# FROM CULBONE WOOD - IN XANADU notebooks and fantasias 

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I note merely the discord between Somersetshire now and the timelessness of Xanadu's appearance before me. And while I might wish to travel in person to such far flung places, I must be content to versify them into an existence which makes them my own and in which I may dream without too great a repining at not having arrived there.

To reach, even in imagination - Purchas's Xaindu - one must travel through a great deal of mud and much hot, stormy desert. Then on arrival one finds that it is a Paradise presided over by a tyrant. Was this, in Eden, our First Parents' experience?

Between what is here and the place which, in a vision, we have visited, exists a tension. It is through such a stretch, in a stiff-bridged sort of dreaming, that we achieve the difficult, intoxicating juncture we were seeking in our labyrinthine aberration.

In Culbone Wood
A poor Fool stood.
He pitched his mind
In spiced Serinde:
At the court of the Khan
And his pastures of Yuan.
Flowers at his feet
Spread a soft seat.
Above in the oaks
A gay bird spoke:
'O come home, young man
From the court of the Khan.
Your fair Muse waits here
In green Somersetshire.'
The fool heeded this call
In his heart and his soul.
But his mind it ran on
To the East with the sun.
He replied to the bird
'I have heeded your word.
For I live with this scission,
This sore self-division.
I am here and I'm there:
To where I've been lured
And in which I'm immured.
But some better day
I'll forsake far Cathay.
But until that time come
I must live with the sum
Of what I've begun.
Soon enough this will end.
And self-severance - mend.

## Culbone Wood Journal 1

An apple tree. The full, charged, fructified, complete effusion from itself, perfect in self-generating abundance - a variegated expression of what it stands through the summer to carry into October.

And so it raises its progeny to the air, and these hang in beauty, passive to allowance of the wasp, the ant and small red mite that crawl its mossy ridges. An apple tree in fruit is nature's noblest expression. The weight and colour of this harvest, big with rich increese, hung from a living and a supple wood. I've studied the bramble and the blackthorn bending with their pruinescent burden. But the apple is the richest of our legacies. One bite of it, moreover, from our First Parents, is engraved in every human brain. But much as I glory at this fruit, just two, if I consumed them, would throw me in a colic.

This was mankind's primal ill. Ingesting not one apple but the entire fruit tree. Indeed, the world's an orchard: rind, seed and core that germinated in the hearts of our Grand Parents and took root there. It's these seeds in the head I feel ripening and then corrupting me. The roots grapple in my physiology. I feed this tree. It fortifies itself in me.

A fool marching along the way marked his passage of return by the disposition of sheep on the hillside. He turned home in the evening and the sheep had been frozen into the pattern in which he had earlier found them. 'This cannot be,' said the traveller in his folly, and plunged into the woods where he lost himself for ever.

I proposed this, fresh-minted, as I missed my way thro' Culbone Wood and became lost, so I thought, to extinction, in the dark, steep chasm that leads, at last, up to the farm house where I've sheltered. It is a mazy and romantick wilderness: thunderous with stream water and threateningly enclosed with trees whose canopies thrust high to transcend the abyss whose shadow they have created. The ascent is precipitous and strewn with boulders, and there being no clear track, I was driven to stumble, in a zig-zag, now across stream, now through creeper-shrouded heaps of
fallen old tree-trunks, and having, more than once, to tear from my face a curtain of wild clematis and ivy.

As viewed through semi-darkness, the sea below blinked dim through underwood and foliage: the water level, grey and dead or dying, as though October, which up here ministered to leaf and flower, had worked also on the ocean, which was pitted like a hammered metal, now pewter-tinted and now, as if soured, like a flat-iron, tarnished.

Weighed down also with the burden of my Purchas, clothes heavy and my linen faecal, I was, indeed, a sad sop in this soused condition. I thought this, as I climbed, however: that there slipped through my fingers that thread of Ariadne, whose paid-out glint might spin off lines of a recuperative poetry. And that these, like the silk with which the little spider builds, rise from deep in the self which was lost to itself in thickets and in mazings. Solipsistic peregrination!

