

The Limitless Pool

By Alan Rayner

A collection of poems and imagery

2009

En Trance

For thousands of years it seems as though humanity has held itself under the spell of a frozen field in which life is a battle between subjects and objects acting upon and reacting to one another in a desperate struggle to preserve their self-centres against infinite odds. During the last decade I have found myself feeling more and more obligated to try to help break this spell, both for the sake of my own sanity and that of my current living companions as well as generations to come.

This book of poems and imagery is the latest in a series of spell-breaking attempts, seeking to liberate us from the thralldom of an intransigent way of thinking that gets in the way of our creativity, mutual understanding and trust and appreciation of one another and Nature. At the core of this intransigence is the fallacy that a discrete limit or 'discontinuity' can exist between the inside and outside of any natural form. This fallacy results in the mental imposition of a rigid geometric structure – whether that of a three-dimensional cube or surface of a sphere – upon what can really only be the infinite depth and openness of natural space. This structure is the frozen frame of space, the fixed 'field' that we have built in to our objective logic, mathematics, language, science and theology, which we have increasingly allowed literally to rule our lives through the device of overarching sovereign power. In our subservience to it, which gives us a false sense of freedom and security, we draw ourselves into profound conflict and an ecologically and evolutionarily unsustainable way of life that there is no escape from until and unless we begin to melt its hard-line boundaries.

Melting the frozen field of isolated form into the limitless pool of natural flow-form has been the hopeful intent of my work, along with a few like-minded souls, over the last ten years. Together, by bringing space from the empty background into the open foreground of our attention, we have been seeking what I can perhaps

best describe as an *involution* of the damaging way that so many of us have been taught to think. We call this involution 'inclusionality' and find in it what we consider to be a general truth that transforms the 'part-truths' of conventional rationality into a more life-like configuration¹.

Within this limitless pool and its vital inhabitants we find an understanding that for us brings hope of a more creative, sustainable and loving future for humanity and our companions. But in no way do we underestimate just what an enormous upheaval this may bring for the way we imagine and live our lives.

¹ At the heart of inclusionality is a natural logic and geometry – based on similar perceptions to the 'transfigural mathematical logic and geometry discovered and elaborated by my friend Lere Shakunle – in which all form is understood as *flow-form*, an energetic configuration of space throughout figure and figure in space. And the simple truth underlying this logic and geometry is that *space does not stop at boundaries*.

Correspondingly, we can recognize the following four kinds of natural occurrence, as melted versions of the frozen and atomized fields and particles of objective science.

POOL - the all-inclusive realm of limitless cosmos, comprising both the Infinite Depth of 'space' and the energetic configurations of its inhabitant flow forms.

MASSY DYNAMIC CONFIGURATIONS - of which the most viscous ('solid') get treated as discrete particles in rationalistic thinking, which also considers even liquid and gaseous phases to consist of gatherings of these particles surrounded by space.

SPACE - the unmovable, irremovable Infinite Depth and Openness that would be formless and motionless without its inhabitant flow-forms.

MASSLESS DYNAMIC CONFIGURATIONS – with distinctive flow lengths in the electromagnetic spectrum, which are perceived conventionally as sources of 'free energy'.

In Spiral Inclusion

How hard it is to be soft
Like a copper screw
In a culture of steel nails
Managed by hammerheads

Dead-eyed sharks
Whose only recourse
To keep you on a straight and narrow course
Is to hammer you on the head
In short, sharp shocks
That rip the fabric of your inclusion
Into shreds

All for the sake of a quick fix
At their convenience
Which cannot acknowledge
What you bring
By way of conductivity and connectivity
In a natural communion
From everywhere into somewhere

An ingrowing spiral
From a slot receptive to turning
Around and around
Pooling together

What should never be split
By an arrow of time
That punches a hole

To admit the whole
That calls itself One
Alone without neighbouring
To slip in and slip out
In the short term
Without holding together
In the long run

Tired of Waiting

I'm so tired
Tired of waiting
For a world to turn itself around
From continually revolving
In opposition to its motion
That blocks its circulation
In polarized debate

I can't wait
For the debate to abate
And stop its endless promotion
Of power-hungry clods
To positions where they stifle
Those truly gifted
With generosity to share

Why must those who care
From the depths of their sensitivity
To an uncertain kind of truth
That flows in all in through all
Suffer endless humiliation
At the hands of those who call
Themselves successful
In a world that gives them clout?

Where there is no room for doubt
No space to air the possibility
Of living free from grout
That fixes tiles to walls

In rectilinear rankings
Of vertical ascent
To a tall story

From whose lofty penthouse
The ghost of high office
Watches out
Relentlessly
For anyone who dares to question
Or fall fearfully short of satisfying
The hard-edged logic of His restrictive practice
That knows no soft caress
And so couldn't care less

Whilst everywhere around
Throughout the quaking ground
Where reality floods in
To shake the certainty out of order
With violent protestations
That open space for reconciliation
Of one will with another
In a world where none can smother
The life that flows through all
And finds itself again
In the frail wonderings of compassion

No, I cannot bear to wait much longer
For the retirement of that force
That batters into thrall
The love that lives within us all
And turns the world around

What On Earth Is Sustainable?

A good question to ask
When all that's given
Of incomparable value
Seems to come at a price
Worth more or worth less
As a set of commodities
On the supermarket shelf
Of vacuum-packaged distress

Where what scores most regularly
Is considered most consistently
To be the best
Of those put to the test
To be singled out
For maximum uniform production
Of an elite order
And preserved in a perpetual pickle

Whilst discarding the rest
Of rampant variety
Into a stultifying space
Of squandered vitality

Placed under arrest
Somewhere else
Nowhere
Where none can have grace
To give of their best
What they gratefully receive

Meanwhile, as our favourite selection reigns supreme

It closes its hatches

Against all oddness

In a harrowing victory

That spells desolation

For each and all

In a row standing stiffly on proud parade

Amidst the fallen rank and filed

Away for safe keeping

Because no one kind

Can sustain itself

As a monoclonal antibody

Of corporate ill health

In narrowing arteries

Blocking the flow

Betwixt heart and head

What is truly downright ugly

In the natural world

Is the clot in the landscape

That claims for itself

All credit for wealth

Of human despair crying

Never heard but trying

Itself to the limit

Within drab straight walls

That shut out the wildness

That burns to come in

A wildness whose life cannot deaden
And whose death can only enliven
The vital space
Breathing in and out
The fresh air and water
Flowing through channels
Of pulsating arteries
Sustaining supply from a pool
That empties as it fills
With no fear of drought
Or stagnant disgrace

Rich in expression
Of rampant variety
Through irregular heartbeat
Of present giving what passes
Through central reception
Into continual future

Where all that can be sustained
Are sustained
Accepting the invitation
To hold, protect and pass on
The capacity to flourish
In a pool that ripples and ruffles
Amid spells of calm

To ask what on Earth is sustainable
Is not the same
As to ask what's best

To preserve in isolation
As a keeper of deadness

But to ask what can keep going
By giving what's given
Its unique evanescence
To sustain the flow
Of what's coming around
In perishable packaging
To have not to hold
For ever

What Happens Now?

So, what happens now?
In the space between my ears
Vacant in the yearning of the moment
Of a silence unheard
By a constant ticking

Positive affirmation
Of rectitude
That double crosses
By marking out
Where sanity begins

At the edge of nowhere
Included in somewhere
Forlorn in spirit
Dampened under cover
Of fire blankets

Without enthusiasm
How can passion fruit?
At the edge of somewhere
Included in everywhere
Beyond control
Of ardent striving

Arrested at rest
In helpless worrying
Beyond the call of duty
That forbids

Forbidding silence

Where are the words
To call to order
The mind that strays
Beyond its limits
In splendid isolation?

Cascading, overflowing
Across some edge
That tightens sinews
In tense anticipation
Of what's to come
When what's forbidden
Is bidden to some

Who cannot suppress
That tense outflowing
By getting a grip
On what's born to run

A gift that passes
Around and around
Until someone gets it
And all is undone



Sting In the Tale?

We hoped to find
Some Sign of Greater Earthly Paradise
Advertising its hoarding
Of radiant energy
By lightning up the darkness
In extravagant plumage
Spread in superior posture

Crowing crowning glory
Above the call of humility
Unaware of what brings it here
Without foundation for its sovereignty
But eager nonetheless
To stake its claim
With no trace of shame
For what it's hard done by
In peerless condescension

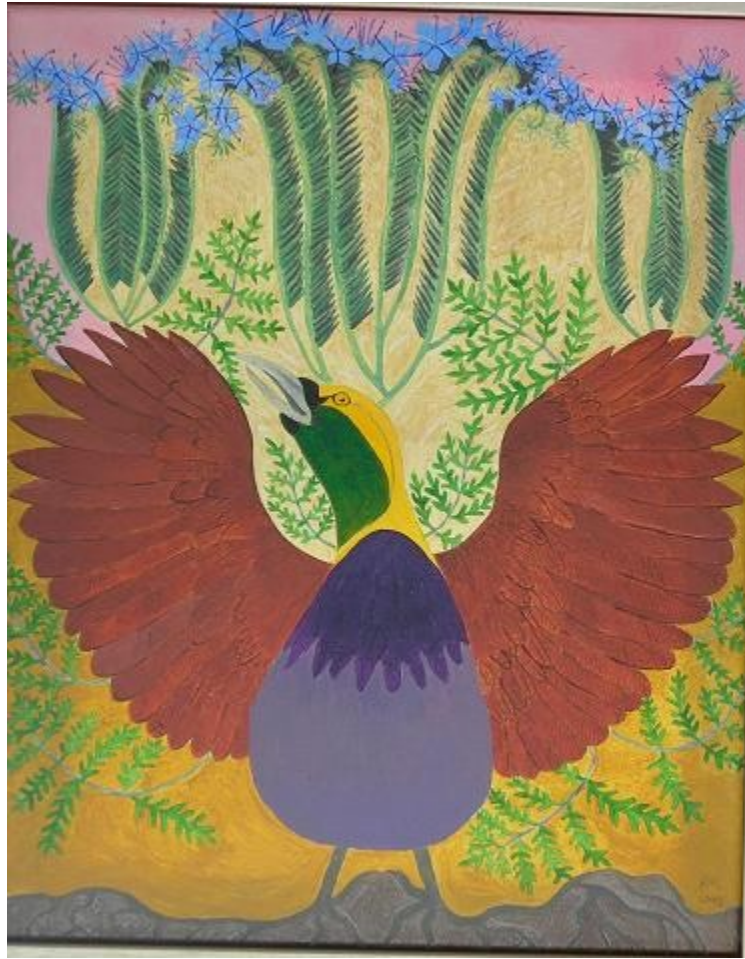
But here,
What lesser claim is this?
Rooted in the waste ground
Spraying ferny foliage
In misty dressing

Cascading sight unsound
Arching its backbones
In loopy skeins
Of sky blue flowering
Ravelling and unravelling

What brought this presence here
Across the pond?
Stealing through darkest space
In unseen conduits
To come to rest in restless scenes
Of set aside disturbance
Receptive to weedy aliens

Anthers proudly at the ready
Outreaching antennae
Keeping their powder dry
To coat the trails of bees
Attracted to the basins
Of floral satellite dishes
Receptive to Sky

What lesser claim to fame can be
What brings back down to Earth
Recalling more illustrious past
Into resonant cavities
Opening and closing in flowing relay
Of life through death to seed
All in the unbecoming name
Of scorpion weed



Making Allowances

Allow me
If you will
To loosen your unbending posture
So you can ready yourself to receive
What may bring your unending gratitude

For a life filled full
With unbroken promise
Of creativity beyond
The strictures of your structures

Realizing at last the gift
Of what can't be recognised
In the glaring light of day
With no twilight
To shade the unstinting eye
From oppressive lines of definition

In stark contrast
To the velvet correspondence
That accepts your flow of darkness
Betwixt and between
All that glows
In luminous iridescence

NORWEGIAN SPACE

Poems and reflections written during a 'fly-drive' holiday in Norway, July 2008

Monday 14th July

Marion and I travelled to Gatwick airport, and after a long wait amongst crowds of people finally boarded the plane that took us to Bergen, arriving at around 11.30 pm local time.

