POETRY FOR MORE OCCASIONS

Martin Nelson

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For Diana without whom these poems would not have been realized.

‘Our England is a garden, and such gardens are not made by singing:  *Oh, how beautiful*! and sitting in the shade.’

Rudyard Kipling, “The Glory of the Garden”

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#

# POEMS ON BEING

#

# ARCHEOLOGY OF MEMORY

Those fragments of memory,

Recollections so vivid.

Slowly unearthed

During moments of being.

Altered by time,

Eroded and jumbled.

Such priceless snippets

Are reality now gone.

Shreds of imagination

Slivers of light and shade

Precious nuggets of time

Slipping through my fingers.

A shell of myself

So vital yet a shadow

Hidden away

In a pocket of my mind.

Slowly those magic moments

Exposed and re-examined

Slip through my fingers.

Now, no longer a reality

Are gradually fading,

Until solely a memory.

# BIRTH

A new life is beginning,

It is creation at its best.

Still so small yet almost complete

Slowly it's becoming a person.

So many hopes, so many dreams,

Fears, uncertainties and worries.

I'm not in control of my destiny

When will the day come to change my life?

Still too small to feel movements

Will it be a boy or a girl?

I feel it's there alive and not yet kicking

My being has changed.

No longer is my body alone

But shared by another

My food is her food

My liquor is her liquor

Her life is now my life.

She's a welcome visitor

yet unknown

No name no identity

She'll be received with smiles

And open arms

As she looks into the world

That first hazy and uncertain view

A mystery of life she recreates evolution

From her beginning is our hope for mankind.

# CAMEL

The bright warm sun lights up the beach

Suddenly revealing her there,

Plodding slowly, a desert ship

Alone aloof unaware.

I watch and share her loneliness

She doesn’t notice me.

Now children climb upon her back

Willingly she lurches, rises and walks on,

Not seeing their smiles nor the fun she gives.

Descended from an ancient breed

She carried spices to our western world

Uncomplaining, in a caravan.

Heedless of the burden she has borne

Throughout eternity.

# CHILDREN

What greater joy than this?

To see your children grow,

To hold them in your arms

And protect them from all harm.

To spot your face in theirs.

Listen to your words again

Witness that first timid step

And hear that shy word Dad.

And all the time remembering

That you were once a child

Your parents in their turn chose

To believe in a better future

That each of us owes so much

To those who went before

So many generations

Of which only memories remain.

But maybe, perhaps a smile

On my face or yours

Is a remnant of that past

That act of faith and love.

That we repeat time and again

Renewing a hope, that we can make

The world a better place

Erasing all the evil that’s gone before.

A new and shining life

Has again been born

Each child gives us a second chance

To bring about the change.

# FAREWELL PARTY

I should have had a party to say goodbye

Not slinked away with no one knowing.

I should have shouted from the roof tops

My thanks for all your love and kindness

Instead I left one morning, alone

As if ashamed to be seen by you.

After all forty years is a long time

More than half my life so far

So many contacts so many friends

I have left behind as memories

Why didn’t I think of it?

Now it’ too late

Didn’t I think you cared?

Was I just too shy to find you did?

But now part of me says Goodbye

I need to move on

Into a new and unknown world

And to be a better person.

# GIRLS

Sitting they talk, smile, and listen

Bright eyed, like birdsong.

They warble and sing.

At ease, with no male leers

To spoil their fun.

No masculine looks to butt in.

Smoothing their hair

Adjusting their dress,

Twisting their earrings,

Fiddling with their sandals,

On red lacquered toes

Sunglasses perched on their curls,

Like plaited hats with eyes.

Cross legged they finger their mobiles

Glancing to see the last SMS.

Others look to see who it is from.

Inquisitive, but too polite to ask.

Straws stand in their long soft drinks.

Three generations at least

Sitting at ease sharing their dreams

Each basking in the sun of the others,

Having fun.

# JACK FROST

Cold crisp cracking beneath my feet,

Trees immobile in the lanes.

