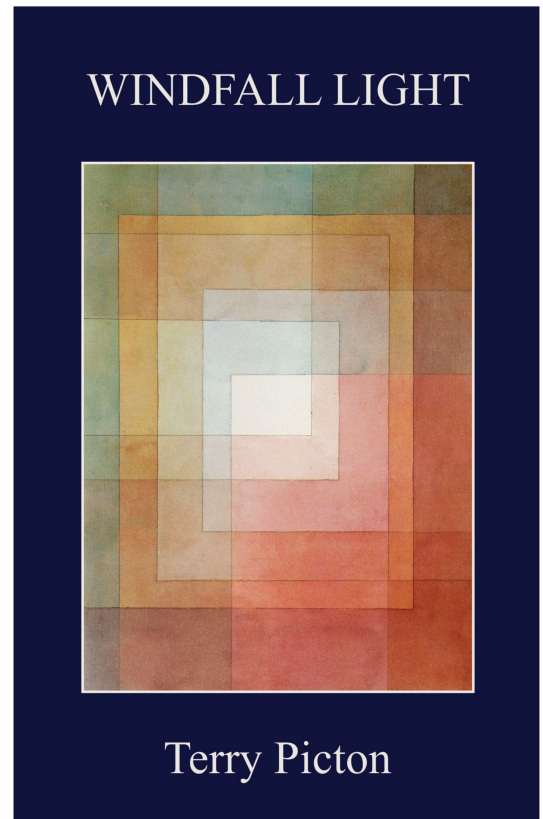


Windfall Light



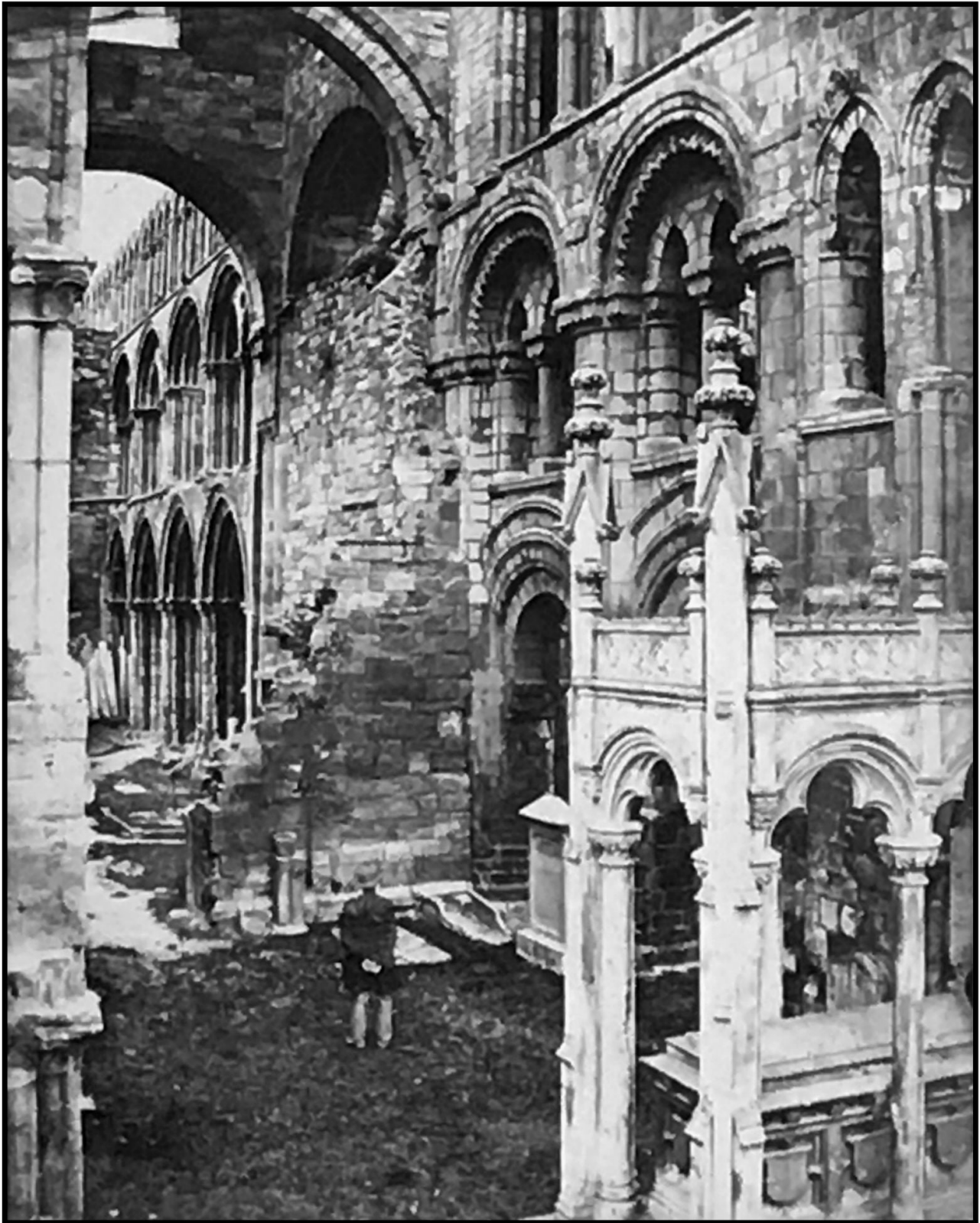
Windfall Light is an old man's self-indulgence: a small book of poems written over the course of my life. The cover shows a painting by Paul Klee. The title comes from a poem by Dylan Thomas. Most of the poems are formal in style, although the rhymes are as often slant as regular. This post presents three poems from the book.

