

## Rainfall

Whether the rain on Mars was delicate or brutal  
whether it was blue or grey  
whether it fell on bare rock that remained bare  
or on fertile ground that raised large forests of  
leafing trees  
it could not last.

Mars froze eventually  
in the same duration that Venus by contrast  
bowed her burning head  
in rosy vapours and gas clouds.

\*

On planet Earth meanwhile  
after half a billion years of continuous volcano havoc  
meteor storms earthquakes and lightning strikes  
vapour stored in the atmosphere began falling.  
When the fires died  
it fell silently on the first outcrops of moss.  
On the tender grass with a sizzle.

With more strenuous drumming  
on fronds of resilient fern.

It became an orchestra of millions  
across the luxurious expanse of the tree canopy.

\*

Then the sun wiped its forehead  
with long filmy fingers  
and beamed afresh.

It worked through to creatures beneath the canopy  
and persuaded them to interrupt their work  
of scouring for roots and berries.

In the clarified light they stared at their hands.

They saw the wrinkled fingertips  
that gave a firm grip on slippery branches and vines  
gradually soften and smooth.

They rose in amazement onto their hind legs  
and crept from shelter  
towards the dazzling savannah.

\*

After a summer of twelve thousand years  
after the timeless interruptions of ice

after one particular inundation  
and the shadow of an ark  
darkening fish shoals  
as they scooted over valleys and hills

after the blaze of one civilisation  
then another

after the destruction of several experiments  
with law and order

after the extinction  
of many beautiful languages

rain by and large  
found its place in the scheme of things.

It began to defeat its purpose  
on the private sky of umbrellas.

It babbled through green fields  
and melted into the seams of poetry.

It larked in the puddle of its names.

Cobblers and chair legs and pipe stems.

Frogs and jugs and beards.

Cats and dogs.

Men.

\*

Although they are shaped like parachutes  
thanks to the air pressure beneath them  
raindrops explode on landing.

Then the sun bears down again  
fitting a monocle into its eye.

The glass flashes and burns.

The rain sweats  
and evaporates into the ocean of the air.

The ocean continues on its way  
overflowing here and there  
in quick little splashes  
or reckless floods and drenching.

It is delicate or brutal.

It is blue sometimes                      and sometimes grey.

Sometimes it falls on bare rock  
at others                      it raises  
large forests of leafing trees.

## The White Bear

When I discovered his tracks in the ice field  
they appeared to have no beginning  
and ended in pure black water.

Without hesitation I knelt down  
and stared into the trembling deep.

I saw him swim through darkness  
with immense and steady strokes  
the violence of his body  
assuaged by phosphorescence  
glowing throughout his pelt

by a slipstream of sand  
and small particles of rock  
such as also appear in the night sky  
when meteors are scudding overhead.

\*

One day  
in the course of his earthly existence  
he lived in solitude eating snow

the next  
he was accompanied by replicas of himself  
grazing the tundra like hogs on a common

one day

he held his breath underwater for hours  
striking his prey from below like a waterspout

the next

he had fooled them into thinking his nose  
was the black dot of a meal dozing on the horizon

one day

he shunted before him ice blocks the size of cars  
and used them as a shield that made him invisible

the next

he lifted and hurled these same blocks as easily as  
dice  
and so crushed his victims or battered out their  
brains.

\*

In the centuries of worship I meant to represent him  
but only managed to carve my own skeleton.

I touched him in my mind and prized this connection  
but realised my fear was his greatest gift to me.

I regularly ingested a part of his body with all due  
ceremony  
but suffered abysmal headaches and lost patches of  
my skin.

\*

For these reasons I have chosen not to prevent him  
escaping from me entirely.

I have closed my ears and eyes  
when the ice floes groan  
and glaciers express their gigantic grief.

When the earth stalls  
and vaporous purple lights  
stream from its parching gears.

I have decided to make a new home for myself  
with hot showers and a table  
reliable internet connection  
a wardrobe  
and a lifetime of dry clothes.