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They are not dying, they are withdrawn into a painful privacy learning to live without words.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.