in cotton pants or long wool skirts and turtlenecks, never provocative but always slightly artsy, and her queenlike walk transformed every outfit she wore. I once determined that this illusion of royal lineage was created by the way she held her head—always high, very still, shoulders down and relaxed, while her hips had a rhythmical way of swaying as she walked.

At the Parliament building, a young Gypsy girl my age or maybe a little older got on the bus and began to beg. People ignored her like usual, but when she reached us, she let out a long sigh, and something in that sigh brought my mother out of her reverie. She turned her head away from the window, toward the girl, her eyes becoming dark with anger; she scared the girl, even though I knew Anyu's anger wasn't directed at her.

Everyone in Hungary hated Gypsies, except my mother. I dreaded what I knew was coming next.

"Would you like to have dinner with us?" she asked the Gypsy girl.

Once my mother decided on something, there was no going back. I knew better than to argue. Cintia let out

a whine and I knew what she was thinking—our dinner, small as it was, was now reduced even further for the sake of a person we didn't even know and who smelled like a garbage truck. There was no way I would let this girl into my bed, though, I decided with a sudden flash of anger. No way.

The girl eyed us suspiciously. Then, apparently deciding that we meant no harm, she sat next to my mother quickly, as if fearing that Anyu might change her mind. I tried to act gracious, remember all the things my mother taught me, but ended up turning away from both the girl and my mother, disturbed by the girl's stench and hurt at the thought of my lost dinner.

When we got to *Élmunkás tér* we got off the bus. Anyu exited first, then the Gypsy girl, then my sister. In a sudden burst of defiance, I didn't get off the bus but held onto the leather handle and imagined how I would go back to the Parliament and the embassies and the New York Café and then somewhere really far, somewhere where no one smelled bad and there was roasted chicken for every meal, and where I would have a say about who I was sharing my dinner with. But then, just as the doors closed, I saw that my mother didn't look back at me but was already walking home, the sun bouncing off her shiny hair, Cintia holding her hand and the Gypsy girl trotting along next to them. And with such acute panic I nearly tore the bus's

handle to free myself, I threw my body at the diminishing space between the closing doors and pushed through, heart beating as fast as if I were drowning.

They didn't knock.

We were peeling potatoes next to the entrance door in the kitchen. The Gypsy girl, whose name was Etel, held the knife awkwardly and cut away too much of the potato with the skin. She sat on the checkered tile floor cross-legged, back curved into an ugly shape, the tip of her braid dipping into the water bowl between her legs.

My mother stood at the stove listening to the rain. It started just when we got home and made great splashing noises on the roof. We lived on the top floor of a three-story apartment building and could hear every raindrop. Anyu's hands moved quickly and efficiently with the peeling knife, and occasionally she began to hum a folk song with her full, soothing voice, but she never finished a song. It was as if midway through she found a hidden flaw in the tune that she couldn't accept.

I sat on a stool between my mother and Etel, mixing hot potatoes with milk and butter. I kept pushing the milk out of the bowl because I applied too much force with the masher; I was very hungry and mad at Anyu for inviting Etel. And Cintia sat on the edge of the bathtub still in her boots, the melting snow making tiny pools beneath her feet. She was making a bath for

Etel and some swimming rubber duckies. Free housing apartments didn't come with bathrooms, but we had squeezed in a tub at the end of the kitchen, despite the regulations. The only toilet was outside the apartments and was communal.

I saw their shadow before I saw them. I'd just dropped a peeled potato into the bowl when I noticed the pale yellow flesh of the potato turning gray. Someone was blocking the light, and I looked up, annoyed.

Two men stood in our doorway in matching shiny boots, faces expressionless. Later, I would recall two things about the officers: the shine on their boots and the stillness in their eyes. Anyu's hand froze above the pot and she stopped humming. Just then she was in the process of cutting up hot dogs and dropping them into the hot water; she now placed the knife and the hot dog next to the pot and turned to me. She grabbed me by my shoulders and pulled me up—warm milk and butter spilled onto the floor and my feet—and she shoved me behind her back.

I fell and knocked Cintia over, my hip hitting the edge of the bathtub. The pain from my hip spread to my spine and all over my body. Cintia found her balance and looked at me, while her mouth formed a little o like when she was a baby. I jumped back to Anyu as the two officers stepped into our home.

The Gypsy girl was the first to react. She shot out of

the apartment with the bag of potatoes, maneuvering herself between the two men like an eel. The officers made no attempt to stop her.

My mother stared the officers down and placed her arm over Cintia's shoulders; Cintia had run to us and was clutching my mother's skirt. I took my stance behind Anyu, still holding the masher, breathing in my mother's sweat.

The older officer gave my mother a quick look and frowned. He studied Anyu with a puzzled face until his expression cleared and his eyes filled with amazement. Then he turned away and marched into our living room with shoulders that nearly danced, boots squeaking. The younger officer stayed at the door, his eyes as large and unblinking as a toad's.

Without letting the senior officer out of her sight, Anyu said, "Olimpia, go with your sister to Mrs. Varga on the first floor."

I glanced at my mother and noticed a single strand of gray hair above her right ear. I knew I should get Cintia out of the apartment, but there was no way I would leave Anyu alone with these men.

The older officer paused in the middle of the living room. He took up a stance with his legs apart, hands resting on his waist. His ironed pants had a small crease near his knee, and I could not take my eyes off that crease.

"You have a nice home here. Modest but nice."

The man's voice was deep and disarmingly beautiful. Anyu didn't move. Her breathing was slow, deliberate.

"Eva," the man said quietly. My mother's name in his mouth, the softness, the intimacy of it, turned my stomach with a violent lurch.

He began walking around the apartment with leisurely steps, examining the furniture, touching our things. He lifted a Zsolnay porcelain vizsla from the chest; the paperweight's green eosin sheen turned purple in his hand.

He didn't look at us at all.

I stayed behind my mother and ran my eyes over our apartment as if seeing it for the first time. The floor was solid-wood parquet in need of polishing, and we had no rugs. The unmade beds, with their wrinkled but thankfully clean sheets, made me blush. There were endless rows of handmade bookshelves filled with books, and the corner table and the armchair were also covered with books. The only furniture in our house that could be called nice was the dining set we got from Grandma as a present shortly before she died. It was all squares, very modern, lacquered, made of some fancy wood, gold as wheat. The four matching chairs were covered with wool in a color Cintia called "boring pink" and my mother compared to a "slain liver." We also had two throw pillows I loved, their surfaces teeming with blooming, richly colored tulips in red,

yellow, purple, and blue; my mother won them in a game at the Nagyvárad fair. They were handmade and decorated with a famous Hungarian embroidery pattern called Matyó.

"That's your name, correct? Miss Eva Nagy?" The man's voice brought my attention back to him. He stopped walking around and now faced my mother, hands on waist again.

"Doctor Eva Nagy. What can I do for you?"

Anyu sounded calm and collected, her PhD-educated Budapest accent flawless and measured. Relief ran through me as comforting as a warm bath. She was in control; everything would be all right.

The younger man in the doorway shifted his weight.

"I think I remember you," the older officer said.

My mother's shoulders tensed. I stepped closer to her and studied the face of the man who addressed her. He had clear blue eyes set so close he resembled a squirrel. His face was rumped and very tan, which didn't make sense, not in Budapest, not in February. He filled up our room so that everything suddenly seemed smaller, the walls, the furniture, even Anyu.

The officer studied my mother with a smile that didn't reach his eyes and made me shiver. He was close enough now that I could smell him. A smoker like Anyu, he reeked of cigarettes, a stench that was darker and more bitter than my mother's smell. It merged with something that reminded me of burned rubber.

“I know I remember something,” he said.

The man took a step toward Anyu. Cintia grabbed my hand with a small whimper only I could hear. Anyu watched the man, alert, her chest rising rhythmically, still not moving at all.

“I just don’t understand it, Miss Eva. It doesn’t make sense.”

So quickly it startled me, the man turned away, walked to our dinner set, and grabbed the side of the table as if he wanted to see how sturdy it was. The single light bulb above him shone off his thick brown hair, the top of his metal baton, his polished leather boots. Still holding the table, he looked back for a moment at my mother.

“Maybe I am mistaken . . .”

He abruptly straightened his jacket and turned to my mother again with a grin that was almost gleeful.

“But I don’t think so.”

With that, he sat down at the dining table, took a cigarette out of his breast pocket, and began to smoke. I watched as he put his feet up on a chair and felt my mother sway for a moment in front of me.

My belly began to fill with cold, solid anger, a kind I had never experienced before.

“What do you want?”

Anyu’s voice was strong, but I heard the slight tremble at the end of the question.

“Tell me, Miss Eva—”

“Doctor Nagy.”

“Doctor Nagy, then.” The officer stared at my mother amused, as if she were a difficult child. I felt the anger in my stomach turn heavy.

“Are you a member of the Communist Party?”