Done in with the flux, I arrived at this farm and needs must, in my sorry frame, beg water and a lodging. And then here, that afternoon, the dose that stopped my bowel was aperiative to imagination: this latter, strongly coloured, alien and vivid, albeit fugitive to recollection.

I have borrowed what turned out to be a pruning knife from the farmer my host and cut a hole at the back of my britches in the place where I spoiled them with this afternoon's incontinence.

Mindful that the knife edge might contaminate some future cut in the branch of an apple, I cleaned the blade well, and so hope to have avoided contributing to our fallen world's infection.

I have, these few days, in consequence of my indisposition, been dressed in a shepherd's smock - a character-reversing loan for one who had been reduced to nakedness.

And thus strive now to sing without circumlocution.

It is morning and on the table lie the two sheets on which the last afternoon's composition is indited. How deep that vision! How distant and unwontedly complete. But how arcane its wild topography. The golden sun-glozed dome still glows - as though gold leaf beaten to an ultimate and airy thinness mantles the intelligence - and there, cooled by a breeze from the northwestern steppe, ample spaces gather to the palace and stretch thence through Asia.

Below the dome the Great Khan with his concubines perambulates. A dark spotted pard on a gold chain walks behind them. An Abyssin-
ian servant follows. (Could I fashion gold from phrases such as these? Forced gold! Fool's gold! And for this reason: Howsoever distantly the Khan's power stretched west from Cathay and then south toward Corea, the shores of Africa lay far beyond the reach of Kubilai even. The association is evocative but derives from ignorance. The word Abyssinian comes to me, I think, for its combination of both like and unlike consonants and vowels. While these compound suggestions of abyss/abysm, whose sibilant percussion gently hammers. $)^{1}$

Now as I write, I have not yet revisited the pages which are the product of my prophetic fury. For the circumstances of the phantasmagoria still live in my waking. And on this quotidian October morning, I am there now in Xanadu and would, were I able, immortalise the enchantment. Yet when I stretch my hand to position my ink horn, the quill dies in my fingers. My forearm is forestalled. I raise my left hand, bring it onto my brow, touch the fingers to a temple. This is English morning bristle. For am I not simply that hapless self that laboured yesterday through mud and briars to collapse among these hospitable premises? And am not I also that Tom O'Bedlam who entreated mercy

From the hag and hungry goblin
That into rags would rend ye ...
How close this touches! Xanadu and Bedlam lie adjacent in me. And I lie here in each, with a most nervous approximation.

I have breakfasted on a ham, and now in bustles the farmhouse maid to clear my dishes and to mend the grate. Up reaches a flame. And now a second. The tongues parry and embrace, fall, joust each other, withdraw into the timber, crawl on the bark as though clutching for a hold. The girl kneels at the hearth and builds in logs of ash and apple. Who invented this blaze? Who re-ignites it?
'Pardon, Sir?' as though she overhears my enquiry.
'Go, child,' I reply. 'It is nothing.' The girl thanks me. I know not for what. But as she passes through the door, I call her.
'Pray,' I ask, without knowing what I intend and without premeditation, 'Can you sing, lady?'

[^0]'Why yes, sir. All about here have songs of the neighbourhood. And the hymns we do in chapel.' (A curious locution, 'do', and not unhappy.)
'Then as you go about your household duties - not here, mind, by me - will you, time to time, give voice to any song you might, in the ordinary way, sing at your own hearth or with your acquaintance?'

Supposing me to be mad, as well I may be, the girl retreated, something disconcerted. A whispered consultation followed, I surmise with her mistress. And then ensued a silence all that morning so much deeper than any I have experienced, so that (besides this renewal of flamboyance in the grate) all I could hear was the singing in my ears and the sound of still air on me in the parlour as, in my indolence, I moved between chairs and tarried, with some expectation of a compositional renewal, by the table.

