

## The Journey

Anghiari is medieval, a sleeve sloping down  
A steep hill, suddenly sweeping out  
To the edge of a cliff, and dwindling.  
But far up the mountain, behind the town,  
We too were swept out, out by the wind,  
Alone with the Tuscan grass.

Wind had been blowing across the hills  
For days, and everything now was graying gold  
With dust, everything we saw, even  
Some small children scampering along a road,  
Twittering Italian to a small caged bird.  
We sat beside them to rest in some brushwood,  
And I leaned down to rinse the dust from my face.

I found the spider web there, whose hinges  
Reeled heavily and crazily with the dust,  
Whole mounds and cemeteries of it, sagging  
And scattering shadows among shells and wings.  
And then she stepped into the center of air  
Slender and fastidious, the golden hair  
Of daylight along her shoulders, she poised there,  
While ruins crumbled on every side of her.  
Free of the dust, as though a moment before  
She had stepped inside the earth, to bathe herself.

I gazed, close to her, till at last she stepped  
Away in her own good time.

Many men  
Have searched all over Tuscany and never found  
What I found there, the heart of the light  
Itself shelled and leaved, balancing  
On filaments themselves falling. The secret  
Of this journey is to let the wind  
Blow its dust all over your body,  
To let it go on blowing, to step lightly, lightly  
All the way through your ruins, and not to lose  
Any sleep over the dead, who surely  
Will bury their own, don't worry.

—James Wright

## **The City Limits**

When you consider the radiance, that it does not withhold  
itself but pours its abundance without selection into every  
nook and cranny not overhung or hidden; when you consider

that birds' bones make no awful noise against the light but  
lie low in the light as in a high testimony; when you consider  
the radiance, that it will look into the guiltiest

swervings of the weaving heart and bear itself upon them,  
not flinching into disguise or darkening; when you consider  
the abundance of such resource as illuminates the glow-blue

bodies and gold-skeined wings of flies swarming the dumped  
guts of a natural slaughter or the coil of shit and in no  
way winces from its storms of generosity; when you consider

that air or vacuum, snow or shale, squid or wolf, rose or lichen,  
each is accepted into as much light as it will take, then  
the heart moves roomier, the man stands and looks about, the

leaf does not increase itself above the grass, and the dark  
work of the deepest cells is of a tune with May bushes  
and fear lit by the breadth of such calmly turns to praise.

—A. R. Ammons

## Sunlight

Some things, by their affinity light's token,  
Are more than shown: steel glitters from a track;  
Small glinting scoops, after a wave has broken,  
Dimple the water in its draining back;

Water, glass, metal, match light in their raptures,  
Flashing their many answers to the one.  
What captures light belongs to what it captures;  
The whole side of a world facing the sun,

Re-turned to woo the original perfection,  
Giving itself to what created it,  
And wearing green in sign of its subjection.  
It is as if the sun were infinite.

But angry flaws are swallowed by the distance;  
It varies, moves, its concentrated fires  
Are slowly dying - the image of persistence  
Is an image, only, of our own desires:

Desires and knowledge touch without relating.  
The system of which sun and we are part  
Is both imperfect and deteriorating.  
And yet the sun outlasts us at the heart.

Great seedbed, yellow centre of the flower,  
Flower on its own, without a root or stem,  
Giving all colour and all shape their power,  
Still recreating in defining them,

Enable us, altering like you, to enter  
Your passionate love, impartial but intense,  
And kindle in acceptance round your centre,  
Petals of light lost in your innocence.

—Thom Gunn

## **The Light of Interiors**

The light of interiors  
is the admixture  
of who knows how many  
doors ajar, windows  
casually curtained,  
unblinded or opened,  
oculi set into ceilings,  
wells, ports, shafts,  
loose fits, leaks,  
and other breaches  
of surface. But, in  
any case, the light,  
once in, bounces  
toward the interior,  
glancing off glassy  
enamels and polishes,  
softened by the scuffed  
and often-handled, muffled  
in carpet and toweling,  
buffeted down hallways,  
baffled equally  
by the scatter and order  
of love and failure  
to an ideal and now  
sourceless texture which  
when mixed with silence  
makes of a simple  
table with flowers  
an island.

—Kay Ryan

## John Clare

I know there is a worm in the human heart,  
In its wake such emptiness as sleep should require.

Toward dawn, there was an undirected light the color of steel;  
The aspens, thin, vaguely parallel strips of slate,  
Blew across each other in that light.

I went out  
Having all night suffered my confusion, &  
Was quieted by this.

But the earth  
Vegetable rock or water that had been our salvation  
Is mostly passed now, into the keeping of John Clare,  
Alive,

whose poetry simplified us—we owe the world  
ourselves—  
Who, dead or sleeping, now reads the detail leaf & stone  
Passing, until it will finally be memorized & done.

I know the heart can be hard, & from this  
Misgiving about itself, will make a man merciless.  
I know that John Clare's madness nature could not straighten.

If there is a worm in the heart, & chamber it has bitten out,  
I will protect that emptiness until it is large enough.  
In it will be a light the color of steel  
& landscape, into which the traveler might set out.

—Jon Anderson

## Upon the Furthest Slope You Know

The spaces  
between  
things began  
speaking. So it was

I understood I  
was now  
to remain  
silent. Saw how

we were all  
plunged  
into this new strengthening  
silence. Was it

vision was it

catastrophe. This

first person  
I use here  
as a way of referring  
to my being in

abeyance – to my  
unknowing –  
though who are we kidding,  
it was not of the radiant kind

where we wait in line  
willingly  
eyes closed  
for the tap on the high spot

of the soul  
for illumination. No.  
We knew all along  
we were being driven

however kindly –  
and always with water & treats  
and names murmured  
which had been bestowed

upon us  
long ago  
before we could resist  
the temptation

of being made so  
singular –  
to slaughter.  
So the things had seemed

secretly our allies,  
but free,  
so free.  
They had not acceded

to these transactions.  
Had remained mute.  
Neither accomplices  
nor witnesses –

mute ...  
This stand of trees  
before me now,  
and yes the one tree

my need for companionship  
picks out,  
that certain one  
in its own light,

solitary  
it seems to me.  
It seems to me  
we regard each other

here now, blazing,  
at the end.  
But it is no longer  
my turn

to inquire,  
to push around it & at it.  
And yet how its branches amaze me.  
How is it I

have not seen them before  
for what they are,

these miles of nowhere-going  
tangling & re-

directing this  
October light, every journey  
silver-grey with  
roiling shadows going

nowhere

in the dawn wind.  
What is nowhere  
is the first thing  
I make out

when it finally begins  
to almost speak  
to me. Listen to it  
when it speaks to you – it is

the next world.  
We are done.  
The light is rising, the light is  
sharpening

everything,

but not the mind.

There are no limits  
to the world's  
imagination now.

—Jorie Graham