

NOTES FROM BENIDORM

- *Micael Norberg*

Konsthall323
Stockholm

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"I LONG", SHE WROTE

"I HAVE A LONGING
BECAUSE THE PAST
ALMOST ALWAYS
ADDRESSES AN ILLUSION

AS MAGIC IS ALL I HAVE"

AND LONGING
IS A PROMISE

OF SOMETHING ELSE

AND AS I SAID
I DREAM

BECAUSE THEN
I ARRIVE HERE
AGAIN IN MY MIND
I AM BACK AT THE TOP
OF A MOUNTAIN

I WALKED ALL THE WAY BACK
AND NOW I HAVE PAIN

PAINFUL

I HAVE BEEN WALKING
GAZING AT THE STARS

IN ONE WAY
IN ONE PERSPECTIVE
LOOKING FOR CONSTELLATIONS

AND I SUPPOSE
I AM LIKE MOST PEOPLE
I STUMBLE THROUGH LIFE
COPING WITH THE DARKER SIDE
OF REALITY
THROUGH SOME MIXTURE
OF IGNORANCE
INDIFFERENCE
AND AVOIDANCE
MY FATHER PROBABLY DID THE SAME
BUT WITH A CIGARETTE IN HIS HAND

SO I WISH
I WISH I HAD CONTINUED SMOKING
JUST
SO I COULD HAVE LOOKED
MORE ELEGANT

FOR A MOMENT

AND FOR A MOMENT
MY FATHER AND SYLVIA
SHARED THE SAME NIGHT SKY
THE SAME VIEW
OVER THE MEDITERRANEAN SEA

BECAUSE IN BENIDORM.
THEY LOOKED AT THE SAME SUN
THE SAME STARS

A KIND OF ASTRONOMY

A STUDY OF THE SUN
MOON, STARS
PLANETS, COMETS
GAS GALAXIES, DUST
AND OTHER NON-EARTHLY BODIES

MAYBE THE SAME THING AS SYLVIA DID
WHEN DESCRIBING "THE BELL JAR" TO HER MOTHER?

SYLVIA SAID TO HER MOTHER:

"WHAT I'VE DONE
IS TO THROW TOGETHER EVENTS
FROM MY OWN LIFE
FICTIONALISING TO ADD COLOUR
– IT'S A POTBOILER REALLY
I'VE TRIED TO PICTURE MY WORLD
AND THE PEOPLE
IN IT AS SEEN THROUGH
THE DISTORTING LENS
OF A BELL JAR."

AND LIKE ESTHER'S LIFE
MY FATHER'S LIFE
AS IN "THE BELL JAR"
SLIDE
SLIDES
OUT OF CONTROL

OR AT LEAST
HE LIVED HIS LIFE
IN A PARALLEL UNIVERSE

BUT
JUST BECAUSE IT WAS
A PARALLEL UNIVERSE
IT DID NOT MEAN
IT WAS OUT OF CONTROL

IT WAS JUST DIFFERENT

SHE WROTE :

“SO I’VE TRIED TO PICTURE MY WORLD
AND THE PEOPLE IN IT WITH WORDS
MAYBE HURTING MYSELF IN THE PROCESS

BECAUSE I CAN FEEL THE WORDS IN MY BODY
WORDS ARE PHYSICAL
AND THEY HURT MY SKIN
THEY HURT MY BODY
I TASTE THEM

WHEN MAGIC IS ALL I HAVE”

SO IN MY MIND
YOU WERE CONSTANTLY JUMPING
JUMPING ON STONES
TO CROSS

CROSSOVERS

RIVERS

AND YOU SAW THE RIVER
AND THE STONES
AS SEEN THROUGH THE DISTORTING LENS OF A BELL JAR

YOU WERE DRESSED IN WHITE
ALWAYS GETTING YOUR LOAFERS WET

"I HAD BEEN UP" SHE WROTE:

"IN THE EARLY HOURS OF THE NIGHT
I HAD BEEN CLIMBING.
MOVING MY FEET.
MOVING MY BODY.
MOVING MY LUGGAGE
EARLY IN THE NIGHT
FROM THE VILLAGE OF FINESTRAT
I HAD MOVED MYSELF
BEFORE THE SUN
WOULD RISE

AS MAGIC WAS ALL I HAD"

SO I DID THE SAME
I STARTED WALKING FROM FINESTRAT
LATE IN THE NIGHT.
FROM THE LITTLE VILLAGE
AT THE EDGE
AT THE RIM
OF A MOUNTAIN

A LITTLE VILLAGE WITH ANCIENT MONUMENTS
PIECES FROM A HISTORICAL PUZZLE

THE NIGHT AIR WAS COLD
AND I COULD SMELL THE NIGHT DARKNESS

DUSK
GLOOM
OBSCURITY

I COULD ALSO SMELL THE DUST
FROM LIGHT BROWN CLOUDS
MY FEET WERE MAKING
ON THE DRY PATH.

THE MOUNTAIN PATH WAS STEEP
AND THE HARD STONES WERE HURTING
I WAS WARM ,
EVEN IF IT WAS EARLY
EARLY MORNING

I HAD TO START WALKING
EARLY IN THE MORNING
TO REACH THE SUMMIT IN TIME
OR RATHER LATE IN THE NIGHT

BECAUSE
IT IS ALL ABOUT PERSPECTIVES
FROM WHO'S EYES YOU LOOK AT THINGS
AND BECAUSE ANOTHER OPTION
WOULD HAVE BEEN TO STAY THE NIGHT
AT TOP OF THE MOUNTAIN

AT A TOP
AT THE TOP

AWAITING THE SUNRISE

I NEEDED TO BE AT THE TOP
WITH THE SUNRISE
I NEEDED TO FIND A LIGHT.

SO WHILE I WALK THIS PATH
UP
AND UP AGAIN
TRYING TO FIND THE MORNING LIGHT
TRYING TO GET
A GLIMPSE OF
BLAZING YELLOW,
TAN AND LIGHT-GREEN FIELDS
UNDER A BLUE-WHITE SKY AND
GREEN-BLACK PINE TREES
I THINK ABOUT MY FATHER

AND I THINK ABOUT
SYLVIA PLATH AND TED HUGHES
THEY GOT MARRIED ON JUNE 16TH, 1956
THEY SPENT THAT SUMMER
IN AND AROUND BENIDORM.