And all this while, at a tree by a river, with a thin bridge to traverse it, a solitary damsel stands. She cries through the dusk and a slow wind stirs the instrument she carries.

At each short flurry, a dulcet and enticing tone arises: as if in the night air, sound became a prism and was lifted through the twilit glimmer.

Deranged? Beyond my latitude! And what right, I ask further, do I possess to idle here as though I'm privileged, by general acknowledgement, to have something to add to the universe that I share with this young woman? A girl, her mistress's instrument, who knows nothing. She eats. She cleans the farm and feeds the hens. She will marry, bear children and quickly grow old. Then Death will abruptly snatch at her mantle: remembered by a few and regretted for a moment when labour allows the luxury of mourning.

And yet, this morning she has accomplished what is an elemental, Promethean eventuality. In this, at her fire, she over-reaches me entirely. What better task is there than to create such a flame, this combustible heart for sustenance and comfort of another being? What more than this could I achieve? Indeed, from what coercion - except for that I am some species of ambitious gentleman with a smattering of languages, some books on his table and a headful of conceits, humours, images, associations and pretentions? What dignity, by contrast, this girl possesses, who contributes her labour and her pleasant manners to this unpretending household! All this so her master's sheep can feed, their wool grow thick, their meat become fat and each in this neighbourhood
sit down sometimes to a dish of mutton. Have I something better to contribute?

Shakespeare suggests some elements of this society in his lovely Winter, where Joan, Tom, Marion and Dick maintain the hall: each labourer devoted to his rustic function. A frost encroaches. But once milk and firewood are carried from outside, then life - for the few - becomes supportable. The song connects in no intelligible way with the comedy of jests that goes before it. But just as the actors from Love's Labours' court evaporate for ever, so these humble figures make their brief appearances. None speaks: but each silently fills his line or stanza, and as they vanish, each pursues his necessary labour. Around them, fields, beasts and sheepfolds melt to nothing. And within the celebrated closing burden, fat Joan's ladle sings and clatters.

It is a rude-hewn vision in which work is either over-heated or else freezing. As for master and mistress, they exist at the edges of what they command and we do not see them. But they are, effectively, the hall itself: and this building, which will pass to their descendants, is their immortality. The servants meanwhile, who provision the manor, themselves are consumed in slow-chap't time's invariable progress. A mortality they suffer with patience.

I have looked through my poem. And very well, I acknowledge it to be a masterpiece. I will go further. This fragment is a masterwork of the English language. Nothing comparable precedes it. Little that comes later will emulate its scope and music, immediacy of coloration or that dramatic intensity that belongs less to the lyric than to epic and to Shakespeare's theatre (I mean the late romances). At the centre of the piece there lies an enigma: that mysterium tremendum lent, in part, by an historical grandeur and geographic majesty, but also by that mystical suggestiveness which radiates from its concealments.

The landscape, so quintessentially romantick, hearkens to an amalgam - in its evocations of two paradisal conditions - of the biblical and pagan: and this is just one stimulus to an imagination that would be transported to the antique clime which was brought to me in my realisation of Purchas. (The critics, should they one day read my poem, might well be disconcerted were I to disclose that the wilderness bounding the Great Khan's gardens derives from a view of the Bristol Channel as seen through the declivity, with its rocky contours and roaring freshet, of Culbone Wood - pars densa ferarum tecta rapit silvis.)

But no reader, beyond a circle of my intimates, will see this work for one or two decades hence. Of such I'm determined. This poetry shall stay near me as my talisman and not go out to be vilified by those who would have in their company only such things to which they are already habituated. This is a poetry of hazard and aesthetic peril. This to myself and likewise perhaps to those who would themselves be led to penetrate such a world as I have conjured in these remote broodings.