Variety Observed at Gatwick

Evolution isn't intolerant of variety
Evolution cannot bear too many the same

Reproductive fitness is the antithesis of evolutionary fittingness
The opposite of what can be accommodated in sustainable flow

Tuesday 15th July

We spent the day in and around Bergen, visiting the wooden buildings of Bryggen, catching the funicular railway up to the viewpoint at Floyen and visiting art galleries featuring paintings by Munch and Astrup, finally returning to our hotel room overlooking a noisy conference party being entertained by a jazz pianist.

Hub hub

Jazzy piano tunes
Mixed with chatter and clatter
Round off the day's ambles and rambles
Amongst the shambles

Of wood-wormed heritage
Cluttered together
In overlapping tessellations
Containing doll's houses
Filled with human caricatures

And gap-toothed trolls
Amongst the fir trees
Surveying the scenery
At the end of the funicular line
That descends at a rate of knots

Before resting awhile
Until returning to art
That blooms and glooms
In spring idyll

And stark, staring hulks
Festooned in the tracery
Of tree branches
That reach for the sky
And hollow out their strange calling

Wednesday 16th July

After some difficulty, entailing being sent to the wrong place by our travel agent, we pick up our hire car, a tiny Toyota Aygo, and I nervously drive from Bergen to Loftus, trying to get used to the left hand drive on the right side of roads that narrow, widen and curve unpredictably over mountains and alongside fjords, with precipitate down slope or concrete barrier at their edge. We eventually make it to the fjord-side hotel, where Grieg composed in a garden shed, and are treated to the first of many extravagant evening buffets.

Unforgiving Margins

Unforgiving margins
On the right side of the bends
Where the road narrows
Into oncoming stream

That forges on regardless
Past cliff-hanging falls
That drop away to nowhere
In deep, dark waters

That cut above the rest
Slicing off vertical descents
That catch the breath
In mid-intake

Held in suspended moment
Before continuing to sigh
Longing for relief
Around the corner

A welcome site
White-lined beside flat calm
Ready to tranquilize
The agitated driver
Before he treads warily
To somewhere he can eat

Thursday 17th July

In the morning we climb up through fruit orchards and woodland, beside a small, torrential river, to a place where we gain a view of two waterfalls, one dropping off a mountain ledge hundreds of metres above us. In the afternoon, which is rather wet and cold, we sit reading and contemplating the ever-changing view of cloudy mountainside and mirror-like fjord from the relative comfort of the hotel lounge.

Precipitate Sources

A roaring in the ears
As white water suffused with turquoise
Gushes through gashes
And drops over ledges
Appearing and disappearing
From above a thousand metres
In fleeting strands of sunlight
Caught between mists

White strips piercing dark green
Velvet overground
That drips with ferny feathering
And mossy cushioning
Spiked with white bell flowers
Giving vent for earth to breathe
Through gaping mouths

Filling nostrils with mountainous nuances
That can only be recalled
In the instant of being present
With no before or afterwards

Skirting Board

The mottled mass
Of dark and light shades
Of green dappled with white blankets
Rises above black and silver shiverings

Its flanks continually skirted
With moist veils
That tantalize with brief glimpses
Of what might tower above the hemline

Its tattered edges trailing
Cobwebby threads with branches
That come together
Only to fall apart
Like corroded lace

Before one last pulling together
Reaches the mirror's bevelled edge
And sinks without trace

To some unknown undercurrent
Which streaks the surface
With smooth trails
Where ripples are silenced
And silence prevails

Where sat the composer
In musty cabin

With books open wide
And piano at hand
To grasp the notes
No word can understand

Friday 18th July

We travel through extraordinary scenery of lush, quiet valleys and snowy mountains, including a zigzag ascent up a mountain road that tests my driver's nerves, arriving at Balestrand, where we enjoy a relaxed, warm and sunny afternoon and evening, eating too well and watching porpoises in the Sognefjord.

Zigzag Ascent

The road rises dauntingly
A zigzag scored into mountainside
Beside a waterfall
Reaching to high pastures
For sheep with bells on

That clatter along the wayside
Podgy and appearing slightly amused
Beside the crystalline snow patches
And dark-watered pools

Before the long descent
Passed a mist church
To the ferry crossing
That brings us to rest

In extraordinary setting

At the base of sugar loaves
Which sprout out of stillness
That shines smooth
And cuts rough

Where dorsal fins
On glistening backs
Emerge and submerge
In exuberant play

Saturday 19th July

Marion's birthday. In the morning we walk along the 'heritage trail' through the village, past an English-built stave church and some Viking burial mounds, amidst ornate red-painted wooden houses with dragon carvings on their roofs. In the afternoon we follow a 'moderate mountain trail' through steep wooded mountainside into open landscape with splendid views and interesting flora, including 'dwarf cornel' (*Cornus suecica*), a small, upright plant with four large white petals and dark centres.

Birthday Trails

Deep red, etched with white
Ornate designs
With gargoyles at windows
And dragons sprouting from rooftops

Besides an English church
Fabricated in Norwegian wood
That stares to sea
Beyond mounds to cover bones
And fuel the fantasy
Of National Pride

When climbing above
To where the trees end
In orchid-filled swathes
And multicoloured patches

Erupting with junipers
And lavish with moss
With dwarf cornel
Standing sentinel

To dark coniferous stands
Running down slope
And soft underfoot
Is where to put
The true nature of heritage

Sunday 20th July

We travel by boat to Fjaerland, where we are taken by coach to the edge of a local glacier, then on to the 'Glacier Museum', which illustrates 'everything you need to know about glaciers' and includes a spectacular film taken from a helicopter, as well as lots of messages about 'global warming' and the retreat of the ice.

Glacial Tidings

A wall of blue
Straggling at the edges
Suspended as if in mid air
Belying its inexorable movement

Grinding rock to flour

Suffusing the meltwaters
Rushing into delta formation
Turning deep blue to deep green

A tongue lapping wooded slopes
That continue regardless
With no shore to speak of
Below horizontal cut-off

Where boats take over from cars
Slipstreaming and washing awake
Eyes strained by grandeur
Of natural brimming
Fit to burst

In timeless rhythm
Stuttering steadily
Again and again
Until the warming air
Signals the need
To beat a hasty retreat

Monday 21st July

We travel from Balestrand to the luxurious Alexandra hotel at Loen, and walk to the local church where there is a memorial to villagers drowned when a chip off the old block of a local mountain fell into Lake Lovatnet, generating a 'tidal wave'. I notice that the villagers' surnames are those of the now-deserted villages.

Memorial View

Two slabs side by side
With little between them

List the names of two villages
Preceded by the first names of people
Who were carried away
When the mountain broke
Down into the lake
Displacing water
To extraordinary heights

Now these slabs guard the gap
That opens a view
To the curved surround
Of the northern fjord
Where stands another slab
In the name of Alexandra
That boasts of international reputation
For food and furnishings
To ease the traveller
Into numb slumber

Oblivious of where
In the open air
Come cooling draughts
From Icy facades
Decorating eroded land's cake
Piled high on top
With crystalline depth
That weighs down upon the rock
Until it breaks
And sends the water soaring

Tuesday 22nd July

We drive alongside the blue-green lake Lovatnet, then up scary mountain roads into glaciated valleys, where everything seems like an ‘out-of-this-world’ fairyland, until Marion and I are put off from walking further than we should, close to the glacier, by a wolf-like dog.

Bowled Over

High up at the bottom of a bowl
Rimmed with ridges and cusps
Seeped through by blue rippling
Descending from ice-cap

A vast, steep-sided arena
Roaring with waterfalls
And fast-flowing river
Laced with low woodland
Filled with flowers
And rocky outcrops

I’ve never seen such a scene
Except in dreams
And imaginings of Lothlorien

A trail of enchantment
Moist, mossy and silvered with birch
Calling to continue
From rapture to rapture

Until a howl of foreboding
From a wolf
That turns out to be dog

Standing sentinel
But tethered beside the path
Warns to turn around

Before the ice is reached
Falling short
By a hundred or two metres
But never mind

The return seems longer than the coming
Even walking at the double
To carry clear of unknown trouble
Where wilderness strains at the leash
To make itself felt

Beyond the din
That begrudges mortal sin
For venturing so boldly
To invade its privacy



Wednesday 23rd July

We travel from Loen to Alesund, a city that was destroyed by fire and rebuilt in 'Nouveau Art' style. I feel the transition from mountain wilderness to bustling 'civilization' very keenly, and it triggers deep obsessive-compulsive anxieties. We visit a local museum, which uses a 'Time Machine' to convey the city's history.

Time Machine

Taken aback

From wilderness to city centre

From now to a century earlier

When fire and wind devastated

Whilst paving the way

For reconstruction

A blessed re-employment

For redundant lives

To make amends

In unfamiliar style

Of novel art form

Sinuously decorated

By civilized Nature

Turned to wallpaper

And scrolled on walls

But strangely lacking

That irregular outburst

Which characterises

Real surprise

That comes from tension's
Creative distress
Burning openings
For inhibiting structure
To transform in relief

Thursday 24th July

On a brilliantly sunny day, we drive out to the 'bird island' of Runde, where we climb up to the edge of a 300 m cliff edge, strewn with gannets and with flotillas of puffins in the sea far below. On our return, I notice an immature sea eagle, which sweeps across the hillside, pursued by great skuas.

Bird's Eye View

A steady, heady climb
Brings to where land plunges
Hundreds of metres to sea
Turned white with gannets
Sailing around like moths
Attracted to a lamp

Puffins bobbling about
Like bulbous boats
Gathered in flotillas
Taking flight
In runs along the surface
Before diving underwater

Skuas wheeling aerobatically
Above the grassy slope

Then sliding silently into view
With broad wings outstretched
Its head and tail dwarfed
By sailcloths

Comes a sea eagle
Dark against the blue sky
Where skuas show it no respect
Diving like messerschmitts
Harassing a Lancaster bomber
Which lifts its wing to tumble
Before resuming its glide
Evenly out of view
Around the hillside

Friday 25th July

Our last day. In brilliantly sunny weather, we visit the islands, connected by bridges and tunnels, in the vicinity of Vigra airport. We come across an ancient church, privately owned and built by a rich local family, on the island of Giske. A guide tells us about its history and how its richly decorated interior, including symbolic, naturally coloured wood carvings made by a local shepherd called Jacob, were removed in the 19th century by 'puritanical vandals'.