BENIDORM WAS SOMETHING ELSE
BENIDORM IS SOMETHING ELSE

AND I HEARD THAT GILES TREMLETT SAID
THAT BENIDORM IS THE BIRTHPLACE OF PACKAGE TOURISM
AND HE REMARKED THAT CULTURALLY THE CITY
CONTRADICTED CONSERVATIVE NOTIONS OF NATIONAL CATHOLICISM
THAT GENERAL FRANCO HAD ESPOUSED

ESPOUSED
JUST AS SYLVIA AND TED

AND MY FATHER
BEING ANOTHER PART

CONSORTS
MATES
PARTNERS
SIGNIFICANT OTHERS
SOUL MATES

AND IN THAT MESS
IT IS STRANGE
IN THIS MENAGE A TROIS
HOW EVERYONE HAD FORGOTTEN
WHAT SPAIN WAS
UNDER A BLUE-WHITE SKY
AND GREEN-BLACK PINE TREES

HUMAN MEMORY SPAN SEEMS ALWAYS
TO BE VERY SHORT.

AND AS USUALLY

YES
SELF MEDICATION,
IN BETWEEN DRINKS
HELPS

SO WITH A VERY SHORT MEMORY SPAN
I COME TO THINK OF THAT IN 1974,
MR. FRANCO HAD SALVADOR PUIG ANTICH
GARROTTED
IN CÁRCEL MODELO, BARCELONA.

AT GARROTTING
THE CONDEMNED MAN IS STRAPPED TO A CHAIR
A IRON RING IS STRAPPED AROUND THE NECK
AND SLOWLY DRAWN TO THE TIP OF A SCREW
WHILE A METAL PLUNGER OR WOODEN TIP
IS PUSHED INTO THE NECK
IT IS A PAINFUL DEATH

AND AT THE SAME TIME
MY FATHER SAT ON THE HOTEL BALCONY
IN ONE OF THE MANY HOTELS ON COSTA BLANCA
IN A SLOW DEATH
WITH A CIGARETTE IN ONE HAND
AND A DRINK IN THE OTHER
HUMAN MEMORY SPAN
ALWAYS SEEMS TO BE VERY SHORT
AND WE DO OUR BEST TO REMEMBER
THAT IT IS A PAINFUL DEATH

AND YOU CAN ALWAYS SELF MEDICATE
WHEN YOU FACE PROBLEMS
BIGGER THEN YOURSELF

SO I CONTINUE TO WALK
AND THINK ABOUT SYLVIA AND TED
AND I THINK ABOUT MY FATHER

THE PARTNER
THE SIGNIFICANT OTHER
SOUL MATE
AS THE HUMAN MEMORY SPAN IS SHORT
AND SELF MEDICATION HELPS

SO THERE YOU ARE
IN THE DARKNESS
AND THE MEDITERRANEAN SEA IS BLUE
AND MY MEMORY FULL OF GHOSTS AND DEATH
AND I START TO SEE THINGS WHILE I WALK IN DARKNESS
I IMAGINE THINGS
BECOMING CONFUSED

CONFUSED
BETWEEN PERCEPTION AND IMAGINATION
AND PAINFUL DEATHS

IT IS LIKE CLIMBING A TREE
AND REALISE THAT GOING
UP IT'S EASY
CAUSE EVERYTHING IS IN FRONT OF YOU
SO OF COURSE YOU THINK ABOUT DEATH

BECAUSE
THAT IS THE ONLY THING YOU KNOW
YOU WILL HAVE IN FRONT OF YOU
EVENTUALLY
IN THE COURSE OF TIME
ONE DAY
SOMEDAY
SOONER OR LATER

SO WHILE MY FATHER SMOKED CIGARETTES
ON A BALCONY ON COSTA BRAVA
I HAD A SLOW WALK IN THE DARKNESS.
I NAVIGATED THE PATH WITH MY HEADLIGHT

AND AFTER HOURS OF WALKING
SOONER OR LATER
I HAVE ARRIVED

AT THE MOUNTAIN TOP WERE ROLAND,
ONE OF CHARLEMAGNE'S PALADINS
ONCE HAD BEEN STANDING
WATCHING THE LANDSCAPE AND THE SEA
IN FRONT OF HIM

WHILE FIGHTING THE MOORS IN THE AREA
ROLAND HAD FALLEN IN LOVE WITH A LOCAL GIRL
CALLED ALDA
THEIR LOVE DIDN'T LAST LONG
BECAUSE ONE DAY ROLAND LEARNED THAT THE GIRL
WAS CURSE
AND SHE WOULD DIE WHEN THE LAST RAY OF SUN
WOULD TOUCH
HER SKIN.

AND NOW I AM DOING THE SAME
AS I HAVE DIED TO MANY TIMES THIS LAST YEAR

"I WOULD BE WAITING" SHE WROTE,

"I WOULD BE WAITING
IN PATIENCE
ON A MOUNTAIN TOP
WAIT FOR A MOMENT
IN A MOMENT OF SILENCE
I WOULD WAIT
IN A MOMENT OF DARKNESS
I WOULD BE ALDA FOR A MOMENT
WAITING

AS MAGIC IS ALL I HAVE"

SO IF I LOOK TO THE EAST
TO SEE IF I CAN SPOT AN ORANGE LINE OF FIRE
THE LINE OF FIRE
THE SWITCH FROM DARK TO LIGHT

A SLOW PROCESS.
AND I WONDER
HOW SOMETHING THAT IS SLOW
CAN BE SO FAST?