There was a momentary relaxing in my mother’s shoulders. I wasn’t sure why Anyu felt suddenly better, but I remembered the time when, after refusing to carry the Soviet flag into the gymnasium for the Workers’ Day celebration, I was called into the principal’s office and made to stand for forty minutes in front of the portrait of Lenin. When the principal arrived and I was told of my punishment (an essay on how grateful I felt for the morally superior upbringing our Communist leaders provided me with), all I could feel was relief that I knew what I had to do, that the uncertainty was over.

“No, I’m not a member of the Communist Party. And that’s my prerogative. You have no right to be here, the State Security Agency was dismantled years ago.” My mother’s rolling, self-confident voice matched the rhythm of the man’s speech, and for a moment I felt like I was listening to a play.

“That’s all true. There’s no obligation for you to join us. Only, most employers don’t like to hire people outside of the party because people outside of the party tend to be, well, unpredictable, wouldn’t you say?”

The officer held his cigarette, his elbow perched on

the table, his crossed legs resting. He didn't take his eyes off my mother.

"Uncontrollable, perhaps," my mother replied. Her hands turned into fists that she kept behind her back.

"Control has its place in society, Doctor Nagy. Someone with your education and intelligence surely can appreciate that."

The man then stood up, dropped his cigarette onto the floor, and killed the stub underneath his boot. The squashed cigarette made an ugly ring on the floor I had just cleaned the day before, and it was that cigarette that finally burst the solid anger in my stomach; I jumped out from behind my mother.

"You bastards!"

The officer's arm rose, crossed in front of his body, and swung toward me like a bat. But Anyu was faster. Her hands shot out, gripped my arms, and pulled me back. The man lost his balance and stumbled forward.

I ran with Cintia to the corner. I saw my mother's face turn dark, like the winter sky before a storm.

Cintia looked up at me, her eyes starting to fill with tears, and I forced my shoulders to relax, my lungs to breathe. "It's gonna be okay," I told her.

"But Mommy?" Cintia's voice was so small I could barely hear her. I picked her up and sat her on the corner table, next to my mother's books, which I now found oddly comforting. I stood as close to Cintia's side as I could and hugged her with one arm.

"Mommy will be fine. But we have to stay quiet, okay?"

Cintia hugged me back, and we both turned our attention to the center of the living room, toward our mother.

Anyu was about eight feet from us. She was facing the officer, who straightened himself and acted as if nothing had happened, but his hair, which was carefully slicked back with hair gel, had come undone, making his rodent face above the perfectly ironed uniform look ridiculous; and that ridiculousness shifted something inside me so that I stopped being angry and scared.

I wanted to shout to Anyu, "Look at his hair!" He was harmless, he was a joke, no one with hair like that could hurt us; but one glance at my mother's back told me there was no need. My mother's shoulders loosened and though I couldn't see her face anymore, I knew she was smiling. I also knew something the tall man didn't: when my mother smiled at people she hated, her smiling was just a warm-up.

The officer walked up to my mother, not stopping until his face was only inches away from Anyu's. I thought she would slap him but she just stood there with soft shoulders. The air seemed to get thicker around the two of them. I could almost see it; it was red-hot and violet.

"A couple of years ago, you won a national poker

game, am I right? I saw you on TV. Yes. I recognized your face when we came in. You have excellent nerves, Doctor Nagy. And you are very beautiful.”

And then I understood. Not everything, not even most of it, but enough to know we were going to win.

My mother and men always had a special relationship. She rarely flirted or cared about having attention, and she worked well with men, who treated her just like my friends treated me at school: like a pal, a teammate, someone to play soccer with. But when she chose to, she could change all that in a second. She would alter something slightly in the way she held her spine, her chest, her neck, the manner in which she moved her limbs and turned her head, so that men around her woke as if from a dream and greeted Anyu as if she'd just arrived. Their eyes would fill with helpless yearning and loss because they knew she was going to leave soon and leave without them, and they were already grieving.

And in that moment with the officer, my mother underwent the same change. The officer's eyes came to life with want, and an energy settled between him and my mother that excluded everyone in the room, including me. Yet I was neither upset nor frightened because I knew that I was witnessing Anyu's choice: her revenge.

My mother took a step toward the officer, who stood in front of her with puffed-out chest, face flushed, eyes

locked on Anyu. She dropped her chin and slowly leaned into the man until her forehead almost touched the man's lips. Then, she lifted her chin again, and holding the man's gaze with her eyes, she rolled back her shoulders and cocked her head slightly to the left, exposing her neck. In her softest voice, the one she used when we were hurt and she wanted to comfort us, she said, “State the purpose of your visit and get out.”

The muscles on the officer's neck tensed, and with an ugly, savage grimace that disappeared from his face as quickly as it appeared, he took his body away from my mother and stepped to the side. It seemed for a moment that he was going to hit Anyu, but he just grabbed his belt and pulled hard on it, so hard I thought it would rip and fall.

“I would advise you to take greater care with vilifying others in your articles. You seem oblivious of consequences, but consequences will nevertheless find you.” The officer's voice was no longer beautiful but sharp and pinched.

He started for the door, and then my mother's voice lilted calmly, “Are you threatening me?”

He turned back to Anyu. “No, not at all. Only, if you don't take heed, we might have to come back and confiscate that fine dining set of yours. Freelance journalists outside of the party rarely make enough money to obtain something that expensive legally.”

He went toward the door. As he passed us, he

paused. “Also, you have your lovely children to think of, don’t you?”

I thought Anyu would be pleased with how she dealt with the officers, but I was wrong.

When the door closed behind them, my mother sat down on her bed, buried her face in her hands, and began to cry. She cried with a bottomless, drawn-out sobbing I was to remember for the rest of my life. I had never seen Anyu cry before, nor was I ever going to later; the sounds she made were as unrecognizable as if she had suddenly addressed us in a foreign language. Cintia took my arm, holding it with both hands, and we stood there witnessing our mother crying for a long, long time.

Then she swept the hair out of her face, which was red and wet from weeping. She clutched the edge of the bed, regarded us with eyes so sad I stopped breathing, and she pushed herself up and straightened her back.

She turned and reached under her bed.

When Cintia saw the ax that Anyu pulled out, she let go of my arm and ran into the kitchen. I stared at my mother, whose face was resolved, serene, and at her black hair, which fell over her shoulders and gleamed underneath the light like a medieval helmet.

She lifted the ax and attacked the dinner table. The beautiful solid-wood top only cracked at first, then it fell with a thud, leaving splinters as sharp as knives. Anyu then chopped up the chairs with their soft wool

cushions, the legs caving like dominoes, and then the chest and the beds, until torn clothes covered the floor and goose feathers saturated the air like snow. One of the feathers stuck on my mother’s lips and for a moment I had the impression of a wild animal tearing not at our furniture but at the flesh of white bunnies. I yelled at my mother to stop, yelled at her again and again until my voice became hoarse and my throat felt hot like it was bleeding, but she didn’t hear me and didn’t stop. Soon there was nothing left in the apartment but the bookshelves and the typewriter, and the air became heavy with dust and the smell of wood.

By the time Anyu finished it was dark, and I left with Cintia to find some food. ♦

The King of Hay-on-Wye

by *Jane Frank*

A maverick anarchist, bookseller and entrepreneur, Richard Booth, who has died aged 80, transformed the small Powys town of Hay-on-Wye into a mecca for the second-hand book. His significant and colourful legacy in the book trade inspired a formula that has since been applied in more than 50 towns and villages in 27 countries world-wide as the resulting International Book Town Movement spread.

Booth revitalised Hay-on-Wye, buying the medieval Castle, declaring himself 'King' and the town an independent kingdom. He bombarded the media with rants against government, big business, quangos, tourism organisations, Murdoch and academia. In more recent years, he took aim at online book businesses, unashamedly using self-publicity to create a 'Town of Books' that would lure visitors to the depressed area and provide his kingdom with an economic foundation. Booth advocated for preservation of the rural economy and traditional crafts in Hay-on-Wye, opposing modernisation, which he considered the yoke of British

tyranny.

Booth and Hay-on-Wye are synonymous. He constructed a number of distinctive narratives to characterise his leadership and colour his relationships with employees, customers and other book town founders around the globe. Such narratives included the book town as 'an economy of poverty', respect and protection of traditional ways of life, and an early uptake of international trade opportunities and specialisations that later became widespread in other industries with sweeping globalisation.

Over six decades, Booth created an unconventional brand that was increasingly adopted by entrepreneurs, governments and organisations around the world. Booth's role as an eccentric leader was critical in the advancement of the Book Town Movement; his audacity, passion and know-how reflecting a willingness to depart from conventional means of problem-solving, resulting in an enduring business concept that drew on the cosmopolitan and collectible appeal of books as objects against the backdrop of picturesque, rural scenery.

A legendary figure, Booth was nevertheless controversial, variously described as an 'eccentric anarchist', 'a publicity engine', 'the voice of the unsettled upper classes', 'a deceptively vague and ruffled man' and 'King Richard Rubbercheque.'

Richard George William Pitt Booth, a descendent of

William Pitt the Younger, was born into a military family in 1939. Booth did not adopt second-hand bookselling on a whim; it was a pastime he began as a boy. His interest was initially kindled by an ex-soldier, Edward Fineron, who had sold books in Woking, near Booth's home, since 1923. Fineron prophesied that Booth would become a second-hand bookseller. He never forgot Fineron's remark: 'You can be a second-hand bookseller anywhere in the world.'