Jack Frost has come to show his face,

White lace against the window panes.

Each year he arrives to clothe the land

With a white carpet under foot.

Steps echo 'gainst the iron-hard soil

While ice gives way beneath our boot.

Bent low against the piercing chill

Walkers step fast to get indoors,

Away from his embracing will,

To warm the stiffness of their limbs.

A bird on its journey south

Contemplates a likely route.

Flying away from its frozen nest

To search for a warmer clime.

The ground now waits patiently

For the first sign of spring to come

Beneath, the bulbs crouch and sleep

Not yet ready to leave their home.

Soon the thaw will touch the earth

Bringing with it new life and love.

And so the circle turns again

And crowns a full rhythm of life.

# MILLENIUM

Winter came very early that year

With snow and heavy frosts.

Mortality figures were up

Coffin makers were having a hay day.\\

Unemployment was rising

The oil industry was on strike.

There was a general feeling of depression.

People walked about nodding gravely.

Computers are going to crash, was on everybody’s lips.

The millennium was dreaded.

My stars anticipated that Mars would collide with Venus

An ominous outlook was expected.

I had predicted this many years before.

But I was unlikely to get there

Though I maintained an optimistic outlook.

While preparing for the end.

A soothsayer once said, ‘beware the ides of March’

But Caesar, ignored him to his regret.

Is my own future as insecure?

Only time will tell.

I have my doubts.

Why, you may ask.

Because it has always been so.

# MOMBASA YACHT CLUB

The gentle waves lap lightly 'gainst the shifting sands

Each giving way to its fellow as it breaks.

Hues blue, green and white together mingle

In the to and fro rocking of the swell.

The wind a soft whisper in the trees

Caresses the water as it passes by.

While flights of birds arriving from the fields

Rest awhile before returning to their nests.

The clouds hover hardly moving,

Promising another day of gentle sun.

Flying fish flutter across the breaking foam

Preparing to settle as the night comes on.

The moon begins her gentle skyward climb.

The sun gives way and settles in the west.

The scene is calm, at peace and full of bliss

As the farmer returns home to his warm hearth.

# MOMBASA YACHT CLUB CENTENARY

I call upon the four directions of the wind,

The white North, the red south,

The yellow East and the Blue West

To celebrate one hundred years

Since those early sailors had a dream

They came together with a single aim

Who loved the sea and camaraderie?

To create a club for all to enjoy.

Their spirits are all around us here

Sharing a future they never saw

Happily we salute them one and all

And greet them on this special day

Now sailors from many climes

Compete for cups and flags

In a spirit of companionship

Racing against handicap and time.

Quiet and peace pervade this scene,

The rigged sailboats prepare to leave.

Lined up ready for the start,

Tacking and gybing, they then depart.

The bell rings, and the race begins.

Bosun Laser, Osprey, 420, all

Their sails filling with blustery wind

They compete against time with skill.

Dim anchored shadows mark the way,

The wind, dark lines upon the waves.

Boats skim like birds across the plain

Water boiling beneath their bows.

Beyond blue skies and distant clouds.

The afternoon is warm and airless

As the spectators sit and watch

A coconut falls, a song bird sings.

The bell rings as each return.

For Michael, Barry, Aslam,

Nazir, Brian, Chris, and Koki

The Victor’s cup for the one who wins

At last all is calm and the waters still

As the chairs are placed for the evening meal

In the kitchen Boniface completes his magic

Transforming simple fare into a banquet

While the sun sets and the day is done.

# NERO

Happy faces, sounds of laughter

Smell of coffee, tenth cup free.

A quiet oasis from the busy street.

Three girls chatting, a baby cries.

A teacher marking, a man just reading,

Fingers tapping, computer charging,

A world away from the noise outside.

Suddenly it is not so peaceful

A car backfires or was it a gun?

Feeling threatened, feeling alone

A smile, a word and the world’s OK.

