

## **Interim**

for K.S.

A black page of night  
flutters: dream on or waken,  
words will spring from darkness now,  
gold-bright, to fill the hollow mind  
laid still to hear them, as an iron cup  
laid on the window-ledge, would fill with rain.  
Not more alone  
waking than sleeping, in darkness than in light,  
yet it is now we can assume  
an attitude more listening than longing,  
extend invisible antennae towards  
some intimation, echo, emanation  
falling slowly like a destined feather  
that lights at last before the feet  
of hesitating fear. Not less alone  
in city than in solitude, at least  
this time--an hour or minute?--left between  
dreaming and action, where the only glitter  
is the soft gleam of words, affording  
intimacy with each submerged regret,  
awakes a new lucidity in pain,  
so that with day we meet  
familiar angels that were lately tears  
and smile to know them only fears transformed.

London, 1946

## **The Breathing**

An absolute  
patience.  
Trees stand  
up to their knees in  
fog. The fog  
slowly flows

uphill.

White  
cobwebs, the grass  
leaning where deer  
have looked for apples.  
The woods  
from brook to where  
the top of the hill looks  
over the fog, send up  
not one bird.  
So absolute, it is  
no other than  
happiness itself, a breathing  
too quiet to hear.

### **September 1961**

This is the year the old ones,  
the old great ones  
leave us alone on the road.

The road leads to the sea.  
We have the words in our pockets,  
obscure directions. The old ones

have taken away the light of their presence,  
we see it moving away over a hill  
off to one side.

They are not dying,  
they are withdrawn  
into a painful privacy

learning to live without words.  
E. P. "It looks like dying"—Williams: "I can't  
describe to you what has been

happening to me"—  
H. D. "unable to speak."  
The darkness

twists itself in the wind, the stars  
are small, the horizon  
ringed with confused urban light-haze.

They have told us  
the road leads to the sea,  
and given

the language into our hands.  
We hear  
our footsteps each time a truck

has dazzled past us and gone  
leaving us new silence.  
One can't reach

the sea on this endless  
road to the sea unless  
one turns aside at the end, it seems,

follows  
the owl that silently glides above it  
aslant, back and forth,

and away into deep woods.

But for us the road  
unfurls itself, we count the  
words in our pockets, we wonder

how it will be without them, we don't  
stop walking, we know  
there is far to go, sometimes

we think the night wind carries  
a smell of the sea...

## A Clearing

What lies at the end of enticing  
country driveways, curving  
off among trees? Often only  
a car graveyard, a house-trailer,  
a trashy bungalow. But this one,  
for once, brings you  
through the shade of its green tunnel  
to a paradise of cedars,  
of lawns mown but not too closely,  
of iris, moss, fern, rivers of stone rounded  
by sea or stream,  
of a wooden unassertive large-windowed house.  
The big trees enclose  
an expanse of sky, trees and sky  
together protect the clearing.  
One is sheltered here  
from the assaultive world  
as if escaped from it, and yet  
once arrived, is given (oneself  
and others being a part of that world)  
a generous welcome.

  It's paradise  
as a paradigm for how  
to live on earth,  
how to be private and open  
quiet and richly eloquent.  
Everything man-made here  
was truly made by the hands  
of those who live here, of those  
who live with what they have made.  
It took time, and is growing still  
because it's alive.  
It is paradise, and paradise  
is a kind of poem; it has  
a poem's characteristics:  
inspiration; starting with the given;  
unexpected harmonies; revelations.

It's rare among  
the worlds one finds  
at the end of enticing driveways.

"A Clearing" by Denise Levertov, from *This Great Unknowing: Last Poems*.  
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