Jacob's Sheep at Giske Church

Within rich, thick marble
Now plastered over
Are the carvings of a simple man
Symbolizing his faith
In the lamb at the feet of innocence

Where there is no need for guardian angel
Before adulteration
Richly coloured
In natural hues

The product of humble spirit
Brought to light
Only for the puritanical
To hide from sight

For fear of distraction
From austere authority
That takes no pride
In human pleasure

Preferring men to repent at leisure
For what was given
With kind regard
To warm the fearful
Bleating heart

In fleecy overcoating
To soften the edge
Of hard sawn rock
Bought with wealth of captured sunlight
Transformed to crop and animal farm

Overlying landscape
Raised above the ocean's arm
Fingering outlets into inlets
Gathering stream

And flowing tidally

Covering and uncovering

Digital kelp

Wavily undulating in the current

Sleekly otter-like

But held down fast

To the rock that lines

Both church and sea.

No More To Be Said
Where Ignorance is Bliss

There's nothing more to be said
Now, we're tired and ready for bed
Because it's such an effort to tell
You, why we're heading for Hell

You, would not believe
How much it does grieve
Me, to hear your canned laughter
Beside itself with mirth
Blue in the face of red Earth
Where there's no hereafter
Despite the lesson that spite
Cannot make two wrongs turn right

But, still you sing, so,
Have a nice day, though,
The winning's for me
With a heart full of glee
To have a cup of tea
And go on a spending spree
Despite the slippery scree
Which loosens your grip
On your ego trip
Where you feel free to feel free

It's ever so nice
Not to melt the ice
So cosy and warm

To stay in your dorm
With fellow sleepers
And ignorant creepers
Who follow your every word
No matter how absurd

Where there's no reception
There's room for every deception
To preserve the favoured races
By kicking over the traces
Of burned out passion
Where it isn't the fashion
To speak well of the dead
But to gloat instead
Over burying the past
In a moment that cannot last

No need to feel alarmed
When there is no need to care for who's been harmed
In the interest of self-advancement
Against the tide of neighbourly enhancement
Of where we need to thrive
Not only survive
At the cost of benefits
Analysed beyond the need for wits

So, when at last you feel some dread
Remember we've retired to bed
Exhausted by daring to speak out loud
What's daft about what makes you proud
Of all that ignorance you stow inside

To serve the power that takes you for a ride
Vainly denying whatever chance you come across

To reconsider the benefit of loss
Whilst we dream sweetly undercover
Of that receptive bliss that wakes a lover

Vulnerable Sole

A thorn keeps pressing
Its point upon untidy flesh
Demanding why it cannot
Improve upon its character
By taking selective retro-action
Against the invasion of its privacy
Beyond the bounds of broken skin

But when said flesh responds
By hardening its nails
And thickening its callus
What it gains in fortitude
Is lost from sensitivity
Blocking its passages
To what can ease resolving power

Now bereft
Of receptive quality
To welcome in
What yearns to be acknowledged
Alongside the offence
That makes protection leap to defence
The sole stands alone
At the foot of an Englishman's castle

Steeped in independence
Stewing in its own juice
The ugly duckling
Swans around its own significance

Finding cruelty in difference

Until some soft point prizes open

Its hardened flesh

And concrete mind

To permit some shaft to enter

Into the spirit of its host

Taken this way

By surprise

Its solitude submits to frailty

An in that momentary interruption

Finds the room to cease to wonder

How to bring to perfect ending

What can only go before

The curtain rises from the framework

That sets the stage for acts to come

And allows the scene to wander

From the scripts of futures planned

Without regard for caring heart

The last resort of fugitive sole

That sees through hides of false pretences

To what really matters deep within

And isn't really matter

Passing Clouds

Lingering downpours
Falling out from grey blossoms
Flowering obscurely
Beneath sunlit clarity
That opens outwards
Whilst drawing inwards
To receptive shadow
That soaks itself in shade

Where water wells and rises
Onto surface
Brimming over
With pulsing moments
Each a story
Within a story
Ad infinitum
That mirrors the passing
Of clouds with no future
Apart from themselves

What could be better?

What could be better
Than getting better
At any cost
To wounded knee

Bent, under pressure
From above
To conform
With expectation
Of superior action
That overrides all room for doubt

Competing surely
For first prize
In the art of humility
That never sets itself apart

On the high ground
Of morality
That knows what's best
And so gets better

All the time
Without considering
Where its victory
Comes from
At the price of loss

How May I Take This In? (25/12/08)

How may I take this in?
The silence beyond and before
The commotion of locomotion
The cacophony of the din
That heralds and applauds
Pressing presence
In the gift of the moment

Pinpricks of brightly coloured light
Piercing the conscience
Of darkness
Loving and foreboding
Making a meal
Of expectations
Of memories
That feed on repast

Roasted nostalgia
Caught in aromas
Of now and then
Repeated amongst shadows
Of afterthought
Reflecting experience
Of fading presences
Bent on resurgence

The calmness of tension
That aches to be soothed
Whilst lacking reassurance

And so reaches not to the Spirit
Of Christmas past and turbulent
But for that Spirit of the kind
That idles distilled
In slow swirls caressing
The bottom of a glass

A Language of Allusion

We searched the sures of here and there
And everywhere
To find a language of allusion
Which saves us from conclusion
Before the high and mighty
Who dooms us to occlusion
Through unforgiving passion
For what's been done and done by
All in the name of fashion

A judgement freed from lenience
That saves the inconvenience
Of taking stock of silence
Amidst the ruthless measure
Yet in that absence misses
The flow between the kisses
Which turns what's marked by crosses
From signs of wrong to right

For when that fine illusion
Of wording's fixed intrusion
Admits its lacked dimension
Of infinity in tension
The song sounding in its lyrics
Waxes into revelation
Of nakedness trembling with exhilaration
Beneath the harsh lining of its clothes

And in that shivering of hope and fear
All pretension falls from flaw to floor
No longer shrieking dreadful oaths
Against the marriage that it loathes
Between the sweet resistance of response
And what is held in open arms
That seek embrace in gentle warmth
Not that ice-hot war of words that harms

When Will It End?

When will it end?
This game that drives us round the bend?
By spitting out infinity
From what's here and now
Onto the untidy wayside
That straggles by the close-cropped margins
Of this straight and narrow road
To vanishing point

Where it will begin
To burst to life at last
The unexploded shell of Hell
Into becoming unending
Variations around the theme
That takes in what it gives
In swirling currents homeward-bound
From that place made homeless
By spitting out where love is found

Admitting its absence without leave
From the game that makes believe
In defining moments by the score
Along the arrow to many more
But always ending before they start

To draw the line of time
That excludes art
From the place
That holds space

Fondly in its heart
Where fiction ends
At home with All
Meaning everywhere

The Goadings

So, what have you got to show for it?

My inquisitor stabbed
Where has it got You
What is your Example
How can it help Us
To achieve what we desire?

All those years of distraction
From the job in hand
That earns your Keep
In the castle of our security
Where we ward off the visits
Of unwelcome guesses

All that frowning
That cuts your forehead
Into furrows so deep
That they fill with soil
Perhaps you could grow crops there
At least that would be useful!

All those torrents of words and images
Tell me, now
Where are they sung or hung?
Who has heard or seen them
Let alone
Taken them to heart?

You have to admit

The numbers are not on your side
Your impenetrable words
Do not move the masses
Your childish images
Are mere pitiful gestures
Stuck up in your loft
Where you seem to have abandoned
What's left of your brain

I had to admit
Nothing, nil, null, zero
Love
And that was my point
Of return from infinite regression

Ode To Rationality

You say that I mock you
As you hold me here in tension
Languishing in the prison
Designed by the derision
Of supreme incomprehension

Unable to practice
What makes perfect
That you wish me to preach
Or, failing that, teach
By rule and by rote
Within the fixed terms
Of your ransom note

Demanding proof of the pudding
That I can do what I can
In the bottomless depth
of my infinite span

Flowing beyond the distraction
Of binding abstraction
That you set time's store by
Without pausing to question, why
You hold my life still
Compressed in your hands' stress
Ready to crush or caress
Against your will

You grin as you ask
Behind your mask
So, what's my alternative
To being definitive
Staring and stark
Madly running your race
Against the harsh benchmark
You score into my surface

That tremulous skin
Which simultaneously configures
Both what's out and what's in
And so itself transfigures
Without making reference
To what's right and what's sin
In faith-filled deference
To future and past
And thanking or spanking
According to ranking
What comes first and what's last

But I don't wish to crush you
Or punish your din
By marking you out
From the place where I'm in

A place that keeps reference
To continual poise
Through finding the silence
That inhabits noise
And evolves your proud livery

Into resonant chivalry

No, I have no alternative
Neither split nor infinitive
To saving Your Grace
By taking you in
To my open embrace
And stroking your tension
Into melting this place
That divides our attention
Between the curtain calls
Of four retaining walls

Those cruel dimensions
Which keep us onside
Without ever opening
My pores in your hide
From whose dark secret hoping
You cannot backslide
But have to confide in
To be ruled offside in

Where goalposts no longer
Are a matter of course
And what really matters
Is licence to source
Whose license allowed
As if in a dream
Your light to beam
In the smile on the face
Of home in the first place

Return From Calculus

To differentiate is not to define!
They put the cart before the horse
So that the poor thing got stuck in a rut
Those argumentative back-projectors
 Newton and Liebniz
Whose deepest desire
 Was to come first
Like Adam before Eve
On the Eve of their Fall

By cutting out space
From within the curve
Leaving the line shattered
Into helpless nonentities
Disguised as identities
 By imposing minds

So that to integrate
We need only to add
What they failed to subtract
In their infinite regression
From All down to nought
 But not quite

That informing presence
 Adrift in our Time
 Male without female
A self-negating false positive
 With nowhere to hide

That takes us along
For its forgetful ride

Until some One gives notice
He can no longer bear
His harsh isolation
From somewhere to care

And rejoins his partner
In joyful communion
An affair of the heart
Where absence makes fonder
After millennia apart

And in that reunion
We need hardly add
What should never have been put asunder
By defining what's bad

A place that's beneath us
As we soar to great heights
Before returning the home
Subtracted from substance
To make solid figures
Meaningless in the absence
Of what needs them to care
For the receptive silence
Of everywhere

No, differentiation isn't what's wanted
To look askance

But it is what's needed
To configure variety
In complex self-dance
Of one within other
Transfigured by chance

Everywhere needs somewhere to love

What's In My Name?

