



This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution 3.0

Patrick Early

Dystopia

A fog-ridden island where all the contours are blurred,
with shaky ground beneath your feet.

The only road leads nowhere.
Those flowers on the shrubs are question marks.

That's a Faulty Hypothesis tree,
branches permanently tangled.

The twisted tree of Misunderstanding
points to a stream called Ah So That's How It Is.

As you press deeper into the wood,
Brambles of Obscurity close in.

No wind. The doubt is stifling.

Your voice has no echo
while unsolved mysteries crowd in.

To the right, there's a cave where Nonsense lounges.
To the left, a lake of Deep Confusion.

Something stirs in its depths but,
rising gaily to the surface,
are lies.

Ignorance reigns over the valley,
spreading illusion from its head.

Despite these attractions, the island is much frequented
and the tiny footprints seen along the shore
all point to the interior.

As though people came here to get away from something
and inevitably were lost.
In life, such things happen.

Flannery O'Connor and Elizabeth Bishop Admired Each Other's Work and Had Never Actually Met. They Talked on the Telephone.

A very nice thing happened last night.
Elizabeth Bishop called me up from Savannah.
She was on a freighter going to Brazil
so she couldn't visit.
The only picture I have seen of E. Bishop
is of a very pretty mature brunette
sitting on an open porch in a rocking chair.
Robert says he has one of her standing
next to a naked Indian woman and the caption says:
"One of the rare photographs of the poet, Miss Bishop".
Lourdes was not as bad as I expected.
Somebody in Paris told me the miracle at Lourdes
is that there are no epidemics.
We went to Europe and I lived through it
but my capacity for staying at home
has now been perfected, sealed
and will last me for the rest of my life.
Elizabeth has sent me a present.
It is an altar with Bible, chalice
and two fat candles in it
a cross above this with a ladder
and the instruments of the crucifixion
hung on it and on the top of the cross a rooster.
It's all wood except the altar cloth
and the rooster and these are of paper
very much to my taste...
It's not a crucifix at all – she just don't know what a crucifix is.

Patrick Early OBE is retired from the British Council, after an overseas career which took him to Morocco, Argentina, Yugoslavia (twice), Spain, Egypt, Sudan and Brazil. He is fluent in French, Spanish, Portuguese, German and Serbo-Croatian, and holds degrees from the universities of Cambridge, Leeds, Essex, and Goldsmith's College, University of London. He has published poetry and reviews of poetry in several British and Irish journals. He spends part of each year in the South West of France.
patrick.early@ymail.com