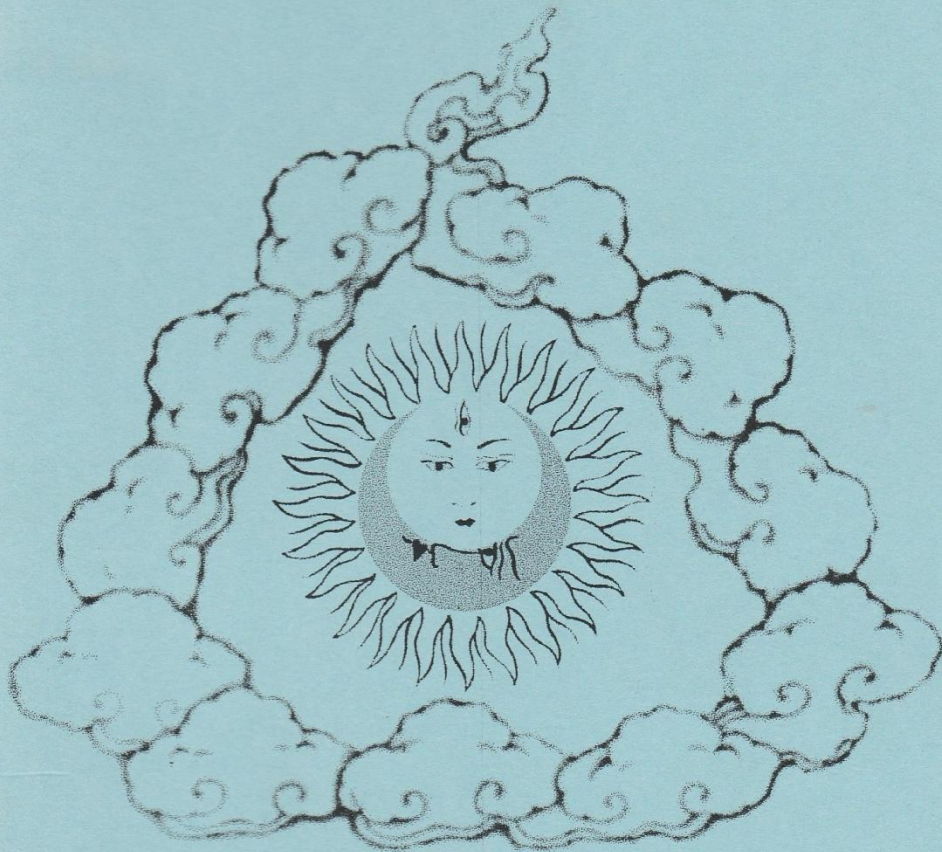


CLOUDS



poems
by Dean Carter

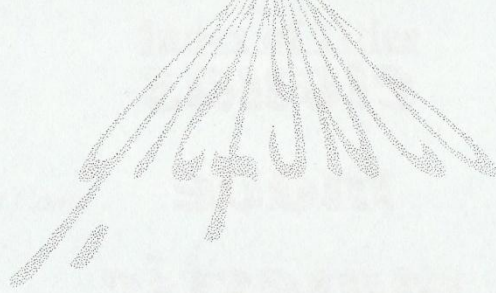
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clouds
move
majestic
as mountains
past my eye

past God's eye
majestic
mountains
move
like clouds

distance



birds

closeness

separates

A Moment Came

A moment came
When I held a grain
Of sand in my hand by the sea,
And I became that grain of sand
And knew its history.
I'd been a cell of the sun,
A piece of star debris,
Cooled into a mountain,
And as the earth shifted restlessly
Found myself part of a coastline;
Was worn down inexorably
By the ocean, who with fathomless patience
Fashioned me
Into this tiny jewel so
Astonishing, so ordinary.
I was gathered up, then given colour
In an isolated monastery,
Assigned my place in a sand-mandala,
Blessed, then returned to the sea.
There I became a shiny pearl
And fishers harvested me
To live at the throat of a queen
In fabulous luxury,
Who then grew tired of her toy
And in vinegar dissolved me.
I passed through her body,
Was flushed down the sewers of history,
Then found myself held in my very own hand
Contemplatively.
As a pearl of song rose at my throat,
A moment came while by the strand I ran
When I was no longer a man singing a note,
But a note singing a man.

Long

**For your comforting hands
To fall upon me soft as flights of doves
I long.**

**For the life giving waters of your hair
To stream over me
I long.**

**For the flowers of passion to bloom
Once again in this arid corpse-body
I long.**

**For the fiery rose to unfold
Once again in my heart's labyrinth
I long.**

**For the sky-drunk rainbow
Of song to erupt from my cobwebby throat
I long.**

**For this vase to be filled
With new blossoms pure water and sweet
dancing light
I long.**

Rainbow

Look at the rainbow,
Uniting heaven and earth,
Before and beyond.

