

# EMPTY HANDED

I climbed a mountain today  
to see if words would find me.  
To see if, high above the noise,  
some beautiful thing  
would sit beside me and whisper.

I breathed the clean air;  
felt the same sun on my face  
that lit the red kite's wings;  
heard the first spring lambs  
call across the valley,  
but no words came.

I walked the woods today  
to see if words would find me;  
to see if their soft grace  
would touch my faltering ink  
and guide me to the truth of things.  
A drip fell from above  
spread a circle on the page;  
a woodpecker's tap  
asked questions of dead wood  
a nuthatch, masked and gravity defying,  
descended the trunk beside me,  
but no words came.

And I wondered what it meant  
all this silence and blank pages.  
Had the spring failed me forever,  
or was it just still waking  
from this year's wintering?  
Did I drink too deep, or not enough?  
Did I silence one word too many,  
my inner critic rendering it  
stillborn on the page?  
Would they pass me by now  
to find some, wiser, purer-hearted soul  
who knew less and listened more?

But still the air moves against my skin,  
the sun falls gently on the fells  
and the wild, indifferent to my agendas,  
is still full to the brim.  
I should not force words  
like a miner, violating the earth to  
wrench what is precious to the surface.  
It is enough to wait and listen  
and not grow bitter  
If I leave with less than I brought  
because no words came.

JOHN BIGLANDS