

R. G. HAY

AGROPHILE

I've been in rainforest before, not always
on a tourist track, and I wasn't eager
to leave the sight of sea and sky
the feel of breeze, sand underfoot: but you
were curious, and no harm seemed likely
on a blue-arrowed path, so we went in.
You admired ferns, and the tall smooth trunks;
I waited for the mosquitoes, tried not to think
of green and mushy, ticks and leeches.
By the time we'd climbed to the top of the ridge
you'd begun to regret your eagerness;
by then it seemed as well one way out
as another, so I took a photograph
(the meter confirmed my sense of gloom)
assured you that it was all downhill
and not far, and relievedly we walked out.

Because you assume a man retains no childish
fears, I find myself doing things I'd always
avoided. Left to choose, I'd never forsake
blue sky and moving air to venture into
that cross between a mine tunnel and
the womb of all the vegetation, most of
the insect life on this planet. Even in
the open, it gets dark when sun sets.
That's soon enough to walk in gloom.