You are a rainbow,
Glowing child of opposites,
Living miracle

Of colour, called forth
By light to touch green hills with
Transient glory.

We are all rainbows,
Radiant bridges born of
Rainfall and starlight,

Retinal teardrop
Emanations, magical
Beyond conception.

Diamond

fountain of flashing stellar fire
brought down to earth-diamond
casually tossing spears of light
that sink down delicately into the mind
like wind borne embers glowing
like blossom gently snowing

if over you we squabble
reduce you into baubles
it's because, carbon cousin, we long so for
your effortless enduring radiance
radiant enduringness

from blizzards of pearls in spring
to each treeful of emeralds waving
it becomes increasingly clear
that a master's hand is at work here

and if the poor die still
on the steps of the cathedral
and if within christ's flesh is bought and sold
yet still we long for the miracle
that turns each wound into a jewel
and our blood to liquid gold

The Four Crowns

*The year's brow darkens as age sets in,
Puckers to Autumn's peevish frown-
Yet harvest also is gathered in,
The wreaths of Autumn's golden crown.*

*Cold and darkness flay the land,
Winter the hag, chilled to the bone-
Yet one wave of frost's magic wand
And glittering silver is Winter's crown.*

*Innocence battles with wind and hail,
See the blossom come whirling down-
Yet fragile lambs and chicks prevail,
And maiden Spring dons an emerald crown.*

*Helpless in the hopeless heat
And huge with child that weighs her down,
Abundance dribbling from her teat,
A blood-red sun seals Summer's crown.*

*Child, maid, lover, mother, crone,
Crowned with silver and with gold,
With ruby and with emerald,
Gaia's ageless dance goes on.*

Hascombe Hill 30/10/1997

**On this supremely still October day
The sponge that is my soul is surfeited on gold and grey,
The acorn's glossy skin reflects the sky,
Leaves underfoot crunch powdery as snow. Everything's dry.
Fall's fantastic fungus-flowers sprout,
My heart beats now disburdened of all doubt.**

**Fragrant with spores and scent of fine decay,
Deep, maturer-coloured counterpart of May.
Seasoning season: not raging 'at the dying of the light',
But calmly acknowledging the nearness of the night.
The man of many winters surely knows
Life ends not with the fall of winter's snows.**

**From faith alone can understanding spring
Of death's dark necessary part of life's unbroken ring.
Accept the ageless law of paradox-
What can you do but smile at fortune's clumsily-staged shocks?
Resting still within myself upon a day so still,
Like an acorn in its cup, no more a stranger to God's will.**

Windermere, August 1997

After a sunless day
This sunset breaks like dawn
Upon a silver silken lake
That meditates soundlessly upon
Waves of fire, breaking in sprays of blood,
The far mountains beyond.

West lies death and mystery,
Sunset marks day's exit wound.
As the scarab of the sun
Rolls this ball of dung the Earth
Always in the same direction,
The East becomes the eye of life,
Beginning and of birth.

So as Time rolls toward us
Inexorably we plunge headfirst-
The waters of morning breaking around-
Into each new day's birth,
Blinkered by sunlight from Night's immensities
Until darkness falls,
To spew at us swans and lyres,
Dragons and dolphins,
Maidens and bulls.

Now as the lake, dumb with wonder,
Mirrors a bridge of stars,
And the brief showers of gold
That are falling meteors,
The massive silence is broken
By a boreal, alien sound-
The guttural, desolate honking of geese,
Resonating the hills around.

Piebald

I look into the light,
Find I am dazzled.
Look the other way
And all the world is shadowed
As my head eclipses the sun.

With darkness and light
Viewed sideways on,
In magpie multiplicity
Of colour shade and form
This world of ours is dappled,
Like a living chessboard
Where empires flourish, are toppled,
And each of Truth's manifold byways explored.

My darkside therefore stays dark,
Is the real thing, not a theme park.
The beasts in those cages bite as well as bark.

If I can't always be loving and wise
I make no apologies.
For what can grow beneath
Perpetually sunny skies?

Diverging Paths

*What have I been doing with myself, old friend?
I've been past the point where agony and ecstasy meet,
Seen the living fan-vaulting of heaven's roof,
Colour's essence, prismatic light without heat.
Felt emotion's full carillon cascade through me,
Tasted sound-chiselled sculptures of light,
Sensed with senses not-yet-named the Rose Of Implicate
Order
Unfold on the Abyss of Timeless Night.*

*You asked, I answered, now you sneer.
Was that really all our love amounted to, shared fear?
I remember what that feels like.
Nowhere's home, nowhere's safe,*

But for faith.