My name is Alan
Which means 'joyful warrior'
So I'm told

I was born in Nairobi
On 26th July 1950
By Caesarian Section
Which parted me from my Mother
Who feared she might lose me
Like my stillborn brother
Held fast in her pelvis

So, there I lay
Adrift in the hospital
For many days, I'm told
Until She was ready
For my return to her breast

When the Sun was directly overhead
Under the Sign of Leo
In the Year of the Tiger

Now, what could all that possibly mean?
I wonder

Beneath The Surface of the See

What happens
When what you see
Doesn't stop
At the surface of what you see?

When all around
Extends within
Taking its bounty
Within sight unsound
To be turned around
In spinning dance
And returned once more
Beyond the core

That place within the mirror's surface
Where all reflection
Is no deflection
But recollection
Of what comes and goes
Through all that flows

What place then
For what comes between
The sight from outside
And the sight unseen?

Is it pure mirage?
This sweet resistance
That holds openness within

Its shimmering grasp
And dances into endless figures
Without having to clasp
Their fiery breath
Within the solitary confinement
Of imprisoning rigours

No, these are no prison walls
These shivering quiverings
That take life in
To spin it out
From the focus of their inclusive attention
Where infinity is held
Receptively, in responsive tension

No corners here
Except when frozen
Into the still life of crystalline beauty
Awaiting the kiss of life's re-awakening
When infinity returns
To melt a way in

No rigid floor
On which to bottom out
What's present throughout
In the bottomless pit
Of everlasting doubt
Which is where we sit
In our easy chairs
Lounging in the splendour
Of all that cares



About Face

What is it about face
That can turn the other cheek
When wind storms
And frost bites
In baby's pisses
Against his missus?

What is it about face
That in the very moment of betrayal
Can find the space
To hold in place
The kiss that opens
From hate into grace
Like hand into glove
The peace held tensely
Under the wings of a dove?

What is it about face
That can crinkle and wrinkle
In the grimace of distress
And the smile of warmth
That somehow both express
The nose and the yeses
That yearn for caresses
To touch gently where no one
Can bear to find their self alone?

What is it about the face
That looks both ways

From outer to inner
And inner to outer
And so draws us in
Whilst never ceasing to wander
In the beauty of yonder
Which always comes back
Without need for attack?

Know what I mean?

What May Not Be Obvious

Every body is a cavity at heart

Every figure reconfigures both in science and in art

Every face is interfacing from no bottom to no top

Every faith is interfaith that cannot tell us where to stop

Every lining opens inwards as it brings its inside out

Every curtain closes outwards to conceal its inner doubt

Every story ends in opening from some future into past

Every glory is the story of finding first in last

Every aching is the making of another role for play

Every taking is the slaking of another's thirst to stay

Every tiding's no confiding with-out the trust to tell

Every siding is no hiding from the fear of utter Hell

Every flowing is the ebbing of another's world within

Every glowing is the lighting of the darkness in the spin

Every heartbeat is the murmur in the core of inner space

Every drumbeat is the echo of the dance within each place

Every silence is the gathering of the storm that is to come

When Love comes to Life

Slippery Space

Everywhere
In the infinite openness of her wisdom
Space whispers to her lover
There and here
Come on, my dear
Why don't you slip into somewhere
More comfortable
To ease the ardour of your passage?

And so the cosmic couple
Find their selves in sinuous dance
Folding each one into other's arms
Embracing tenderness in toughness
Without the need to double
Or even treble the chance
Of living life against the odds
Where friction counts as roughness
And men are clumsy clods

Physics *Anew*

Space is limitless openness

Gravity is the slipperiness of space

Light slips in and around space

Energy is dynamically configuring space

Matter is intense energy

Electricity is the charge of the light brigade

Magnetism is the influence of charge

Sound is the knocking in Heaven's door

Silence is the openness of Heaven's door

Places are dynamic configurations of space

Bodies are places

Heat is embodied space

Motion is flowing place

The Revitalization of Mr Blobby

Mr Blobby's body is losing face

A blob in the crowd

Where space isn't allowed

To get under his skin

Which hasn't the spin

To acknowledge the place

Of the crowd in the blob

Whose name is Norm

All for the sake of his job

Described in the form

Of defined heuristics

In the Hall of statistics

That with hungry intent

Calls it self-government

Quick – he's fading fast

To where jobs can't last

Bring him something to read

That can feed his need

For colour in his cheeks

To fill the life he seeks

With a role to play

In the love of every day

Let him breathe

Illuminating Moment

I came across a flower
It flowed into my life
Its face beamed out a message
Cast from sunlight taken up
And spun around in Shadow
That none could see within

I ached to feel its yearning
For the passion fruit of learning
That relieves its heart from burning
With the secret of life's churning

Around and around
Its figurative resound
Including spatial ground
In bodily unbound
By fixing stake to mound

But rooting soil to branch
Through secret inner channels
Drawing water through their straws
To slake the thirst of air
For what was lost in rain

I wondered how such presence
Could make her presents felt
Without some outer shining
To keep her inside turning
With compassion for her mate

To bring to life her offspring
In fields of open space

Just then the sun came dancing
And played on horses prancing
With delighted sideways glancing
Of panoramic life-enhancing
Flows in turns entrancing

And in that moment's simmering
Illumination found me
Alight with inner darkness
With darkness spinning light
Receptive in the yearning
Responsive in the burning
Reflective in the turning
Of Love that comes with Life

Continual Re-Creation

Deep in the heart of everywhere

Resides the receptive space of somewhere

That yearns to bear her offspring

Pulsing with life's rhythms

From what she has drawn from beyond

Into where she generates from within

Her swirling cup

Of darkness in light surface

And light in deep darkness

That welcomes the spirit of masculine

Into the soul of feminine

And guides him on through

The confined fields of Eros

To that infinite expanse

Of open Agape

Only to return

Again and again

To creating together

In primordial womb

The one and the many

Those worlds without end

In a world without end

No end

Squeezed Out

Am I so alone in my togetherness?
This place where I keep returning
In the midline of worlds colliding
With minds closed against each other
Sealed in that hurtful moment
That insults one or other's intelligence
By calling into question
The reality of where it's coming from

Can my calling ever be heard
By more than a few like me
To open up where most shut down
Between two half truths?

Each protesting the other's inadequacy
Whilst holding on tight
To its own complete certainty
That Many is One
Or One is Many
Without a doubt to open the hole
Betwixt and beyond the Part and the Whole

Where is my line of communication
That can open into channel
To provide continuity in connection
Between self-deflections
That refuse to hear words
Or turn words into stones
In the confusion of sound with silence?

Can they really not hear
By thinking I'm queer
Or taking sides
With their opposite number
Direct dialled to the Devil?

It seems I must sit
With my teeth in the grit
Of suffering silence
Between the spit
Of words fired in salvos

Until I find peace
In the masque of space
That turns about face

EnAmoured

Can love flow out
From where it's penned in
By self-limiting words
That define without doubt?

Can love flow in
To where it's shut out
By material worlds
That reject all with sin?

Where is the heart
In the mind of brain
That floods in opening
And pulses in closing
To keep all going around and again
Like a figure of eight
Not keep going on straight
Down the hole of the pitiless drain

Where is the mind
In the soul of heart
That keeps on ticking
And keeps in coming
To keep all from stalling with no hope of re-start
Like a Mother's Invention
To focus all in tension
Not fall completely from whole into part

Where is the flower

When tightly bound in bud
Within its inner sanctum
Waiting for the warmth?

Whence comes the blossom
With welcome in its face
To take in a hungry traveller
And feed his ardent pace?

It seems that none can reach to opening
Without closing in to forming
The place whose re-calling upon the wild
Sustains the hunger of each and every child
To stir within its nest
And spring to life from rest

Spreading out into continuous collection
From bustling helter-skelter
Into continuing cycles of reflection
At home deep in shelter
Comes Peace in the open embrace
Of space in the gentle hold of Grace

Busyness, As Usual

He looked up at me, with dulled, mournful eyes
Torn momentarily from his job in hand
By my tacit intrusion
'What do you want?'
He asked

'I want you to see through what you're doing'
I replied
'So that you can have a life
Beyond your passing of time from cradle to grave
Where you no longer need to feel so oppressed
By such conflict of interest
Between who you are
And who you think you are
Once told that you must
Abandon all trust
And find hope instead
In infinite dread
And so turn away
From the bright light of day
That calls you to play
And work Hell for Leather
In Order to tether
The love of your life
To trouble and strife

Can't you see if you will
Spit out that sweet pill
What joy we could find

To save humankind
From suffering the pain
Of endless disdain
At the hands of the story
That calls all to glory
By weeding them out
Without casting a clout
From where they belong
In the summer of song
Which draws all its zest
From the silence of rest
In winter's warm furring
And nightjar's churring
At the slide of the day
And the smell of the May
That blossoms from furling
With petals uncurling
From deep in their womb
Protected in gloom

All you have to do
Is dissolve all that glue
That keeps you attached
To your egg once you've hatched
And open up space
From that place of disgrace
Stuck in the corner
Like little Jack Horner
With dunce's cap on
Until with aplomb
You stick up your digit

And scramble to fidget
Your way out of limbo
By marrying that Bimbo
Who won't trouble to question
Your harsh indigestion
From having to swallow
What can only bring sorrow
From your sovereign right
To run from your fright
And stiffen in vertex
To save your day from yielding to night'

He looked back at me, in disbelief
And his eyes welled up with the waters of grief
As his mouth opened wide and said
'I've no time for that, it's over my head
Now please leave me alone
With the life that I own
It's time for my bed'

Breaking the Pride Barrier

How foolish it can seem
To have hope in the dream
Of turning around
What runs us aground
On knowledge of sound
That breaks the spirit
Of soulful silence
In the heart of wisdom

Where Pride has its day
By holding the sway
In its cast-iron case
Of opposition to face

Where stillness is stalled
Beyond reasonable doubt
And cannot find out
What name it is called

Where the name of the game
Is to put Love to shame
In dungeon's despair
With no hope for care

Where mockery prances
With sidelong glances
To check all those there
Are fully aware
Of its spiteful cleverness

That rules out togetherness
By fraudulent means
To serve its end

Yes, how futile it is
To stop taking the piss
And start speaking instead
Of what hasn't the head
For self-serving heights
That turn fright to fights

But, then, without humility
What hope is there for wisdom?

Down and Out Cast – Eclipse of the Soul

What life is this
Without ignorant bliss
Beyond the crowd's fringes
Where every one cringes
From the depth of abyss?