No fiddling while the coffee brews

Enjoying coffee in my own Nero.

# PULLED CALF

What happened then?

I don’t understand.

One moment I was fine

And now I’m limping.

A sudden wrench, a painful pull,

And I am held in the grip of you.

I had forgotten that you were there,

Silently functioning

Without me aware.

So you decided to give me a shock,

To let me know who was the boss?

And now painfully

Bowing to your ruling

I walk with a hobble

Until I've recovered.

# SPRING IN ENGLAND

I am getting spring ready for you

And have put the bluebells on ice;

So that they won’t appear too soon

Until you are here to take delight.

My daffodils may slumber a little longer,

Their crowded home keeping them warm.

While the masses of crocuses remain unseen

Or just peep out to show you they are there.

The trees are beginning to stir.

Their buds fattening and preparing to show.

Beneath, their roots are swelling with nectar

To nourish the fruit that they will bear.

My whole earth is trembling and awakening

From its winter sleep so deep

In time for you, my dearest

To enjoy and love.

# THE CLINIC

Solemnly we sit waiting, each in our own world,

Waiting to see the doctor. Worrying, could I be ill?

Is it serious? What will happen?

So little is known and so much is guessed.

Now I wait, just aware of my breathing.

She smooths and combs her hair

Checking her face not satisfied.

A large pale blue ring on her left hand.

No music, time passes slowly.

The air feels heavy with silence.

Footsteps, a cough, swine fever?

A nurse in black locks the sickbay.

Nervous voices can be heard,

A key is turned, She enters.

Magazines are opened and scanned

We look at the posters

My name is called…

# THE OPERATION

No curtain rises on this uncertain play;

Only the sound of steam hissing in the sluice,

And an audience showing its annoyance,

When the performance fails to please.

The actors enter, gowned and masked

Ready to enact a familiar scene.

The lead, supine, slumbering, sleeping, Waits for his dialogue to begin.

As the awesome spectacle unfolds.

Her hand rises, poised, with a blade

She incises and draws a line,

A red rosary, gaping like a mouth.

Now facing each other in this drama.

They perform a ‘dance macabre,’

Executing an aesthetic beauty,

Beneath a bright fluorescent flame.

Deeper the scapellum plunges,

A hiss of breath, no more is heard.

Searching, exploring for the crab.

At last, extending the wound, it’s found.

Now starts the final act,

As man and beast engage in mortal struggle.

Back and forth they sway as the blade cuts.

Finally the brute is felled and silenced.

Unseen and unknown, one rogue escapes.

Freed from the host, it celebrates

By spreading its malice far and wide

To continue its cruel path to death.

# THEIR VOICES

Their voices loud and raucous

Like a chorus.

Workmen on their way,

Wake the day.

Women preparing food,

All share,

The same high pitched mood.

Reviewing the news,

Giving their views

About their leaders, most are readers.

Corrupt and thieves they steal.

Walking slowly they know not where.

No job, no hope just sitting waiting,

Watching the women labouring

Digging, cooking, breast feeding,

Holding the family together.

Absent fathers, brothers, sons,

Smiling, happy to believe in a God

Who will provide all their needs?

Sitting talking waiting …

And then the rains come.

Thundering, clattering, rattling

Roads become lakes

Cars threw up sheets of water

Passers by shielding their feet

And then it stops,

Calm, clean, shining,

And the sun appears.

# WOODHENGE

For a century you have stood

A Redwood henge climbing to the skies:

Saplings planted by our forefathers

A gift that I will pass by but once.

Now you stand straight and true

Towering mightily over me.

You face the four directions of the earth,

The white North, the Red South,

The Yellow East and the Green West.

A carpet of leaves mostly brown and decayed

Will become you again in the sun and the rain.

The silence only broken by a tinkling stream

And the sound of the wind and the birds.

The late sun now cool caresses your skin

So soft like an animal’s fur.

And I hear your heart and feel it beat

In unison with my own.