Booth described himself as a failure and non-conformist during his adolescence at Rugby school. After leaving the school under a cloud, Booth continued his education in Guildford which at the time was an important centre for second-hand book dealing. At Oxford, he met Kyril Bonfiglioli, a charismatic, Oxford antiques dealer with an encyclopaedic knowledge of English literature, who was an ex-sergeant in the King's African Rifles. These mentors were like Booth's father: all three were ex-army officers deeply immersed in their passion for books.

Rather than pursuing the accountancy career his parents had hoped for, Booth returned to Hay-on-Wye where his family had lived since 1903. Using a small legacy, he opened his first second-hand bookshop in a building previously used as the town's fire station. Opening a bookshop in a declining market town seemed lunacy. As he told me, people said 'Booth won't last three months. Nobody reads books in Hay'. Booth's

empire grew, however. Through the late 1960s and early 1970s, the local cinema, castle, chapel and workhouse were bought cheaply and filled with books.

Booth combed the country, purchasing every book he could find sometimes buying entire bookshops and complete libraries belonging to Welsh Working Men's Clubs. His vision was to accumulate vast numbers of out-of-print titles in one location. He claimed that old books never die and that no matter how unattractive a book may seem, there is always someone who will covet it because everyone has their own peculiar notions of value. This is the thinking behind Booth's 'Honesty Bookshop', described vividly by Paul Collins in *Sixpence House* (2003):

In a field at the bottom of the castle hill is a motley collection of rusted metal bookshelves and clapped out old hard-cover books, all left to sit in the open air. This is the end of the line for the printed word, the place where absolutely unsaleable books from Booth's stock wind up . . . These unfortunate volumes are not brought inside at the end of the day; they just sit out in the wind and the rain until some buyer takes pity on them and drops a few pence into the unmanned box, or until the action of sun and moisture upon the paper decomposes the books into pulp.

The 'honesty' shelves featured prominently at the foot of the grassy hill beneath the Castle Bookshop where curious travellers, despite the intermittent rain,

filed along the rows of rejected volumes, occasionally rescuing a book and dropping some coins in the box.

Booth's buying mentality reflected his views as a political and social radical. When I interviewed him in 2011, he commented that 'the original vision that started book towns was that it was an economy of poverty'. He was a passionate advocate for the affordable book: 'every person has the right to read a cheap book'. Booth objected to the approach of companies like Amazon because postage charges are usually far higher than the cost of the book itself. Booth said, 'If you have a few thousand publications, you can send them around the world in a container . . . we can send a paperback around the world . . . for a penny whereas with Amazon, you'll pay £2.75 for the postage even if they only sell that paperback for a penny. £2.75 is quite a high price for a poor person'.

It was Booth's intention in Hay-on-Wye to make the book town an extension of the traditional market place, bringing social and economic benefits. There is a historical tradition of commercial activity outside the formal boundaries of metropolitan book emporia. From the Frankfurt book fairs of the sixteenth century through to the street trade in London and other provincial locations, a distinctive and colourful cast of traders played a crucial role in the circulation of books. Travelling pedlars, hawkers and chapmen, distributing printed matter beyond the reach of conventional

bookshops, played a critical part in the growth of the book trade in the non-metropolitan streets and public spaces of Britain and Europe that were the precursors of book towns as we now know them.

Booth's entrepreneurial activity therefore had an embedded social purpose; his work facilitated a social as well as commercial infrastructure that allowed not only booksellers but others to engage in cooperative activities and grow the book town concept. Booth described this to me as a two-way commitment, requiring 'an economy of total community input'. Booth's creative intervention undoubtedly relied on Hay's picturesque rural scenery, the cultural heritage value of its under-utilised historic buildings and shops and rich local traditions.

Respect for the rural way of life was central to Booth's complicated philosophy – 'post-capitalist' as he described it – and the many (real and imagined) obstacles he opposed to secure his ideal. He promoted the book town approach as an alternative way of revitalising the rural economy rather than one that prioritises the interests of 'officials' or government bureaucracies. Booth often described his distaste for quangos as Collins recounts:

The Milk Board, the Welsh Tourist Board, the Forestry Commission . . . all that lot. They call them nongovernmental, but they're propped up with tax money. To build luxury hotels in farming and coal

towns . . . The quangos are killing Hay. A town needs a reason to live. And you won't find it in the Tourist Information Centre. Or shops full of Welsh key chains and souvenir shot glasses . . . This town's reason to live is books.

Booth argued that quangos destroy the rural economy of Wales by encouraging big businesses. 'People want the butcher, the baker and the candlestick maker, they don't want supermarkets,' he said. When I interviewed Booth, he was vehement that

you can either subsidise or protect an economy, and at the moment, everyone is subsidising the economy, so the official becomes God. If you protect it, then you're not going to eat anything except local bread . . .

Booth's passion for protecting Hay-on-Wye's future – albeit in a way that suited his own business – was behind everything he created. However, his methods were extreme. He had books delivered around town in a horse-drawn cart. Horse transport, he said, relieves the energy crisis and provides work for local saddlers, wheelwrights and blacksmiths, who might otherwise be unemployed. Preserving a past that was already gone suited the tourist-friendly image Booth needed to cultivate his book businesses but ignored the fact that some people and parts of the local economy needed the various quangos as part of their own ways of making a living. Not everyone in Hay sold books. The dairy industry needed the Milk Board. There were people in

the town who wanted a supermarket and other conveniences of contemporary life.

Booth's enthusiasm for the revival of local industries and crafts was also linked to his suspicion of the intellectual world – which was ironic for an ex-Oxford scholar whose vast numbers of books afforded libraries and universities the opportunity to purchase obscure or esoteric titles. When Martin Amis visited Hay-on-Wye and interviewed Booth in 1980, he observed the paradox that the 'world's largest bookseller should turn out also to be one of its leading anti-intellectuals'. In his autobiography, Booth reinforced this observation:

My success as a bookseller was built against the background of manual work. I was thrown into the society of diggers and ditches, labourers and woodmen . . . Pride in manual work, I believe, is the basis of any traditional rural economy. I hold a good manual worker in higher esteem than any intellectual. Working with just a few country labourers, I ended up possessing books of greater intellectual variety than all the universities in the British Isles put together.

Booth's methods polarised people. He was fiercely criticised for his role in the depredation of the same Welsh working men's libraries, whose closure he later considered a tragedy, and the supply of collections to the same university libraries that he later felt had a 'deadening effect on the culture of the book'. Many felt however that there was an honesty in his radicalism.

His early vision of a rural revival was dismissed by many as being idealistic claptrap, yet the sentiments he expressed then are now echoed by environmental groups and government departments.

Driven by these ideas, Booth stood for election in the Welsh Assembly as a candidate for his own Rural Revival Party in 1999. Affiliated with Arthur Scargill's hard-left Socialist Labour Party, Booth adopted an anti-intellectual stance, and despite being defeated, continued to represent the community as a member of the local council, allowing him the opportunity to advocate for traditional farming and anti-development values intrinsic to Hay's past.

Booth's lasting legacy lies in the advantage he made of changing dynamics in both book production and consumption, and his ability to apply them to revive a community that suffered a dramatic decline in prosperity in the post-war years. His early success coincided with a time in the twentieth century when the book was extending its influence beyond what had previously been regarded as its safe constituency – the educated bourgeoisie and the middle classes.

Even more significant at the time, however, was the explosion in book sales and the democratisation of book consumption that was driven by the spread of the 'general-interest' book. How-to, self-help and hobby- or pastime-based books sold in their millions, as did cookbooks, horse books, travel books, sports

biographies, airport novels and 'pulp fiction' more generally. Booth capitalised on this trend to create a tourist attraction he could sell through his infamy and celebrity.

Between 1962 and 1968, Paul Minet in *Late Booking* (1989) stated the business's turnover rose from £6,000 to £100,000 per year. In 1968, Booth estimated that he had 400,000 books in stock and that he was buying 600,000 titles each year. His 1963 purchase of Hay Castle was a move which he said symbolised his attack on centralised authority and 'sealed his fate in the town forever.' The space provided by the castle, outbuildings and cobbled stables accelerated the book town project. By the mid-1970s, Booth's staff had grown to 20 and a million books were housed in the town. He was listed in the Guinness Book of Records for having more second-hand books and more miles of shelving than anyone else worldwide. The town quickly achieved national and international fame, partly due to the book town concept, but equally to Booth's colourful personality and the impressive, highly publicised run-ins he engineered with government bureaucracies.

The acquisition of the castle generated extraordinary global publicity when, on 1 April 1977, Booth proclaimed Hay an 'independent kingdom', and himself king of the 'town of books' – King Richard, Coeur du Livres. Leading citizens were appointed to top 'government jobs' and aristocratic titles. Dukedoms,

earldoms and knighthoods were available for a price. Ambassadors were dispatched to the International Court of Justice in The Hague, and a rowing gunboat patrolled the meandering River Wye. Passports were issued and stamped for Hay-on-Wye in the town's two taverns, and a Hay National Anthem written. Evoking Caligula, Booth also named his horse as Prime Minister. The 'Home Rule for Hay' celebrations brought huge media coverage and thousands of new visitors.