Already for myself it's over strong. And like some elixir, albeit benign, it is not for the unguarded or the non-initiate. People in a later age will variously approach it with their hermeneutic tackle. Others, all-too-knowing adults, will, as they do nursery rhymes, insensately chant it. The romantick who inclines to solitude will intone lines according to his predeliction with the borrowed menace of a dark, self-hypnotised inebriation, and school children memorize it alongside their tables of multiplication - and with as little relish. For myself, I shall maintain these lines in a privacy correspondent to the circumstances of their composition. Unchallengable though its presence, this demands asylum.

Not to be closeted too long with this solitary burden and clutching my papers, I walked to the yard in the early afternoon and having ascertained that this compound was deserted (the reconstruction of a hayrick having taken off the farmhouse), I stationed myself in the midst of the paving and emptying my throat of the used air from the parlour, gave voice to my fragment. This was the debut occasion that I heard the piece sounded. And in its movement from the paper to the eye and from eye to the voice, Xanadu imprinted itself strangely on this yeoman courtyard.

To our right stood the kitchen and its cobble-enclosed potager of lettuces and spinach, a stand of daisies and geraniums on the window ledge, straw scattered on the pavings, the sweet freshness of this and not unwholesome excrements enhancing the autumnal scents enclosed within this shelter.

As I chanted my poem (with an eye that cautioned as to possible embarrassment) I glanced up and observed that my voice had excited the attention of some eight or ten ewes that were fattening in the sheep pen against the prospect of this Friday's market. The woolly company was pressed together, but none too close, and consider my surprise and amusement to witness the manner in which some inclined their heads, and stretching their necks in my direction, gave the certain impression (some twitching up an ear, and others pensively inclining their long, mild
faces, as though judiciously considering some compositional originality) of attending the recital.

I had reached the second page and was mid-way through this when the silence with which my companions had been patiently standing was now interrupted with a rhythmic grating, whose counterpoint transected the solemnity of my numbers. A party of sparrows had just then flown to the meadow. A chaffinch followed and two wagtails replaced it.

I aborted my recital, and for this reason. Rolling their eyes and with their slotted pupils angled, the sheep were grinding their teeth, and in reasonable unison! Nor was this pretty, for as each bared its long incisors and these scraped on their fellows, they gave out a screeching and dry dissonance. Putting up my pages, I retired to the meadow where the wind blew with a better music to the high tops of Culbone and allayed my disquiet. In mixed distraction, I walked there till evening with a few late butterflies. A large blue dragonfly with a black and green striped thorax hunted among the gnats. And the little white plume moth stumbled through the seeding grasses.

Disburdened of my lines, am I left here feeling yet more foolish? Hier steh ich nun, ein armer Tor ... The creaking of sheep's teeth continues to perturb me.

Among the butterflies still alive in the sunlight: Red Admirals and Peacocks. The former species flaunts a scarlet whose intensity is framed by black and white patterns: reminiscent of the fire that I'd left among its grey fragmenting embers.

If the Red Admiral is splendid, the Peacock expresses an aristocracy which I admire without sympathizing with it, as I do its sister: the Vanessa atalanta (Matchless appellation! In the balance of its consonantal/ assonantal values, a short whole poem.) For the Peacock is beautiful in that it is too rich and there is an arrogance in the reserve onto which its blue climactic eye is painted. The Peacock's nobility is heraldic, whereas the Vanessa radiates the brightness, as its admirable English name expresses, of those jovial parades that cheer good people.

Back in the parlour, I opened the window and a Peacock flew in and vanished behind the dresser. A butterfly once hibernated in our own little kitchen and perhaps this individual, having supped on the last of its autumn nectar, had come to sleep here. Will it doze, I wonder, in that dream of Xanadu?

Less fancifully, I noted as the Peacock fluttered in, the ribbed, granular texture of its underwing which was utterly black, and thus blind, as it
were, to the wide-awake blue eye that stares from its upper surface. This down-facing darkness is like shrivelled up lace which has been pulverised and reconstituted into dried out veins, which though they've long since ceased to work, retain their pattern.

