

ON ARRIVAL

BY THE SAME AUTHOR

In Daylight (Printed Matter Press, 1995)

Monumenta Nipponica (Saru Press, 1995)

The Painting Stick (Pine Wave Press, 2005)

From the Japanese (Isobar Press, 2013)

World Without (Isobar Press, 2015)

Seeing Sights (Isobar Press, 2016)

Temporary Measures (Isobar Press, 2017)

ON ARRIVAL

1981-1995

Paul Rossiter

ISOBAR
PRESS

First published in 2019 by

Isobar Press
Sakura 2-21-23-202, Setagaya-ku,
Tokyo 156-0053, Japan



14 Isokon Flats, Lawn Road,
London NW3 2XD, United Kingdom

<https://isobarpress.com>

ISBN 978-4-907359-28-7

Copyright © Paul Rossiter, 2019
All rights reserved.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Grateful thanks to the editors of *NOON: journal of the short poem* and *Poetry Salzburg Review*, where some of these poems first appeared or will soon appear. An earlier version of one poem was published in *In Daylight* (Printed Matter Press, 1995).

CONTENTS

I *News of the World*

The Blue Edge	9
Beach	11
Poseokjeong Bower	12
Ginseng Wine with Mr Kwon	13
Watching the World Lightweight Boxing Cham- pionship on TV While Eating Dinner in a Bulgogi Restaurant in Kyongju with Chirone	14
Three Stone Buddhas	15
How to Paint the World	16
Pak Wayan, Sitting on the Veranda of His Losmen	18
The Waves	
<i>Over the Mountains</i>	19
<i>In the Village</i>	21
Some Roads in Bali	25
Kubutambahan	26
Mount Batur	28
A Dance in Ubud	29
Hall of Justice	30
Borobudur	31
A Courtyard in Bangli	35

II *On Arrival*

On Arrival	39
Straw Against the Winter	43
Zazen for Foreigners	46
All That Flows	48
In Izu	49
Mountain Road	51

Glimpsing the Garden	52
Sanjūsangen-dō	54
Four Postcards from Kyoto	
<i>Saihō-ji</i>	56
<i>Philosopher's Walk</i>	57
<i>Nanzen-ji</i>	58
<i>Ryōan-ji</i>	59
Climbing, Descending	60
Deep in the Night	64
III <i>Current Accounts</i>	
Habitat	67
The Real Thing	67
Perestroika	68
Guinness Book of Records	68
Capitalism in the Eighties	69
Supper in Houston	69
The Albanian Deprivation	70
Marketisation	70
A Slight Misunderstanding of the Nature of Democracy in the Friday Sermon	71
Hit List	71
Live from Cairo	73
IV <i>In the World</i>	
In the World	75
Hotel Bangkok	77
Gold Rush	79
Ceremony at Ayers Rock	80
<i>Notes</i>	85

I

news of the world

for Chirone

THE BLUE EDGE

Moalboal, Philippines

I

from the beach you can see it
the line where the sea turns
from turquoise to cobalt
from coastal shelf to deep-sea trench

in facemask and snorkel we
swim out through shallows
gliding just above
a coral garden in full bloom

ochre brains bulbous on the seabed
pink branching vein-like intricacies
orange many-throated sponges
lavender-blue lungs draped over boulders

2

suddenly we reach the edge
a precipice where
the seabed drops away and we're left
hanging above

an abyss, into which
the imagination plummets –
that's much too deep! –
(the crush of millions of tons of blue...)

fish flit over the edge, silver sparks
vanishing
into depths beyond
daylight's reach or our cognisance

3

night
heavy limbs and sunburnt shoulders
salty tangled hair –
we lie in darkness, drifting

just above the surface of sleep
half-awake to
the *shooosh* of the sea beyond
the palm-frond walls, that will repeat

all night without our hearing it
as we float away from shore, suspended
above our own dark
unsounded places

BEACH

mounting towers of boiling cumulus
processional
above the hills of Negros

but not going far
burning off before they can cross the water
to this white beach where
the sky's been blue for days

sun-blaze
ripples lisp on hot sand
hermit crabs scuttle or stay interminably still

I sit with barely a thought
in the shade of a palm-frond shelter

the sea breathes its colours
a peacock walking in the garden of the world
turning its feathers this way and that way
coruscating in the sunlight

never the same glint or flourish twice

no blueprint
no schedule

there's no such thing as chaos

POSEOKJEONG BOWER

Kyongju, South Korea

among pine trees
a dusty stone channel
raised a little above the level of the earth

where, on summer nights, poems
and cups of wine
were floated down with the current

until one evening the future arrived
uninvited
and a king fell on his sword

the stream still flows
its water now
too low to feed the sinuous granite channel

the palace gone, paddy fields surround
this accidental monument –
an epigram in

undulant curves of stone
on the themes of power, pleasure
and their passing

a trinket fallen
from a dynasty's pocket
in tall grass beside a country road

GINSENG WINE WITH MR KWON

Mr Kwon
in his white shorts
with his shock of short black hair and his glasses awry

Mr Kwon
with his sudden pronouncements
his outbursts of total merriment
his fierce one-thing-at-a-time concentration
his treatment of all people alike
and his perfect impatience with all linguistic impedimenta

fills my glass with ginseng wine
and gives me a piece of calligraphy, a Korean song, he says

what does it mean? I ask

he adjusts his glasses and sits up very straight:

*Mongols come Chinese come man goes man fights woman
cries Japanese come man goes maybe dies woman cries many
wars Korea many wars Americans come communists come
many wars now 38-line country divide man gone maybe dead
woman cries this means this song very sad song please sing*

WATCHING THE WORLD LIGHTWEIGHT BOXING
CHAMPIONSHIP ON TV WHILE EATING DINNER IN A
BULGOGI RESTAURANT IN KYONGJU WITH CHIRONE

marinated beef sizzles over charcoal
the table is spread with reds and yellows and whites
an anthology of kimchi in small ceramic bowls

cross-cuts, zoom-ins and close-ups
 bloodied faces
 rivulets of sweat
assault and battery orchestrated
 into three-minute episodes –
short, sharp variations on the theme of harm

for *human* read *male*, says Chirone

as one of the fighters hits the canvas with a wallop
 and stays there
the referee crouched and counting
the audience screaming –
 and then the winner's glove is raised

next up:
the weather forecast

we raise our glasses in a toast to
 several hundred miles of rain-filled cloud
last night's warm front
now moving quietly across northeast China

THREE STONE BUDDHAS

weathered
 smudged with green lichen
sitting out the centuries
under pine trees in a walled enclosure

*soldiers in chain mail deploy
among blossoming trees*

last night in pelting darkness
rainwater drenched their heads and laps,
 sluiced off carved stone bases
into the loamy earth

*a peasant woman stoops
in stifling heat to light a stick of incense*

this morning, steam rises
 from warming branches, sunlight
dapples the statues' granular repose

*an ant carries a yellow
leaf across a carpet of pine needles*

three stone Buddhas
 sitting out the centuries
under pine trees in a walled enclosure

*snow grows like white moss
all through a winter night*