

FRAMES OF REFERENCE

'Child be strange, dark, true, impure, and dissonant.
Cherish our flame. Our dawn will come.'

– King Penda, in *Penda's Fen*

Nights are the best, stars shining as flames.
Starts as a line of light made from broken dreams
then sparks its way across my vision, resisting

the very precepts previously beyond question.
My guess is that we plunder the planet and
refuse to distinguish between the wild and tamed.

Occupation can be ornamental or eminently practical,
has been widely employed throughout history;
an audio system immerses you in birds warbling

as we attempt to find another handle on the sun,
lose ourselves in shadow's sacred legacy.
Untethered by written documents, we have

little to rely on, are always open to guesswork;
there are disarmingly clever infographics
and dusty exhibits of all our mistakes and lies.

What looks like power sockets and raindrop ripples
are visual poems, the shrieks and moans you hear
the curator's performance work. The broader circle

of language is a footpath crossing neatly mown lawns;
if you look up from the page's horizon and lose yourself
you will find notches and lines, mute stones and works

of collaboration and creativity. The future runs mostly
downhill, skirting the retreating ice, eroding debate
and song. Meaning will not translate into words,

thought has been invested in creation, definitions
of genre and form ride the literary seesaw whilst
our allegiances and attention move elsewhere.

We contradict each other and make way for others,
plant new evidence and scheme. The past blows
this way then that, as frames of reference emerge:

moments of intuitive belonging, strange likenesses
and spectral presences populate the landscape,

offer continuity. The key to now is then.

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