Beyond the land like a rich woven carpet

Is clothed in green, yellow and brown.

And smoke curls from a nearby home

Now hidden behind a cloud.

# POEMS ON HAPPINESS

# GOOD HEALTH

You have it but don’t know it till you’ve lost it.

You just take it for granted ‘till it’s gone

You can’t see it or touch it but can feel it.

It’s a blessing that you’re given only once.

But you can save it if you care to make the effort.

It’s now or never, don’t put it off too long.

The rules are simple and require no special skills.

But just the wish to want and of course the will.

So start today and make yourself this promise.

To care for your health as you do your car.

Don’t overload it or drive it too fast.

Just give it the right fuel and it will last.

So my friends, the message I offer is clear.

It’’s up to you to make the choice.

To live in health and glowing vigour

Or do nothing and pay the price.

#

# MANKIND PROJECT

They came together, men from many places

To describe the journey they had undertaken.

Proudly and bravely they stood together

To confront the world and say-

I am here

Me

I am unique and a whole man

A special being to play my part,

Confidently they proclaimed

We are ready to support those in need.

Men standing eye to eye,

Confronting their battle between good and evil.

Supporting each other, they hugged

For the first time without fear.

Smiling and laughing, unashamed

By their new familiarity.

Men showing courage, honour and strength.

O love my friend, my heart, my all.

# MY SON

You are the product of our love, my son.

One cell chose another to make you.

All that you are was there

A chance encounter came true.

Cell made cell again and again,

Each knowing what to do.

Slowly growing unto you

As if it was always so.

Now full grown and complete

you are the mirror of me.

So many things we share

So many wrongs we see.

You have now repeated the act

A cell of you made real

A boy , a girl, a smile.

The circle again is sealed.

# SWEET SILENCE

Sweet silence, where are you hiding,

Frightened away by the sounds of the city?

Human voices raised in anger?

Radios blaring, car horns sounding,

No electricity, generators growling.

Where have Nature’s gentle sounds gone?

The sweet song of birds on the wing.

The rustle of the breeze in the trees.

The gentle sound of waves on the shore

Are they lost to be no more.

The wind whistling through the sails

The rustling water beneath the prow

Why are they lost? Where are they now?

Have we abandoned nature to a world of strife?

No longer able to see the magic of life

Insensitive to her magical powers

To revitalize and renew our lives.

# POEMS ON LOSS

# A DREAM I HAVE CONTINUALLY

A dream I have continually;

My hands blood red within your core,

Searching for the devil that lodges there,

A bright light glaring above my head.

Powdered gloves, a scalpel sharp as steel,

The warmth of your entrails,

Writhing in my hands.

This is bizarre, where will I find it?

I cannot tell, it feels so real,

Then I see it, surely I cannot fail

To reach it but it moves away

And disappears from sight.

All night I search, all night.

I awake and am alone.

Dreams are what you wish

Or things that happen out of chance.

Could this be a premonition

Of what is about to pass?

How can I guess what all this means?

Will time tell me what will be?

Will I ever know?

What awaits me now.

I toss and turn, my mind alive

In the darkness of the night.

The hours pass so slowly,

The light never seems to come.

Has time stopped?

I check my clock, ten minutes

It can’t be so slow?

Have I entered another world?

# A FLOWER

What divine ecstasy,

That a flower is a plant’s last cry before it dies.

Its crowning glory is its last goodbye.

# A MUSEUM

A museum is now erected,

Where visitors can come and gawk,

Unable to believe what they see.

They just stand amazed and talk.

The prison huts are no longer there.

The paths to hell are overgrown.

Gardeners leisurely mow the lawns

While the birds still swoop and sing.

Can this be really be the place?

That I remember so well.

A place I can never forget

Where so much evil dwelled.

Is this really where my hut was

In which so many died in pain?

Can this be the furnace

Where they all went up in flames?

Time has passed so quickly.

Can some memories linger on.

The next generation is now born.

Will they forget this infamy?