I WANTED THE FIRST RAY OF SUN
TO TOUCH MY SKIN.
THAT IS WHY I AM HERE

I STILL WAIT AROUND
I WAIT
BECAUSE IT IS NOT MY TIME YET.
AND BECAUSE THE SUN IS UP
AND I LOOK TO THE SOUTH
AND I AM NOT BLIND
I CAN SEE AND I CAN FEEL
I CAN SEE FAR
I CAN SEE
THE EARTHS CURVE AT THE HORIZON

LOOKING TO THE SOUTH
I SEE THE MEDITERRANEAN SEA
AND A SKYLINE

BENIDORM

AS THERE ARE FOUR POSITIONS OF THE BODY
LYING DOWN
SITTING
STANDING
AND WALKING

SO I HAVE THE SAME BODY POSTURE
WITH MY LEFT LEG POSED IN-FRONT OF ME
MY LEFT ARM LEANING ON THE RAISED LEG
LEANING MY BODY ON MY RIGHT LEG
AS "THE WANDERER ABOVE THE MISTS"

A POSTURE
AND IN THAT POSTURE
I HAVE MY EYES AT THE HORIZON
AT THE SKYLINE
I SEE COLOURS

YELLOW AND LIGHT-GREEN FIELDS
UNDER A BLUE-WHITE SKY
AND GREEN-BLACK PINE TREES

AND I LOOK AGAIN
AT ONE OF THE PHOTOGRAPHS I FOUND
I HAVE THE PHOTOGRAPH IN MY HAND
I CARRY THEM WITH ME
I COMPARE THEM WITH MY OWN LINE OF SIGHT
PHOTOS TAKEN SOMETIME
SOMEWHERE
ON THE WAY UP OR DOWN

ON ONE OF THE UP'S
OR DOWNERS

AND I CAN NEVER UNDERSTAND
HOW YOU MANAGED TO WALK
WITH YOUR LOW THIN
CROMWELL LOAFERS

SHOES
THAT WAS NOT MADE FOR WALKING

SO I LOOK AT YOUR SHOES IN THE PHOTO

AN IMAGE OF TIME,
A KEEPSAKE FOR POSTERITY
A GHOST TO BE SAVED
AND KEPT FOR ME TO MEET
TO TOUCH
AND THE COLOURS FADES

AS YOU ALWAYS TRAVELLED
TO ALL KIND OF PLACES
AND I DON'T THINK YOU HATED SPAIN
YOU LOVED SPAIN
AND YOUR CIGARETTES

A SAFE PLACE
FREE
FROM

AND

SHE WROTE:

“I WATCHED THE COLOURS
BLAZING YELLOW
TAN AND LIGHT-GREEN FIELDS
UNDER A BLUE-WHITE SKY
AND MY EYES LINGERS
IN THOSE SHADOWS OF DARKNESS
IN THE SHADOWS
OF GREEN AND BLACK PINE TREES
I THOUGHT ABOUT GOYA AND HIS THREE GOBLINS
I SEE HIS GOBLINS
PREENING AND POSTURING
GOBLINS IN VAIN ACTIVITIES
PREVIOUSLY THOUGHT
FOR MAN ALONE
AND I REALISE I AM A PART
I AM A CHUNK
I AM A COMPONENT
A DETAIL
AN ELEMENT AND A FACTOR

AS MAGIC IS ALL I HAVE”

“IN THIS MOMENT” SHE WROTE

“IN THIS DARKNESS
AND AT THIS PLACE I HAD TO WAIT
WAIT FOR THE LIGHT
I WAS WAITING FOR A LIGHT
THE LIGHT TO HAVE FINISHED ITS TRAVEL
A TRAVEL FROM THE SUN.
A TRAVEL THROUGH SPACE
LIKE A ROCKET
LIKE A STRAIGHT PENCIL LINE
A THIN LINE THROUGH VACUUM
LIKE A SWORD
LIKE A KNIFE
I WAS WAITING
FOR SOMETHING SHARP

AS MAGIC WAS ALL I HAD”

SHE WROTE

“I THOUGHT
IF THE SUN SUDDENLY STOPPED
AND ITS JOURNEY ENDED
IF THE SUN CLOSED ITS EYES
AND DISAPPEARED FROM OUR VIEW
IT WOULD CLOSE ITS EYES
IN SILENCE
MUTE AND WORDLESS.

AS MAGIC WAS ALL IT HAD“

“IT WOULD TAKE EXACTLY EIGHT MINUTES” SHE WROTE

“EIGHT MINUTES BEFORE
I COULD SEE NOTHING
BEFORE I WOULD FEEL
THE LONG TENTACLES
THE LONG ARMS
THE FEELERS
AND THE COLD
SOMETHING SHARP WOULD AGAIN SLICE ME
AS MAGIC WAS ALL I HAVE”

SHE WROTE:

“BUT ON THE OTHER HAND
IF I WOULD STARE DIRECTLY AT THE SUN
I WOULD GO BLIND
FALL INTO DARKNESS
FALL, FALLING, FELL
COLLAPSING, DESCENDING, PLUNGING AND SLIDING
TUMBLING
I WOULD FEEL THE COLD OF DARKNESS AGAIN
AGAINST MY SKIN SOMETHING SHARP
IT WOULD SLICE TROUGH ME
AND I WOULD
I WOULD BE DREAMING ABOUT YELLOW ORANGES AGAIN
I WOULD HEAR
I WOULD STILL HEAR THE SOUNDS
THE TUMBLE AND BUMBLE
I WOULD HEAR THE BUMBLE BEES
ON FLOWERING SHRUBS
AND ESPARTO GRASS,

AS MAGIC WAS ALL I HAD”

“SO FROM THE TOP OF THE MOUNTAIN” SHE WROTE,

”I WATCH THE ROOFTOPS OF BENIDORM
I LET MY EYES LINGER ON
HOTEL BALI
THE MORNING LIGHT
BOUNCING
UP, DOWN AND AWAY
I SAW THE MORNING LIGHT GLITTER
IN A TURQUOISE SEA
AN ABSURD COLOUR
A COLOUR FAR AWAY IN ANOTHER GALAXY
I LOOK AT THE MEDITERRANEAN SEA
IN THE MORNING GLOW

AS MAGIC WAS ALL I HAD”

AND AS I SAID
HAVE YOU EVER CLIMBED A TREE ?
AND REALISED WHILE GOING UP IT'S EASY
CAUSE EVERYTHING IS IN FRONT OF YOU?
BUT WHILE CLIMBING DOWN
IT IS TRICKY
BECAUSE SUDDENLY
YOU HAVE TO FEEL WHERE THE BRANCHES ARE
BELOW YOU

SO I WALK DOWN FROM PUIG CAMPANA
WITH MY EYES ON BENIDORM
FEELING WHERE THE BRANCHES ARE
IT SHOULD TAKE ABOUT THREE HOURS AND FORTY-ONE MINUTES
FOLLOWING THE SMALL DIRT TRACKS DOWN
THE SAME WAY DOWN AS UP

