

Leaving the Island

Isles of Scilly

Wind. Rushing through the twisting
streets of St. Mary's, buffeting
the low stone houses closed in
on themselves, banging on shutters,
blowing our words away until all
was gesture, touch, and pantomime.
Circumnavigating the island,
we watched it beat the headlands
like a blacksmith's hammer, heard
buoys past the lighthouse ringing madly,
like church bells on a Sunday morning.
Bodging-forth, we followed ourselves
up and down hills without handholds
to Pulpit Rock. There, without warning,
we stepped into a windbreak and the wind
stopped. All was silent and moving,
a moving landscape of sea battering rock.
Islands, imagined and real—some new
and shining, others like old broken coins—
stretched like stepping stones far out
into the Atlantic, each to be charted by us,
the work of two lives laid out like a map.
Sight was that clear, but only for a moment.
Later, were the black-backed gulls circling
the runway at the airport laughing
or crying as we prepared for take-off?
I'd lost my sunglasses scaling those hills.

Undisturbed, would they look out for me
forever from some high prospect?
How easily our small plane ascended,
the island pulling away, leaving us
feeling regret mixed strangely
with elation, the smoking waves below
moving in slow motion as we returned
to the familiar, to what we would become.

Fragment: White Rose

The sun-drenched beetle with a rainbow on its back,
splayed and luxuriating on the wide white petal—
is that what our life could be?

Us, arms outstretched,
prone and petalled on a pillowed world?

Starved and drowning, I am kneeling now
to gather white petals the wind has scattered.