Epistle To Bob

We fear our love is muzzled
And cannot sing.

We fear our love is shackled
And cannot take wing.

Yet, who can silence song?
Put the wind under lock and key?

Who oppresses us
But we?

None is so blind
As he who will not see.

None so enslaved as he
Who cannot see that he is free.

No-one can harm you, unless
You wish it to be.

You're living in a gaol?
You have the key.

Life's only a lesson.

There is no hell or purgatory.

We're here not only to do,
But to be.

Walk lightly, lovingly,
Courageously.

Forgetting That The Stars Gaze Down

We writhe in ant-heap Babylons
Seething with man-made light,
Forgetting that the stars gaze down,
Save on the odd rare cloudless night-
And even then the fires we've made
Seduce our eyes, seeming more bright.
Dazzled by light shows of our own,
Forgetting that the stars gaze down.

Lost in our self-constructed mazes,
And the comforts of our town,
Next to our partners, children, friends,
We wake at night adrift, alone.
We wonder, where did we go wrong?
What is it that we haven't done?
Forgetting that the stars gaze down,
Forgetting that the stars gaze down.

Daytime eats the constellations,
Not even spitting out the bones,
The stars need never bother us
When we've T.V. and telephone.
We get home in the evening to
A voice that nags 'This isn't home.'
We live out of alignment,
Forgetting that the stars gaze down.

It's in the quiet places,
Relieved to find our cover's blown,
It's in the solitudes
That we see what we truly own.
Free from man and all his works,
Alone, we find we're not alone.
Blossoming beneath the starlight
Falling like refreshing rain.
Discovering that the stars gaze down,
And have been all along.

We look up backwards into Time.
Light falls on us that predates man.
The dance is one of Endlessness,
Has been/is/will be going on
Beyond all memory of how
Earth, History and pain began.
In mystery the stars gaze down
Blazing with compassion.

We scientifically know
What stars are, yet I still delight
In knowing that this cloak or shield
Of darkness that we call the Night,
Pin-pricked with stellar holes, protects us
From the Primordial Might
And Majesty Ineffable of
The Greater Light.

I have heard the star hosts sing
Celestial hymns around the dome
Of this great cosmic cathedral
That truly is our home.
In our bones the song is echoed,
In our blood the hymn rings on,
Every cell's unique hosanna
Has at its heart a rising sun.
However much we've been distracted,
Whatever stupid things we've done.
We live in the life giving gaze
Of our parent-star, the sun.

So back into our human world
And day's bright domain,
Wiser and gladder men and women
We can now return.
Cradled by stars,
Knowing now that they're ours,
Summoned by mystery,
Freed from our histories,
Pilgrims through life,
We journey on,
Rejoicing that the stars gaze down,
Rejoicing as the stars gaze down.

Walking In The Clouds

I

I'm walking over water,
I'm walking in the clouds,
Past the cliffs of candyfloss
Of which the locals are so proud,

Across a bridge that sings
Across a mighty river's throat,
Cutting it simultaneously-
Tides bleed devoid of boats.

Silence crashing in on me,
Wave on silent wave,
Silent as the silence
As the the mourners leave the grave.

This is the first time I've been here,
Yet also I've been here before.
I *know* this silent afternoon,
This multifacet shore.

I've come into my kingdom,
Wooded hills that run to meet the sea.
Am I dreaming up this landscape,
Or is it dreaming me?

The raw numinous presentness
Of everything before my eye,
The juicy, timeless is-ness
Overpowers all philosophy.

It's both within you and without
That the real adventure happens,
And such distinctions melt away
As our vision sharpens.

I'm fully present here
In this stinging rain,
Yet also I'm my younger self
Walking up a different lane.

Look deep into your lover's eyes
And you'll soon break through
To the timelessness in her,
And the timelessness in you.

The Gateway to Eternity
Is present in each moment,
One day you'll be amazed to find
It always lay wide open.

Now, garlanded by butterflies
A rainbow trails me home,
The sky split by the lightning
Of a dead elm white as bone.

Severn Estuary August 1997

II

Angels skate across the tarn.
In nearby choirs of meeting streams,
Water sings on stone, and wind
Plays on tree-harp strings.

A 'happy child of nature' am I
In my mountain home,
Friends with grass, rock, sky and water,
Light bent ripples, chirping foam.

A million crashing tons of water
Translated into a caress
For tired limbs—who could be careless
Of such thoughtfulness?

