

To penetrate.

To no longer be face-to-face. To peer through the eye-piece of the centre. To exchange organs for zones, anatomy for astronomy. Just as skin can fold, so do the galaxies.

What is sensuousness?

What each sense imagines is beyond its reach.

Tangible?

Yes.

Visible?

Yes.

Palpable?

No.

Where?

Deep, deep within the origin, where each sense first discovered itself in pleasure, a fraction of a moment before it discovered itself in plain. Because of this infinitesimal priority, life is a gift. Abidin, like no other artist I know, is painter of this gift. Not a single adjective, not a single metaphor, will I apply directly to his images.

* * *

Once I was studying a map of Anatolia to decide where to go. I found a lake somewhere in the south between Konya and Denizli. I took a bus and arrived at the nearest town. The exit I took from the bus station led me into a draper's shop.

A young man who was the shopkeeper's son, was going to put me on the right road. We left the shop and walked out into the street. He took me by the arm, and when he left me I kissed him on the lips. I followed the path to which he had brought me, into a forest and further. From there I could see a lake. Over the grassland before the lake there was a slight mist. On the border of the lake was a black bush of longing with berries. It was triangular in shape. The radiance and beauty of the light on the water were such as I had never seen. I took off my coat and,

folding it, laid it on the grass beside the path. On top of the coat I placed my wallet. Then I walked down the slope to the lake.

That evening when I returned to the city, first on foot and then by bus, I did not collect my coat and wallet. This was no oversight, but rather an impetuous choice on my part. There was little money in the wallet, only what are called my papers; documents to establish my identity, age, civil status, nationality, etc.

My city friends claimed I would still find my belongings if I returned. I was sure that by now, even in such an under-populated place, somebody would have found them. (Perhaps with my papers a man was already planning to escape the torturers.) I wanted to leave something as a tribute.

My friends got out a map and asked me to point out the town to which I had taken the bus. To my surprise I could neither remember nor recognise its name. The proximity of the lake didn't help either, for there are many lakes between Konya and Denizli. All I could say was that near the lake, where I had passed the day, there was a small black triangular bush. Absurd! Yet now, ten years after, I have refound the place. It is there in these paintings of Abidin.

John Berger, born in 1926 in London. Art critic, novelist, scenarist and documentary writer. He lives in a little village commune in France.