# ANTON CHEKHOV

The story that the writer’s penned

Is of a poor man who has lost his son,

Who died too young from an unknown cause.

He wants to speak about this terrible thing.

But no one has time to listen to him.

He is a poor cab driver at the beck and call

Of any passenger who can pay his fare.

He believes that he should have died

Before his son with his whole life to live.

But he is unable to describe to anyone

Except his mare who listens while chomping.

# CRYING FOR THE WORLD

I'm crying again and I don't know why.

Tears well up, my chest feels tight.

I fight them back, but they tumble still.

Why am I crying? I cannot tell?

Am I crying for the world,

The pain, its ills’

The lost opportunity,

The failed attempts.

The mistakes we make,

The hurt we cause.

Not pausing to see the beauty around,

The blue sky above, the trees, the sea,

The distant horizons, the world beyond,

So much we have, and yet we want.

Must we always just seek and fail.

Won’t we ever be satisfied?

For the love I see in your eyes.

The sparkle of a child’s smile,

The warmth of your hand in mine

The gift we share as your face lights up

How did I deserve such a prize

That you so freely give, my love.

# DEATH IS MY FRIEND

Death has been my companion for some time.

I can’t remember exactly when it began

But everyday he stands quietly by my side

Reminding me if I need to be that he is my friend

That in the end he will have the last say.

Sometimes I even forget he is there

But it never lasts for long.

Each day something awful happens,

And he smiles and says I did that,

I took that little girl’s life away.

I stole that father from his family.

I pushed that boy and let him drown

I let that cancer eat her away.

But when my time comes, will I be ready?

To sink into his arms and rest for eternity.

# GOODBYE

Footsteps echoing on a wooden floor,

A butterfly settles on a window ledge,

Its multi-coloured wings fluttering no more.

Children’s voices heard from the road outside.

A dripping tap – a car’s exhaust.

Dust trapped in a beam of light,

Rows of bottles by the sink.

A half empty peanut jar.

Ants climbing into a biscuit tin.

I shut the door and lock them in.

# HOW DO YOU DEAL WITH THE LOSS

How do you deal with the loss

Of someone you loved so much?

How do you fill the gap

That she leaves in your life?

What do you put in her place?

To fill your waking hours.

How do you find the reason for being

Through those long sleepless nights?

How do you fight the melancholia

That faces your waking day?

What stops you from getting lonelier

And falling into an abyss of despair?

By learning to manage each moment

In a manner which gives you hope

And strengthens your purpose for living

For finding that vision you dream.

By accepting what has happened

And be thankful for what you have had

Not dwelling on what you have lost

But celebrating the love that you knew.

# IN WHOSE EMBRACE?

In whose embrace do you wish to be when you die?

Is it someone you have loved and cherished?

Or will it be a person you are yet to meet?

Who will be with you at the end?

To hold your hand and share your journey

Into that unknown place alone and scared.

Are you ready for that voyage into eternity?

Unaided, unknowing and unprepared.

Maybe you will die alone like so many

Your family and friends no longer there

To share your last moments on this sphere

Before you leave this mortal residue

And fly into those distant skies.

# MASTECTOMY

The bright umbrella of light above,

No shadow, warm comforting,

Scalpel, cold and hard in his palm,

Steady, pause and incise, cut cleanly,

Confidently, the skin taut between fingers and thumb,

No slipping, no hesitation,

Cut, red beads, then yellow and brown

Familiar paths, slipping easily between valleys and hills.

Opening, exposing and seeing, considering,

Yes, this is the way into the forbidden.

Uncover, revealing the damage,

The disease, the dysfunction.

Clip and cut, stop and search.

Gently, slowly calmly ease, uproot

Deeper, beyond and behind, unknown.

Carefully release,

Freed , removed,

Closed.

# O MEMORY

O memory why taunt me so

With sweet images of a love now passed.

A life shared with one so dear

A partner, lover, mother and friend

With whom my true life really began.

