

Borage Blue

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As if to profess a faith that, in the practice of remembering some blue, we might enter a region wider than any geography, I look at the drab winter sky and imagine Borage.

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To touch a leaf of Borage, to attend to that touch, is to be taken by the mystery of what is close at hand.

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The *medium* of touch is the skin. The *organ* of touch, however, is an invisible membrane: the illimitable surface where sensitive life is emergent in matter.

If plants, capturing solar energy and ceaselessly transforming insensate matter into living being, can be considered the cosmogonic agents of such emergence, then perhaps the most apt analogy for the relation of touch to its world is the staggering, endlessly intricate surface of summer foliage. Like the surface of touch, this is an ontological, not merely spatial, surface; it is infinite, because it defines a universal limit and its emergence inverts the relationship of container and contained – such a surface is not ‘in’ the world, but establishes the existence of world within a new ontological horizon.

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I fall asleep pondering the proper form for a poem on Borage. On waking, I have a song from musical theatre – unheard and unconsidered, as far as I am aware, for many years – on continuous mind-loop: a reminder of the essentially anomic relation between the material body and the eidetic formations of consciousness – a factor which, in the composition of any text, constitutes a significant limit to the illusion of formal mastery.

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The gentlest summer air is turbulent with fantastical atoms – with the airy, intricate architectures of pollen; with pollen polylobate, piliated, pstilate; perfectly round and reticulated pollen; pollen pitted, scrunched inward like sea-shell pasta; pollen annular and clavate, mono-sulcate, rugose; pollen smooth above, yet, with spinula, lavishly mulleted beneath; light or lumbering pollen; thousands of windborne microscopic sponges, reefs of pollen, in a coralline, invisible sea.

Like Cyclamen or the Bittersweet Nightshade, Borage, with its reflexed petals, the oil-dark prominence of its staminal cone, is a prototypical example of the flower structure known to botanists as a ‘shooting star’. Through highly specialised interactions with bees, such flowers are capable of copious ejections of dried, electrostatic grains of pollen. A foraging bee will clasp the Borage anthers in his pelted forelegs, yielding to a wild thoracic vibration. Tuned to a deep co-evolutionary frequency, the resulting resonance elicits, from the plant, a spurt of fertile matter – a loop of futures, rich with repetition.

o

An essayistic form seems most appropriate to the vegetable. For the essay expands, not because it advances towards some clearly defined limit, but on account of a habit of expressive involution – a turning back which would rescue every nuance, no matter how nugatory, from the oblivion of argument. The same is true of the growth of plants, a process for which every establishment of fixity – a flowering stalk, a leaf-stem, a shallow root – simultaneously defines a site of interstitial emergence, a betweenness charged with potential.

◦



I walk onwards into shade with it placed there, arm  
outstretched, a suppliant to the beech grove

A tingle of warmth and animation spreads to my palm,  
outwards, in movement to occasion, and from out, in, to  
a fix in proprioception – habitual motion, tempered to a  
point of feeling stillness

In contemplation motion is a form of ease – as for the  
gliding fulmar, hammocked in wind

Appropriated to life, we are drawn out into mystery,  
must cleave to what unfurls in attention

So, to walk – which is to think – and write: the  
successive cadence held as one

Picked by this Pincushion

Opposite, an oak extends in sympathetic symmetry, its few last leaves luminous amongst the dark outlines of the boughs – as if each were the promise of one more bright winter sunset, a jewel in these days of rain.

Often, in my work, the window, with its restricted view, serves as a reminder of the limits to the free development and expression of life.

Such limits are an effect of the social metabolism, governed by its law of value: that, under unequal conditions, to work for money is the dominant mode of access to what keeps and grows life; that what is consumed is produced by the labour of others; that the circulations of these indirect, imbricated and international relations, like the growth rings of a tree, accumulate as our human geography – objectified historical time: this room, this window, the ornamental redwood.

Only a painter, maddened with skill, might hope to match  
such fine formations of decay.

Striving to show them, my words – curling, indwelt  
to the tongue's tangent palette –

would break off into babble, or unravel, held to the swift  
asemic glide of the pen

the touch of it, recursive in the holding hand.  
So, as migrant thrushes clatter

into mystic coverts, there is this pact with all that flies  
from fixing look, from unincisive name.

◦

through woods in winter

subtle colour  
weaves its catachreses

◦

There is a range of feelings experienced in the presence of natural events.

Amongst these our 'sense of natural beauty.'

I imagine this affect as a remnant of past potentiality; a swerve, untaken, in the history of what we recognise as proper to our species: thus, as the record of a relict, yet always latent, organ.

So that a plant or animal creature, for which we feel an unexpected love, could have been, to the invisible life of sense – the self given to itself – as, in the field of biological fact, mitochondria are to each single, animal cell.

To make such an intuition show itself, we assume these approximations, which we call concepts.

We work their internal, inherited differences, so they return to that future which was grasped, also, in them; their unity with the pre-intuited real.