This poem is about a mother comforting her child

Hush

A mother picks
Up her fussy child
And slowly rocks
From side to side
Gently jogging
Up and down
Thrice each swing
Above the ground
Lightly patting
Baby's back
With a descant
Melody
That finds a meter
For the why
And resolves the need
To cry.

The following poem is about a photogravure of the ruins of Jedburgh Abbey (below). One can see through the photographer the outline of the grave before which he stands.



Francis Frith at Jedburgh

In the early days of photography,
and ever since, to catch a light that's low

or change a sparkle into sheen,
the exposure of the film was very slow,
and in this passing time the photographer
could come into the field of view
and wait unmoving for a while, before
covering the lens to start anew.

The walking-in and walking-out were all
too fast to cause a lasting trace
upon the film, but the standing still
would leave upon the record of the place
a clear, faint outline of the person,
through whose quiet transparency
the ruined abbey, in all its undone
truthfulness, we now can see.

The roof is open to the sky, the walls
arrayed in sunlight, a grassy floor
now covers the crumbled tiles,
and through the camera's open door
the old light of graves and broken stone
takes through time a gentle passage
through the fading record of the man
who caught himself within his image.

The following sonnet is about the meeting in Emmaus after the
crucifixion between two disciples and someone who they thought
was Jesus (*Luke 24:13-32*)

Emmaus

I am not the one who died upon the cross –
You really do not recognize me.
That easy way to remedy your loss
Is just what your sorrow wants to see.

Look not for miracles to stop your grief –
Death is not followed by resurrection,
And mystery is not solved by false belief.
You heard him clearly say that “It is done.”
We should simply remember what he taught:
I fill with wine our glasses to the brim
And new bread now break for us to eat;
Blessed be our life, though it be far too short.
And if you truly would remember him,
Love each and every one that you will meet.

If you wish to obtain a physical copy of this book, I can send you one for 10 CAD (mainly to cover mailing costs) if you give me your mailing address. Payment can be made through an **Interac e-Transfer** to terry.picton@gmail.com. If **Interac** is not possible, please contact me to suggest some other method of payment. Or if you would like a pdf copy of the book, just send me your email address.

Short Day with Sound

As I stated in my pre-Christmas post about *On this Short Day of Frost and Sun*, I have made a copy of the file with embedded sounds. For each of the poems, there is a recitation, often by the author of the poem. While inserting the soundfiles, I also corrected a few typographical errors in the original pdf.

