

JAMES ROBERTSON

Where Will I Go From Here?

Where will I go from here now you're away?
Up another fifty Munros, off round the globe
With a rucksack, Stevenson in my pocket and some
Vague ticking list of islands washing my mind with their surf?
Maybe nowhere, just into myself again, on the old search,
But — *been there, done that*, as they say, plus the time
Left for that journey's eating away very fast now, so
Perhaps I should skip it. Christ, look at us!
You, I, have spent so many years travelling
To what or whom we might be
If we don't soon call a permanent halt
We'll be gone before we arrive.
Enough! The two generations of men before mine
Never tasted the luxury of finding themselves
Before they had to go off, eighteen, nineteen,
Out into desert or jungle or sky or wasteland of mud,
Their faces camouflaged with what looked like maturity,
To kill or die for country or some other cause,
With God or maybe not God looking or maybe not looking on.
When I think of them now, I'm shamed by our fortune,
The chances we've had to love, to take or retreat from love,
To balls it up over and over, when some of them died
Never knowing the feel of waking in bed snug like a spoon
At the back of a sleeping lover, or —which is worse? — died
Painfully, knowing it, knowing they'd never know it again.

Love

You are there down the flown years,
The dust-blown years, the years
Bundled away like old diaries:
Your name on the pages of diaries
For meetings, movies, meals, arrivals,
Departures; longed for arrivals,
Departures that broke one or other,

Sometimes both of us. Love's like no other
Memory, it cracks anew the heart
When the mind recalls what the heart
Never could forget. You are gone from me,
In touch still but long gone from me
And far from touch. How does time
Flee and yet not move at all? Like the time
I held you in a tiny airless room
Without windows and with room
Just for the mattress we'd made love
On for the last time, the time, my love,
Before you took me for my flight
Away, back home, away, my flight
Away from you and all our grief
And happiness, that room full of grief
And happiness, our hot young tears,
Your face, my face, and our hot young tears.