Lon ging

is the transfiguration of aloneness, the defenseless interior secret core of a person receiving its over-
due invitation from the moon, the stars, the night horizon and the great tidal flows of life and love.
Longing is divine discontent, the unendurable present finding a physical doorway to awe and discovery
that frightens and emboldens, humiliates and beckons, makes us into pilgrim souls and sets us on
some road that starts in the center of the body, and then leads out, like an uncaring invitation, like a
comet’s passing tail, glimpsed only for a moment, making us willing to give up our perfect house,
our paid for home and our accumulated belongings.

Longing is felt through the lens and even the ache of the body, magnifying and bringing the horizon
close, as if the horizon were both a lifetime’s journey away and alive already, deep inside at some un-
known core - as if we were coming home into a beautifully familiar, condensed strangeness.

In the longing and possession of romantic love it is as if the body has been loaned to someone else
and has taken over the senses - we no longer know ourselves. Longing calls for a beautiful, grounded
humiliation; the abasement of what we thought we were and strangely, the giving up of central con-
trol while being granted a watchful, scintillating, peripheral discrimination. The static willful central
identity is pierced and wounded, violated and orphaned into its own future as if set adrift on a tide:
like Moses in his floating cradle, bumping along the reeds of the Nile, like a child lost in a panicked
moving crowd and at times, like a creature hit, gripped and lifted by a passing hawk.

Longing has its own secret future destination, and its own seasonal emergence from within, a ripen-
ing from the core, a seed growing in our own bodies; it is as if we are put into relationship with an
enormous distance inside us leading back to some unknown origin with its own secret timing indif-
ferent to our wills, and gifted at the same time with an intimate sense of proximity, to a lover, to a fu-
ture, to a transformation, to a life we want for ourselves, and to the beauty of the sky and the ground
that surrounds us.

Longing is nothing without its dangerous edge, that cuts and wounds us while setting us free and
beckons us exactly because of the human need to invite the right kind of peril. The foundational in-
stinct that we are here essentially to risk ourselves in the world, that we are a form of invitation to
others and to otherness, that we are meant to hazard ourselves for the right thing, for the right
woman or the right man, for a son or a daughter, for the right work or for a gift given against all the
odds. In longing we move and are moving from a known but abstracted elsewhere, to a beautiful,
about to be reached, someone, something or somewhere we want to call our own.

I wrote Longing in a single sitting in the morning quiet of a sitting room of an old Inn in the Yorkshire Dales I
have visited since childhood. The evening before I had walked up high to a line of stone cairns looking down at
the village. I was there to work up an appetite for the substantial fare provided at dinner and to take the air, but
in that evening air I suddenly felt the tear of what felt like a passing bullet, close to my ear. I looked round and
saw nothing, looked again and felt strangely puzzled, then came the tearing sound again, but this time I saw the
missile, a winged bundle of aggression in the shape of a buzzard, that would-be, compact eagle, diving and driv-
ing me off, away from its nest in the wood below, its yellow eyes condensed on my form with unremitting in-
tent, its partner above in a larger gyre of surveillance watching for other intruders.

My walk continued in the evening sunlight as if in the midst of a continuous ambush, the bird trying to attack
me from every angle including from directly above. Looking up into its formidable eyes as it came straight at
me, I felt charged, exhilarated, joyous, and warned, as if the ambush was the annunciation of enormous change,
some identity walking its unconcerned way through life, now dislodged from its easy onward way and given
notice; as if the end of a certain epoch was being announced and a new one born but not yet to be recognized,
and that I should be alert to a new inward and outward movement, some great tidal element of life coming from
all sides, a symmetry longing for itself, trying to meet and create its simple central reflection at the center of a
life and a work.