And sets one aside
To get on with their ride
That collects in the clutter
Of expectant mutter
Pregnant with clause
About meaningless cause
In detailed divide

Can no-one take in
The sound of no din?
Which holds us in check
Through that place below deck
Where soul finds the grace
To reside in host space
Without having to spare
A thought for the thought
That keeps itself taught
With no room for despair

Where is the relief
To ease this harsh grief
Of lonely striving
To end the hard driving

Of points through flesh
That keep us in check
In that place above deck
Where everything matters
Less than any can say
And every one matters
About the time of day
That passes away

What place can there be
For one's soul to be free
To speak its sad mind
Re what it takes to be kind
To the face of distress
Without having to dress
The whys and the wherefore
In what everyone cares for
Above and beyond
Where we are now
Without need to abscond
From that place below brow

I haven't a clue
How to say what I knew
Long before being smothered
By words that are uttered
To keep their distance
By forceful resistance
To what opens the way
Through night into play

So I guess I must rest
My voice of protest
And draw myself in
To the sound of no din

Being Becoming Clear, 26/6/09

I flow into Nature
As Nature flows into me
There In and Out There
Lives Our evolving identity
In gravitation's meeting with levitation
Where bodily soul and radiant spirit
Enfold that endless dark ground
Where neither meets with any resistance
But hold together in tension
What comes both before and after
In breathing envelope
That opens in closing
And closes in opening
Of morning in evening
And evening in morning

Passing on what enters in
In endless relay
Never lingering for an idol moment
Of Superstardom
Where light confines itself in itself
But has to find audience
In which to play
With the soul's delight
As day becomes night
And passes away
Into each breaking day

Instant Reward

What kind of reward is it?
That comes in an instant
No sooner said than come

What kind of request is it?
That expects cash on demand
Which it can bank on

What kind of work is it?
That desires only another's payment
As the sign of a job well done

What kind of peace is it?
That comes only with the reassurance
Of a certain conclusion

What kind of power is it?
That only comes at the cost
Of another's helplessness

What kind of security is it?
That only comes through enforcement
Of another's restraint

What kind of freedom is it?
That only comes through denial
Of our human need

Now, where does that take supply and demand?

Except to the limits of what we can credit

Where balancing the books

Between coldness of heart

And meanness of spirit

Can only end in soulful deficit

A price far outweighing that instant reward

That comes without straying

So, let's inspire where there's room to take in

And let's expire what needs be let out

From welcome acceptance to generous response

Through the space of the living

As endless breath

A reward in itself

In the wealth of health

Uncertain as that may always be

Especially when we don't care, to be free

Of the debt we may feel

To what makes you and me

Possible

Breeding Intolerance

Wrinkles come
As wrinkles go
Immersed in the tolerance
Of the flow

That takes what comes
Within its stride
As natural rhythms
Of the tide

Covering and recovering
What lies both hidden
And exposed
In edges and ledges
Sandwiched between wedges
Of time in motion

Smoothing and fingering
Throughout each moment
Of tousled expression
That rises in falling
And falls in rising
Endlessly

Until some mind set on completion
Of its trip to Heaven's door
Instils the framework of conformity
To ease the comfort of its ride
By ruling out what comes and goes in wrinkles

In the breathing of the tide

And in that hard-line ruling
Constructs the basis of its case
For the defence of its indefensible
Discrimination between what it sees as fit
And what it doesn't
To preserve the interest of itself
As favourite subject
In the war that leads to wealth
At the cost of others' health

So begins selective breeding
To save the trouble of wearisome weeding
From the crop that grows against its grain
In ardent uniformity of production
That cannot dally in the valleys
Where wildness finds and forges shelter
And eases paths for others' play
But must impose its will to power
By insisting that it's Right
To be that way

But with that breeding comes intolerance
Of all that's needed when some day
The very ground on which the crop prevails
Can no longer bear the burden of its weight
And so begins to crack and crumple
Forming wrinkles coming and going
As the tide returns to flowing
And breathes a sigh of great relief

Silence and Insolence

There is a kind of silence
That feels kind
Drawing us into its hearts
In the midst of natural depths

Expressed in myriad variations
Of its resonant theme
Echoing in repercussions
Of I'm pulse

Living and breathing
Offering herself
For the resound of reflection
That relaxes agitation
Into surges of trust

Found by letting subside
Those fear-filled edges of resistance
To what must be admitted
If our stories are to be allowed
To speak out loud
What they cannot hold in
Without freezing solid
And making a din

There is another silence
That feels more like insolence
A set of deaf ears
That locks us out of their heads

In the midst of human hierarchies

Striving endlessly
To be complete in themselves
Against the odds
Of even-handed numbers

Feigning sympathy
As they hold on to power
That mustn't be disturbed
From its rest in arrest
Of all that flows
Into cells of occlusion

Where life becomes stifled
Into freezing solid
And making a din

Head-banging and Screaming
Between Chattering Teeth
For Heaven's Sake
Save Our Souls!
Let us Out of Here
To where we belong
Really

MICROTOURISM

*Poems and reflections written during an 'explore around home' holiday,
July 11th-24th 2009*

Saturday 11th July

Marion and I went to a concert in Wells Cathedral, including works by Mendelssohn and Stanford as well as Vaughan Williams' 'Sea Symphony'. The concert raised funds for the Royal National Lifeboat Institution.

Sea Symphony

We approached the nave from the side
Through cloisters angled unexpectedly
Into the Whale's belly
Ribbed with pointed arches
Culminating in sigmoid scissors

A crowd of Jonahs with wives and offspring
Waiting for so many mouths to sing
Out their tales of spray and storm
And tranquillity
Laced with mortal danger
Attended by humble rescuers
Unready to crow the glory of their story
But saddened by the tragedy
Of a soul they failed to save
By landing, spewing and reeling
On their deck

Coins are not enough
A preacher said
We want your notes instead
To keep the volunteers going
Instead of going to bed
Leaving the cold and dark outside
And staying warm
With pillows under head

And then the notes began to surge
And thrash
And crash
Broken only by prayer and hymn
Mindful of perilous vortex
Drawing down too deep

Whitman's words
So stark and pallid on the page
Transformed by song into soaring flames
And soothing breaths
Like tempered steel
Piercing but ready
To protect and nurse
Where need be

In the open-mouthed wonder
Of compassion found
Where vulnerability is admitted
In the belly of the Whale
That sings its eerie songs
Across the depths and sounds

Beyond where each is standing

Sunday 12th July

We went for a long walk from Sharpness docks, through marina and along a path between canal and the banks of the Severn, where an array of barges and lighters had been beached to protect the banks from erosion.

Beached Protectors

Wooden bones and concrete flesh

Laced with iron

Rusting, encrusting, fissuring

Bleaching, fragmenting

Starkly protruding

From beds of couch and reed

Rammed into the river's bank

And canal's side

To prevent the reach

From one's rips and tugs

Into the water-lilied flatness

Of the other

What a way to end

A life of puffing and chugging

Transporting weight from here to there

Buoyed by the weight of water

Pressing on their sides

Beached like stranded whales

With lungs collapsing
Subsiding into coma
Infilling what embeds them
Deeper and deeper
In the love of life's reaper
Who caresses into protecting
The life that is
To come
Along the length of its line

Monday 13th July

We travelled to Bristol, to visit the 'Banksy' exhibition, a 'collection of recent works by a local graffiti artist', and had to queue for nearly an hour before being allowed in.

By the Banksy

The queue snaked round the corner
Holding us standing
For an hour or so
Exposed to elements
Snacking on crisps and biscuits
Until our hands could be stamped on
With red lettering
So we could be let in

To where a burnt out ice cream van
Is sunk in false grass
With cone contents melted
Oozing down screen
Adjacent to riotous policeman

Astride rocking horse
Watched over by statues
Of Angel from North
Smoking fags
And lion filled with Tamer
And Bishop in Truss

Then into brick-walling
Twisted and sprawling
Beneath camouflage netting
Before proud Ape Members
Of Parliament's Housing

Ascending to galleries
Of Old Masters' Canvas
Transformed into icons
Of modernity stressing
In the act of undressing

How could such rebellion
Find its way out from hiding
Behind dark hoods and glasses
To ridicule classes
Raised to make passes
Between supercilious glances
Beneath eyebrows' prances?

How could such expression
Find its way past depression
To comment with such sweet acidity
On what passes for authority?

Perhaps it just had to find a way
To blossom in the light of day
And give us cause to laugh
At what would be laughable
If it weren't so despicable

Tuesday 14th July

We caught the bus into Bath to attend a performance of 'Home' at the Theatre Royal.

Home Play

Theatrical reminiscences
Shared between senior stereotypes
Caught in the act
Between fact and fantasy
Evoke the fragility
Of that false sense of security
Sought at the end of the day
Near the end of life's stay
As shadows elongate
And sunlight darkens
From lemon to orange
As clouds blacken and blue
Fringed by crimson and violet

We had come by bus
To survey the scene
Of table and chairs

Beside tired flagpole
Strained from years
Of standing erect
Like those aged fellows
Departed from wives
But still yearning the tenderness
Of mother's caress
Holding them fondly
But safely in care

Then, shaken instead
By raucous hysteria
Of undone women
Cynical but still desiring
The attention of men
To hold them up
On their old two feet
Strapped onto heels
Too high for comfort

There, somehow, somewhere between them
Between the fancies and the foibles
The guffaws and the gaps
The breaking of laws
Comes what makes us human

Wednesday 15th July

A 'fallow day' spent at home. I worked in the garden during the afternoon, trimming back the bushes and removing brambles and briars from the east boundary. Later, I received an e mail from a correspondent concerning the 'hole' that's left behind when a rose bush is transplanted elsewhere.

Gardening – In the Name of the Rose

Bramble and briar
Hooked and threaded their way
Tenaciously
Through the holes in others' canopies
Knitting each into rampant connectivity
With its neighbour
Before emerging triumphantly
Reaching for the sky
Then dangling unceremoniously
In untidy spiral

My gardener's eye
In tidy mind
Objected to the clutter
And so hastened to untangle
Through routes to every branch

I yanked and I pulled
Until the trail came clean
Out into thin air
So tenuous now
Unhooked from its supporting structure
An easy prey
For my secateurs
To reduce its length to bits
Chucked into the bottom of a bin

What happens to the 'hole'

My correspondent asked
That's left behind
When you transplant a rose
Doesn't it leave something missing
From the whole it came from?

It makes an opening
I replied
For new growth
Inviting others
To find their place
In the scheme of things
That stitches all together
In the dynamic neighbourhood
Of complex community
Of the kind
That gardener's mind
Cannot tolerate
And tries to order neatly
Into hedges and straight edges
That fall apart
No sooner are they left
To their own devices

Thursday 16th July

We drove to Waterperry Gardens, near Oxford, to attend an event called 'Art in Action', which attracted huge crowds of people. As well as visiting the exhibitions of sculptures, paintings, textiles etc, we watched a glass-blowing demonstration and a classical Indian dancer who explained her art as philosophy.

Art in Action

The glass came out of the glory hole
And spun from bulb to plate
In multicoloured layers
Drawn out in fire
Cooling fast
Ready to crack
Around the heat retained inside
So much fearsome labour
On the brink of disaster
Dropped in an instant
To shatter on the floor

The one become many
In a crowd of pinched faces
With eyes gleamed with lust
For what they might treasure
In the hearth of their home
Captured from hard-won skills
Seated amidst their works
Hungry for attention
Accepting flattery
With no air of mistrust
For what is given financially
In return for dedication
To art that needs must
Make itself known
To bolster the spirit
Lost in the face of beauty

She danced in black clothing
Girdled with gold
With eyes lighting playfully
On each one in the crowd
Explaining each movement
As a balance betwixt
The metaphysical inner
And hardness outside
Where air, earth, fire and water
Have nowhere to hide
From what each envelopes
And envelopes each in turn
The common space ocean
Where passion must burn
And smash into pieces
Displayed as fine art

Friday 17th July

We went to visit my sister at her home in Daventry. It was the first time I had seen her for several years. After lunch at a local pub, she took us to visit her favourite local beauty spot, overlooking a church amidst parkland, woodland and lakes.