I WILL PASS FINESTRAT
AND AFTER THAT THE ROAD IS RELATIVELY EVEN
THE SUN IS RAISING FAST AND I FEEL THE HEAT
I ENJOY
IT IS A NEW DAY
AS A PHOTOGRAPH
IT HAS A PROMISE
MY FATHER ALSO WALKED THIS PATH
AND I PASS HIS SAND DUNES
IT IS HOT AND MY BODY FEELS YOUNG AND STRONG
BECAUSE I AM STILL ALIVE IN THIS WORLD
AND LONGING
IS A PROMISE OF SOMETHING ELSE

AS I SAID
I ALSO DREAM

SHE WROTE

“I SHIELD MY EYES AGAINST THE MORNING SUN
I LOOK DOWN IN THE VALLEY
SPOTTING GLITTERING GEMS
SMALL SPARKS OF LIGHTS
BETWEEN
THE TALL BUILDINGS OF BENIDORM
I SEE SPARKLING PEARLS
OF SWIMMING POOLS
BETWEEN APARTMENT BLOCKS
APARTMENT BLOCKS
THAT CARRY A COLOUR OF THE DESERT
AND ENGLISH RED
AS A VEIL
A MORNING VEIL
SUN HAZE
I SEE AN IMAGE OF HOT SAND
AND A PROMISE
AND THE SWIMMING POOLS GLITTERS
FAR AWAY IN THE DISTANCE
LIKE A STARRY NIGHT
SWIMMING POOLS
WITH AN ABSURD TURQUOISE COLOUR
SWIMMING POOLS
REMINDING ME OF A BIGGER SPLASH
SWIMMING POOLS
THAT WILL MAKE ME WET
WITH CHLORINE FILLED WATER DROPS

AS MAGIC IS ALL I HAVE”

SO I FOUND YOUR PHOTOGRAPHS IN A DRAWER
WHEN I WAS CLEANING YOUR HOUSE
ONE PHOTO I CALL
"THE DESERT MAN"
BECAUSE YOU ARE STANDING ON A SAND DUNE
WITH YOUR LEFT LEG POSED IN-FRONT OF YOU
YOUR LEFT ARM LEANING ON THE RAISED LEG
LEANING YOUR BODY ON YOUR RIGHT LEG
MAYBE HERE OR SOMEWHERE AT COSTA BLANCA
AMONG EVEN MORE STONES
BUT EVEN SMALLER ONES
MOUNTAINS OF DUST
BY TIME

MAYBE SYLVIA TOOK THIS PHOTOGRAPH?
SOMEBODY MUST HAVE POINTED THE CAMERA
BEING THE EYES THAT WAS SEEING
LOOKING AT MY FATHER

IT COULD HAVE BEEN ANYONE
SHARING THE SAME PATH
AND THE SAME BOTTLE,
PASSING EACH OTHER BY THE SAND DUNES
AS THEY PASSED A BOTTLE
BETWEEN EACH OTHER
ONE THEIR WAY UP OR DOWN

ALL OF THESE PHOTOGRAPHS HAVE A LONGING
BECAUSE THE PAST
INHABITS THEM
AND BY SO
ALMOST ALWAYS ADDRESSES AN ILLUSION
AND BECAUSE LONGING
IS A PROMISE OF SOMETHING ELSE

SO I THINK OF GAUDÍ WHILE I WALK
NOT ON HIS ARCHITECTURE
THOUGH IT MIGHT BE HARD NOT TO DO SO
SO COMPLETELY TRUTHFUL I'M NOT
SOME LITTLE TWISTED SPIRE
OR AMORPHOUS SHAPE PROBABLY SLIPS INTO MY MIND.
NO, I USUALLY THINK ABOUT HOW HE DIED

"AND AT THE LEVANTE CLUB APARTMENTS" SHE WROTE,

"I SEE THEY HAVE AN APARTMENT BLOCK CALLED GAUDÍ
AND I THOUGHT OF ANTONI GAUDÍ
HE LOOKED LIKE A TRAMP WHEN HE DIED
I THOUGHT ABOUT HIS DEATH WHILE WALKING
AND THAT NO ONE WOULD KNOW
WHO GOT HIT BY A TRAM IN BENIDORM
SO WITH MY MIND ON SOME LITTLE TWISTED SPIRE
OR AMORPHOUS SHAPE
I THINK OF ANTONI,

AS MAGIC IS ALL I HAVE"

IT IS ABOUT ELEVEN THIRTY
WHEN I ARRIVE AT ESTACIÓN DE BENIDORM
THE TRAM STATION ON CTRA. ESTACIÓ
I HAVE BEEN WALKING ALL MORNING
THE WALK DOWN PUIG CAMPANA
HAS BEEN WALK
A WALK WITH GOOD INTENTIONS
AND THE ALICANTE TRAM
HAS ITS ORIGIN IN THE RAILWAY LINE
THAT LINKED ALICANTE TO DENIA IN 1915

THE RED LINE WILL TAKE YOU
TO AND FROM BENIDORM FROM ALICANTE
THE SAME TRAM SYLVIA PLATH TOOK IN 1956
FROM ALICANTE TO BENIDORM

SYLVIA WRITES HOME IN A LETTER TO HER MOTHER:
“THE COLOURS WE SAW FROM THE TRAIN WINDOW
ALL THE WAY DOWN
WERE BRIGHTER THAN I THOUGHT POSSIBLE

... BLAZING YELLOW, TAN AND LIGHT-GREEN FIELDS
UNDER A BLUE-WHITE SKY, GREEN-BLACK PINE TREES,

WHITE ADOBE HOUSES WITH ORANGE TILE ROOFS”

SO WITH ONE FOOT AFTER THE OTHER
I CONTINUE TO WALK
AMONG BLAZING YELLOW
TAN AND LIGHT-GREEN FIELDS
UNDER A BLUE-WHITE SKY

