

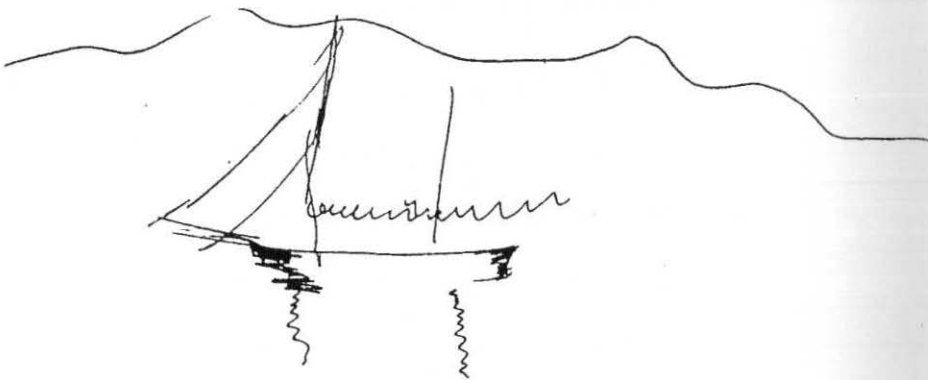
St Columba's Bay, Iona

Among the bones of seagulls  
and of kings  
and with all this muffled, nibbled turf  
even the sea's gone quiet,  
imagine that!

In respect for such unusual tenderness  
it wasn't difficult  
to walk the long way back  
cradling a crab shell in my hand;

leaving behind, on this occasion,  
the weight of intricate stones.

It was with light step  
that afternoon  
I made it home.



For Pete Laver

Okay Pete, here it comes  
after all these years, the elegy.  
We walked the long path out of church  
down to the burial ground, not quite sure  
whether to talk or not. It was warm  
and bright (now twenty years on  
it is drizzling).

You were so funny.  
The first time we met, you were perusing  
the headstones in our churchyard  
having earlier backed your car  
into the River Derwent near Wordsworth's House.

Here is your grave, the smallest of stones,  
like a bit off someone else's, and the lettering  
no longer visible. So I trace it  
with my finger to check what the date is:  
1947-1983. We began together.

It was a warm day in summer,  
so many poets, so many young people,  
women in gay dresses, so much beauty  
and memories of laughter. So why then  
after all these years  
this checking of tears.