

ARTHUR HENRY KING

I WILL MAKE THEE A TERROR TO THYSELF (JER. XX:4)

I have made endeavour to serve thee, Lord,
and yet thy servant —
this thy child —
is apprehensive at thy majesty.
Under the blue of day I bow to glory,
acknowledging in gratitude here goodness,
there beauty,
and sometimes the two glancing together;
but, as I drive at night between high mountains
(their summits lost in looming cloud)
or along the edge of a black-aviced lake
(whose unknown depth I hope not accidentally to plumb);
or watch an improbable sea smash up at an impossible cliff;
or even round the zoo (observing
the tiger yawn, the elephant put his foot down,
the octopus tentative, the spider leap,
the fifteen-foot hamadryad
— caught on the Singapore golf-course by coolies who thought
him a python —
lunge at the reinforced glass);
or as I await at the clinic, on someone close to me,
a specialist's careful conclusion —
I feel the general terror.

Love beyond, above, and beneath us may
appall us because it exceeds our measure.
Love that creates and includes the predator should
startle us into reconsideration.
Permit us to allow thee
to love and make what thou wilt,
to exercise thine own free agency!

Help me to sense
neither sheer terror nor mere beauty
but both one grace and strength winging the bird of awe
to soar in the courts of thy sublimity.

Aid me to relegate ignoble fear
to the land of that so-called prince of darkness
(for thou art the king of thy deep night
as of thy light, O Christ) —
that pseudo-Lucifer,
who aspired above the aristocracy
and fell to acting the gentleman.

In the last analysis,
fright turns out to be a kind of
giddiness at the precipices of our own inadequacy,
appears to stalk through
and spring from
our own inner landscape.

It is not what thou has made,
but what we make of ourselves as an interim measure
(for terror can fill any interval
before the apparent ultimate;
And yet that medial 'time'
can be 'redeemed' from acrophobia):
an interim measure,
a ring of faltering steps
to widen horizons,
reveal peaks further and higher,
open gulfs deeper for thy love to fill:
briefly, to free us from that cozy world
where, each Saturday night,
Father winds the grandfather clock,
then switches off the light,
to release the reign of terror,
the rule of uncomprehended love.

Enable us, therefore, to realize
that we shall continue to render Pan some
breath of involuntary worship,
until we come nearer to understanding
and, yes, matching
thy love.