

The Autumn Country

What a time to go back to the Autumn Country,
when the tourist in their vans
are clogging up the lanes
with their slow, happy speculation;
their money transfusing red blood cells
into anaemic villages, their love
unconditional but with no meaningful return.

Like the pink-footed geese they are filling our fields
hoping for more clement weather,
bread of heaven, a drink from an unsullied well.
And here I come, returning empty-handed,
filling my old space for a little while
in this hill-circled vastness, then leaving,
making the emptiness emptier, like a conjurer
of nothing, like all temporary guests.

The harbour is silted: no ships leave, no ships come,
no-one makes salt, digs coal, weaves wool.
There are plans for a spaceport on the moors,
as though salvation must lie anywhere but home.