

## Five Mythological Gratitude Odes

### Ode on Returning Home

I

When work is done, thoughts turn to home's warm glow  
Behind me has now closed the office gate  
Bright images shine forth that lift me so  
Familiar smiles of little ones who wait  
    And onward leaps my heart to say  
    To them that I'm well on my way  
And echo back the joyous, radiant cheer  
    Returning is a Treasured Thing  
    That makes my Soul and Spirit sing  
For they to me are infinitely dear.

II

This love must be the fire that warms the tale  
Of he who journeyed far on leaving Troy  
And neither towering wave nor raging gale  
The will to reach his loved ones could destroy  
    Nor could the lulling lotus flower  
    With all its hedonistic power  
Obliterate the thoughts of wife and child  
    Nor could the cyclops rude and strong  
    Nor sirens with their luring song  
Prevent him reaching his beloved isle.

III

Our old savannah tribes would send a band  
Of huntsmen, ranging far in search of prey  
By reading clues laid down by hoof in sand  
To guide them on for days upon their way  
    Until, at length, the prize attained,  
    They yearn to see those who remained  
In camp, awaiting that long hoped for sign:  
    When finally the camp they spy  
    Across the grassland wild and dry  
Their hearts explode for joy, and so does mine.

**Gloom Breaker – an ode on the tale of the heart-healing power of the songs of the birds of  
Rhiannon**

I

At dim-lit dawn on Platform 1 in sombre throng  
we stand forlorn in flat, sense-numb routine  
until from trackside trees bright breaks the redbreast song:  
clear, lucent water in a crystal stream  
We tend to think that we'll not hear  
such music at this time of year  
yet chiffchaff, thrush and finch brave Winter's squall  
Untensing, in my mental eye  
I spread my wings; I rise and fly  
upon the soothing sound set free, and then recall

II

how Branwen's hope lay likewise in her feathered friend  
as she in miniature set down her news:  
'Come soon! I, Queen of Eire am by brute force detained  
Your sister, Bran, they torture and abuse'  
She ring-wise rolls her chosen words  
and gently takes the docile bird's  
frail form and round a tiny leg she ties  
the note. A kiss, to wish it well  
then through the window of her cell  
releases it and skyward, swift the starling flies

III

It lands, it sings, they read, they sail, but sail in vain:  
A fire claims her child – she can't but grieve  
and though Bran's fleet a wood had seemed upon the main  
Just queen and seven soldiers live to leave  
Eleven leagues from their departure  
Branwen dies of broken heart.  
So on in gravest grief the Seven sail  
Yet, over the ensuing years  
they're healed in Harlech, through their tears  
like me - by bird and bard: sweet song and well-wrought tale.

### **An Ode to Herbs**

I

For aromatic oils in herbs and shrubs  
Let thanks rise to the gods, from whence they fell  
When one but holds the leaves and gently rubs  
There issues forth a mystic, fragrant smell  
    The living plants will ornament  
        A tended garden plot  
The plants will then provide yet further gifts  
    For sprigs of these ingredients  
    When added to the cooking pot  
        The taste uplifts

II

Hellenic folk in golden ages old  
These perfumes of the plants sought to explain  
With stories down the generations told  
Of how such shrubs some pretty nymph contain  
    How when Apollo yearned to kiss  
        Sweet Daphne, she, forlorn  
With all speed did attempt to run away  
    Then saving metamorphosis  
    The pretty maiden did transform  
        To odorous bay

III

O Sage! O Thyme! O Rosemary! I praise  
Your power to boost our health, our pain to ease  
Our memory to strengthen, moods to raise  
Our sense of sight and smell and taste to please  
It must have been when we first burnt  
Dry incense, or with mint  
We first less pleasant tastes and smells disguised  
That we, now that at last we'd learnt  
To add a subtle herbal hint  
Were civilised

### **Ode to a Car Key**

I

O fine, faff-free and labour-saving key  
That lets me lock and unlock, with one press,  
The car remotely and most easily  
For you my heart now fills with thankfulness  
Let's say it's raining and one stands  
With luggage in both hands  
It's been a busy day and one is tired  
How glad one feels to then recall  
A single button press is all  
That is required!

II

Hephaestus for the gods with rarest skill  
Did many a shining bronze device design  
Some tool that leapt to action at their will  
Performing tasks befitting lives divine:  
Their gold cars pulled by brazen steed  
Through air at such a speed  
As lighting that precedes the thunder's rumble  
We feel ourselves to be their kin  
When gracefully we enter in  
Without a fumble

III

So unimpeded in the car I climb  
And like a king upon a throne I sit  
And cruise the country lanes in state sublime  
Like Bacchus in his magic vine-filled ship  
And as my homeward way I wend  
I know at journey's end  
There waits for me a happy circumstance:  
I'll loose the safety belt and out  
I'll get and walk away without  
A backwards glance.

### **An English Ode**

I

That famous field where nodding poppies sway  
In sunlit grass, where Souls of all the good  
Spend sweet Eternity in dance and play  
And with the gods, take Beauty as their food  
Upon the isle across the sea  
That circles all the mortal world  
With misty waters like a castle moat –  
How like must that famed meadow be  
To these fair fields where late I've strolled  
These hills and lanes, these woods, this very spot!

II

Was it vain pomp or blind naïveté  
That made the folk of ancient Egypt style  
Their image of divine Eternity  
Upon their earthly land astride the Nile?  
Where they might hunt in starry creeks  
Beside the starry waterway  
Or find in starry gardens sweet, cool shade?  
Or likewise made the clan of Greeks  
Use Grecian fields where grasses sway  
As models for their paradisaal glade?

III

But no, let neither supposition stand  
I say, that it was rather that they paid  
The greatest compliment to their dear land  
When seeing Beauty there, "Divine!" they said  
And so to English Summer Time  
Such compliment I wish to pay  
As will the praise of those old pagans match  
The heaven forming in my mind  
The isle to which I'll cross one day  
Has village greens and homes with roofs of thatch.