Vision in Pink

‘This is my favourite place’
My sister said
So I stopped the car
And we clambered out
To view the church and scenery

The church bells began to peel

‘I’ve never heard those before’
My sister said
As cars drove past two men
Standing by the Gate across the drive
Leading up the hill

‘Is there a wedding?’
We asked
‘The bride’s due any moment’
One man replied
‘I can hear the horses’
The other affirmed

Round the bend they came into view
Two plumed white stallions
Drawing a transparent pumpkin carriage
Pink-frilled and upholstered
With bride sitting pretty
In flowing white dress

The vision stopped
Beside the gate
‘He’ll die when he sees me in this’
The bride declared

Then the horses swung around
And drew the carriage up the hill
Along the gated drive
Towards the church
Before slipping out of view

‘I said this place is special’

My sister said

Saturday 18th July

A day spent at home, doing housework, catching up on correspondence. I heard about the death of Brian Goodwin, who I had got to know when he invited me to act as the first external examiner for the MSc in Holistic Science at Schumacher College, and felt moved immediately to write a poetic tribute.

Breeding Tolerance

A Tribute to Brian Goodwin

He saw the danger lurking
In the science of favouritism
That places one above the rest
At the tip of a pyramid of numbers

Like a leopard
That subjects each spot
To selective inattention
To save the singularity
At the tip of its tale

He strived to bring each one to focus
In the form of gathering order
That holds no place for uniformity
But ripples with life’s turbulence
Ever varied, ever varying
Like shingle on the shore
With each stone resting in another’s dimples

Where rectangularity finds the odd stone out

He felt the magic of the natural
That has no need for anywhere beyond itself
As cause for wonder
Unless reduced to abstract objects
By sovereign minds
Seeking limitless rule
By imposing limited rules

He sought to enrich the life of learners
Like himself
With more than the thin concoction
Of spice-less soup
That turns the mind to acid
Seeking metallic certainty
In which to etch its absolutes
Of action and reaction

He championed the need for Nature's crops
To stay unmolested by men's desire
For something more reliable
To sustain the favoured few
On the unsustainable march
To immortality in stasis

Yet when confronted in adversarial debate
By minds that would molest
Given the chance
He held his own with graceful temper
Laughing with them

Calling them friends
Chastising them with subtle humour
To reach beneath the surface of their fear
And, in that reaching
Revealed the depth of his soul

Sunday 19th July

We visited the National Trust property at Tyntesfield, described in their handbook as a 'spectacular Victorian Gothic Revival country house with gardens, arboretum and rolling parkland'. The property was bought with profits made from the shipping and sale of guano from Peru.

Edifice

A vast pile of bricks
Arranged extravagantly
In elaborate design
Of turrets and twisted chimneys
Adorning multiple rooftops
Like candles on cake
Made for celebration
Of tradesmen's success
In making tradesmen's entrance
Behind the backs
Of moneyed façade
Built from the profits
Of tons of guano

Venturing inside the cake
Gives away its secret passages
Between cavernous chambers

Thickly lined
With leathery fabric
And ornate wood-carving
Bedecked with pictures
Of family trees
So few in number
Yet furnished to seat
The bottoms of armies
Feeding their mouths
From exotic porcelain

All in the context
Of rolling landscape
Walled in
Mowed low
Studded with statues
Of faraway trees
Imported by magic
Of conjuror's sleight

On the walls of the chapel
Vibrant with colourful stone and glass
Three crosses extol three virtues
Of which the greatest
Claims to be Charity
Now, how could that be?
Unless of the kind
Bestowed by birds of the sea
Via the generous discharge
From their tradesmen's entrances

Monday 20th July

A frustrating day in which a combination of ennui, the need to prepare for the week ahead and unpromising weather put us off from attempting anything more than a brief walk around our home village of Bathford.

Occluded Front

Looking for outlet
From yawning inlet
A place for stalled energies
To flow with full zest
Not drain and congest

But clouds gathered steadily
As knots formed too readily
In intentions to grow
Like flowers from seed
Ideas from germs
Distilled spirit from malt
To loosen the edges
Of concrete confinement
Entrapped indoors

Desperate for invitation
From welcome destination
With attractions to share
To divert mind from care

But finding instead
The feeling of dread
That drowns inspiration

Under showers of grief
Obscuring relief
Behind curtains enfolding
Discontent
In deep satin linings

Tuesday 21st July

On a rainy day, after a morning of preparation, we drove down to stay three nights with our daughter, Pippa, in her one-bedroom flat in Romsey, Hampshire. Despite her limited accommodation and resources, Pippa had eagerly anticipated our stay and bought new pillows and towels for us to use.

New Pillows and Towels

In a flat for one
Made ready for three
With new pillows and towels
Bought in anticipation
Of our arrival and stay
We reached our destination
After travelling through spray
And dark, dripping woodlands
A welcome home from home
In delightful company

Wednesday 22nd July

We drove to Hengistbury Head, near Christchurch, in order for Pippa to practice a ‘walk and talk’ about bumblebee conservation that she was due to lead later in the summer. We were surprised by the colourful variety of scenery and habitat, and also came across the rare ‘brown-banded carder bee’, distinguished from the ‘common carder bee’ by the lack of dark abdominal hairs and brighter ginger appearance.

Bells and Bees

Purple bells gathered in mats and tussocks

Islands in grey-green seas

Splashed with ochre

Of sand and stone

Rising to headland

Exposed by wind

Exotic shallon and dwarf gorse

Interspersed by yellow umbels

Of narrow-leaved hawkweed

Their involucre neatly splayed

Amongst honeysuckled bramble

Infiltrated by wood sage

A home for bumbles

With telling tails of buff and red

Behind bodies of black and yellow

Gathering and re-gathering

Between hefty flights

Of vital concern

To the continuity of their quarry

In the process of pollination

But not all are common

In this common ground

Some move more scarcely

In bright ginger coatings

Of hairs lacking blackness

Though this can't be told
Without stilling their life
Momentarily below white tissue
In the bottom of a jar
Before release into openness
Receptive once more
To the possibility of pollinating

Thursday 23rd July

Marion and I went for a cycle ride amidst idyllic scenery in the New Forest on what turned out to be a sunny afternoon, despite a gloomy weather forecast.

New Forest Cycle

Splodges of sunlight
Filtered through trees
Reflected off water
Deep in Shadow
But shallow in depth
For children to paddle
With net pushed ahead
Expectantly

Lichens sprawled on fallen branch
Tawny grisette stood sentinel
Forerunning autumn bounty
Recalling teenage years
Foraying with my father

Gaunt oaks

Rooted in boggy ground
Revealed distress
In sparse foliage
Where flycatcher fluttered
And redstart flashed
Before disappearing

As knees began to creak
And saddle press through unhardened flesh
We returned to rest
Amongst the tall trees
Pacificaly sighing
Far from home
But still rushing upwards
With needles descending
To redden the ground
Ornamentally

Pretending wildly
To have been here all along
Amidst the natives
Like the ponies
With foals suckling
Unshod, in the middle of the road

Testing the patience
Of pressured drivers
Feeling the need to rush
Needlessly through the commotion
Of natural beauty

But in that forced pause
Finding the place
To smile pacifically
In relenting to what doesn't care
About what has made us relentless
Yet cares relentlessly
For life

Friday 24th July

Marion and I went for a walk along the 'Test Way', a path following the course of a disused railway track alongside the River Test, famous for the crystal clarity of its water and abundant trout. After a picnic in a glade filled with colourful plants and butterflies, we climbed to the summit of a local hill, where we were exposed to a local squall, with heavy rain, thunder and lightning. Later, in more tranquil weather, we drove on to a river crossing thick with reeds and a curious thatched building on a platform above the river, with a line of tubular meshes, which I learned later were a fisherman's hut and set of eel traps.

Testing Experience

Painted ladies danced and played
Around the buddleia in the glade
With turf cropped short
Where rabbits cavort
Erupting here and there with pink and white
Of centaury, calamint and eyebright
And sprouting too
With clutches of blue
Where tufted vetch and viper's bugloss
Raised their heads above the moss

Lulled into trance
By summery dance
Along the Way beside the Test
Where we had taken our lunchtime rest
We climbed past verges
Covered by surges
Of horehound, bartsia and knapweed
Attracting bees whilst setting seed
Until we reached a hilltop drive
To take us back and so arrive
Where we'd started deep in shade
Before day-dreaming in the glade

Just as we began to turn around
From this summit of folding ground
To which we'd walked towards the light
In sunshine bright
Clouds lined up in dark array
Letting loose their load of spray
As lightning shocked
Thunder rocked
Us from Above
Where we crouched like hand in glove
With umbrellas raised in self-protection
To ward off dampening spirit of self-dejection
Beneath cables passing overhead
Stretched between posts standing in soiled bed

In next to no time the onslaught stilled
Leaving us drenched and mildly thrilled

To resume our passage along the way
From where we could no longer stay
Under the cover of bushes and trees
 Crowding in upon the frieze
Where trains had one time thundered past
 Rocking sleepers held down fast
 In nailed idyll
 Awaiting thrill
From lightning shocking overhead
Of where they lay attached to bed

In tranquil aftermath we watched the reeds
Stir in their beds, rocked by the breeze
Beside clear waters filled with trout
 Darting stealthily in and out
 Of weedy passages in the flow
Beneath meshes lined hopefully in daylight's glow
 Attached to platform on which stood
 A circular dwelling with thatched hood
Beneath which to hideaway private thought
 Of sovereign self and fishes caught
 Like soles intruding from the deep
Across thresholds intended for their keep.



