

Breaking

I

This month one word -
“breaking” -
has stayed in my mind.

I expected ferment -
phrases to attach,
connecting leads,
bridges -

so the word would multiply
and generate new meaning.

But nothing grows.
Just this solitary word

breaking

resonates in my mind
and hovers over my sleep.

Rogan Wolf
December 1997

The breaking strain
of a thing
means the point

beyond which
more
cannot be borne

and the thing
relaxes all its holds
and simply gives up

with its own kind of sigh.
The *consequences*
of giving up,

of course,
bring a different
slower kind of pain

but the thing presumably
does not consider that
at the time

being in no
condition perhaps
to do so.

Rogan Wolf
December 1997

The phrase “breaking strain”
invites a plain question -
what is the value
of that which is to break ?

What will be lost to the world
as a consequence of this breaking ?
Will it be me ?

Or only the phoney song
which all these years
I’ve been sadly singing ?

In which case
the collapse of each dry note
in some final ugly rattle
might signify nothing
except release from nullity.

The breaking strain of a thing
might just be
the point at which
it finally becomes interesting.

Rogan Wolf
December 1997

There was a month in which
I got nowhere with “breaking”
The word just sat there
repelling all advances.

Now we’ve moved on
and “breaking strain”
comes close to filling the lens.

The stealthy tread of it
I now believe
was always present in my mind

only I wasn’t awake enough
at the time
to hear it distinctly.

Rogan Wolf
December 1997

A certain Orthodox priest
proposed that the broken

the convicted the found out
are worthy of envy.

Bereft of a face
to present to Society

(but no uglier in reality
than anyone else)

these were now free
not to pretend any more.

Their Redemption therefore
close at hand.

written on my 50th birthday,

In middle age I've come to realise
that nowhere in existence holds more interest
than a breaking-point
a place of giving way.

For there before us
just visible, perhaps,
through a scrum of hair-line fractures
is a glimpse of our redemption.

Soon fear floods the cracks again
and old shapes or new shapes -
it matters not in the least -
shield us from what we might have been.

But now I stare old age in the face
and beyond my decrepitude
I see my shadow
holding a scythe

and I say this
that from today
I'll gravitate to the breaking points
I'll merge myself with the giving way.

*Rogan Wolf
January 23rd 1997*

A concern with "Breaking"
 still roams
 these inner chambers.
 I send a message through -
 "What's happening?"
 "Breaking"
 is still the answer.

The owl performed this role
 for more than a decade
 when I was young.

It was my albatross
 I just couldn't shake it loose.
 Whenever a poem called down to be written
 whenever the command was issued
 there an old owl was
 (and nothing else).
 "I have seen owls...." etc.

Even now
 I thrill to attention
 if some chance owl
 graces my system -
Woo-hoo-hoo ! by sound wave
Whah ! by flight path.

Breaking lacks
 the owl's majesty
 but a certain lustre
 still pertains to it.
 The aftermath
 of breaking is quite likely
 worth being broken for.

Rogan Wolf
January 23rd 1998

Having broken.

Having lain in ruins.

Having explored thoroughly
the meaning

and curious value
of the breaking strain.

I should now be glad
to turn to the subject

of breaking clear

Rogan Wolf June 1998

But what
if anything
does “breaking clear” mean ?

“Breaking ?”
All of us know about breaking -
it’s the one sure constant on Earth.

And “clear” - from what ?
Nothing - besides breaking -
is certain in the universe

and you can’t break clear
from nothing.
And what in a foul

world is “clear” ?
But the phrase still hangs there -
“breaking clear.”

It seems to imply
a serious trauma
leading to a pleasant sense of spaciousness.

It seems to say that nothing pleasantly new
no real sense of release
can be arrived at

without a breaking of shells
a close and intimate raking
by loss and insufficiency

a surrender of precious dreams.
It is the loss
of old beloved dreams

that is perhaps the first requirement
of liberation. Any new release
of energy into a desperate world

is energy dreams have fed on
till now.
The world is desperate for our dreams.

Rogan Wolf, July 1998

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Jumping from a familiar edge
breaking clear
is a guarantee of grief and terror

but in a fragmenting world
standing still
ensures annihilation

a surrender of hope and selfhood.
Breaking clear
is always thus

the safest, most loving option
and offers a reasonable chance
of aging creatively.

Rogan Wolf July 1998

Either I break clear
 or a storm breaks in.
 Either I'm captain
 of my own good ship
 or I'm castaway
 a liquid dot, tossed
 hither and thither,
 of the merciless ocean.

Rogan Wolf July 1998

Better by far
 to break out
 into strange and dangerous wilderness

 than wait to be violated
 tossed and driven
 by forces others set in motion.

Rogan Wolf July 1998

It is surely wiser
 for change to be
 your own adventure

 you at the tiller
 and change to your shaping

 than to sit and wait for foreign forces
 to drive you from your citadel
 sweep you from your station.

Rogan Wolf July 1998

If I am already broken
then I *can* be infinitely *light*

and need not fear
the loss of carapace,
or ties, or mooring rope.

If I am already broken
I can travel far, untraceable,
and I'm almost impossible to stop.

If I am already broken
I am *almost* unbreakable

and like a dandelion seed
almost impossible to stop.

Rogan Wolf
May 2011