

Into the Long

Sara Wolcott¹

1. Out of the Short

Turning the bend we imagined
they would greet us like Giants
these Mysteries of the Isles, instead
they were so much smaller -
just a circle standing on a hill-side.

In that strange blue-florescent neon night-light,
we'd be hard pressed to find a ritual
much less a druid
instead just
raucous squeals and twisted dreads of that
breed of mostly-young hippie-consumers:
even before midnight,
beer cans and plastic strong-bows
litter our path.
That throw-away culture
colliding defiling melding - defining
the usually clean 'English Heritage site.'

Long: the plastic forks for the stringy wok noodles
will take decades to decompose
Long: the squeals and yells seemed to never end
just pass from one flippant smiling baggy-jeaned girl to another
Long: the pull, the pull of 5000 years -
we kept walking
Long: the sacred walk, the ancient walk,
of breathing and rhythm and rhyme.

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Picking our way amongst
debris blankets hash
we walked the walk
we had never been permitted to walk before we
crossed the barrier
that tonight of all nights the English Heritage
did not police
we crossed the barrier
that even we did not understand:
the young coming to greet
the Old Ones.

She gasped as we crossed the barrier.
Took my arm; her hands were cold
she said can you believe it
they suddenly seem so
big.

So much smaller than anything in London
When we crossed the barrier
size reconfigured itself to a world
without skyscrapers just human
muscle and laughter and (perhaps) faith.

Oh, these stones.
Crossing the barrier
that my parents crossed
before I was born when they
stood here
I now stand
I now stand
Amongst the standing stones
touch
5000 years of lichen and cold and warmth
nothing but compassion
we all reach out

to touch the Long
Not noticing
if we stand on beer cans.

All night we
kept staring at them.
She popped a little seed
told me it was acid and would only take
a few minutes to work -
He opened and drew back the strong bow
glowing golden light shining through plastic -
she carefully laid out the flimsy trash bags
to protect us from the wet -
(we were without wool blankets.
we were not our mothers.)
and we stared into the Long
embodied in the stone.

2. Centre Circle

I waited till after midnight
to fully enter into the Long -
I feared a mosh pit
but all that living flesh was more
akin to swimming among a thousand seals.

After my shoulders
began slowly to move
(how did they get so stiff?
Where have I been? - oh yeah - Lost
in the short.)
I took up the meaning of my given name:
princesssan, wise woman, minister-ess
she who (got away with) laughing at god
now standing on Stones.

Not so high
as a corner office I could touch
drummer's head sitting beneath me
let his rhythm overtake me
dancing spontaneous yelling
embrace me.

Celebrating the longest day
through witnessing the shortest
(misty chilly) night:
Raise hands above head
draw down the moon;
Dear druids forgive us
we mean no usurpation; just responding
to that calling we risk forgetting -
into the long.

Looking amongst a sea of laughing untrained warriors
who do not know the ways of the druids
who do not know the chants or the songs
who do not know how to care for the dying
who do not know how to properly wash the dead
who do not know how to harness the energy
Who are looking ahead only dimly, drunkenly
I see the stones
holding the hooting descendents of their makers
such immense imperfection.

In this time of such planetary destruction
we are the ones they must rely upon for protection?
(or are they the weighty Guardians?)
do my fellow dancing fools know the collapse of the system?
regardless: the stones hold them.
They have seen so much more than I they know
the rise and fall of how many kings, civilisations, children.

In the flashing lights of cameras
even the stones in their stillness seem to be moving
opening
Maybe in the old days
it wasn't always proper somber rituals
by chieftains
but sometimes
people came to laugh drum scream
awaken the stones danced in their stillness
on the longest day of the year.

I in my remembered-role -
the men came to me
dancing, telling me
their confessions:
how they would never miss this night
how it gave them energy for months
how they couldn't explain it -
how they came to reclaim
their heritage, not to be bought
for 7 pounds - concession.

These men
in big boots with strong hands
that reached
for booze and women
and for the stones -
running their hands over the stones
in homage
turning to me he said
isn't it all just so
beautiful.

Yes, I said. Yes.
And you from America! they laughed
that their cousin might see

what their sister
who stayed at home to watch tele
did not.

There
amongst the stones
we knew ourselves: journeying
into the long.

3. The Separation

After the dawn broke
When the fields were filled with summer's colours
Rose 21st century England's barriers between
clean and filth, ruler and ruled, the poor and the proper
re-emerging at the order of class and power
taking the form of yellow-jackets with sharp teeth
the bobbies pointed to the exit - that way.
As if a circle ever had one exit.

Instinctively: resistance. fertile? the
lust
for the stones suddenly increased
inadvertently compulsively we
flocked to their side
reaching out
to caress
the Long.

We who cling to our caves and our fear
of one another we
hoped these
Guardians could teach us
of that which we can not remember
oh how long till we can touch them again?

That one, the tall one
his blue-gray skin etched with wind, rain, and kisses
(I suspect also - swords) I could
stand next to him and lean
he'd murmur the sweet nothingness
of the Long
that accepts infinitely the sorrows and joys
of those trapped
in the short.

But the bullet-proof vests
(we who seek to love are dangerous)
swept us away
(no need to glare.
I knew the rules of the game before I played.
This time, at least, I obey.)

Suddenly everything
(myopic animals/election cycles/quarterly reports
my time here) was
too short.

Leaving (not again)
I kept looking back we all kept
glancing as if afraid
they had moved
shuffling back into 'tourist mode.'

From the top of the hill
they looked small - even short.
Certainly cleaner,
tip bags piled neatly
in the far corner.

But my heart,
re-aligned by Giants

still remembers their rhythm.

So. I pick up someone else's trash
join the bus, the chatter, the 10am pub crawl
dozed on a train filled with suits
failed at talking sense into a silver-cuff-linked oil-man -
my fellow travelers confused
stones and humans. Where is the open heart?

May they also journey
into the long
before their short-termism
goes on far
too
long
that they forget
those terrible curses that befall grave-robbers
fossil-consumers
and the burial grounds
(where shall they go, do they know?)
and the henge
of standing stones
beckoning us
into the long.