Walking. Illness. Aberration.
Harbour with a book of histories.
A drugged posset. Sleep and reverie. Thence my poem.

Reverting to the Wood and birds I listened to, which then fell silent. It was as if they lived in Virgil, had fluttered from his lines and then flown back to roost in their proper hexameters. These are the numbers, most perfect in all literature, those creatures enacted:

Nox erat et placidum carpebant fessa soporem corpora per terras, silvaeque et saeva aequora, cum medio volvuntur sidera lapsu, cum tacet omnis ager, pecudes pictaeque volucres, quaeque lacus late liquidos quaeque aspera dumis rura tenent, somno positae sub nocte silenti. Aeneid IV

Night. Fatigue. The forest. Ocean. Stars are setting. Quiet meadows empty. Animals and birds in wide, rough country sleep in silence.

The contained energy of moorland and its defensive architecture of rock that thrusts, as though wanting more of itself, toward the ocean. Where sea meets the sky there exists a perfection of silence that we, who are surrounded by land over which we beat our business, have yet to learn from. Still, we need that percussion. For the absolute would be as nothing without some differentiating relativity.

This house is full of noises - a very deep silence, notwithstanding. How this can be, is answered simply. For with coombs behind us rising steeply and meadows and woodland reaching to the Channel, the farm stands enclosed in quiet, natural limits.

Oh there are winds and bird song - rooks and magpies, chaffinches and sparrows - and a stag now and then that boveys in the twilight. At midnight, too, the owls chuckle and halloo each other, while far across the meadow, vixens - strangulating in the act of darkness - scream their lacerating hymeneals.

But there dwells in the house a serene suspension, through which softer, more domesticated music rises: the master and mistress - genial voices children's laughter (which is both of the household and of heaven), rambling in and out the byre of cattle, dogs leaping to follow their shepherd up the pasture, horse-shoes scraping, the slow weight of cart's wheels and the rub of harness, clattering of ladles, women's pattens - there are two at the pump now: one fills a bucket - the ring and scratch of scythes, spades, hinges, pitch-forks, latches, and articulating silence, the cat's reticent and introspective sotto voce.

And then, as I breakfast, song, for which I've waited, reaches me from where the servant girl is working. Absorbed in her labour, she laments to herself, without inhibition.

Lacrimae rerum. Men and women
Disappointing one another -
Here is a region of which I know something!
Singing, as she sweeps, her voice comes through a twist of corridors above my ceiling, close now, then withdrawing through a casement and now stifled by old beams and plaster, as if her verses travelled along passages, winding thorough thresholds and down stairways, half audible from where I am secluded, as she moves from one task to another, her stanzas in fragments, now in an unwonted combination, separating and dispersing - quo lati ducunt ... ostia centum! - before invisibly she draws near again, her singing recovers its self-possession, and she voices it with harmonies, in synchrony and discord, where old occasions and the present hazard come together:

As though - In a wood there grew a tree.
And the green leaves grew around, around.
And I sowed the seeds of love, she's singing. And now
You have caused my dear heart's wound.
Where the pretty little birds do change their voice,
She calls. That I (says he) may give you a fair kiss.
And a girdle of red gold around thy waist.
I'd rather, she replies, rest on a true-love's breast.
And she has become a leaping hare.
Gently, my Johnny my Jingalo.
For poor, gentle John Barleycorn he's dead.
The dog goes before him everywhere.