The resultant pdf file is very large – 588 MB. Because of its size it is only available on my google drive:

On this Short Day of Frost and Sun Text and Sound version 1.0

I have not been able to download the file on my phone, and I think that it would too complicated to operate on a phone or a simple tablet. It should be downloaded onto a computer. Your browser may complain that the file is too large to check for viruses, but that you can "download anyway." There are no viruses in the file.

Once you have downloaded the file to your computer, it should be opened using Adobe Acrobat Reader (free to download.) If the file is opened in other pdf-reading programs, the file will either be rejected as too large, or the sound files won't work. For example, Google may automatically try to read the file using its Google-Doc programs but this will not work.

In order to listen to the embedded sound files, you must set up the Adobe Reader to play multimedia files. To do this follow these steps:

Edit > Preferences (bottom) > Multimedia & 3D (in menu)> tick box for Enable Playing of Multimedia & 3D content (topmost box).

Like its soundless cousin, the file is best viewed using a full-screen two-page viewing mode. To set this up in Adobe follow these steps:

View > Page Display > Two Page View

This is a screen-shot of what it looks like when it works.

Judith
Anderson

Divinely Superfluous Beauty

The storm-dances of gulls, the barking game of seals,
Over and under the ocean...
Divinely superfluous beauty
Rules the games, presides over destinies, makes trees grow
And hills tower, waves fall.
The incredible beauty of joy
Starts with fire the joining of lips, O let our loves too
Be joined, there is not a maiden
Bums and thirsts for love
More than my blood for you, by the shore of seals while the wings
Weave like a web in the air
Divinely superfluous beauty.

Robinson Jeffers, 1924

Auden

Musée des Beaux Arts

About suffering they were never wrong,
The old Masters: how well they understood
Its human position: how it takes place
While someone else is eating or opening a window or just walking dully along;
How, when the aged are reverently, passionately waiting
For the miraculous birth, there always must be
Children who did not specially want it to happen, skating
On a pond at the edge of the wood:
They never forget
That even the dreadful martyrdom must run its course
Anyhow in a corner, some untidy spot
Where the dogs go on with their doggy life and the torturer's horse
Scratches its innocent behind on a tree.
In Breughel's Icarus, for instance: how everything turns away
Quite leisurely from the disaster; the ploughman may
Have heard the splash, the forsaken cry,
But for him it was not an important failure; the sun shone
As it had to on the white legs disappearing into the green
Water, and the expensive delicate ship that must have seen
Something amazing, a boy falling out of the sky,
Had somewhere to get to and sailed calmly on.

W. H. Auden, 1939

73

Divinely Superfluous Beauty

Robinson Jeffers lived most of his adult life in Carmel, California, where he and a stone-mason built Tor House on Carmel Point. He and his wife Una lived there for the rest of their lives. From the house and the adjacent Hawk Tower, they could watch the waves and listen to the seals.

The poem's rhythm is irregular and there is no rhyme. Long lines alternate with pairs of shorter lines. The final image of the flying seagulls – "while the wings weave like a web in the air divinely superfluous beauty" – sums up the poet's response to nature: there is no need for it to be so beautiful, and yet it is.

Musée des Beaux Arts

Auden and Isherwood visited Brussels at the end of December 1938, just before they emigrated to America. At the *Musée des Beaux Arts*, Auden was struck by the paintings of Pieter Brueghel the Elder.

In this poem he describes details from three of the paintings. *The Massacre of the Innocents* shows Herod's soldiers murdering the babies of Bethlehem, while dogs play and a horse scratches his head against a tree ("behind" sounds better). *The Census at Bethlehem* shows Joseph and Mary arriving at the inn amidst all the activity in a Flemish winter village, such as the children skating on the frozen pond. Finally, in *The Fall of Icarus*, the amazing event of a boy falling out of the sky and disappearing into the water is portrayed as a minor detail in the lower right of the painting. Everything

else goes on as if nothing had happened. This is the message of the poem. Momentous happenings and great disasters occur, but life goes on as if they had not. This response may appear cold and cruel but it is, in fact, an affirmation that human beings will survive come what may.

The poem uses lines of irregular length and variable rhythm. Every line except one ("place") rhymes with another line but there is no definite rhyme scheme. Despite its irregularities, the poem sails calmly on.



73