Beyond us our children carry our genes.

And their children, until eternity

Are living evidence,if need be

Of the life and love we shared.

That is now gone and all that remains

To taunt and reduce me to tears,

Are those memories now fading fast?

To reappear at times like this.

When alone, they return and I see your face

And even hear your voice, amongst a crowd

And stop, stunned and dejected

When it's someone else

Who looks and sounds like you.

# SHE DIDN’T DIE

When will I be able to accept?

The reality of her death.

How can I dispels these hopes

That it didn’t really happen.

That she’s there waiting for me

If only I knew where to look.

But I know that she is not alive,

But her spirit still visits me

And for a moment she is real.

I no longer dream of her,

But in the quiet of the night

I feel a sudden belief

That she didn’t die that day.

# SOMETIMES WHEN I’M ALONE

Sometimes when I am alone

I feel you sitting by my side

Waiting silently for me to speak,

Reminding me of those halcyon days

When we were young and free.

I listen for your sweet soft breathe

But can only hear the wind

Your words so faint have almost gone

And floated away I know not where.

I wait not moving, hoping you will stay

And share this moment with me.

I look around, you are no longer there

Having gone to a place I cannot yet reach.

Still I wait hoping you will return

To share some time with me.

Perhaps one day we'll meet again

When all this toil and pain have gone.

# TEARS

I'm crying again and I don't know why.

Tears well up, my chest feels tight.

I fight them back, but they tumble still.

Why am I crying? I cannot tell?

Am I crying for the world, the pain, the ills’

The lost opportunity, the failed attempts.

The mistakes I've made, the pain I've caused?

By not pausing to see the beauty

Within my midst and all around.

The blue sky above, the clouds, the trees.

The distant horizons, the world beyond,

So much I have, and yet I want.

Must I always just seek and fail.

Won't I ever be satisfied?

# POEMS ON LOVE

# BROTHER GEOFFREY

Three score years and ten

Is our allotted span

So the good book says,

But you have proved it wrong

Once again,

And added another ten.

And since eighty is the new sixty

So we are led to believe,

You are clearly heading to ninety

And we all wish you Godspeed.

Surrounded by your family

Who increase day by day?

We honour and love you

And want you to stay.

As fit and strong as you are

For many years to come

So we can stay together

No matter where you roam.

So raise your glasses

And make this toast.

Father, Uncle, Brother, Friend,

We wish you all the Best

To Geoffrey!!

# GRANDCHILDREN

We met at Waterloo, but they forgot your passports.

So we got a later train to Brussels.

While they retreated into their iPods,

We contemplated the rows of white crosses in a cemetery.

We stopped in Paris for a meal.

We had Coq au Vin, they had hot dogs.

We wanted to take them to a museum or gallery

Instead they wanted to go shopping.

So we left them at MonoPrix with some Euros,

While we admired Monet and Picasso.

We shared a chambre, four in one, a mistake.

They slept late so we crept from the room.

# HOME IS WHERE THE HEART IS

Somewhere twixt London and Mombasa, a bird flies

High in the sky amongst the clouds

Seeking a place to rest on her journey south.

Driven by forces beyond her control

And by navigation beyond belief,

She returns to her southern home each year

To restore her strength and fertility

Only to make the journey back like clock work.

What does she think about on that long dangerous flight?

'Why am I doing this,' she may ask.

More likely she will just get going as the winter sets in,

And the length of the day shortens and the darkness begins.

She follows a tortuous and difficult path in this annual migration

Yet she has no choice if her future is to be assured.

The voyage is as natural as breathing to ensure that her young will survive

And another generation will be born in the warmth of the sun.

When large enough they will take the journey north

Guided by eons of memory inherited from centuries

And the cycle will go on.

# I MEANT TO LEAVE YOU BEHIND

I meant to leave you behind

Trying so hard to move on

But instead I brought you with me

In your paintings, your pictures, your songs.

You are there upon the mantelpiece

Smiling and looking down.

