

ARTHUR HENRY KING

## I WILL MAKE THEE A TERROR TO THYSELF (JER. XX:4)

I have made endeavour to serve thee, Lord,  
and yet thy servant —  
this thy child —  
is apprehensive at thy majesty.  
Under the blue of day I bow to glory,  
acknowledging in gratitude here goodness,  
there beauty,  
and sometimes the two glancing together;  
but, as I drive at night between high mountains  
(their summits lost in looming cloud)  
or along the edge of a black-aviced lake  
(whose unknown depth I hope not accidentally to plumb);  
or watch an improbable sea smash up at an impossible cliff;  
or even round the zoo (observing  
the tiger yawn, the elephant put his foot down,  
the octopus tentative, the spider leap,  
the fifteen-foot hamadryad  
— caught on the Singapore golf-course by coolies who thought  
him a python —  
lunge at the reinforced glass);  
or as I await at the clinic, on someone close to me,  
a specialist's careful conclusion —  
I feel the general terror.

Love beyond, above, and beneath us may  
appall us because it exceeds our measure.  
Love that creates and includes the predator should  
startle us into reconsideration.  
Permit us to allow thee  
to love and make what thou wilt,  
to exercise thine own free agency!

Help me to sense  
neither sheer terror nor mere beauty  
but both one grace and strength winging the bird of awe  
to soar in the courts of thy sublimity.

Aid me to relegate ignoble fear  
to the land of that so-called prince of darkness  
(for thou art the king of thy deep night  
as of thy light, O Christ) —  
that pseudo-Lucifer,  
who aspired above the aristocracy  
and fell to acting the gentleman.

In the last analysis,  
fright turns out to be a kind of  
giddiness at the precipices of our own inadequacy,  
appears to stalk through  
and spring from  
our own inner landscape.

It is not what thou has made,  
but what we make of ourselves as an interim measure  
(for terror can fill any interval  
before the apparent ultimate;  
And yet that medial 'time'  
can be 'redeemed' from acrophobia):  
an interim measure,  
a ring of faltering steps  
to widen horizons,  
reveal peaks further and higher,  
open gulfs deeper for thy love to fill:  
briefly, to free us from that cozy world  
where, each Saturday night,  
Father winds the grandfather clock,  
then switches off the light,  
to release the reign of terror,  
the rule of uncomprehended love.  
Enable us, therefore, to realize  
that we shall continue to render Pan some  
breath of involuntary worship,  
until we come nearer to understanding  
and, yes, matching  
thy love.