

Grand Canyon Mules

Mute, infertile, the
Burdens of others
Strapped across your backs,
You labor on in
Heat and dust and thirst,
Insofar as known
Without complaint, though
Perhaps what seems like
Dumb resignation
Is both more and less:
What point in braying
Over a karmic sentence
That admits neither
Appeal nor parole?
Better to focus,
One step at a time,
On climbing out of
This life's abyss of
Pain and penance: *Get*
Out, back to the rim,
The cosmic bondsman
Paid in full for now,
And rest, in sweet hope,
On higher ground.

Under Foreign Skies

Here in a foreign land
I have loved a woman
Of dark hair and sad eyes
With a love I could have
Given to few others.
Yet as I walk these
Foreign beaches and
Listen to the sea
She loves so well,
I can find no single
Star in all the heavens
That will lie to me
And say she shall ever
 be mine.

Belfast, Northern Ireland

Reverie

I remember my inconsolable youth:
Irradiated by loss, fearful of
Spontaneous combustion;
The heart held incommunicado
 against its will.

Election Night, 2008

Forty years gone by,
Forty wasted, wandering years
Since you lay face up,
Glassy-eyed, life ebbing away,
On the greasy floor
Of that hotel pantry –
Our tribune slain, and the stone
At the bottom of the hill.
“Is everyone all right?”,
You asked, dying.
“Is everyone all right?”
Yes, Bobby, yes.
Rest easy. We are all right now.

November 4, 2008

Equatorial Blues

Always beneath the play you write is the play you meant to write; changed but not abandoned and, with luck, not betrayed, but shadowing still the play that has come to be.

Alan Bennett, *Untold Stories*

Substitute 'life' for 'play'
And 'live' for 'write' and,
Ah, there's the rub! Fifty
Years on and still working
On the rewrite. No, not
Abandoned, not betrayed
Outright, but surely the
Steady erosion of
Long-held intention:
Too many roads not taken,
Too many dreams deferred
Or given up whole while
Flecks of aspirated hope,
Life-blood spatter, pock the
Canvass of a doldrummed life.