

5.8 Song for May (2011)

What is it makes my blood run cold as though
I had chilled vodka coursing through my veins.
This morning of all mornings
a deep unease, profound agitation whipped up
by ceaseless river wind which bows and bends
the mighty cedar heads outside
and claws at all the corners of my mind.
I've heard such wind before: it's everywhere –
it tells me of some impending great departure:
a loosing of the ties, of letting slip
the moorings of my life, an imperative embarking
to another place which vaguely frightens me,
it makes me ventilate, it leads my heart to groan,
and poses unfamiliar questions to my mind.

And through this violent wind, there's incomparable
glitter of the sun on every animated leaf,
and everything's alive this half-spent day,
although I know not where it's leading me.
While wind is sweeping clouds across the fiery blue
and dissipating vapour trails to make them milky ways,
old helion glares at me, strikes down
through every orifice and blinds me off the table-cloth.
A tiny spider treks across my page, alert but purposeful,
more sure than I on how to navigate
this sun-spell, God-given space of time.

So what's this all about? Can I identify
in this my early elder age what strange new alchemy's
at work within and whence it comes to me?
All very well it is to share politely with my friends, my
heart's companion, my speculations
on memory and sleep: but some new chemistry's
alive in me. I now know what it is,
the terror when my fingers lose the grip
upon the gunwales of my bark,
when places that I know so well slip through
the framework of my sense so I must learn
to re-learn them: when people
that I know so well drift out of reach while I
work hard to re-assemble in my mind
events that I participated in a bare few months before.

My wretched mind's a hotchpot
of memories and dreams, things done, undone;
unregulated thoughts fired off by tiny triggers
from that ever-hidden world of my emotions,
disordered information, not organised to some intent
but swirling dangerously around in my receptacles
wherever they may be. It feels as though it's coming
to a head, as if I need today the courage to embark
upon a different sea, to climb a different hill
and leave a lot behind.

Of higher power I have no doubt, and can
rehearse the faces it assumes for me: with others
or alone I stretch my hand in search, or in surrender:
redemption is my thirst, the hand of the redeemer,
the words of hymns. In this my wilderness I sense
I may become reborn – agitated by this harrying wind,
animated by this merciless sun and
the unspeakable beauty of this morning of all mornings.

Teddington – May 2011.