

For Kirsty

Remember
those Ayrshire summers?

Watching salmon leaping
in splashes of quick silver
under the dark arc of the bridge;

eating wild berries
snatched from hedgerows
with greedy stained fingers;

throwing sticks at lazy snakes
baking unawares
on sun-filled rocks;

playing in grey midnight light,
our naked feet
prickling on shorn hayfields;

running through cool fountains
of moist
shoulder-high ferns;

dabbing calamine pink
on the red
of burning nettle rashes;

smelling seaweed and brine
in celadon sea
breezes;

tasting the salt dusting
our skin
after a day at the shore;

never ever brushing
the knots
from our wild tangled hair.

In the long summers of no school
the land and her creatures
unfolded themselves to us –

willing friends –
opening their arms
in companionship,

granting respite
from the pain and sudden violence
of home,

offering solace
for the profuse sadnesses
of childhood.