AS THERE ARE FOUR POSITIONS OF THE BODY
LYING DOWN
SITTING
STANDING
AND WALKING

AND I AM WALKING

I AM ON MY WAY TO CALLE DE TOMÁS ORTUÑO, 59
AND THE HOUSE WERE SYLVIA AND TED LIVED IN THE SUMMER OF 1956

I WALK AV. COMMUNITAT VALENCIA
THE MAIN STREET THAT CUTS THROUGH THE CENTRE OF BENIDORM

THE STREET
THAT IS THE PLACE TO BE,
WERE THE “KM DANCE CLUB”
SUPER-CLUB IS SITUATED
AND “PENELOPE’S”
THE SECOND BIGGEST CLUB IN BENIDORM
THE VENUE SEES NIGHT AFTER NIGHT OF PACKED-OUT ROOMS
GLITTER RAVES
AND GLOW STICK PARTIES

I WALK AV. ESPERANTO
A FAVOURITE SPOT WITH THE SPANISH
AND THE THE CLUBS ON AV. MALLORCA AND AV. LEPANTO
WHERE THE BRITISH FEEL AT HOME
WERE
WHEN THE NIGHT PROGRESSES INTO THE EARLY HOURS
HIGH SPIRITS CONTINUE IN BLAZING YELLOW
TAN AND LIGHT-GREEN FIELDS
UNDER A BLUE-WHITE SKY
IN THE BIG DISCOS ON THE OUTSKIRTS OF THE TOWN
ON THE ALTEA ROAD

BUT FOR ME IT IS MORNING

AND FOR ME WALKING
IS A REGULAR ANTI-ANXIETY PILL
I HAVE OTHER GLITTER RAVES AND GLOW STICK PARTIES

AS I WALK THE AV. COMMUNITAT VALENCIA
IN THE SAME PACE
MY FATHER WAS DOWNING DRINKS ON COSTA BLANCA

AND WHILE I WALK THROUGH THE STREET
I MEET PEOPLE ON THEIR WAY HOME
NIGHT PEOPLE
ON THEIR WAY HOME TO DREAM

THEY TRY TO DREAM IN BED
I TRY TO DREAM AWAKE
BECAUSE
BENIDORM IS DOMINATED
AND TRANSFORMED
TO SOMETHING ELSE
BY SOMEONE ELSE
TRANSFORMED
TO NEED
GREED AND DESIRE
NEON NIGHT LIGHT
AND THE SPANISH SUN

BLAZING YELLOW
TAN AND LIGHT-GREEN FIELDS
AND
A BLUE-WHITE SKY

AND I AM BAREFOOT
JUST SO I CAN FEEL

AND TO REMEMBERED THE POSTCARDS
I GOT FROM MY FATHER

POSTCARDS FROM BENIDORM
POSTCARDS FROM EXOTIC PLACES
LINES OF WORDS
IN ANGULAR, RUGGED LETTERS
HE ALWAYS WROTE IN CAPITALS
AND I FOUND A PHOTOGRAPH
OF A MAN LIGHTING A CIGARETTE
THE MAN IN THE PHOTOGRAPH
LOOKED JUST LIKE DYLAN THOMAS
SO WITH A SENSE OF SELF-RELIANCE
MY FATHER WAS CONSTANTLY ABSENT
AS HE SPENT TIME WITH SYLVIA AND TED BY THE POOL

“... A SWIMMING POOL BESIDE A MODERN HOUSE
DISTURBED BY A LARGE SPLASH OF WATER
CREATED BY AN UNSEEN FIGURE
WHO HAS APPARENTLY JUST JUMPED
IN FROM A DIVING BOARD”

WITH A SENSE OF SELF-RELIANCE
MY MOTHER KICKED HIM OUT
AND I ENDED UP ALONE
WITH A FULL-TIME WORKING SINGLE MOTHER
I SOMETIMES WONDER IF MY MOTHER
JUST USED MY FATHER FOR HER OWN NEEDS
WITH A SENSE OF SELF-RELIANCE

I DON'T THINK SHE WAS INTERESTED IN MEN
I WAS HER ONLY CHILD
AND WITH THAT
MY MOTHER NEVER TALKED ABOUT MY FATHER

SO EARLY ON IN MY MIND I HAD AN IDEA OF MY FATHER
LIKE PLATO WROTE IN THE REPUBLIC
“PLATO SAID THAT ART IMITATES THE OBJECTS
AND EVENTS OF ORDINARY LIFE
IN OTHER WORDS
A WORK OF ART IS A COPY OF A COPY OF A FORM.
IT IS EVEN MORE OF AN ILLUSION
THAN IS ORDINARY EXPERIENCE
ON THIS THEORY,
WORKS OF ART ARE AT BEST ENTERTAINMENT,
AND AT WORST A DANGEROUS DELUSION”

SO BASED ON AN IDEA
I TRIED TO FIND MY FATHER
AMONG
BLAZING YELLOW, TAN AND LIGHT-GREEN FIELDS
UNDER A BLUE-WHITE SKY
AND GREEN-BLACK PINE TREES
AND FADED PHOTOGRAPHS
AND I FOUND HIM
BY THE POOL
TOGETHER WITH SYLVIA AND TED
AND
AS MY FATHER WAS HANDED
A GIN AND TONIC BY SYLVIA
THEY SHARED
THE SAME TIME AND SPACE

AS THEIR FINGERS TOUCHED
JUST FOR A MOMENT

WHEN HE DIED
HIS SMALL HERCULE POIROT MUSTACHE
WAS STILL YELLOW
FROM ALL OF HIS CIGARETTES

I REALISE
THAT WE ALL
HAVE YELLOW FINGERS
AND A TERMINAL DIAGNOSIS OF SOME SORT

SO I HAVE TO WALK IN CIRCLES
UP AND DOWN AV. COMMUNITAT VALENCIA
AS I FORGOT WHAT
AND WHO I WANTED TO BE
I RAN
AND I ENDED UP
WALKING
WALKING IN A ROUND-ABOUT
AROUND AND
AROUND AGAIN
WALKING AIMLESSLY
AWAY
AWAY
WITH HIGH APARTMENT BLOCKS
SHADOWING ME

I AM ON MY WAY TO THE HOUSE ON CALLE DE TOMÁS ORTUÑO, 59
AND IN THESE SHADOWS
I THINK ABOUT INTENTIONS, PERCEPTION AND INJUSTICES
I THINK OF MIRROR-IMAGES AND REFLECTIONS
I TRY TO CHANGE MY DIRECTION OF THOUGHTS
I THINK ABOUT SYLVIA
AND AMONG BLAZING YELLOW
TAN AND LIGHT-GREEN FIELDS UNDER A BLUE-WHITE SKY
AND I FIND SYLVIA
LIKE THE LEFTOVERS FROM MY FATHER
LIKE FADED PHOTOGRAPHS IN A DRAWER

