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.