Hay still provides a key example of the emergence of manufactured tourism experiences that rely on tourists' ironic engagement but equally on their recognition of the value of the actual offer – the beauty of the setting, the genuinely interesting array of bookshops and books, the local produce and crafts, pubs, cafés and so on. In this sense, Hay was a pioneer in both courting and producing the phenomenon now known as post-tourism. The play between the authentic and inauthentic is inherent to an experience such as Hay-on-Wye.

Booth was loved and hated in equal measure. Seen by some as unscrupulous, his achievements were nevertheless immense. Though there were many spats and vicissitudes, a bankruptcy in 1984 and a notable falling out over the Hay-on-Wye Literary Festival, his template for reviving dying local communities through books, local genius and niche specialism has been copied successfully world-wide. Booth's town of books

may have come about as a result of a coalescence of factors unique to the early 1960s but few could deny that the man himself played a unique role in transforming a shrinking regional industry and in the process, masterminded a new way forward for regional tourism. ♦

Side by...

The Prelude

by William Wordsworth

Book Two

(1)

*Thus far my Friend, have we retraced the way
Through which I traveled when I first began
To love the woods and fields: the passion yet
Was in its birth, sustained as might befall
By nourishment that came unsought, for still
From week to week, from month to month, we lived
A round of tumult: duly were our games
Prolonged in summer till the day-light failed;
No chair remained before the doors, the bench
And the threshold steps were empty, fast asleep
The labourer and the old man who had sat
A later lingerer, yet the revelry
Continued and the loud uproar: at last
When all the ground was dark, and the huge clouds
Were edged with twinkling stars, to bed we went*

...by side

Előhang

Tárnok Attila fordítása

Második füzet

(1)

*Eddig követtük, barátom, az utat,
Mit bejártam, ahogy az erdőket,
Mezőket átbolyongtam. Bontakozó
Szenvedélyem vétlen erők táplálták,
Hisz hétről hétre, hónapszám,
Felborult állapotban éltünk.
Rendesen nyaranként sötétedésig
Feledkeztünk a játékba. Alkonyatkor
A székeket a ház előtt bevették, a pad
S az ajtóhoz vezető lépcső üres lett,
A munkás és az öreg, ki addig ott
Ücsörgött, hirtelen álomba merült,
De a mi örömünk és vidám perceink
Tovább peregtek. Majd később, amikor
A terek és kertek sötétbe burkolóztak,*

*With weary joints and with a beating mind.
Ah! is there one who ever has been young
And needs a monitory voice to tame
The pride of virtue and of intellect,
And is there one, the wisest and the best
Of all mankind, who does not sometimes wish
For things which cannot be, who would not give,
If so he might, to duty and to truth
The eagerness of infantine desire?
A tranquillizing spirit presses now
On my corporeal frame, so wide appears
The vacancy between me and those days
Which yet have such self-presence in my heart
That sometimes when I think of them I seem
Two consciousnesses, conscious of myself
And of some other being.*

*A grey stone
Of native rock, left midway in the square
Of our small market-village, was the home
And centre of these joys, and when, returned
After long absence, thither I repaired,
I found that it was split and gone to build
A smart assembly-room that perked and flared
With wash and rough-cast, elbowing the ground
Which had been ours. But let the fiddle scream
And be ye happy! yet I know, my friends,
That more than one of you will think with me*

*S a felhőket csillagok vették körül,
Lüktető elmével, elcsigázottan mi is
Bebújtunk az ágyba. Ó, nincs ember, ki
Sokra becsülné a szellemi erényt
Ifjúkorára emlékezve. És van-e, akár
A bölcsek közt is, ki ne kívánna
Lehetetlent, s ha tehetné, ne csempészne
A hétköznapok valójába gyermeki vágyat,
Hogy minden gondot száműzzön?
A szakadék, mely egykori és mai valómat
Elválasztja egymástól, testemen éket üt.
S ha a múltba visszarévedek, a két
Jelenlét két különálló öntudatként
Lakozik szívemben, mintha a mai
S hajdanvolt énem öntudatával
Egyszerre bírnék.*

*Örömeink fő
Színterén a környék elszórt szobrai.
Közülük egyet kiváltképp kedveltünk,
Mely a falu piacterén állt, de később,
Hosszú távollét után megpihelve, láttam,
Hogy helyén egy vakolt, meszelt közösségi
Ház páváskodva sajátítja ki a teret,
Mit egykor sajátunknak éreztünk.
Hadd sírjanak a hegedűk, te légy
Vidám! Tudom, barátaim, többen
Gondoltok, velem együtt, a szelíd*

*Of those soft starry nights and that old dame
From whom the stone was named, who there had sat
And watched her table with its huckster's wares,
Assiduous, for the length of sixty years.*

(2)

*We ran a boisterous race, the year span round
With giddy motion. But the time approached
That brought with it a regular desire
For calmer pleasures, when the beauteous scenes
Of nature were collaterally attached
To every scheme of holiday delilght
And every boyish sport, less grateful else
And languidly pursued.
When summer came
It was the pastime of our afternoons
To beat along the plain of Windermere
With rival oars; and the selected bourn
Was now an island musical with birds
That sang for ever, now a sister isle
Beneath the oak's umbrageous covert sown
With lilies of the valley like a field,
And now a third small island where remained
An old stone table and one mouldered cave,
A hermit's history. In such a race,
So ended, disappointment could be none,
Uneasiness, or pain, or jealousy;*

*Csillagos estékre és a dámára, kit
A kőzet mintázott. A hölgyalak
Hatvan éven át, kitartóan szemlélte
Piaci árusok roskadó asztalát.*

(2)

*Szilaján versenyt futottunk az idővel,
Szédült iramban fordult az év, de közelgett
Már az idő, mely csendesebb örömök
Vágyát hozta el. A Természet gyönyörű
Tájai a nyári vigasságok mintáihoz
Tapadtak, s minden fiús játék csak
Akkor szerzett megelégedést, ha
Ernyedten úztük. Nyári délutánonként
Versengve evezünk a windermere-i
Tavon. Utunk célja egy madárdaltól
Hangos sziget, vagy egy másik, a tölgyes
Árnyékában, telis-tele gyöngyvirággal,
Akár egy mező, vagy egy harmadik,
Ahol egy régi kőlap és egy faragott sír
Jelölte az egykori remeteség letűnt
Történetét. Egy-egy ilyen versenyben
Minden kényelmetlenség, fájdalom,
Féltékenység rögtön véget ért. Senki
Sem csalódhatott. Az árnyasban
Győztes és legyőzött egyként
Örömittasan pihent, s így önzésünk,*

*We rested in the shade all pleased alike,
Conquered and conqueror. Thus our selfishness
Was mellowed down, and thus the pride of strength
And the vain-glory of superior skill
Were interfused with objects which subdued
And tempered them, and gradually produced
A quiet independence of the heart.
And to my Friend who knows me I may add,
Unapprehensive of reproof that hence
Ensued a diffidence and modesty,
And I was taught to feel, perhaps too much,
The self-sufficing power of solitude.
No delicate viands sapped our bodily strength;
More than we wished we knew the blessing then
Of vigorous hunger, for our daily meals
Were frugal, Sabine fare! and then exclude
A little weekly stipend, and we lived
Through three divisions of the quartered year
In penniless poverty. But now to school
Returned from the half-yearly holidays,
We came with purses more profusely filled,
Allowance which abundantly sufficed
To gratify the palate with repasts
More costly than the Dame of whom I spake,
That ancient woman, and her board supplied,
Hence inroads into distant vales, and long
Excursions far away among the hills;*

*Gőg és önhittség, hamis büszkeség
Semmivé olvadtak, és erőnk vagy vélt
Ügyességünk rétegekkel gazdagon,
Felülmúltak mindent, és elhozták
Lassanként a szív függetlenségét,
Szelíden. Barátom, ki ismeresz engem,
Feddéstől nem tartva hozzátehetném,
Hogy innen származik félnkségem és
Szerénységem, és ez a lecke tanított meg,
Talán túlzottan is, az örömet ígérő
Magányt megkedvelnem.
Testi erőnket nem puhították finom
Lakomák. Ismertük, bár nem örömünkre,
A nehéz éhséget, napi betevőnk
Egyszerű volt. Szűkös heti zsebpénzünket
Minek is emlegessem! Az év háromnegyed
Részében szegénységben éltünk. De utóbb,
A félévi szünetről az iskolába nem
Üres tárcával érkeztünk. Ez a bőség
Csitította vágyainkat és tartalmasabban
Étkeztünk, mint amit a vénséges asszonytól
Kaptunk, akiről már szóltam. Ezért hát a
Távoli völgyekbe tett hosszú kirándulások,
Paraszi vacsorák a hegyek közt, a hűvös
Zöldben, folyóparton vagy a forrás mellett:
Ünnepi étek, melyek által a természeti kép
Fásultságból az étkezés örömébe fordult.*