LEFTOVERS
AND STUFF THAT ARE PASSED ON
BECAUSE THERE IS ALWAYS A BEFORE
AND AN AFTER
AND A NOW
AS THE PAST ALMOST ALWAYS ADDRESSES AN ILLUSION
AND BECAUSE LONGING
IS A PROMISE OF SOMETHING ELSE
AND A PROMISE IS

AS USUALLY
WHEN YOU ASKED FOR SOMEBODY
TO BELIEVE IN YOU
AND WHEN NOBODY DID
IN BLAZING YELLOW
TAN AND LIGHT-GREEN FIELDS UNDER A BLUE-WHITE SKY
YOU LOST IT

LOST
YOU LOOKED AT THE SEA WITH YOUR BLUE EYES
AND THEN WENT BACK TO YOUR GIN AND TONIC
BECAUSE YOUR BRAIN WAS BUZZING

THE BUZZ
THE TUMBLE
THE BUMBLE

“I BEGAN TO THINK VODKA WAS MY DRINK AT LAST
IT DIDN’T TASTE LIKE ANYTHING
BUT IT WENT STRAIGHT DOWN
INTO MY STOMACH LIKE A SWORD SWALLOWERS’ SWORD
AND MADE ME FEEL POWERFUL AND GODLIKE.”
WORDS SYLVIA WROTE IN “THE BELL JAR”
MY FATHER’S WORDS
WORDS THAT HE KEPT CLOSE TO HIS HART

WITH ANXIETY AND FEAR
BENIDORM IS ONE WAY
BENIDORM
WITH IT'S BORDERLESS FREEDOM
OF ALL DEMANDS

BENIDORM
THE IMAGINARY
WITH ALL ITS POSSIBILITIES

ESCAPISM
PURE ESSENCE

YOU DRANK IT,
YOU INHALED IT

YOU DID NOT HATE SPAIN,
AS TED WROTE YEARS LATER

SHE WROTE:

“AND AS MAGIC IS ALL I HAVE

I CONTINUED WALKING

WALKING AWAY

AGAIN AND AGAIN.

TURNING A BLIND EYE

LISTLESS

DROWSY AND DULL

LACKADAISICAL AND LOST

WITH A CURTAIN

A BLINDER

BLINDFOLDED AND CAMOUFLAGED

I AM CLOAKED AND COVERED

MASKED

I WALK AIMLESSLY

DIRECTING MY SELF

POINTING MYSELF TO THE PLAZA DE TOROS

WITH SIX BULLS FROM SALAMANCA

I SEE THE “MATADORES”

THE ”PICADORES”

AND THE ”BANDERILLEROS”

I SEE AN AUDIENCE WANTING BLOOD ON THE GOOD FRIDAY

AND AGAIN AS A FLASH

THE ”ESTOCADA” IN MY HEAD

I WALK AWAY

AS MAGIC IS ALL I HAVE”

SO AT LAST ARRIVE AT CALLE DE TOMÁS ORTUÑO 59

CALLE DE TOMÁS ORTUÑO

A QUITE PEDESTRIAN STREET THESE DAYS

IF YOU WALK TO YOUR LEFT FROM WERE I STAND

YOU WILL EVENTUALLY END UP ON AV. DE LOS ALMENDROS

IF YOU WALK TO THE RIGHT

YOU WILL END UP ON AV. DE RUZAFÁ

AMONG BLAZING YELLOW

TAN AND LIGHT-GREEN FIELDS UNDER A BLUE-WHITE SKY

IN SILENCE

I STAND

IN SILENCE

IN FRONT OF THEIR OLD HOUSE

AND IMAGINE

I IMAGINE LIKE THERE IS NO TOMORROW

I UNDERSTAND IT IS ALL INTERCONNECTED

FROM THIS TIME TO ANOTHER

PERSON TO PERSON

SKYLINE TO HORIZON

THESE DAYS THE HOUSE WERE SYLVIA AND TED LIVED

IS A SEAFOOD RESTAURANT CALLED "FREIDURIA"

THEY SERVE "PULPO", "MEJILLONES"

"SEPIA", "FRITURA DE PESCADO"

AND "BOCCADILLOS"

I WATCH THE LITTLE TWO FLOOR HOUSE
THINKING ON ALL THE THINGS
THAT HAS HAPPENED SINCE 1956
FOR SYLVIA AND MY FATHER

AND AS THIS LITTLE BLEAK HOUSE
IS SURROUNDED
BY HIGH APARTMENT BLOCKS
I POINT MY NOSE TOWARDS THE SEA.
BEING AN ASTRONOMER AGAIN
THINKING OF GALAXIES, FAR, FAR AWAY

AND I LEAVE AGAIN
AND I RUN AGAIN
AS WE EVENTUALLY ALL HAVE TO LEAVE

I START TO WALK
DOWN CALLE DE TOMÁS ORTUÑO

I WALK SLOWLY
AS BENIDORM IS A CONSTRUCTION
TO SAVE US FROM OUR FEARS
THAT HAS BEEN THE PLAN SINCE THE SUMMER OF 1956
WHEN SYLVIA AND TED WALKED THE SAME STREETS

STREETS
THAT MAY OR MAY HAVE NOT CHANGED THEIR NAME
BECAUSE I HAVE HEARD THEY SAY
THAT BENIDORM, IS NOT A CITY OF PIAZZAS
BUT A CITY OF POOLS

HUNDREDS OF POOLS
SIT IN BETWEEN HIGH APARTMENT BLOCKS AND HOTELS
THEY MAKE UP THE VAST MAJORITY OF SHARED SOCIAL SPACE
AND ALL THESE SWIMMING POOLS BETWEEN APARTMENT BLOCKS
HAVE AN ABSURD TURQUOISE COLOUR
THEY REMIND ME OF THE PAINTING
"A BIGGER SPLASH" BY DAVID HOCKNEY
DEPICTING A SWIMMING POOL
"BESIDE A MODERN HOUSE, DISTURBED BY A LARGE SPLASH OF WATER
CREATED BY AN UNSEEN FIGURE WHO HAS APPARENTLY
JUST JUMPED IN FROM A DIVING BOARD"