I am lying still in the bedroom

Staring up at you from the floor.

Your presence is all around me

No matter which way I look

You enter my life while I’m sleeping

And tease me while I am awake.

I thought that time would fill it

That empty space in my heart,

Instead unknowingly

I have stored you in my head.

# I SAW THE SEA TODAY AS IF FOR THE FIRST TIME

I saw the sea through your eyes today

As if for the very first time.

Through the eyes of a young woman

Who had never seen it before?

What a wondrous sight, it must seem

Stretching as far as the eye could see.

Its waters blue black and green

White washed sand on yellow beach.

She staring to the horizon, disbelieving

Her dress blowing in the wind.

Never having seen such a scene before

What must be going through her head.

What can it be like to first feel the breeze

And smell the ozone in the air?

Walking on the warming sand

Hearing the breaking of the waves upon the beach

And tasting the salty spray in your mouth

The low-flying birds diving for fish,

The sea glistening like glass on the swell

The breaking waves whispering to the sand

While the horizon, stretching out as far as can be seen

Seems to be tumbling into that distance,

Beyond that deep thalassic oceanic dream.

# RENEWAL

Forged,

In the deep heat of the earth.

Bent and buckled,

Melted and moulded

The serpentine stone

Is now distinct.

She rests and waits

For the intimate stroke

Of the sculptors hand

To seek her innermost secret

And unveil her hidden beauty

That lay dormant,

Waiting to surprise him.

Alone she has slept,

Deep in her stony bed

For more than a million years.

She has been changed forever,

And will never be the same.

She is prepared

For the quarryman

To cut deep and clean

And take her from her bed.

Gently he lifts

and releasers her.

She is now ready,

And free to be caressed

By the loving touch

Of the sculptor.

Proudly she stand

For everyone to see.

Her innermost dreams

Transformed

By her lover’s hand

Into an immortal shape.

# SOPHIA

Nine months later, a baby girl is born

And nature repeats its miracle once again.

From that single fused cell has come

A full and wholesome child.

Equipped with all she needs to face the world.

She lies asleep unaware of the journey

Which moments ago she began.

She smiles and gurgles obliviously.

Her name a mirror from the past

A rebirth of an ancient long passed.

Returning in a new and unblemished form,

She offers hope and a brand new start.

# TOUGH LOVE

The old man sat shaking,

Tears running down his cheeks;

The boy huddled on his lap trembling,

Exhausted by his recent outburst.

Never knowing his real father.

The old man loved him as his own

As close as father and son could be

More a granddad than a dad.

Now four years old

He hasn't learned that none of us

Can always get what we want.

Wishing to watch TV.

Quite mesmerized by cartoons

He sits staring for hours.

The two returned from the beach

A broad expanse of fine white sand.

Where the boy would play for hours.

An onlooker could be persuaded

That he seemed to be engaged

In conversation with an invisible friend.

Later he wanted to watch cartoons,

The old man didn't dislike cartoons,

He marvelled at the skill in their making,

The life like movements of the characters.

So the stage was set for an almighty conflict.

It began slowly, Andrew tried to switch on the TV

When it became obvious to him

That the old man was not going to weaken,

The paddy began with shouts and screams,

His voice rising to a crescendo.

Andrew on the floor kicking and punching

'Go downstairs and play with the other children,'

Andrew shouted 'I don't want to.'

The two were at an impasse,

The old man seated in a chair

Andrew crouching on the floor

Not far away out of control.

It went on for a long time,

Andrew grew tired, his shouts weakened.

The old man watched and remembered;

Remembered his own childhood.

The many occasions when he went into a fury

Unable to get what he wanted.

He waited and watched beckoning

Eventually and very reluctantly

The boy slowly relaxed on the old man's lap.

He closed his eyes and the two hugged.

The closeness of the boy and the poignancy of the moment

Reduced the old man to tears.

At that moment he was reminded

Of what he already knew

That he wouldn't live long enough

To see this beautiful gracious boy into manhood.