*Hence rustic dinners on the cool green ground
Or in the woods or by a river-side
Or fountain, festive banquets that provoked
The languid action of a natural scene
By pleasure of corporeal appetite.
Nor is my aim neglected if I tell
How twice in the long length of those half-years
We from our funds perhaps with bolder hand
Drew largely, anxious for one day at least
To feel the motion of the galloping steed;
And with the good old Innkeeper in truth
I needs must say that sometimes we have used
Sly subterfuge, for the intended bound
Of the day's journey was too distant far
For any cautious man, a Structure famed
Beyond its neighborhood, the antique walls
Of a large Abbey with its fractured arch,
Belfry, and images, and living trees,
A holy scene! Along the smooth green turf
Our horses grazed: in more than inland peace
Left by the winds that overpass the vale
In that sequestered ruin trees and towers
Both silent, and both motionless alike,
Hear all day long the murmuring sea that beats
Incessantly upon a craggy shore.
Our steeds remounted, and the summons given,
With whip and spur we by the Chantry flew*

*Célomat nem feledem, ha elmesélem,
Hogy a hosszú szemeszterek során
Általában kétszer is könnyelműen
Költekeztünk, hogy legalább ekkor,
Még ha csupán egyetlen napig, a vágózó
Mén iramát élveztük. A jó öreg fogadós eszén
Bizony túljártunk olykor, be kell vallanom,
Hisz a távolság napi járó föld,
Ha óvatosak vagyunk, de a helynek
Messzi tájon híre kelt. Az apátság,
Öreg falaival, harangtornyával,
Sérült boltívével, az élő fák ölelte kép:
Megszentelt színhellyé vált. A zöld,
Puha pázsiton lovaink legelésztek.
A szél kerülte völgy benső békéje,
A rom magukban álló tornyai
És köröttük mind a fák, hangtalanul,
Moccanatlan, egész nap a sziklás partot
Verdeső tenger moraját figyelték.
Újra lóra ültünk. A sarkantyú és
Az ostor parancsát követve szilaj csődöreink
A temetőkápolna mellett suhantak,
Egymással iromba versenyre keltünk,
És magunk mögött hagytuk a keresztes
Lovagot, az apát szobrát és az árva
Ökörszemét, mely egykor oly édesen énekelt
Az öreg templom főhajója hosszán.*

*In uncouth race, and left the cross-legged Knight
And the stone Abbot, and that single wren
Which one day sang so sweetly in the nave
Of the old church that, though from recent showers
The earth was comfortless, and touched by faint
Internal breezes from the roofless walls
The shuddering ivy dripped large drops, yet still
So sweetly 'mid the gloom the invisible bird
Sang to itself that there I could have made
My dwelling-place, and lived for ever there
To hear such music. Through the walls we flew
And down the valley, and, a circuit made
In wantonness of heart, through rough and smooth
We scampered homeward. O ye rocks and streams
And that still spirit of the evening air,
Even in this joyous time I sometimes felt
Your presence, when with slackened step we breathed
Along the sides of the steep hills, or when,
Lightened by gleams of moonlight from the sea,
We beat the thundering hoofs the level sand.
There was a row of ancient trees, since fallen,
That on the margin of a jutting land
Stood near the lake of Coniston and made
With its long boughs above the water stretched
A gloom through which a boat might sail along
As in a cloister. An old Hall was near,
Grotesque and beautiful, its gavel end*

*Futó záporok után szél járta át
A boltozat nélküli templom hidegét,
A falakról borzongó borostyán csüngött alá,
Mégis, a komor idő ellenére, a láthatatlan
Kismadár magát szórakoztatva énekelt.
Bárcsak örökre itt rendezkedhetnék be,
Hogy ily muzsikát halljak! Az ódon falakat
Magunk mögött hagyva, a völgy felé
Felelőtlen kerülőt tettünk, és ágon-bogon
Poroszkáltunk haza. Ó, ti sziklák, patakok,
Az esti ég moccanatlan lelke!
Ez örömteli órán állandó jelenléted érzem,
S lassítva lépteinket, a meredek hegyoldal
Mentén lovaink fújtatnak egyet.
A hold sugarai a tenger felől megvilágítják
A patkók nyomát a homokban.
A Coniston-tó partján ősi fasor;
Egy kiszögellő földnyelv végében a fák
Hosszú ágai a víz fölé hajoltak mélyen,
Árnyékukban akár egy vitorlás is
Elfért volna, mint egy fedett árkádsoron.
Egy régi kastély állt a közelben, groteszkül
S egyúttal csodálatos módon a tornyot,
A kéményeket tetőtől talpig benőtte
A repkény. Ide látogattunk, ez szokásunkká
Vált, s a parton a hűvös terecske ölen,
A jóemberek, kik a magára hagyott*

*And huge round chimneys to the top o'ergrown
With fields of ivy. Thither we repaired,
'Twas even a custom with us, to the shore
And to that cool piazza. They who dwelt
In the neglected mansion-house supplied
Fresh butter, tea-kettle, and earthen-ware,
And chafing-dish with smoking coals, and so
Beneath the trees we sat in our small boat
And in the covert eat our delicate meal
Upon the calm smooth lake. It was a joy
Worthy the heart of one who is full grown
To rest beneath those horizontal boughs
And mark the radiance of the setting sun,
Himself unseen, reposing on the top
Of the high eastern hills. And there I said,
That beauteous sight before me, there I said
(Then first beginning in my thoughts to mark
That sense of dim similitude which links
Our moral feelings with external forms)
That in whatever region I should close
My mortal life I would remember you,
Fair scenes! that dying I would think on you,
My soul would send a longing look to you:
Even as that setting sun while all the vale
Could nowhere catch one faint memorial gleam
Yet with the last remains of his last light
Still lingered, and a farewell luster threw*

*Udvarházban éltek, friss vajjal, forró teával
Kínáltak, és cserépedényben, a füstös szén
Fölött pirított hallal. A fák árnyékában
A csendes tavon ringó csónakban,
Miként holmi bűvőhelyen, fogyasztottuk el
Az ízletes fogást. Megfáradt lelkünket
Igaz örvendezésre készítette, ha
Pillantásunk az elnyúló ágak mögött
Keletre, a magas hegyek ormára tévedt,
Ahol a lenyugvó nap, bár maga láthatatlan,
Fénye rózsállón megpihent. És kimondtam,
Mert itt öltött testet bennem a gondolat,
Hogy benső, lelki érzeteink halványan
Mindig emlékeztetnek külső körülményeinkre,
E gyönyörű képpel szemem előtt, kimondtam,
Hogy bárhol érjen is halandó sorsom véget,
Te drága kép, rád majd ott is emlékezem.
Hogy halálom óráján is rád gondolok.
Hogy a lenyugvó nap, bár a völgyekre
Futó pillantást sem vetett, utolsó sugarai
Épp azokon a drága ormokon időztek,
És oda intettek búcsúfényt,
Ahol reggel felkelt. Tizennégy nyarat
Megértem, s e szavakkal őszinte érzéseim,
Egy hirtelen jött gondolat hullámain
Bennem ekként szólaltak meg,
Pedig e gondolat mélysége messze*

*On the dear mountain-tops where first he rose.
'Twas then my fourteenth summer, and these words
Were uttered in casual access
Of sentiment, a momentary trance
That far outran the habit of my mind.
Upon the east above the crescent of a pleasant bay,
There was an Inn, no homely-featured shed,
Brother of the surrounding cottages,
But 'twas a splendid place, the door beset
With chaises, grooms, and liveries, and within
Decanters, glasses, and the blood-red wine.
In ancient times, or ere the Hall was built
On the large island, had the dwelling been
More worthy of a poet's love, a hut
Proud of its one bright fire and sycamore shade.
But though the rhymes were gone which once inscribed
The threshold, and large golden characters
On the blue-frosted sign-board had usurped
The place of the old Lion in contempt
And mockery of the rustic painter's hand,
Yet to this hour the spot to me is dear
With all its foolish pomp. The garden lay
Upon a slope surmounted by the plain
Of a small bowling-green; beneath us stood
A grove, with gleams of water through the trees
And over the tree-tops; nor did we want
Refreshment, strawberries and mellow cream,*

*Meghaladta akkori érettségemet.
A Windermere-tó keleti partján,
Egy kellemes öböl karéjában állt egy
Fogadó, de nem ám holmi falusi kunyhó,
Amilyenek a körötte lévő házak, emez:
Pompás intézmény. Az ajtóban a hintót
Libériát öltött segédek fogadták, s odabent
Az asztalon vérvörös bortól csillogó palackok.
A fogadó öröktől fogva, de legalábbis mióta
Egy másik ház a szigeten megépült, kiérdemelte
A költők sóhaját. Büszkélkedhetett egyedülálló
Lobogó tűzével vagy az árnyat adó platánnal,
És bár a rímek a bejárat fölött
Elmosódtak, s az oroszlán egykori címerét
Kék alapon arany betűs, festett felirat bitorolta,
Mintegy borsot törve a hajdani festő orra alá,
A színhely számomra, botor pompájával,
Mégis kedves mind a mai napig. A lejtős kert,
Fölötte a magaslaton tekepálya, mögöttünk pedig
Egy liget, tündöklő fényekkel a fák közt
S a fák fölött. Fél délutánokat játszottunk itt,
A simára kaszált gyepre, még frissítőt,
Epret vagy teasüteményt se kívántunk,
Kiáltásaink messze csengtek körülöttünk
A hegyek felé. Mielőtt az est leszállt,
Naszádunk az alkonyba forduló tavon
Visszatért, ám előzőleg kitérőt tettünk*