AND I SEE MY FATHER SITTING
BESIDE ONE OF THE POOLS
WITH A GLASS OF VODKA IN HIS HAND

JUST BEFORE
TAKING A DIVE INTO THE POOL

THE POOL OFFERED THEM POSSIBILITIES
AND TO LEARN THE DIFFICULT ART
OF SPLASHING WATER OUT OF A POOL
SHOWING OFF AND DOING NOTHING
A DIVE INTO THE VOID.
A JUMP INTO THE VOID
INTO ONE OF BENIDORM'S
MANY SWIMMING POOLS

SHE WROTE:

"SO IF I COULD PAINT
I WOULD PAINT
WITH BLUE AND A TOUCH OF TURQUOISE
LIKE THE SWIMMING POOLS
LIKE A BIGGER SPLASH
I WOULD PAINT THE COLOUR
THAT HAVE BEEN FOLLOWING ME THROUGH MY DAY.
FOLLOWED ME LIKE A LOST LONELY DOG
BUT I AM NOT A PAINTER
I DON'T SPEAK THE LANGUAGE
I DON'T OWN A BRUSH
OR HAVE ANY OTHER MEANS
OF MAKING MYSELF UNDERSTOOD
I CAN ONLY WALK
SO I START TO WALK
WITH MY EYES ON THESE GLITTERING GEMS
BECAUSE ONCE YOU SHINE A LIGHT ON SOMETHING
YOU CAN'T THEN UN SEE IT
I HAVE A GLITTERING TOUCH OF TURQUOISE IN MY EYES
AS MAGIC IS ALL I HAVE"

SO I TURN MY FACE AWAY
I POINT MY EYES TO THE SEA
AND IN A BLAZING YELLOW, TAN AND LIGHT-GREEN
UNDER A BLUE-WHITE SKY
I SEE
A COLOURFUL GLITTERING POSTCARD
OF NEON LIGHTS AND GLITTERING STARS
LIKE ONE OF THE POSTCARDS FROM MY FATHER
“...DEPICTING A SWIMMING POOL
BESIDE A MODERN HOUSE,
DISTURBED BY A LARGE SPLASH OF WATER
CREATED BY AN UNSEEN FIGURE
WHO HAS APPARENTLY JUST JUMPED IN
FROM A DIVING BOARD”
PICTURES OF SWIMMING POOLS
WITH PROMISES FOR SOMETHING ELSE

AND THROUGH MY STUDY OF THE SUN, MOON, STARS,
PLANETS, COMETS, GAS, GALAXIES, GAS, DUST AND OTHER
NON-EARTHLY BODIES AND PHENOMENA
I HAVE FOUND A NEW PLANET
A PLANET I CAN WALK ON
WALKING AWAY
SEARCHING FOR MEANING
THROUGH NARROW STREETS OF THE OLD TOWN

AND PEOPLE ARE EVERYWHERE AROUND ME
TO MANY BODIES
BODIES ARE TOUCHING MY SKIN
ALL OF THEM PASS TO CLOSE TO ME
IN BRIGHT TIGHT SUMMER DRESSES
WHILE I AM WEARING WHITE,
AND LOW THIN CROMWELL LOAFERS

SHE WROTE:

“I SEE BLOND GIRLS

IN BIKINIS TOO SMALL FOR THEIR BODIES

EXPOSING FLESH.

I SEE BIG FAT MEN

IN SMALL COLOURFUL SHORTS

EXPOSING FLESH

FOREIGNERS WITH A TURQUOISE BACKDROP

AS MAGIC IS ALL I HAVE”

AND THERE AT LAST
AT THE END OF THE OLD TOWN
I SEE IT THROUGH SMALL ALLEYS
WHAT SYLVIA WROTE IN HER LETTERS
“...THE BLAZE OF BLUE SEA, A CLEAN CURVE OF BEACH
I FELT INSTINCTIVELY WITH TED THAT THIS WAS OUR PLACE.”

I HAVE ARRIVED
AT AN END

AN ENDPOINT OF MY WALK
AT THE END OF A STRAIGHT LINE
A TRAVEL FROM THE SUN.
A TRAVEL THROUGH SPACE
LIKE A ROCKET
LIKE A STRAIGHT PENCIL LINE
A THIN LINE THROUGH VACUUM
LIKE A SWORD
LIKE A KNIFE

I HAVE ARRIVED AT THE “THE BALCON DEL MEDITERRANEO”
SITUATED ON TOP OF THE ROCK
SEPARATING THE TWO BEACHES OF BENIDORM
LEVANTE AND PONIENTE

I LOOK AT THE SEA
YOU LOOKED AT THE SEA
AN ESCAPE
A CURE FOR MELANCHOLY AND MANIA.

AND I CAN LOOK BACK AND IMAGINE YOU NOW
STANDING
JUST HERE
AT THIS PRECISE SPOT
THE OLD FADED PHOTOGRAPHS
HELPS ME TO REMEMBER
I LOOK AT THE BLUE SEA
WITH YOUR EYES
AS SEEN THROUGH THE DISTORTING LENS OF A BELL JAR
AND LOOK AT WHAT JAMES JOYCE DESCRIBED
AS SNOT-GREEN
THIS THING OF BRILLIANT TURQUOISES
WHITISH GREENS
THROUGH ULTRAMARINE NAVY BLUES
TO DISHWATER GREYS
AND MUCKY BROWNS

SHE WROTE:

“THEY SAY WE LIVE IN THE AGE OF REASON
BUT WHEREVER I TURN
I SEE AND HEAR
WHAT GOYA WOULD HAVE SAID
IS THE POWER OF IGNORANCE
CALL IT FAKE NEWS OR ALTERNATIVE FACTS
GOYA HAVE NICELY PICTURED THIS FOR US
WITH TWO PERSONIFICATIONS OF STUPIDITY
STRANGE FIGURES WITH DONKEY HEADS
OH THESE DEAR SYMBOLS OF IGNORANCE
SO I TURN MY BACK TO THE TWO BENIDORM
ONE FOR THE WEALTHY
ON THE PONIENTE BEACH, WHERE INTEMPO STANDS
AND ONE FOR THE LESS WELL-OFF
ON THE LEVANTE
AND I WALK, AIMING MYSELF AT THE SUNSET
THINKING ON THE BEGGARS OF BENIDORM
AND WITH PAINFUL FEET CRACKED BY ANXIETY AND FEAR
FEARING LANGUAGE IS IMPOSSIBLE
AND COBBLESTONES ARE MOUNTAINS PEBBLES
HITTING
BEATING
CLUBBING
PUNISHING, SLAMMING, SLAPPING
SMACKING, THUMPING, WHACKING
AND SLOWLY WHIPPING MY TIRED TOES
I AM BLIND FOR PINK GLITTER,
BRIGHT PLASTIC TOYS
AND TURQUOISE WATER, AS MAGIC IS ALL I HAVE”

