Bryniau Caersalem

Gan/By Rowan Williams

Today, like other days, is not like other days.
The weather's new; we have not been
here before, our feet are standing
in a new Jerusalem, white limestone
ruins against black cloud, and on the other side
of clouded hills, what we can only guess
from sounds we try to edit, what no-one
should have to hear
the sound of doors
closing on words and sight, closing on truth.

O'r fryniau Caersalem ceir gweled
Holl daith yr anialwch i gyd.
Remembered from an auntie's funeral, that arrogant,
unlooked-for image, death as a National Trust
trig-point; with nothing now to hope for
only the vista of the desert, all of it,
but knowing only that the desert starts and stops,
and by some unknown path here we are,
seeing as we look back the desert is not
all.

With death
you have to turn your back on futures,

turn around. There was a path. There was
a desert's edge. There was discovery
with successive breaths that a new landscape
could be inhabited, new languages
learned. Look at your drying footprints
in the mud, foot after foot, breath after
breath, the little death and life of a today
not like another day, of words not said
before, of things not seen before. If the sounds
reach us that no-one should have to hear,
each one makes a new place to see, a space of death
for light to push through, love, can we say? Each destroyed
insulted face a world to enter, to learn
without editing the pain, without
a lie.

And now our feet are standing.
Turned from the edge of death, the green
moment. Hope is to guess that edge,
that green; to turn round, seeing
that truth and clear embracing and lament
and labour and the terrible singleness
of every cry make our face human, make each day,
(like every other day) not like other days,
the weather new, the language beginning
to be learned, the next step taken to the desert's
frontier. *Bryniau Caersalem. Pen Calfaria.*