*And there through half an afternoon we played
On the smooth platform, and the shouts we sent
Made all the mountains ring. But ere the fall
Of night, when in our pinnace we returned
Over the dusky lake, and to the beach
Of some small island steered our course with one,
The minstrel of our troop, and left him there
And rowed off gently while he blew his flute
Alone upon the rock, oh then the calm
And dead still water lay upon my mind
Even with a weight of pleasure, and the sky,
Never before so beautiful, sank down
Into my heart and held me like a dream.*

(3)

*Thus day by day my sympathies increased
And thus the common range of visible things
Grew dear to me: already I began
To love the sun, a Boy I loved the sun
Not, as I since have loved him, as a pledge
And surety of my earthly life, a light
Which while I view I feel I am alive,
But for this cause, that I had seen him lay
His beauty on the morning hills, had seen
The western mountain touch his setting orb
In many a thoughtless hour, when from excess
Of happiness my blood appeared to flow*

*Egy kis sziget felé, ahol egyikünk,
Csapatunk vándorénekese hátramaradt.
Fuvoláját gyöngéden fújva egy sziklán,
Magányosan trillázott. Ó, ily pillanatban
A mozdulatlan víztükör nyugalmat árasztó
Képe elmémbe írta magát, s az öröm terheit,
A soha ilyen gyönyörű eget, szívembe zártam,
S a kép magával ragadott, mint egy álom.*

(3)

*Így napról napra érzések érlelődtek
Bensőmben, s a látható világ dolgai egyre
Kedvesebbé váltak. Régtől fogva
Szeretem a Napot, már kisfiúként is
Szerettem, de akkor nem úgy, mint ma:
Földi létem biztos pecsétjeként, a fényt,
Mit ha láthatok, tudom, hogy élek.
Nem, akkor azért, mert gyönyörű fényét
Előttem szétterítette a reggeli dombokon.
Sok tétlen órán néztem, ahogy lenyugvó
Sugara a nyugati hegyeken játszik, amikor
Örömtől ittasan a vér ereimben a maga
Kedvére folyt, s vidáman felsóhajtottam.
Az otthon- és hazaszeretethez hasonló, ilyen
Szerény, de forró érzelmeket tápláltam
A számomra szintúgy kedves Hold iránt is.*

*With its own pleasure and I breathed with joy.
And from like feelings, humble though intense,
To patriotic and domestic love
Analogous, the moon to me was dear,
For I would dream away my purposes
Standing to look upon her while she hung
Midway between the hills as if she knew
No other region but belonged to thee,
Yea, appertained by a peculiar right
To thee and thy grey huts, my native vale.*

(4)
*Those incidental which were first attached
My heart to rural objects day by day
Grew weaker, and I hasten on to tell
How nature, intervenient till this time
And secondary, now at length was sought
For her own sake. But who shall parcel out
His intellect by geometric rules,
Split like a province into round and square;
Who knows the individual hour in which
His habits were first sown, even as a seed;
Who that shall point as with a wand and say,
This portion of the river of my mind
Came from yon fountain? Thou, my Friend, art one
More deeply read in thy own thoughts, no slave
Of that false secondary power by which*

*Ácsorogva bámultam rá, és álmodoztam,
Ahogy a dombok között himbált, mintha
Minden egyéb tájék számára ismeretlen
Lenne, csak hozzád tartozna, gyermekkorom
Völgye, igen, mint amire, szürke kőházaiddal,
Egyedül te formálhatnál sajátos jogot.*

(4)
*Az alkalmi varázslat, mely szívemet
Kezdetben a vidék tárgyaihoz kötözte, napról
Napra halványul, de sietek elmesélni, hogy
A Természet, mely eddig csak közvetett módon
Ékelődött egyéb létezők közé, mostantól
Számomra önmagáért létezett. Ki oszthatná
Fel nagyszerűségét mértani szabályok szerint?
Ki rendelhetne kerek vagy szögletes formát
A Természethez? Ki ismerheti az órát, mikor
Külső megjelenésének magvait elvetették?
Ki mutathatna rá pálcájával, hogy kijelentse:
Egy folyó bizonyos szakasza az ő elméjéből
Forrásozik? Te, barátom, mélyen szántó
Gondolataiddal, nem szolgálod ama téves
Eszmét, mely által, gyengeségünkben,
Megkülönböztetéseket végzünk, és véljük,
Hogy halovány kontúrokat észlelünk
Csupán, de nem mi hozzuk őket létre.*

*In weakness we create distinctions, then
Believe our puny boundaries are things
Which we perceive and not which we have made.
To thee, unblended by these outward shows,
The unity of all has been revealed
And thou wilt doubt with me, less aptly skilled
Than many are to class the cabinet
Of their sensations and in voluble phrase
Run through the history and birth of each
As of a single independent thing.
Hard task to analyse a soul in which
Not only general habits and desires
But each most obvious and particular thoughts,
Not in a mystical and idle sense
But in the words of reason deeply weighed,
Hath no beginning.*

(5)
*Blessed be the infant Babe
(For with my best conjectures I would trace
The progress of our being) blest the Babe
Nursed in his Mother's arms, the Babe who sleeps
Upon his Mother's breast, who when his soul
Claims manifest kindred with an earthly soul
Doth gather passion from his Mother's eye!
Such feelings pass into his torpid life
Like an awakening breeze, and hence his mind*

*Neked, kit nem vakítanak el külsőségek,
A mindenség egysége megmutatkozott.
S velem együtt, ki másoknál kevésbé
Termett az érzékek skatulyázására,
Kétségbe vonod, és szapora szóval hirdeted
Minden sajátos és független elem
Születését, létét és történetét.
Nehéz feladat a lélekelemzés ott, ahol
Nem pusztán általános vágyak és szokások
Működnek, de sajátlagos gondolatok,
Nem rest és misztikus értelemben,
De a ráció szavának súlya alatt,
Bár forrásuk ismeretlen.*

(5)
*Áldott a csecsemő,
Fejthetem tovább, legjobb képességem szerint,
Létünk fejlődését: áldott legyen a kiseded
Anyja ölen, a gyermek, aki anyja mellén
Elszenderült, s ki mikor lelke egy másik
E világi lélekkel rokonságra lép,
Anyja szeméből merít bátorságot.
Ily érzelmek borzolják tompa életét,
Mint ahogy a szél kel, és figyelme,
Már lelke első ébredése során,
Így válik azonnal éberré; mohón egyesíti*

*Even in the first trial of its powers
Is prompt and watchful, eager to combine
In one appearance all the elements
And parts of the same object, else detached
And loath to coalesce. Thus day by day
Subjected to the discipline of love
His organs and recipient faculties
Are quickened, are more vigorous, his mind spreads
Tenacious of the forms which it receives.
In one beloved presence, nay and more,
And those sensations which have been derived
From this beloved presence, there exists
A virtue which irradiates and exalts
All objects through all intercourse of sense.
No outcast he, bewildered and depressed:
Along his infant veins are interfused
The gravitation and the filial bond
Of nature that connect him with the world.
Emphatically such a being lives
An inmate of this active universe;
From nature largely he receives, nor so
Is satisfied but largely gives again,
For feeling has to him imparted strength,
And powerful in all sentiments of grief,
Of exultation, fear and joy, his mind,
Even as an agent of the one great mind,
Creates, creator and receiver both,*

*Majd minden tárgy elemeit egyetlen
Képben, kivéve azokat, melyek ellenállnak
Az egységesítésnek. Napról napra így lesz,
A szeretet fegyelmében növekedve,
Érzékelése és figyelme élénkebb egyre,
S gondolatai állhatatosan őrzik majd
A formák részleteit, melyeket befogad.
Egyetlen szeretett jelenlétben,
Jobban mondva, abban a tanulásra
Készítő közegben, melyet a szeretett
Lénytől nyerünk, létezik egy érték,
Mely mindent átjár és életre kelt
Az érzékelés széles spektrumán.
Nem magára hagyottan, akár vadul,
Akár rossz hangulatban, a gyermek ereiben
A földhöz, a Természethez ragaszkodó
Vér csörgedez, a külvilághoz ez köti.
Érzelmileg lényét a tobzódó mindenség
Tartja fogságában. A Természet
Bőségében kínálja számára magát,
S mert kielégíthetetlen, mindig újat ad.
Hisz a gyermek érzései átvett erők,
Elméje – a fájdalom, a félelem és
Az öröm élményétől felvértezve –,
Az egyetlen elme ágenseként, újat
Teremt, de a művel, melyet szemlél,
Mint alkotó és befogadó egyaránt,*