SHE WROTE:

“IT WILL HUNT ME DOWN AND DEVOUR MY SOUL
IF I DON’T LEAVE
BEFORE THE LAST RAY OF LIGHT
HITS PUIG CAMPANA
AND I
JUST LIKE ALDA
WOULD DIE AFTER SUNSET
SO IN THESE TIMES
WHEN REASON SEEMS TO HAVE BEEN LOST
I DESPERATELY TRY TO FIND A WAY
A WAY TO BEAT
BYPASS, CIRCUMVENT
AND DODGE
GET AROUND
SIDESTEP, SKIRT
AVOID, DUCK, ELUDE
AND ESCAPE
AS WELL AS DISREGARD
MY ANXIETY AND FEAR,
AS MAGIC IS ALL I HAVE”

SO I TURN MY BACK TO THE SEA
AND THE COLOURS OF THE MEDITERRANEAN SEA.
I HAVE MY EYES ON TWO HORIZONS
I HAVE MY EYES ON TWO LANDSCAPES
AND I LEAVE BENIDORM
THE TOWN THAT MR. FRANCISCO FRANCO HUGELY APPROVED OF
FORGET THE PROVENANCE
IT'S NO MORE WICKED THAN A VOLKSWAGEN CAR
THE OFF-THE-MAP VILLAGE THAT ZARAGOZA TURNED
INTO AN ENTERPRISE THAT CHANGED A NATION
CHANGED MY FATHER

I WALK AWAY FROM THE SEA SIDE
I WILL CREATE ANOTHER STRAIGHT LINE FROM HERE ON
I HAVE THE LEVANTE BEACH ON MY RIGHT
I WILL LOOK FOR AV. DE EUROPA
STRETCHING ALL THE WAY UP
TO ALL THE BIG HIGHWAYS AND JUNCTIONS TO THE REST OF SPAIN.
WHEN I WALK AV. DE EUROPA I WILL HAVE L'ILLA DE BENIDORM
RIGHT IN MY BACK,
LIKE A LIGHT HOUSE

I REMEMBER
THE LIGHTS
SHINING ON ME FROM THE TOP OF PUIG CAMPANA
EARLY THIS MORNING
LIGHTS REPRESENTING PEOPLE RETURNING FROM
A NIGHT IN THE SHADOWLAND OF WHAT IS CALLED HAVING FUN
SO I TRY TO SORT MY EMOTIONS
PERCEPTION AND IMAGINATION
WITH CHAIRS ON YOUR HEAD
YOU ARE ALL READY TO MEET THE TOPSY-TURVY WORLD
WHERE NORMAL RELATIONS ARE INVERTED

LET GO OF SENSES
LET IT ALL GO
I LET IT ALL GO
I WILL WALK AWAY,
THINKING OF SYLVIA PLATH
THE BELL JAR,
MY FATHER
AND ON DEATH

SYLVIA PLATH KILLED HERSELF IN 1963

A NURSE WAS SCHEDULED TO ARRIVE THAT MORNING OF FEBRUARY 11,
TO CHECK ON HER AND HELP WITH THE CHILDREN.

NO ONE ANSWERED THE DOOR, SO WITH THE HELP OF A WORKMAN, THEY GOT INTO THE
APARTMENT, WHERE THEY FOUND SYLVIA, WITH HER HEAD IN THE OVEN

IT WAS ESTIMATED THAT SHE HAD PUT HER HEAD IN THE OVEN AND TURNED ON THE GAS AT 4:30
IN THE MORNING

MY FATHER DIED IN 2004

I STILL REMEMBER THE SMELL OF HIS DEAD BODY

"BEING", SHE SAID
"AS BLUE AS A ONE BLUE SEA
I WAIT
CLEARLY
WITH A SLICE OF LEMON
A TOUCH OF
AFTERNOON
AS MAGIC IS ALL I HAVE"

SO I START TO WALK
AND I WILL WALK
ALL THE WAY BACK IN SILENCE
I WILL NOT SAY A WORD
I WILL NOT THINK
AS HAMISH FULTON SAYS:
“A WALK HAS A LIFE OF ITS OWN
AND DOES NOT NEED
TO BE MATERIALISED
INTO A WORK OF ART”

I WILL WALK ALL THE WAY BACK
BACK TO THE TOP
OF THE MOUNTAIN I STARTED FROM THIS MORNING
AND I WILL GET PAINFUL FEET
I WILL BE GAZING AT THE STARS AS I WALK
LOOKING FOR CONSTELLATIONS
AS I HAVE HEARD
THAT IT IS A COMMON RULE IN CLIMBING
THAT MORE PEOPLE DIE COMING DOWN
THAN GOING UP

YOU'RE SPENT GETTING TO THE TOP
YOU GET TIRED, YOU'RE EXHAUSTED

BUT IT WILL BE AN EASY WALK BACK
AS THE REST OF MY LIFE WILL BE
A SLOW WALK
BECAUSE AGAIN
THERE BACK AT THE TOP
I SUPPOSE I AM LIKE MOST PEOPLE
I STUMBLE THROUGH LIFE
COPING WITH THE DARKER SIDE OF REALITY
THROUGH SOME MIXTURE
OF IGNORANCE, INDIFFERENCE
AND AVOIDANCE

AND IN THE END
AT THE END OF MY WALK
I WILL HAVE THE SAME BODY POSTURE
MY LEFT LEG POSED IN-FRONT OF ME
MY LEFT ARM LEANING ON THE RAISED LEG
LEANING MY BODY ON MY RIGHT LEG

AND I WILL

I WILL KEEP WAITING FOR THE RIGHT MOMENT

I WILL CONTINUE TO WAIT FOR THE RIGHT TIME