Crouching at my feet, the sun
Cupped in the water's hands,
Emanating endlessly -
I kick him to sparkling smithereens,

Dandelion

*A child blows on a dandelion-
The galaxies disperse
Their seeds of Time and Space
Across the universe.
Ahead of me a tree of stars
Shimmers in the cosmic breeze,
A point of light cupped in the loving
Hand of every leaf.
To be a part of everything
Means also to have known
The pain of separation
From everything you knew as home.
Man reached a surly adolescence
Turned from Mother Earth,
Dwelt only on the painful parts
Of childhood and of birth,
Exacted terrible revenge
Upon the parent globe,
Sucked out her blood and bones and flesh,
Stripped her of her wondrous robes.
Now reaching a maturer age
Is hoping to turn back the clock,
Can no more deny the agony
Of wandering from the flock,
Knows now that the only hope
That he too can be healed
Is to cast his pride aside,
And rejoin the fold.
Our healing of ourselves
And of our friends and families
Is the healing also of the Earth,
The forests, rivers, seas.*

And The Mountain Showed Me

*The mountain showed me secret treasure
A shining brightness of far ocean
Blazing like a forest fire
And I plucked the stars like berries
From the blue-black tree of heaven
And I gathered them together
And I clasped them to my heart
And I felt the rising/falling
Hills as waves beneath my feet
Caressingly my weight supporting
As if I were on water walking
I saw the moon's bright florin
Slip in the purse of miser night
While uneasy constellations
Jiggled restless at their moorings
And a crazy wind was jeering
Through each tree's naked rigging
And the midnight swans were bobbing
Sleeplessly like ghostly jetsam
In the dawn the trees were writhing
Sinuous up skies of granite
Sombre in their nakedness
Objective correlative
Of my solitariness
I listened to a river's song
I held a rainbow in my hand
The lake piled swords of flashing light
Like tribute where I stood on land
Up paradox's winding road
Now I hope to find contentment
In committed detachment
Detached commitment*

no earthly reason

Did I come here for this,
This never *quite* getting right
Of relationship on relationship?
This toil, worry, frustration and unending struggle?
This nightmare fight up
Life's down escalator?

No, you came
To hear the sudden hiss of summer rain
On the river's silently gliding body.
To see heaven
In a mound of lemons,
Though the woman you loved
Looked through you like a stranger.
To ride winds rushing off sheer crags,
Your vision adrenaline eagle bright, then
Scattering laconic sheep,
On singing-silk descent.
To feel the world both gained and lost
In a bed of love too steep to be climbed from.
To hold these and other
Of time's jewels in your heart,
Invisible talismans,
Next to those moments when
Dove-like peace and calm descend
Sleeping or waking, still or moving,
For no earthly reason at all.

Beach

Sands
The score
Of some wave woven fugue

Intertwining themes of
Brown,
yellow,
pink,
silver,
purple,
white.

At the mother of pearl shoreline
the sea has divulged
clusters of shells like hands,
clutching, unclutching,
clasping, unclasping,
to the sea's in.....out.....in.....breathing

Shiny mirror, faintly echoing
caressing yule-pale cloud.

Bare cupfuls of sunlight to go round,
yet each grain of the sand
of this boreal strand
glows with its own inner

radiance.

Portobello, Edinburgh, 21/12/96

Melting Sky

Sky melts
Away from sunset
Jay's-wing blue
To lucent cobalt
Holding present
Invisible violet

It's not only at
The fiery focal point
That all is changing
All is happening

History a wild flower
Opening
And closing
On the beat
Of gossamer wings
Fate is hanging

It's not often in the sight
Of the crowd's ogling
That Beauty's to be found
As dawn blushing

More Clouds

woolgathered

eagle

nebulous

jellyfish

whirlpool

galaxy

dishevelled

spine

burning

metropolis

crucified

angel

smoke ring

ghost's wing

foggy

shoreline

Fields Sown With Light

I have seen
Fields sown with light
In gleaming incandescent rows.
So however this journey works out,
Whatever the destination,
All's well.
Every day can seem a battle,
And every battle seem lost,
Yet the warrior can win the war
After losing every battle.
And something unquenchable in me
Waves a pure-white flag of victory,
Sings a song of peace,
In the midst of the disaster.
The part of me that hears the silence
At the roaring thunder's core,
That feels the heat of the sun
Beating in the fox's heart,
That knows the vast stellar fury
That rockets the crocus up
Through dense cold darkness,
That sings the miracle of tone and texture
That is one green pastel lichened
Winter oak's trunk.

