

Poems

Helen Moore

Bee

What do you feel
when you enter
the flower –

Love,
a lover,
a long, slow
linger of light?

The Fallen

A growing number of wildflower species are on the edge of extinction – according to The Vascular Plant Red Data List 2005, nine native species have been lost within the British Isles.

Here lies Ghost Orchid;
once haunted Beechwoods –
rest in peace.

Here lies Small Bur-parsley;
legion pot-herb of wastelands –
rest in peace.

Here lies Alpine Bladder-fern;
crossiers lost from damp highland rocks –
rest in peace.

Here lies Cottonweed;
assieged from Britain's beaches –
rest in peace.

Here lies Purple Spurge;
eternally procumbent –
rest in peace.

Here lies Marsh Fleawort;
ditched from fens, unrecorded –
rest in peace.

Here lies Downy Hemp-nettle;
the deceased passed unremarked from fields –
rest in peace.

Here lies Summer Lady's-tresses;
style totally outmoded –
rest in peace.

Here lies Lamb's Succory;
succumbed to high-yield wheat –
rest in peace.

And with each plant, its embedded companions,
the Unknown Biota lost to steady human pressure –
may your souls also rest in peace.

The Future Gazes Back

After Anthony Gormley's 'Amazonian Field', an installation comprising approx 24,000 figures, exhibited at The Royal Academy, 2010

They creep through the Palladian
door-cases, nudging our giant feet;

I daren't bend and touch –
after all this *is* Art, and the attendant is wary
as a Bloodhound in a manger –

but I imagine dank clay
(that strange way a corpse feels).

With limbless forms, they seem ready-
shrouded, as if buried upright in their thousands,
the mass production of a late Chinese Emperor –

yet these the funerary statues of our great
grandchildren, if we don't change.

Out of place their folksiness, perhaps,
in the former Senate Room of London University,
its glazed lunettes, painted stucco and *putti*?

Eyes hollowed out, the raw vision
of every manikin makes us want to pocket one,

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adopt him/her as an act of redemption.

Instead we avert our gaze,

degrees of complicity needling our minds

as we stand against the edifice

that's made us who we are –

shades of Bacon, Newton, Hume, Locke,

stories of a world

running out against the clock.

The Longest Day

I crouch in the wet heat
opaque with its furred slick of suds,
(this intimacy of our husbanding
resources), my body stiff
from overwork, ball-bearings
studded on the inside of my brow.
My sigh is involuntary –
I'm wrecked, mind rutted
like an old drovers' track
at Midsummer – these dripping digits
that served to strike the laptop keys,
this head, these naked limbs not
the temple
to which my higher self aspires.
No, I'm the steeplejack stuck on the job;
the paratrooper dangling in Sainte-Mère-Église,
my parachute tangled on the point
where matter yearns for spirit.
I want you to help me, and I call out –
you're a damp, tousled angel
come to soap my neck and back
with strokes that draw me down
to Earth, submerge me in your sea.
I sink below the surface
so that eyes, nose, mouth
are a Pacific island breathing steam.
Beneath I'm a diver rocked

by sounds the foetus makes
trying its lungs inside the womb.

Now I'm nothing
but this steady breathing;
eyes focussed on the white
expanse of ceiling; mind washed
of all the day's dogged drive,
work matters not a jot.

My gaze is long, unflinching –
as air and water slowly
I'm returning.