Now as for those sheep they're delightful to see.
With my rue dum day, fol the diddle dol.
O Master John, do you beware!
And don't kiss the girls at Bridgwater fair.
And O pretty maid how far are you going?
With my whack fal lor, the diddle and the dido.
I will take thee down to some lonesome dale.
A pretty, pretty place for girls and boys to play.
When we have sheared our jolly, jolly sheep.
The green leaves grow around, around.
I'll place my love on a primrose bank.
For I'm sick to my heart and I fain would lie down.
She slept, she dreamed, she saw him by her. Just in her bloom she was snatched away.
Young women they run like hares on the plain.
Hold up your cheeks my fair pretty maid.
And he went to the woods cutting broom, green broom.
Young women they sing like the birds in the trees.
And in the greenwood she lies slain.
Her clothing is made of the cold earthen clay.
Alas - here was hapless, inconclusive dreaming!
And did I lie thus with so mortal troubled mind?
In the jolly, jolly greenwood - or on Elfin ground?

There exists, in certain voices, a timbre belongs generally to the children. It is high-registered in a young woman and plaintive: but untouched, too young yet, by the melancholy and disenchantment of which she is innocent in her own ballads.

Such simplicity, with its musical attenuation and artless colour, may last through youth, and while sung from the stool or the apple-picking ladder, bespeaks a faery information: as if, through prompting of a similar effusion, the nether world folk - or the gallybeggars of this district, as they call them - communicate their yearning for the company of warm, quick, pretty and unknowing mortals - could they snatch 'em! (As with Thomas the Rhymer and Goethe's Erlkönig - of which more later.)

To be not thus detained, but live in the uncomplicated upper air, is one
of my secure determinations. For I will not be ruled by fancy entirely. And in this I am confirmed by apprehension that this young woman's singing was a parcel of the homely intermezzi I have detailed. With the one goes the other. I'm reassured by that material equivalence. For songs are of the air, and without earth to sustain them, they'ld lead imagination wholly to the elfin - from which danger there's no certain egress.

And yet as I sat in reverie this evening, Great Kubilai's dome arose in my vision, and these rustic numbers soared up through it. Beware an ascension or a katabasis with that music!

The silence of the woods broken by the flux of sea from below. My system works in harmony with that and I am at pains to hold myself in a posture that resembles the human. Twice I squatted by the path and let fly with my bare arse. I heaped a tumulus of ivy and bracken on top of the stinking effluvium I had deposited and laid stones over these. Through the underwood, while I groaned out my innerds, I watched from above, the waves winnowing across the beach stones. Thus my vision oscillated. But in nature always.

Reverting to my Purchas. Here are countless divagations shut up in one volume. And yet I carry this along the narrow country track of my own small aberration. Narrative is voyaging through error. As Virgil expressed this: Hic labor, ille domus et inextricabilis error. There is no better vision, than in those last eight syllables, of man's errancy: that most complex ravel and unravelling followed by the thunderous finality of error, with its continuing suggestion of an uninterrupted blunder. ${ }^{2}$

A pear tree, outside Culbone Wood, overhangs the churchyard with a crop of late fruit encased in hard, russet-coloured skin. In the grass between graves, are rinds of two or three which have been eaten almost entirely away by birds and insects. One skin resembles some ancient long-boat, eviscerated and on its side. Another is a tattered web of indentations

[^1]surrounding a pattern of holes, giving it the appearance, with the grass darkly showing through, of a mask, multiply fissured, that gazes back into the tree that bore it.

Metal and wood ring out, first in sequence and then together as the wicket closes. This is an expression of something that I could not at once identify. Then I was overtaken by a recollection: the clangour of ordnance: gun carriages, cannon, muskets and wagons. Milton in his Book I curses iron: its discovery and excavation. And a tree, which was at once dangerous and sacred, stands at the centre of his poem. Musket and wicket express the convergence. As I came through that gate, I imagined this fable:

Once Paradise was ended, a poor woodsman was passing through the forest and came to rest at the Tree of Knowledge which had, since in its primal state, grown into a giant.

Having rested in its shelter and hearkened to the song birds that innocently expressed themselves in its branches, the man took his axe and belaboured the tree trunk. As the hatchet bit the final inch of heart-wood, the tree fell down with a thunderous crashing. Crushed by his victim and still innocent of its nature, the woodsman died there in an agony of regret for all the great war engines that might have been fashioned from its timber.

