

## The nightingale's place

So follow me now to a land you've long forgotten, somewhere close to home - a place unnoticed, passing through the strange dead space between then and here. Something must be wrong to forget a place where such joy and peace surrounded both of us. Follow me please - look around you. Simply tell me if you see anything that is not dead - just one free natural thing in this lost place. It took a lifetime for you to come so please follow me. Above us stood a tree recently diseased and cut down - its span embraced the air - captured each gust of wind before it shook them loose; it loved to feel confusion running through its hands. Remember how you'd love to rest, your skin ripened by the sun, and then would let the shade slowly cross to cool you down - by those old fertilizer bags where lines of wheat now grow perfectly in rows and you can see a haze of toxins. I believe there used to be a rose growing there. A burnet rose, and birds, absent now from this place, and thorns piercing the leaves - old man's beard tangled on the hedge. Some-one cleared away the mess - I believe these were the words describing how the trees were left - torn apart to rot here on the land. A nightingale sang near here, you said. Remember how we sat down in the dead Silence, then hoped to hear the song. None emerged but as we stayed we found a strand of quiet then heard a thrush give a sweet elegy that seemed to mark the things we didn't know would soon be gone. A blackbird came down next with its own song. The nightingale though had long since fled departing once it knew life would disappear. Rarely do you see anything here; perhaps a crow or rook passing by. Perhaps a mouse, if you look carefully in the dead grass, or there might be a pigeon in the air on its way to the wood beyond the hill - nothing more - just fragments. Over there, beside the bend

I entered on my hands and knees  
crawling through the moss and ferns - trees  
above me - hazel - thorn. You saw a way  
beneath the stems and made me squeeze  
between the roots to come to a place  
immersed in life. We stopped a while  
- listened. Nothing at first but then a smile  
opened on your face and we heard  
creation rise it seemed; over there it was - that space  
beside the ditch and fence; just there - yes

I'm sorry now to see you here  
I didn't think it was this bad  
I didn't know you'd feel so sad  
again. Sorry. I guess I should have known  
Everything living here has long since gone  
The only thing we have  
... is your song