

Gerald Dawe

POINTS WEST



Gallery Books

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for Dorothea

The Bay Tree

in memory of Peter and Christabel Bielenberg

The time the bees were swarming
in the eave-runs of the front attic
looking out to the mountain
'under the sun' and we came back

a year later, in late summer again,
and the bees were dusty thistledown
on the ledges and on the carpet
and even on the books about the war

stacked in nonchalant rows
and on the writing desk next to an old
clothes horse and a lopsided mirror
that had come through it all . . .

So I thought I should let you know
the bay tree from your garden
rustles here still, in the shade,
just within hearing.

Mayo Mantra

Your midwife aunt's *Lanco* watch is going again,
taken from the days and nights she travelled
the length and breadth of Gloucester,
between war and peace, cultivating a market garden,
and her Englishman, in his army uniform,
astride a camel no less, by the Pyramids,
before the return home for more years than
she cares to remember — the weekly shop,
the spin, come summer, to Lacken or Ross;
the fire set through dirty old winter.



As we skirt the Moy, 'Many's the time and oft',
at that particular turn in the road
the river can be low, the ridge pool sunken,
not that far out from the estuary, the woods and castle,
I see you in your father's boat, the salmon
jump so high they take your breath away.

View of the Island

On the island I decided
I didn't really like
I lay beside you one night
and listened to the ebbless tide
pull and drag me through the silent
corridors and empty lawns,
across the stacked sun-beds,
the tidy pool, till panic set in.

*What if the sea really can take you
over to the harbour and beyond
to the boats night fishing?*

A pod of light moves in the darkness
as one man or another
casts his nets upon
the steady water
and keeps going, further and further,
to where I can only see,
through billowing curtains,
in the garish villas
at the edge of a cliff,
a glimpse of life.

Shadows criss-cross
in the other hotel
and a light flicks on or off
as someone mooches about
sleepless and agitated
by this tidal surge
of a night sea journey
that closes on the incomplete
silence of pampas grass
swaying at the ocean's side

where you walked
in the afternoon heat.

Now swaying in and out
of sleep this airless night
are the same pictures called
to your mind as to mine —
like the perilous pine forest road
we drove up around
to the shaley mountain top —
and what about this tide
turning over and over
at the back of my mind?

In your own place, I bet,
the light is slowly breaking.
Sea birds trail the last man in;
souls' awakening.