For Kirsty

Remember those Ayrshire summers?

Watching salmon leaping in splashes of quick silver under the dark arc of the bridge;

eating wild berries snatched from hedgerows with greedy stained fingers;

throwing sticks at lazy snakes baking unawares on sun-filled rocks;

playing in grey midnight light, our naked feet prickling on shorn hayfields;

running through cool fountains of moist shoulder-high ferns;

dabbing calamine pink on the red of burning nettle rashes;

smelling seaweed and brine in celadon sea breezes;

tasting the salt dusting our skin after a day at the shore;

never ever brushing the knots from our wild tangled hair.

In the long summers of no school the land and her creatures unfolded themselves to us –
willing friends –
opening their arms
in companionship,

granting respite
from the pain and sudden violence
of home,

offering solace
for the profuse sadnesses
of childhood.