Now, at the farm, there is a silence so complete that the sole sounds I detect are clucks and hisses emanating from my midriff, while deep in my brain, from fatigue and confusion, a symphonic roaring comes - as though Haydn here stood pounding with his Paukenwirbel - or van Beethoven belaboured his infernal anvil - and the joyous palaver of Signor Rossini broke forth in nightingale roulades and lark song - all these interwoven with an instrumental complication!

Encompassing this tumult, a primordial quiet leads me to an apprehension of the moments that preceded the world's first minutes - for as God proceeded through the creation, its augmentative expression made certainly a large commotion.

Before this, in Chaos (that miasma of elemental interfusions), no entity existed to strike on another. But with light and order, animation and then separation (which was Elohim's means of definition) came a wonderful clamour.
'Let there be Noise!' I conjecture the Creator crying as he sank back to his sabbath: and so things and creatures rushed out from him, and like children released from the asphyxiation of a school room and who race off to play by a cold stream in the meadow, there was spontaneous
uproar. We who come later have inherited that pasture. While some run laughing through the grasses, others trample down the stream's edge and make puddles of its margin. And the poet? His task: to acknowledge and to build from mud, and enhance the creation with unbroken singing. So Ovid at the outset of his Metamorphoses:
adspirate meis primaque ab origine mundi
ad mea perpetuum deducite tempora carmen!

And if Ovid's carmen be a neuter, let us, with our own songs, nonetheless inseminate it with our consequent, perpetuating genealogies!

I, too, am a fruit of that tree onto which mankind was grafted. Once when I was a yunker, I held my ear to some apple bark and heard the coursing of the sap which later in the season would inform a hundred ruddy and delicious fruit that sang all summer as they swelled on the branches.

All things are endowed, in variable degrees, with singing voices. Not every person can attend to these; nor do all phenomena reveal acoustic properties. I can not, for example, hear this table over which I scratch - as chanticleer does, to pick grubs from the dung pile. But all bodies have a tune which is borrowed from the world whose stuff we are part of, and these, whate'er their provenance, I listen in to. Howsoever far-away and low in register, these sotto voce melodies are expressions of a character whose presence informs the part-song of fraternal, all-creating nature.

How gorgeous that initiating vision! And yet how insubstantial was its outcome. Here in muddy Somerset I squat with this trickle of the river I envisioned dried up in the twilight - while by some fastness of an Asian palace, fresh gold in its ardency pursues its rushing. I approach the table. But those pages do not draw me. They are paper merely: thin, poor, nothings. The good solid things in this parlour have more substance. Old workings of oak, turned in Devon last century. A dark tankard, coppers, and the tongs and shovels that lie haphazard at the hearth with its coals still aglow in a mountain range of ashes. See too the ravines inside this, pocked with faery dells and casements, shaggy humps and tumuli which let fall now, and then ensevelate, their strata.

I sense the ceiling beam inch down of a sudden, as though to forge from tensions in its old stability an oppression in me. My pen totters and then droops. It's filled with lead - not mercury! Here is a feather won't ascend again.

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Set in OurType Arnhem and Monotype Futura Bold by Ewan Smith, London

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[^0]:    1 Entire possession eludes any Empire. Enquiry shows, as noted of the T'ang below, that Peking in the time of Kubilai was peopled diversely from beyond his khaganate. Stet therefore Abyssinia, wedded albeit with old Prospero's abysm.

[^1]:    2 Say the word 'journey' and I reply vicissitude. Worn soles, sharp wind and a poignant intestinal grinding. This volume of Purchas weighs ten pounds on my shoulder. The burden of its information drags down intellect and body. On every path we meet Misfortune. Anticipate that always when experience falls short of expectation. Commiserate with Purchas' lamentation! All men take disappointed journeys. Call it, as did Purchas, pilgrimage, and lend dignity - a nice delusion! to its mishaps and hallucinations.

