

THREE POEMS BY WILLIAM BEDFORD

*Journeys*

Waking in my room  
you talk of cafes in Jerusalem  
where we have never travelled  
and stars fail to shine.  
The painting on my ceiling  
is your photograph,  
a naked, blackbird dawn,  
the lake blue as your eyes.

At the border, the guards smile.  
You are moving somewhere  
between my dreams,  
but I cannot remember the town,  
the flat, brown country.  
Your voice reminds,  
your hands explore a still wood,  
cool in the leafed green,

your silence  
is of birds and woodlands.  
Always, we talk of Jerusalem,  
the figures by the lake,  
the small boats tiding into rain.  
Our hands at last are still,  
and our voices enter contentment.  
We are journeys deep inside my room.

## *Forced*

The crops  
 are all displayed,  
 neat, predictable,  
 achieving an almost natural green.  
 The heat, even,  
 is arranged.  
 Rain is of no consequence.

But at night,  
 bereft of company,  
 the plants voice their anger,  
 a thin  
 chorus of wailing,  
 beating against the glass.

## *End of Season*

When I arrive, this end of season silence  
 holds me,  
 like the walls containing tides,  
 a tall exposure of melancholy.  
 All morning, I search among shadows,  
 the eyeless shops, the green stare of shutters,  
 the streets winding into water.  
 Blind with a fine sand,  
 October lurches towards me,  
 a sandcrab pincer motion, chased by a circling dog.

The event, as always, escapes description.  
 I see your smile,  
 ghosting a desolate seashore,  
 the dog and gull chased hours leading to the sea,  
 the misery of half remembered memories.

What's left of pain lingers in the eyes,  
and the sea empties into sky,  
draining a tired emotion.  
Enormous, the past surrounds me,  
like a graveyard of summer's laughter.

Yet the town is not prepared for my questions.

    Wrapped in bright colours,  
tarted by paint and lighting, it heaves  
reluctantly into winter, ignoring the summer's end  
in a brief, electric charade.  
For a month, the old are welcome,  
and the sick, led by their nurses, staring at the promenade.  
Cheap rates and fog for October,  
and a wind, cutting to the heart,  
reminding them of things they had forgotten.

In chairs, they move towards silence.

    Their smiles are rehearsed,  
their eyes dulled with expectation,  
their hands, gripping and relaxing.  
Alone, or travelling in pairs,  
they trundle bleakly through the morning,  
all laughter exaggeration,  
their voices wavering in the air.  
As usual, the town is prepared,  
and sweeps them gaily into battalions,

cheap rates and empty hotels.

    Going by me,  
they ignore my stare, indifferent  
as the shells and your memory.  
The event, as always, escapes description,  
and I pincer, like the sandcrab, into silence,  
turning from the mournful shores.  
To this, our love will take us,  
the knowledge that loneliness clarifies,  
the escape from loss into tedium.