*Working but in alliance with the works
Which it beholds. Such verily is the first
Poetic spirit of our human life,
By uniform control of after years
In most abated and suppressed, in some
Through every change of growth or of decay
Preeminent till death.*

(6)
*From early days,
Beginning not long after that first time
In which, a Babe, by intercourse of touch
I held mute dialogues with my Mother's heart,
I have endeavoured to display the means
Whereby this infant sensibility,
Great birth-right of our being, was in me
Augmented and sustained. Yet is a path
More difficult before me, and I fear
That in its broken windings we shall need
The Chamois sinews and the Eagle's wing:
For now a trouble came into my mind
From obscure causes. I was left alone
Seeking this visible world, nor knowing why:
The props of my affections were removed
And yet the buildings stood as if sustained
By its own spirit. All that I beheld
Was dear to me, and from this cause it came*

*Szövetségre lép. Bizony, ezek emberi
Életünk első költői élményei, és bár
A későbbi évek sokakban eltörlik
A kezdeti irányt, másoknál, minden
Változás vagy romlás ellenére, a szabály
Mindhalálíig érvényes marad.*

(6)
*Már egészen korán,
Nem sokkal azután, hogy csecsemőként
Az érintés segítségével anyám szívével
Először szótlán párbeszédet kezdtem,
gyermeki érzékenységemnek hangot
mertem adni, ez létünk születéssel
Szerzett joga, ami által bennem e rezgések
Csak növekedtek egyre. Ám az út előttem
Sokkal kuszább, és attól tartok,
A kacskaringók szemléltetése antilop
Izmok és sasszárnyak nélkül bajos.
Érhetetlen módon, régi gondjaim most
Eszembe ötlenek: nem tudom megmagyarázni,
Miért maradtam egyedül a látható világgal.
Szeretetem tárgyai kimozdítva, de az
Épület továbbra is áll, mintha
Lelke tartaná. Minden látható számomra
Kedvesnek tűnt, és ebből következett,*

*That now to Nature's finer influxes
My mind lay open, to that more exact
And intimate communion which our hearts
Maintain with the minuter properties
Of objects which already are beloved,
And of those only.*

(7)
*Many are the joys
Of youth, but oh! What happiness to live
When every hour brings palpable access
Of knowledge, when all knowledge is delight,
And sorrow is not there. The seasons come
And every season brought a countless store
Of modes and temporary qualities
Which but for this most watchful power of love
Had been neglected, left a register
Of permanent relations, else unknown:
Hence life, and change, and beauty, solitude
More active even than "best society,"
Society made sweet as solitude
By silent inobtrusive sympathies
And gentle agitations of the mind
From manifold distinctions, difference
Perceived in things where to the common eye
No difference is: and hence from the same source
Sublimar joy; for I would walk alone*

*Hogy a Természet hatásaira elmém
Kinyílt. Kinyílt a legapróbb elemekkel
Történő benső egyesülésre, szívünk ebben
Józanul eligazít, de csakis oly tárgyak
Felé fordulunk, amelyeket már eleve
Szeretünk.*

(7)
*Bizony, fiatalságunk
Végtelen örömök forrása, de mennyit ér
A boldogság, melyet minden pillanatban
Ismeretszerzés kísér, és minden új ismeret
Bú nélküli vigasz. Az évszakok rendes
Váltakozása számtalan újabb, átmeneti
Minőséget kínált, s ezt csak a figyelmes
Szeretet erejével vettük észre, ám ezen
Örömök, más észlelésnek ismeretlenül,
A lelkünkbe íródtak, örök időkre. Ezért
Életünkben a változások gyönyöre még
A magánynál is kellemesebb társaság,
Mert a társasági élet örömeit a magány
Percei édesítik némán, tolakodás nélkül.
Az agy a sokféleségben különbséget
Lát ott is, ahol a közönséges szemlélet
Semmi különbséget nem talál, épp ezért
E forrás ismerete kifinomult érzületre vall.
Gyakorta egymagamban kóboroltam*

*In storm and tempest or in starlight nights
Beneath the quiet heavens, and at that time
Would feel whate'er there is of power in sound
To breathe an elevated mood by form
Or image unprofaned: and I would stand
Beneath some rock listening to sounds that are
The ghostly language of the ancient earth
Or make their dim abode in distant winds.
Thence did I drink the visionary power.
I deem not profitless these fleeting moods
Of shadowy exaltation, not for this,
That they are kindred to our purer mind
And intellectual life, but that the soul
Remembering how she felt, but what she felt
Remembering not, retains an obscure sense
Of possible sublimity to which
With growing faculties she doth aspire,
With faculties still growing, feeling still
That whatsoever point they gain, they still
Have something to pursue.*

(8)

*And not alone
In grandeur and in tumult, but no less
In tranquil scenes, that universal power
And fitness in the latent qualities
And essences of things, by which the mind*

*Esőben, viharban vagy csillagfényes
Esteken, az elcsendesült mennybolt alatt.
Ilyenkor éreztem, hogy minden neszben
Erő lakik. Hogy önmagában mind magasztos,
Sohasem profán hangulatot idéz. Vagy egy
Sziklamélyedésben megállva hallgattam
A föld lelkének ősi nyelvét, vagy a távoli
Szelekben lakozó hangokat. Látomásaim
Erejét e forrásokból nyerem. Úgy ítélem,
E homályos túlfűtöttség részemről nem
Haszontalan. Ha másért nem, mert
A rajongás szeplőtelen értelmünkkel
Rokon. A lélek, emlékezve rá, mit érzett
Egykor – bár hogy miképpen, azt elfeledte –,
Megőrzi a kifinomultság elvont érzetét,
Melyre táguló értelmünk egyre visszahat.
Mert értelmünk ugyan gyarapszik
Folyvást, mégis: bármennyi új ismeretnek
Jutunk is birtokába, mindig újabb tudást
Szomjazunk.*

(8)

*És nem csupán
E fenséges sokféleségben, sőt még kevésbé
A megnyugvásban rejlik a tárgyi világ
Általános ereje és látszólagos lényege,
Mely agyunkat az érzékek örömeivel áthatja.*

*Is moved with feelings of delight, to me
Came strengthened with the superadded soul,
A virtue not its own. My morning walks
Were early; oft before the hours of school
I traveled round our little lake, five miles
Of pleasant wandering, happy time more dear
For this, that one was by my side, a Friend
Then passionately loved; with heart how full
Will he peruse these lines, this page, perhaps
A blank to other men, for many years
Have since flowed in between us, and, our minds
Both silent to each other, at this time
We live as if those hours had never been.
Nor seldom did I lift our cottage latch
Far earlier, and before the vernal thrust
Was audible, among the hills I sat
Alone upon some jutting eminence
At the first hour of morning when the vale
Lay quiet in an utter solitude.
How shall I trace the history, where seek
The origin of what I then have felt?
Oft in those moments such a holy calm
Did overspread my soul that I forgot
The agency of sight, and what I saw
Appeared like something in myself a dream,
A prospect in my mind.*

*Nálam ez a hatás, egyéni tulajdonságaim
Ráadásaként, lelkemben öltött testet.
Kora hajnali sétáimon, gyakran még az első
Tanóra előtt, öt mérföldet tettem meg.
Boldog mámorban kóboroltam a kis tó körül,
Örömittasan, nem úgy, mint akkori, forrón
Szeretett társam, aki gyakran elkísért. Milyen
Boldogan olvassa majd e sorokat, ezt az oldalt,
Amely más számára talán semmit nem közöl,
És bár jó néhány év férközött közénk azóta,
És mai gondolataink a másik számára oly
Ismeretlenek, akár ha meg sem éltük volna
Azt az időt, amelyről most beszámolok.
Nem ritkán házunk zárnyelvét már a
Hajnali rigók éneke előtt megemeltem,
S a dombok között egy kiszögellő magaslatra
Ültem egymagamban, jóval pirkadat előtt.
A völgy odalent hangtalanul nyújtózott még,
Tökéletes magányába zártan. Miképpen
Követhetném nyomon érzéseim fonalát?
Vagy épp eredetét? Lelki állapotként
Gyakran oly szent megnyugvás ereszkedett
Rám, hogy cserben hagyott a jelenvaló,
És amit láttam, nem volt egyéb, mint
Rejtett önmagam, egy álom, gondolataim
Tája, hű lenyomata.*

(9)

*'Twere long to tell
What spring and autumn, what the winter-snows
And what the summer-shade, what day and night,
The evening and the morning, what my dreams
And what my waking thoughts supplied, to nurse
That spirit of religious love in which
I walked with nature. But let this at least
Be not forgotten, that I still retained
My first creative sensibility,
That by the regular action of the world
My soul was unsubdued. A plastic power
Abode with me, a forming hand, at times
Rebellious, acting in a devious mood,
A local spirit of its own, at war
With general tendency, but for the most
Subservient strictly to the external things
With which it communed. An auxiliary light
Came from my mind which on the setting sun
Bestowed new splendor, the melodious birds,
The gentle breezes, fountains that ran on
Murmuring so sweetly in themselves, obeyed
A like dominion, and the midnight storm
Grew darker in the presence of my eye.
Hence my obeisance, my devotion hence,
And hence my transport.*

