

The Lake

423 Words

I have often wondered if silence is not the brittle, limpid thing we make it to be. Could it perhaps, instead of crystalline, be inhalative, the pause between breaths of a choirboy – infinitely inevitable, and inevitably finite?

Some places learn silence; others are born with it beating in their chests. The lake is one of the former, or always is to me.

A stream of anxious grandchildren frets endlessly about my moonlit ventures to the water, for it is nothing but a darkened, lonely place to them. Of course, it is the same lake to me, but in truth that is why I come here: for silence, and solitude - but also to feel young again.

For the lake has changed so little since my youth.

Ivory willows weep, faced with their own quiet melancholia; stars gaze down and beseech their pinprick reflections; the surface of the lake – a deep, deep indigo – is rippled by the faintest of breezes, and distorts the moon until she can almost pretend she is the sun; nightbirds flit for a beat across the shifting mirror; the lake – gagged by shadows and chained by earth – is silent but welcoming, like death to the infirm.

Such was the lake then; such is it now.

And by the lake, death is nothing. It is only the last petal of the water lily slipping back into the warmth; the final introduction of mouse to owl; death is nothing but sinking below those waters which you have fought and struggled for so long to stay above, and beneath the waves is only silence. But you are not gone, not departed to some soundproof room, irretrievable, and she is not gone, because death is nothing, nothing, by the lake.

I am an old man now, and prone to amnesia, but a thousand more years would not rob me of the memory of that little boat she used to row, and that little song, whose lyrics I never learnt, which she sung as she pushed the oars.

And the moonlight does not forget either: there are fractures of a graceful silhouette in its glancing reflection – yes, the moonlight remembers.

A bird trills out, but goes unanswered. The still-vivid symphony of her laughter dances across the water to sit beside me, as she once did.

Ah, lake. Will you not have pity on our ghosts? For so soon creeps in the alien light of morning - there is a curve of gold at the horizon.

Soon a newborn sun will rise to claim the sky.