

The Road to Bedford Gaol

Timelessly you park your car in the shortening shadow of Shevington's Saxon steeple. The pristine diamanté of the sparkling frost chills the silent limestone houses as tiny birds bob about their breakfasts in crannied litter.

The dissolving market cross passes you abeam as you amble down the rough hewn buttressed wall which retains the consecrated dead. The naked branches of a flanking copse blur shifting shapes in the warming Vernal sunlight on the slippery puddled slope.

In the laneside thickets throstles essay their aubade auguries and relent to audit our footfall.

I slide to stumble and you reach out to save me. I am glad you are here. Could I, like Winthrop, leap to storm-swept rocks to try conclusions with sharing savages in a wilderness, or like Penn find the courage to offer the open hand of equity to such as they? Or might I like Prynne mock the bigot's brand or keep with Fox dark oblivion shin-deep in excrement? No.

For whilst birds can love without question, men must trust despite appearances, or lie the aesthete skeptic mis-shriven and alone in the congress of the churchyard.

I am a flock animal. You are my companion.

The dark and viscid vortices of the distant silty river charm with defied lethality and nocturnal immersions a faithful vigil, freezing sanctuary alike to fallen men and floating fowl.

The matutinal mists afar discover a flock of waders slowly strutting with stilted deliberation through the steeping willowed meadow. All scale is lost in backlit haze as you define coots, or maybe water-hen, white-capped and black-pinioned in their guarding fen.

Yet already the younger game have gained the flood-plain's berm and pause on rising ground to scan bedappled; piebald apparitions like milling magpies, stately yet furtive.

John slouches up this slight acclivity from the misty Ouse ayonder. The bonneted women pass with murine discretion as he pauses at Bridget's sacred spring where the sweet, refractive waters have ever slaked the blind. His next bridewell will give him inner sight, and you and I a masterpiece.

All are soaked but do not shiver. John says "hedges have eyes" and the spies of Star Chamber peer unseen from every cleft and covert in the aging fabric of the landscape.

Seeker, you came to search for John, yet God's Grace is but the Precursor as I am a mere pursuivant. John's words garland the world, following the counsel of his beloved Hero. John is a tinker by trade and waits at the

wayside for that Carpenter, for they build an innovation. We remain to plow the pregnant plains, wait on our Lord, and hope for laurels in heaven.

The many-striped blazon of a new republic takes life amongst us and we are content.

For Shevington is Everywhere and Nowhere, the Calvary of All Men, and we are yet to reach the Cross.