

We Walk

by [Michael Shindler](#) (March 2019)



We walk on the forest floor, you and I,
Beyond the bounds of lined fields and firelight,
Seeing only shapes of the wild and sky,
So that all the world seems one woodland-sight,
And we feel these shapes touching us gently:
The stroke of a vine, the tap of a tree;
We're forgetting each plant's proper naming,
Classifications we've learnt from reading;
We stop recalling the links and logic,
Accounts of the world's internal working,
And I wonder—do you hear strange music?

Our thoughts become theaters where branches vie
With one another and warm lengths of light
Pass through thickets and potent shadows lie
Alongside flowers, without fret or fight,
And birds trill high above with guiltless glee
Within the whisper of the canopy;
Amid this mass of oaks, we are walking,

As they march up the hillside, enduring
Through every storm's jest and every drought's trick,
With their trunks swelling and branches soaring,
And I wonder—do you hear strange music?

Our father was here, where lost songbirds fly,
In the past, right here, in this selfsame site:
Right here would he laugh, right here would he cry,
Laboring by day and dreaming by night;
This was his home; this was where he was free:
One day our father climbed up high to see
The glory of heaven, the sun shining,
And when he climbed down, it was by hugging
The trees that he learnt to stand like this stick,
His feet on earth, his eyes upward looking,
And I wonder—do you hear strange music?

As we walk, we see things growing nearby
And shrinking and stretching without respite;
We watch the shifting of the clouds up high
Unworried with how they'll next shift in flight,
But with a regard that extends broadly

To all these shapes that in dusk's lambency
Seem to shift like one immense thing moving:
A petal in play with wind while falling,
A spider weaving where the grass grows thick,
A bit of lightning in clouds gathering,
And I wonder—do you hear strange music?

In both our bodies air is flowing by
Nutrients flowing down then up our height,
Surging with the air, with silence and sigh,
The dance of the forest's diurnal rite;
Opposed things coming and going promptly:
You and I walking though the greenery;
Our bodies, our minds, our thoughts, are taking
Us deeper into the shapes of the thing;
That which makes the journey true and tragic
Is bringing us here, where all is growing,
And I wonder—do you hear strange music?

A little shaft of moonlight is guiding
Us through the still pines and past the stone ring,
We stop recalling the links and logic,

Accounts of the world's internal working,

And I wonder—do you hear strange music?

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