(9)

*Hosszasan mesélhetném,
Miként hatott rám tavasz és ősz, a havas
Téli táj vagy a nyári nap hevétől védelmező
Hús. A nappal és az éjszaka, esték, reggelek,
Álmaim és éber gondolataim ápolták lelkem
Szinte már vallásos önátadását, amellyel
A Természetet szerettem. Ám annyit legalább
Ne feledjünk, hogy kezdeti alkotói
Érzékenységem a világ mindennapjainak
Malomként őrlő ritmusában sem csitult.
Formálódó erők lakoztak bennem. Egy
Lázadó, irányító kéz vezetett, gyakran
Görbe utakon, egy hétköznappal
Viaskodó öntörvényű szellem,
De alázatos módon alávetve magát
A külső világnak, melyben társára lelt.
Agyam segédfényt küldött, a lemenő nap
Sugarát új ragyogással ruházta föl.
A madarak éneke, a gyöngye szellő,
A magukban morajló források: ez mind
Uralma alatt állt, és még az éjféli vihar
Is sötétebbre váltott tekintetem tükrében.
Ezért a főhajtás, innen ered a hódolat,
Innen származik rajongásom a környező
Természet iránt.*

(10)

*Nor should this perchance
Pass unrecorded, that I still had loved
The exercise and produce of a toil
Than analytic industry to me
More pleasing, and whose character, I deem,
Is more poetic, as resembling more
Creative agency: I mean to speak
Of that interminable building reared
By observation of affinities
In objects where no brotherhood exists
To common minds. My seventeenth year was come,
And whether from this habit rooted now
So deeply in my mind, or from excess
Of the great social principle of life
Coercing all things into sympathy,
To unorganic natures I transferred
My own enjoyments, or, the power of truth
Coming in revelation, I conversed
With things that really are. I at this time
Saw Blessings Spread around me like a sea.
Thus did my days pass on, and now at length
From Nature and her overflowing soul
I had received so much that all my thoughts
Were steeped in feelings; I was only then
Contented when with bliss ineffable
I felt the sentiment of being spread*

(10)

*És amellett
A mellékes körülmény mellett sem
Mehetünk el szótlánul, hogy mindig is
Jobban szerettem a fáradságos munkát
És gyümölcsét, mint az elméleti okfejtést,
Hisz jellege közelebb áll a költészethez,
Az alkotáshoz. Arról a vég nélküli
Építkezéstről szeretnék szólni, melyen
Érzékenységünkkel dolgozunk, és amely
Rokonságot sem mutat a közönséges
Szemlélettel. Elérkezett tizenhetedik
Eszteendőm, és vagy ebből, a gondolataim
Legmélyén megbúvó habitusból, vagy a
Mindent rokonszennvé alakító nagy
Kapcsolódási elvekből következően, az
Élettelen természetre saját örömeimet
Vetítettem, felfényllett az igazság ereje,
És valós tárgyakkal társalogtam, mert
Ekkor megláttam a tengerként ölelő
Áldott állapotokat magam körül.
Így teltek napjaim, és addigra
A Természet túláradó lelkéből már
Oly sokat merítettem, hogy minden
Gondolatom érzelmekkel telítődött.
Csak ott letem megnyugvást, ahol
Szavakkal ki nem fejezhető öröm*

*O'er all that moves, and all that seemeth still,
O'er all that, lost beyond the reach of thought
And human knowledge, to the human eye
Invisible, yet liveth to the heart,
O'er all that leaps, and runs, and shouts and sings
Or beats the gladsome air, o'er all that glides
Beneath the wave, yea, in the wave itself
And might depth of waters: wonder not
If such my transports were, for in all things
I saw one life and felt that it was joy.
One song they sang, and it was audible,
Most audible ten when the fleshy ear,
O'ercome by grosser prelude of that strain,
Forgot its functions, and slept undisturbed.
If this be error, and another faith
Find easier access to the pious mind,
Yet were I grossly destitute of all
Those human sentiments which make this earth
So dear, if I should fail with grateful voice
To speak of you, ye mountains! and ye lakes
And sounding cataracts! ye mists and winds
That dwell among the hills where I was born.
If, in my youth, I have been pure in heart,
If, mingling with the world, I am content
With my own modest pleasures, and have lied
With God and Nature communing, removed
From little enmities and low desires,*

*Járt át minden mozgó és mozdulatlan
Létezőt, mindent, ami az emberi szem
Vagy elme előtt ismeretlen, de mégis a
Szívünkben él. Minden felsíró, éneklő,
Minden rohanó, ugrándozó létezőt,
Minden boldog eget verdeső, a hullámok
Mélyén surranó létezőt, sőt, magát az
Áramlatot, vagy a vizek roppant mélyeit.
Ne csodálkozz töprenkedésemem, hisz
Mindenben egyetlen örömteli létezőt láttam.
Egyetlen muzsika hangja volt számomra
Hallható, s a leghangosabb épp, mikor a
Tapintható fül, a külső ingerek hatására,
Funkcióját vesztve zavartalan álomba merült.
Hiba ez, tán úgy véled, és más hit
Könnyebben elnyeri a jámborság jutalmát,
S én nélkülözöm az összes emberi erényt,
Mely ezt a földet oly varázslatossá teszi.
Úgy hálátlan hangon énekelnék meg
Benneteket, ti hegyek, tavak és robajló
Zuhogók, ti ködök és szelek, kik a dombok
Közt lakotok, mely egykori szülőhelyem.
Ha ifjúkoromban szívemben tisztaság
Honolt, s a világba vegyülve megelégedtem
Szerény örömben, és – csupán Istennel
És a Természettel társalogva – a gyarló
Viszályoktól távol tartottam magam,*

*The gift is yours: if in these times of fear,
This melancholy waste of hopes o'erthrown,
If, 'mid indifference and apathy
And wicked exultation, when good men
On every side fall off we know not how
To selfishness disguised in gentle names
Of peace, and quiet, and domestic love,
Yet mingled, not unwillingly, with sneers
On visionary minds, if in this time
Of dereliction and dismay I yet
Despair not of our nature, but retain
A more than Roman confidence, a faith
That fails not, in all sorrow my support,
The blessing of my life, the gift is yours
Ye Mountains! thine, O Nature! Thou hast fed
My lofty speculations, and in thee
For this uneasy heart of ours I find
A never-failing principle of joy
And purest passion.*

(11)

*Thou, my Friend, wast reared
In the great city mid far other scenes,
But we, by different roads, at length have gained
The self-same bourne. And from this cause to thee
I speak unapprehensive of contempt,
The insinuated scoff of coward tongues,*

*Úgy azt nektek köszönhetem. E félelmetes
Korban, a remény e sivatagában, néha
Közönyben és csüggedésben, máskor
Lelket romboló mámorban, jobb sorsa
Érdemes emberek dőltek, tőlünk jobbra,
Balra, önzés közepette, melyet hamis
Békecsók leplezett és csend és szeretet,
Hisz a jövőt fürkésző prófétát vonakodás
Nélkül kigúnyolták, ez idő tájt,
A döbrent elhagyatottság óráján, nem
Inogtam meg természetünkbe vetett
Hitemben. Latinos önbizalommal
E hit támogatott minden keserűségben, és
Tette áldottá életemet. Az ajándékot tőletek
Kaptam, ti hegyek. Ó, örök Természet,
Te tápláltad büszke vágyam, és
Nyugtalan szívem benned talált soha
El nem múló örömet, forrást, tiszta
Szenvedélyt.*

(11)

*S te, barátom,
A dicső városból jöttél, egy másik világból,
De veled más-más úton ugyanoda
Értünk. Ezért merek fenntartás nélkül
Veled mindent megosztani. Nem félek,
A gyáva nyelvek koholt vádjaitól, sem*

*And all that silent language which so oft
In conversation betwixt man and man
Blots from the human countenance all trace
Of beauty and of love. For thou hast sought
The truth in solitude, and thou art one,
The most intense of Nature's worshippers,
In many things my brother, chiefly here
In this my deep devotion.*

Fare thee well!

*Health and the quiet of a healthful mind
Attend thee! seeking oft the haunts of men
But yet more often living with thyself
And for thyself, so haply shall thy days
Be many and a blessing to mankind. ♦*

*A néma testbeszédtől, amely ember és
Ember között oly gyakran bemocskolja
A szeretet és a szépség kifejezéseit.
Mert te is a magányban kerested az
Igazságot, és egyike vagy a Természet
Legőszintébb imádóinak, sok tekintetben
Édes testvérem, de leginkább ebben
A csodálatban. Búcsúzom, jó egészség
És az egészséges elme csöndje kísérje
Utad, ki alkalmanként keresed a
Társaságot, de még gyakrabban élsz
Magadért és egymagadban. Boldogan
Teljenek napjaid! Áldott legyen az Ember! ♦*