Winter Oak

twisting emerald torrent
frozen cascade
sky rooted
pouring earthward

When We Grow Up

When we grow up
We'll be inviolably vulnerable
Vulnerably inviolable
Strongly tender
Gently tough
As children who've not yet learnt
To play the game
Of pass the parcel of pain

We'll be
Innocent as sages
Wise
As babies
Our accumulated experience
Passionately flowering
In youthful idealism
Our store of years bestowing
The clarity of vision
Of those who know
They yet know nothing

We'll dump our baggage
Use our arms
For embracing
Cartwheels
Handstands
Flying

**Neither dawn nor sunset
Nor the sun's across-sky journeying
Will give us cause for terror
We'll have found our way
Out of Time's rat maze
The lions and tigers will be out of their cages
And the game will be up
For the mind's tamers**

**When we grow up
We'll grow down
And stillness
Shall be our movement
Movement
Shall be our stillness**

Singing

Embrace the moment
Singing like the blade of a
Sword of diamond.

Words

*the foaming wavecrests
where the shores of consciousness
meet mind's deep ocean*

Stow Bardolph, Norfolk, 26/7/97

*Sitting by a formal pond,
The meeting of three worlds, I muse on Mind,
(Gold gleams dart through sunken murk,)
And pray that calm can sometime bring an end
To the winds of passion that distort
These images of trees and sky behind.*

Downham Market, Norfolk, 27/7/97

A billion leaves are hymning in
The glory of the dawn,
Moved by the self-same breath that left
Yesterday's rose petals strewn
In brutalised disorder
Across the well kept lawns.

Child

left alone at last to explore every room
of the big rambling house encounters
 marvels at every turn
cupboards bursting with gold and rubies
attics packed with pirates and battles
 jokes jellies tricks and ghosts
expeditions jungles sands and tundra
sundials afternoon lawns and shadows
shaded dens secrets whispered loves
 trunks packed with histories
 shelves packed with futures
warriors sorcerers wise men kings
 spaceships and kayaks
 nobility madness
fortitude laziness nostalgia treachery
waterfalls telescopes daphnia mastodons

and this time no tea-time ends it
no adult voice breaks the spell
 no bully reality
bursts the bubble or rings the bell
 we all carry within us
potential heaven, potential hell
 he's chosen the former
 school's out now forever
and never will break through his shell

Roads.

The Road of Sorrow leads
To the Palace of Joy.
The Road of Struggle leads
To the City of Ease.
The Road of Confusion leads
To the Tower of Clarity.
The Road of Cacophony leads
To the Temple of Silence.
Every road leads
To the end of the road,
As movement leads
To repose.
The journey leads
To journey's end,
As all things are shadowed
By their opposite.

The meaningful path leads
To that which is beyond meaning.
The search for understanding leads
To that which is beyond understanding.
The quest for comprehension leads
To acknowledgement of the incomprehensible.

Tears In The Rain

all of our pleasure, all of our pain,
tears in the rain, tears in the rain,
all of our losses, all of our gains,
tears in the rain, tears in the rain,
all our frustration, all of our striving,
our highs and our lows and our simply surviving,
the somethings and nothings that hold our attention,
comes in the end to that which we don't mention,
tears in the rain

all that we treasure, all we're afraid of,
tears in the rain, tears in the rain,
all we can measure, all that we're made of,
tears in the rain, tears in the rain,
all that restricts us, all that confines us,
all that obstructs us, all that defines us,
all that we wish to be, or to escape from,
the very blood's blueprint we all take our shape from-
tears in the rain

all that we question or take for granted,
tears in the rain, tears in the rain,
all that we have, all we've ever wanted,
tears in the rain, tears in the rain,
the traps that we fall for despite every warning,
the reasons we get out of bed in the morning,
the things that we'd steal for, beg for, lie for,
the things that we'd kill for, or that we'd die for,
tears in the rain

a child on the beach invents civilisation,
tears in the rain, tears in the rain,
science, religion, bureaucracy, nations,
tears in the rain, tears in the rain,
age old laws, time-honoured structures,
prostitutes, parasites, sermons and lectures,
bread and circuses, transport, technologies,
wars, rites, drugs, agriculture, mythologies,
then the tide rushes in once again,
and with a sigh all is one,
tears in the rain

we're arrogant, weak, selfish and vain,
tears in the rain, tears in the rain,
ignorant, cruel, short sighted, insane,
tears in the rain, tears in the rain,
we're also courageous, loving and kind,
the thoughts of some far greater mind,
once we've learnt what we came here to find,
we return to the source, leave our bodies behind-
tears in the rain

our tears are lost in the rain
our tears are dissolved in the rain
but the grass grows tall and the trees climb high
and it all goes round again