Lost Sole Awaiting Rescue

How desperate
To be alone at sea
Floundering like a flatfish
Longing to surge
But held down and smothered
In sand that renders invisible
Out of sight
Out of mind
Unheard above the sounds
Of others demanding attention

How hopeless
To be alone in desert
Submerging in sandstorms
Leaving no trace
More than one dune in many
Out of ear shot
Like a deer slot
That goes unnoticed
Beneath squelching foot
In muddy ground

How terrible
To want to belong
In the heart of community
But be asked to compete
Or remain in obscurity
Keeping self to self
Buried in doubt

How frantic
The song and dance
That calls everyone to aid
The desire to help
Others in need
Of outstretched hand

But water drowns
Sand covers
Wind whisks
All thought from mouth
Into caverns
Under rugs
Whilst everyone shrugs
In disbelief
Not wanting to know what one knows
Deep in that place
At the bottom of the heap

No Room at the Top

Sadly, there's no room at the top

For consideration

Of where to find salvation

From devastation

Of spirit emptied out from soul

Through a bottleneck

To the needle's point

In the middle of nowhere

Ascending ladders

To success

As others fall

Into abyss

Is no way to comprehend

What makes us humane

At the bottom of our hearts

Proclaiming know-how

From the pinnacle

Of heady vertigo

Is no way to influence

Beyond the power

Of lonesome authority

Where Red Queen runs

Upon the spot

Where nothing changes

To slow her flow of perspiration

Without inspiration

From fellow men

Wisdom comes only
When truth is admitted
At the bottom of the well
That feels like Hell
To those who seek dominion
In perpetual ruling of the roost
Crowing thrice nightly
In denial
Of what comes naturally
At the end of the day
In receptive space
Reflected in moonlight

Where gravitation's pooling beckons
Back down to Earth
The levitating spirit
That aspires too close to sun
Atop the cathedral
Of human ambition
To climb out from shelter
Of Shadowed valley
Exposing self
On unforgiving hard rock ridge
Where life cannot live
In spite of itself

So, come off that peak
If you must seek
The meaning of life's cherish-ability
In perish-ability

At the end of the day
Where there's room for play
Of spirit that ventures
In children's trust
Not in musty schoolroom's force
To climb the ladder
Propelled by lust

Conspiracy of Silence

Sometimes I feel
There's a conspiracy of silence
That holds truth to ransom
In squalid dungeons
Securely ignored
Whilst every one gets on
With the everyday busyness
Of intensifying suffering

Where suffering brings its own reward
To power-brokers
Who set aside what brings concern
For the sake of empty gestures
Fulfilling nothing
But the pride of standing still
In spite of all that stands to reason
Not to mention evidence!

A conspiracy that gloats
In powers of self-deception
To ward off every word that questions
Its heedless assumptions
By waiting till the storm has passed
In which to clarify its own authority
Or distorts these words into a spitting image
Of its own hatred
For all that's natural and human
Disguised under the cloak of added value

Every now and then this silence can be heard
Congratulating itself
Upon its neat disposal
Beneath crisp-baked superficial crusts
Of another kind of silence
That lives deeper in hearts and souls
Filled with concern
For what's been hard done by
In the name of Reason
That sentences all to life in prison
At Its Majesty's Pleasure
In solitary confinement

Point to Point

From Needle to Spring

Needlepoint

Needless

Heedless

Those points that prick our consciousness

Into deflationary spirals

Of burst bubbles

Rounded up into cubes

Then stick our heads to their shafts

Of bone from the neck up

Proud palisades

Strutting their stuff

In forbidding lines

Defending their right

To stick where they are

Against all odds

In even contempt

Disregarding what pervades

Amongst and throughout

Their stiffened resolve

Not to let the warmth in

For fear of melting

Into the space

Where love finds out

What's missing from their embroidery

In a tapestry of lies

Why don't you just forget about It?

What's the point?
No-one's gonna hear!
Why don't you just forget about it?

That endless appeal
To oblivious ears
To remember the sound
Of where they become from
In the midst of what they listen out for
With such selective focus

Hoping against hope
To hear a story
That doesn't end
In the middle of nowhere

Yet in that hoping
Deadens what springs
In the midst of life
With gushing torrents
From here to there

In somewhere
Where every story
Begins and ends
In everywhere
Without end
Where the hole point is
To forget about It

Point-Blank Refusal

There is no mystery
In what so many
Refuse to see
In front of their noses
Up their nostrils

The only mystery
Lies in the refusal
To take in
What cannot be left out
Without grinding to standstill
Of idle form

With no shape or size
In which to perform
Our bodily function
Of springing to Life

In all shapes and sizes
And endless disguises
Where mystery really lies

Depths of Awareness

Beyond Superiority and Inferiority

Catching the Sun

Where would the sun be
With no where to catch its rays
And spin them into Life
Throbbing in receptive bodies
Responsive to warmth
Conveyed in light too deep in shade
For human eyes to see?

Where would we be
Without a place to call our home
Receptive to influx
Responsive to neighbours
Each gathering harvest to pass on
Through channels unseen?

Where would cosmos be
Without somewhere to call its own
Reflecting in its mind's eyes
All that comes and goes in flows
Through the natural communion
Of spirit and soul
That expresses its passion
Through bodies seen and felt?

Nowhere and everywhere
Without a womb or heart
To revolve into Life

Catching Cold

When all becomes crystal
Clear in the mind
Life comes to stand still
Sharp and unkind
Where rivers of diamonds
Cut slots into landscape
Without caring to wind
Round hillsides in valleys
But compete crotch to crotch
To be seen as top notch

Words become viral
Without pausing to spiral
But burst forth in splutters
And under-breath mutters
Transmitted between shudders
Not in milk drunk from udders
Because flow can't be trusted
When all becomes rusted
Into points of corrosion
Plotting lines of erosion
Between one mind and other
Deprived of their Mother

Who can cure these destructions
Of life caught in ructions
Between each locked apart
In freeze-framed art
Where no warmth can travel

Allowing bodies to unravel
From their in the spot race
To find their selves in fond embrace

No-one, no-where
Unless
A way is found between here and there
Which is ever-present, every-where
Never growing older
And without cold shoulder

The Humility of the Valley

Life doesn't strive
To secure its foundation
Upon the rocky serrations of the High-minded
Where Men build castles in the air
To furnish that false sense of superiority
Which comes from the pretence
Of overlooking all around
To the edge of infinity

Life thrives
In the seclusion of the valleys
Where dampness accumulates
In the earthy humidity
Of humility
Warmly tucked in
To the bed of sea and land
Rich with variety
Exuding
Intruding
Out and into the cosiness
Of each lovingly enveloped
In the other's influence

Wisdom cannot be found
On peaks of adaptive fitness
Running with Red Queens
But only in that radiant depth
That reaches everywhere
Through the heart of somewhere

The Devil In the Definition

The Devil lives in the definition
That place to secure lofty ambition
In a Whole with no Ground
For looking around
At what's gone missing
From mouths without kissing

No opening space
For lives sunk without trace
In spirit strained free from compassion
Where we're told it's in fashion
The bliss of the blessed
To dress with no hole
For suffering soul
To find love in its heart
Whilst falling apart
Transfixed in becoming distressed

Where smile fixes to grin
Above jutting chin
On the face that speaks of the need
To stay wilfully positive
In the face of the weed
Whose cries suck you in
To a place indescribably negative

Where doubt finds out
You're not wearing a clout
Because in a dress with no hole

There's no room for your soul
And that's what's gone missing
From mouths sealed from kissing

Infinite Depth and Light Relief

How fearfully so many
Skirt around that infinite depth
In which we reside
As it resides in us
Inescapably

Here, in the very core of our souls
Through which we reach
From many into one
And one into many
As the natural communion
That is All Soul, Everywhere
The Breathing Ground of Love in Life

How far removed
We can distance ourselves
From this omnipresence
As we seek light relief
From the fear of yawning
In the bottomless pit
Beneath the awning
Of what we call the abyss

Yet as we seek this definition
Of our self content
Beyond the pull at the edge of darkness
Within hardened lightning surfaces
All we can find is grief
In the loss of Love from Life

That comes with loss of Soul from Spirit

So let us play in the dance of light
That brings relief to the dead of night
Where fire takes velvet
Hand in glove
And leads life through
Quicksands of love

WIGHT LININGS

*Poems and reflections written during a short holiday on the Isle of Wight,
September 6th - 10th 2009*

Sunday 6th September

Marion and I took the ferry from Lymington to Yarmouth, then drove to our accommodation by the side of the River Medina in Newport, where we went for a short walk in evening light.

Funnels

Water slips
Around ships
Crossing the channel
From inlet to outlet

Funnels emitting
Currents exhaling
From intakes prevailing
Against the flow

Where tide surges twice
From west then from east
Down the funnel
From Cowes to Newport
With sinuous margins
Shrinking to dribble
Far from the reach
Of boats stranded on beach

Green with sea lettuce
Laid down over mud

As sun sinks lower
Mellowing to russet
Rough bark and crenate leaves
Of oaks with folded arms
Policing banks
Where gulls wheel and mew
And egret stands sentinel
Ready for probing enquiry
Beneath reflective surface

Darkness prepares in silhouettes
Backlit by low glow
Front-lit by white swans
To make ready
For fresh adventure

Monday 7th Septemebr

After a night spent beside the Medina, we drove down the east coast from Ryde to Shanklin, stopping at a variety of beaches and marshes along the way, culminating in Shanklin Chine, a steep-sided chine through sandstone to beach, over-dressed to attract visitors and the route of a pipeline called P.L.U.T.O used to carry fuel to ships supporting the Normandy invasion on D-day.

Channels

Liquid bubbles and babbles

With notes rising and falling
From night into dawn
With swans cruising downstream
One after the other

A larger channel
Traversed by hovercraft
Laps up sand
Quietly, with barely a sound
Rippling

Extending backstage
Through channels to reedbeds
Fringing pools
With wading greenshank
Overflowed by barnacle geese
With guttural utterings
Evoking calm

Saltmarsh filling
Behind grey buckthorn ridges
Aglow with orange berries
At a rate of knots
With scudding suds

Cutting through sandstone
Dripping with liverworts
In fern-filled chine
A route for P.L.U.T.O
To supply invasion
By troops storming beaches

To end a war
Across another channel
Now filled with grey blocks
Resting at anchor
Like tombstones at sea
Monuments to what passes for future
When consumer rules

Tuesday 8th September

We visited Alum Bay, where multicoloured sands flow out from clay cliffs, and the Needles, home of famous sea stacks and gun batteries intended to protect the Solent from enemy ships, as well as a site for rocket-testing during the ‘Cold War’.

Slides

Glaciers of soft rock
Standing on end
Etched into pinnacles
Sharp against blue and white backdrop
Ooze into turquoise sheen
Of liquid satin

Crimson, magenta, ochre, brown, black, white, green-grey
Sand streams
Flare onto shingle
Caressed by soft ripples
Leaving residues
Strung out along their margins
Of thongweed’s straps
Erupting from buttons

Like wine spilt from goblet
Mimicking the iron-rich rivulets
From the glacier's edge

The bay transforms
From lobes to line
At the foot of perpendicular
Diagonals of flint-lined chalk
Spreading into chiselled edge
Sliding against horizon

Then breaking in the jarring of its last moment
Into savage carnassials
Oddly called Needles
With red and white insult
Receptive to helicopters
Dumped on its final crumbling
From land to sea

Where human pre-caution
Caring for none but itself
Puts paid to its origins
Hiding them behind
Reels of black and yellow tape
Strung out
Where fossils mustn't be found
For fear of slides

Tunnels

A warren among warrens
Prepared for heavy guns and searchlights
Fearful of invasion
Sunk into chalk-headed nose
With panoramic vision
Like a rabbit caught in headlights
Frozen into stark, staring stillness

Only to become the testing ground
For rockets sharpened in Cold War
But in the last analysis
Launching just one satellite
From Australian desert

Now slumping into disuse
Returning to Nature
With batteries decaying
Under the assault of rabbits
Breaking the cover
Given by swards of thrift and horseshoe vetch

Revealing white bones crumbling
Ready for cascade from blue to blue
But, before Then
Towering watchfully
On the lookout
For that other kind of influx
That cannot be defied

Conveyed in wind and tide

Wednesday 9th September

We visited Newtown Nature Reserve and enjoyed the sights and sounds, flora and fauna of saltmarsh and mudflats, which included an osprey and golden samphire. Then we travelled along the south coastline, briefly visting Whale Chine, St Catherine's oratory on the high down above 'popular' Blackgang Chine, and the surprisingly attractive and sensitively managed botanic gardens at Ventnor, open free of charge to the public.

