

Reflection on the River Barle by David King

Looking down from this stone bridge, I see a mono-chromed self-portrait in the stream, laced with strings of water like easy melting candle wax laid flat on glass and here, as if on woven paper glitzed by seeds of the sun, a slow fish has risen to the gloss sheen surface, where mayflies live and die,

and here a surface so smooth, so clear, it is no surface at all, just the place where air and water reflect each other's invisibility and there, it writhes a coil of broken bracelets, necklaces, ten thousand diamonds melting into silver and darkness, crashing a white song in chorus with itself, constantly different

and the same, ten thousand mirrors breaking broken seconds, chill smithereens, snake skin crystal music, old rain reborn each moment, transmuting every kind of wetness, risen mist, fallen condensation dripped from cold branches of cold trees, drenching reeds, hooves of couldn't-care-less cows on tiny beaches,

rushing laughter, soft applause for stencilled light through oak and ash, on sun flashed kingfisher. The river whorls heaped water up and round and over rubble boulders, speaks in tongues, a gabbled language always known and never understood, lucid, indistinct, merged with rook calls above Hawk Ridge, Horse Wood,

Birchcleeve, the toppled confluence at Dane's Brook, Sherdon Water, conjures songs for a Celtic goddess, psalms for green cathedrals, resurrects the hymns of long forgotten saints, derelicts black roots of dying trees, skins the pelts from fallen torsos plush thick with fungus, moss, lichen, carries off the last dry molecule of every spinning leaf,

final bone of kestrel victim. Its purposes include brighting stones, darkening soil, gleaming fish, receiving shadows of bridges, reflecting overhanging limbs, dissolving buzzard calls, numbing to pebble cool the feet of dogs and children, sliding underneath Tarr Steps, midge and dragonfly, washing Exmoor from hands,

from boots, ever being overheard by a hill fort in Burrige Woods, tumbling seeds of flowers to a place of new fertility, nurturing dainty voles for the benefit of owls, ghosting surreptitious lovers, teasing patient fishermen, crumbling ribs of puny hulks, drowning streets when mad storms allow, ferrying death and life toward the sea.