

Warmingham

I

Among the meadows of the Wheelock
in a bowl of hills
thin beautiful water
moats the church-mound,
and then turns through a meander
into its exit.

Sunlight silvers the valley
and warms between frozen fields
to leave with a crimson tail
at the setting of summer.

To be a captive here
is to be bound in rivers,
hemmed in hills close
and far away,
camouflaged in green.

These
are the contours of freedom.

II

Time never runs out in this valley.

The church-tower that guards the bridge
tolls time
while segments of light and dark
like a sundial
circle the distant hill.

The sound of water is the sound of time.

III

The dead tree and the cow bending
to drink where the river turns,
birds walking on mud islands
becalmed below the weir,
graffiti on the bridge parapet,

a woman watering roses,
the church-yard a book of verse
and a book of names:

tomorrow will find Warmingham,
the Wheelock, and time
the same and changed,
and nearer to neither their beginning
nor their end.

Look back – at the valley's end
dispensing light and water
is the pointed hill, its beginning,
from which flows all time.

And all time flows through Warmingham,
is captured and escapes at Warmingham,
and by flowing on, returns
to the dawn it rose from.

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