the Mediterranean, or perhaps smoke opium on Himalayan tracks,
sat on the back of a clapped-out scooter, or sleep
inside a sanctuary with seven wild serval, or stand with fingers
tip to tip, but still not fully circle the trunk of Tane Mahuta, and
you want to tell me how tea tastes better with cherry petals falling, how
you don’t know you’re alive until you’ve watched your breath make diamonds
on the decks of research vessels touring actual icebergs, even
as I’m feeling such pangs of adrenaline, because I never saw that door
led to an alleyway, all bricks and fire-escape, till painters left it drying, or
just because a thunderhead is forming at the junction, over the yellow box, but,
in fact, I’d drop the lot and come away right now — why not? — with eyes open,
skin porous, drinking up the Tokyo neon, the aurora
over Helsinki, the Waitomo cavern’s glow — just as I’m always drinking... though,
please, let me take this notebook for the chance to tell you — show you — how this works:
how it isn’t the extremes, nor differences, nor changes,
but this making words, where words are not some abstract simulacra
nor the tattered paperback you chucked into your rucksack, but what happens
when the nervous system touches like a taper to a gastap,
and no matter where you are that moment... the world explodes.

Gram Joel Davies

Wasting Time by Looking

For a friend who argued that a poem should not simply look, but think.

But it’s the look of the thing I’m after: flicker and shine
on a leaf, a particular angle of sun where dust-
motes dance, that swelling heave in the pavement that must
be a plane-tree hammering back. Even the rain
falls differently each morning, to sizzle or leap
depth-ringed from puddles, and every crushed-foot bird
pigeons it with its own hobble and flirt. Faces crowd
platform, street, bar with looks I mustn’t let slip.

Too much, you’ll say – I should be constructing a case,
not indulging this raw greed for shapes and colours.
But I was never any good at argument: I lose
sight of the steady line, distracted by a word, a tune,
the glance of intimate or stranger — the enchanted glittering surfaces
there’s never enough time to love or to write down.

Christine Webb