LONG MARCH HOME SESTINA

Who the hell back then would have thought that I could have traced a path all this way from the sullen mullock mounds, perils of half-filled mine shafts, creaking derelict poppet heads craning high over a quartz crushed hill rising among Yilgarn grey-green savannah? My mother was raised in green pastures of Avon River’s winding ways, so surely not. My father? A derelict family when his Welsh Da left the quartz gold reef of Gondwanaland with the thought of richer tin mining among jungle perils.

And instead, now I face professorial perils in a China classroom, or inspect derelict Welsh mining towns crouched in the green mists, finger family gravestones. No thought there of new factories—crystals of quartz in Jiangsu where they’ve lost the Taoist Way.

Or bursting through snowbanks on my way to Valtellina peaks rising above green apple orchards. And who’d have thought I ‘d trudge Tuscan roads? No chipped quartz this time, but marble scree amid perils of Michelangelo’s quarries, now derelict.
That I conversed in tongues all derelict of meaning to my father or mother, of perils at Bologna Station bombed, or quartz carvings smashed by Red Guards on the way to win over dynasties of cultured thought; strange my voice turns from red to green.

And so, landscape a solace, I sought green shades of my homeland once again, my way back to gold-bearing greenstone of derelict mining sites, the scars of greed and perils of fallen stopes, miners entombed in quartz or lungs dusted. Ma, who’d have thought?

For me, such perils began on ridge of quartz with birth thoughts of pain among derelict desert trees, grey-green. Yet it is my way.