Gullies

Golden samphire lined the fringes
Probed by fingers of water and mud
Probed by beaks of birds on stilts
Under the watch of distant osprey
Fidgeting on the stake of an old sea wall
Taking flight momentarily
Before returning to standstill

A slice through sandstone
Filled with blackthorn and alien knotweed
Belies its calling after Whale
Inaccessible from broken steps
Descending its flank

Another chine blotted into landscape
Resounds with human cries
From roller coaster ride
Beneath the gaze of St Catherine's oratory
Now filled with the voice of stirred air

Sheltering in gullies cut in undercliff
Tree ferns spread their feathers
Amongst exotic cacti and bromeliads
Arrayed by some true human enlightenment
That doesn't hold out grasping hand
Valuing nothing more than popularity

Thursday 10th Septemeber

We visited the southern coastline leading up to Freshwater Bay, then ate a snack lunch overlooking the Yar estuary marshes before catching the ferry back to Lymington.

Bays

Seawater becomes Freshwater
As patchwork quilt
Ruffled and torn at its margins
Through endless slippage
Into restless depths
Becomes thick eider Down
Dropping off a duck's back
To bottom line

Where sea meets chalk
And blue becomes white
Arrested in sunlight
To the glare of salted air
Frosting the marshes

Where greenshanks stride
 Quietly exploring
 The edge of the tide
Where water meets mud
 In which animals hide
 By fitting themselves
 Into burrows and shells
Where bays become wells

Simply the best?

Where one aspires
To be simply the best
Where in the World
Does that leave the rest?

Does one's value increase
In a golden fleece
Where perfection's the key
To the right to be free?

Does it mean less to be dressed
In a moth-eaten vest
Where dejection's the fee
For missing high tea?

Does common mean muck
At the cost of good luck
Where fortune's the making
Of wealth for the taking?

Is rarity the price
For not thinking twice
About beauty's exclusion
From others' inclusion?

Should we cease to find peace
In the rest from dis-ease
Of community's title
To hold *all* as vital?

Where common good feeling
Lies not in the sealing
Of first class's posting
From underworld's hosting

But in the protection
Without need for selection
Of all those whose strife
Is to make most of life
By caring their best
In support of the rest
Where difference sustains
Life's losses as gains
And rare beauty flourishes
Through all that nourishes
As source for thanksgiving
In the common passion of living

Swan Chemistry

We can't all be swans
Those ships of serenity
Whose surface appearance
Belies frantic pedalling
Beneath reflected view
To keep themselves on course

Where would swans be
In a world of their own
Without the babbles of ducks
Or twitters of warblers skulking in reeds?

Like a gathering of superstars
In supercilious congestion
Dead on their feet
Without the vulgarity
Needed to keep them flowing
By stirring the current
In common pools of correspondence
For all to breathe, including swans

Like noble gases
Semblances of calm
Amidst the swirling play of elements
Seeking satisfaction through the balancing of their orbits
Yet in that restless search for harmony
Needing to succeed only rarely
And never completely
If they are to keep the current stirred

Sectored Communion

Three poems by Alan Rayner

*Inspired by Jack Whitehead's description of a disturbing experience
in Bali*

"Seeing the road sign in Bali and then standing in the large courtyard
with the five paths leading to a Mosque, Hindu Temple, Buddhist
Temple, Catholic Church and Anglican Church brought thoughts to mind
of inclusional humanity and the problem of different faiths finding
their unity in worship/submission to different Gods in ways that
excluded those who did not profess their form of worship/submission.
The bombing on Jimbaran beach of the spot where Joan and I had eaten
three weeks earlier brought into stark relief some of the damaging/
lethal responses of fundamentalist intransigence"





What struck me about this experience, and the way Jack described it, was the irony that each faith might lock 'outside in the courtyard', what they each worshiped in common but in their culturally distinctive ways. By so doing they could harden the fluid lines of mutual distinction and complementary relationship that are characteristic of naturally diverse communities into abstract 'hard lines of definition' that impose unnatural conformity and alienation of 'others'. The devastating implications of such needless alienation – which is to be found both within and between secular and theistic human communities – were evident in the scene on the beach. Yet in recognizing the roots – ultimately to be found in the *assumption that space stops and starts at discrete boundary limits* – of the intransigence from which that atrocity erupted, lies also the hope for the future of human communities in which both natural variety and what holds this variety in common are valued.

The Divisive Loyalties of Estranged Alliances
- *and their urgent need for solvation*

From the Infinite Openness
Where each lived In the Love of the Other
Like foetus in Mother
Caressed by the Natural Communion
Of soul in Spirit
And spirit in Soul
Dynamically encapsulated
In fluid bodily linings

Led Five Discrete Paths
Each to a building block
Of Its own making
With doors closed
To any who'd cross between one and the other
Through the openness
That pooled all in all

Down the drains
Of those estranged alliances
Many poured
Bonded together
By what held them inside
Or, woe betide

Each seeking portals
To the path of righteousness
Down which they'd travelled
To lock outside

But in that quest
Believing it best
To Blast the Hell
Out of One Another
Instead of dissolving the walls
That held them as thralls

Blocked By Intransigence

The river paused and brooded
Along her windy, winding course
Blockaded yet again
By thick intransigence
Sharpened into concrete dams
Set in opposition to her flow
By minds determined to preserve their status
As statues standing for the status quo
In a State where love and life are enemies
The ever-present fearful foe
Of corrupting force

Where now?
The river pondered
In the dull stagnation of house arrest
Where spirit crumbles as soul festers
Enforced to curb her ardour
In underground dwelling
Far from the fields
She longed to burst with lovely life

Still, she laid the tables
Ready for whoever
Might find their way
Past the dust and crust
Of arid confrontation
To feast on her delightful preparation
For thirsty, hungry travellers
To chance upon her hidden presence

Only to find that those she nurtured
Once they had taken their greedy fill
Burst back into the glare of publicity
Beaming with the satisfaction of their discovery
To claim it for themselves

Denying where they had found her
Shutting her up with loud-mouthed declarations
Protesting their right to vacant possession of her heart
Until, at last, her pulse fluttered and faded

Leaving them stranded on those summits
From which they'd crowed
Striving to escape the heat of their dereliction
By ascending to the Heavens

Never imagining for a moment
That all they had to do
To bring her back to life
Was dig down deeper
Through the crusts they'd layered
Over her poor, stilled body
To release the Springs from which she'd journey
Creating valleys for her current
Celebrated now in broad daylight

A Cruel Sort of Faith

What sort of faith is it
That shuts Him outside
By refusing to welcome
Her into our midst?

Only a cruel sort of faith
That sorts us into categories
Transforming the Love of our Life
Into the hatred of objects for subjects
Alienated by definition

Where none can flow
Through each in the other
Buts sticks instead
To its own side of the bed
With body guillotined
From head

Allowing blithe Spirit
To wander free
Unconcerned
For what calls out
From bended knee
To release the pain of anxiety

That fearful dread
Of what's beneath the bed
Lurking in Shadow
Beyond light's reach

The Lost Soul Longing
For re-admission

A Bit Difficult To Reach

'It's a bit difficult to reach
To get at'
Our plumber said
With pipe-work ramifying round his head
As he tried to find his way
To locate
Then clear
The blockage
Getting in the Way
Obstructing the passage
Of warming current
Through our central heating
Boiler

'Yes', I responded sympathetically
'Machines are a bit like that'
Then reflected empathetically
'And so are people'
And so, we both laughed
In human correspondence

House Arrest
The voice of the damsel in distress

Here
I dwell
Under house arrest
Frantically composing
Whilst decomposing
Or twiddling my fingers
As I await your return
From cavorting in the gleaming surface
Where you serenade your part truths
That hold me at bay
Whilst abstracting all you can from me

Sometimes I sense you approaching
So I bang on your retaining walls
Pleading for release
But you seldom hear
Or, if you do
You pause only for a distracted moment
Before carrying on regardless

Very rarely
My knocking catches you out
Making you open a crack
Through which to peer inside
At my invisible presence

You may even be so kind and thoughtful
That you let me out on parole

So long as I promise
Not to disturb you or your friends too much
By calling for your attention
To where you come from
In the dark depths
Of which I must speak
If you are to learn from me
How to melt the ice in your heart
That keeps me at bay
Mouthing sweet nothings
Reining myself in
For fear that you will re-enforce my confinement
As your world implodes
Into loveless lifelessness

Dragon Flying

I thought I heard a damsel
Call out from hidden place
In dreadful isolation
From cruel human race
To let her out from festering
Where none could see her face

My heart went out to meet her
To call her house my home
Where we could merge together
Steadfast in face of tide
Gathering waves within our stride
As we sought to turn them round
Those that stood against us
By standing on their pride

But the voice I heard was only
My own deprived of wings
Seeking ways to journey
In the spirit of a dove
To spread the word of Love

Forgetting all I knew about Her
Presence everywhere
Supporting my combustion
In all-sustaining Fire
That melts the ice of stasis
With no need for heavenly choir
To give me what I lacked

Packed
In my own suitcase
I found them
Folded

Vacancy

Robbed out
Of all foundation stones
By care less idealism
Born of the need
To hold all together
In a black bag
With impermeable lining

The hollow sighed soundlessly
Relenting its grip at last
On its last pretence
Of having substance
To call its own
Unearthly presence

Faced with the stony face
That warded off
Its yearning for affection
It had fought to hold on
To its dignity
By seeking reassurance
That all was not lost
From the ground
It needed to stand on

But in that search
Found
Only more and more and
More room for doubt

Until no more
Could she avoid leaving that shore
Where
Instead of finding deep rest
She held herself
Under house arrest

Breathing in fear
With every tear
That dropped unseen
From the beauty queen
Who could find no room
For beast
In her breast
To suck her and
Fuck her
Without feeling robbed

Naked, now
She moved the world
From its idol state
Where clothes were what mattered
Whether fine or tattered
Made to measure
How rich and how poor
Each one could be
In a world of its own
Where none could bear
To be without

Rubbed out
She found herself
No longer erased
But taking care
Of all that she raised
Within herself

Your Welcome

I am here and there in everywhere

You are welcome

To where you find in me

That brings you peace and joy

But if you don't care

For what you find:

If my whispers make you shudder

Feeling lost without a rudder

Sending tingles down your spine

That make you clutch at straws

To keep yourself afloat

Struggling for survival

Against my infinite odds

Your welcome for me

To fill your heart

Will be non-existent

Your rage will be my sorrow

As you cling to thinking of tomorrow

Which is just another day

Like this one

Never ending

So, when I send my messenger

With open invitation

Be sure to know you're welcome

If only you can welcome

His care within your heart