# TREES

Forests of dead trees frozen in time

Mark the place where a volcano shook.

Now standing solemn stately silent and stark

No longer part of the living world.

They mark a tempestuous time.

The world in turmoil and rage.

They provide wood, oil and coal,

Creators of climate, rain and shade.

New rows of saplings straight and true

Springing from the fertile soil,

Watered by the giving sky

Providing shade to the weary soul

Your roots travelling far and wide

Hold the soil against erosive rain.

Mudslides can no longer cause

The loss of a single human life.

Splay-footed trunks anchor your heavy hulls

To hold you against the strongest wind

Your air roots reaching to the ground

Are a haven for insects, monkeys and more

I walk inside the fullness of your heart.

And feel the slow beat of eternity.

You shelter me from rain and shine

Without you I could not be.

# WHERE IS LOVE?

It's so obvious when you think of it

No one ever disagrees.

We constantly search for it

And know it when it is near.

Yet it's so difficult to remember

When things are really tough,

That there's one way out of it

That all of us can trust

Why is it so much easier,

To get angry, shout and storm,

Get indignant, outraged and foam?

Than it is to stop and pause

And think and feel and hold

And hug and kiss and yield.

# YOU MUST LEARN TO LOVE

You must learn to love yourself again

Forgive all those failures that are yours.

Remember your strengths and not your frailties

Look into a mirror and see

The face of someone you love

Smile and say Hello.

Bid welcome to another day

Say thanks for the sun to shine

And the rain to fall

And another chance to love.

Laugh and accept your faults

And grow, into a better person

Day by day.

# POEMS ON REFLECTIONS

# A DATE

It was a long journey so I thought

Tedious, like a snail crawling across a road,

But on looking back today, it seemed to fly.

In the blink of an eye,

The yesterday I had has gone forever

Surviving only in my memory.

Different for each of us,

You recalled the surprise of my call

I, the deep blue of your eyes.

You, the sweet music they played.

Me how short a time you stayed.

You wondering, would I phone again?

Me, thinking how soon and when?

What a chance to find your name

Thumbing through my diary

You hadn’t changed your number.

It was so scary

Waiting for you to answer

After so many years.

And your voice I remembered

You hesitated then said yes.

# ANOTHER PRECIOUS DAY

Another precious day,

Another chance

Taken from the time that’s left.

Each valued day slipping by

Is less time to make amends?

To put right all those wrongs

To say I’m sorry for all my sins

The sun rising bright and new

Gives me another chance to renew.

To start again as if I’ve just come

Into this bright new world

Discarding all the sins I’ve done

As if a newborn child again

A black board with no writing on

No heavy burden on my back

To weigh me down and stop my step

Into a new and perfect day.

# BOOKS I LOVE

Their covers may be hard or soft,

and contain both truth or lies.

They can be about letters.

and have contents and chapters.

with pages and borders,

Indices and references.

No annotations and footnote in margins.

They set the reader on a voyage of discovery.

It's a magic journey into secret places

Where information lies ready to be revealed,

So many facts reside there within their covers

It's like entering a hidden cave.

They provide a source of excitement\

And an escape into dreams.

# CAPSIZING

It was any other day,

When under blue skies, the crisp winds

Threw up gentle waves.

The boat, sail dressed

And seated on her cradle

Slipped gently into the water.

I clambered aboard

And set off, one hand on the mainsheet.

The other on the tiller.

Gaining speed,

She heeled against the wind

With water lapping.

Tiller firm, feet locked against the hull.

No better place to be.

I prepared to tack,

Pushing the tiller away and moving across.

Then, falling, flailing, spluttering, sinking,

Ropes and sails snagging,

I surfaced to find the hull up-ended

And the keel reaching to the skies

I had capsized.

# I AM FREE

I was moved to tears yesterday

It took me by surprise

Sudden, violent and uncontrolled,

Shaken, I was asking why?

A woman and a man were released

After they had been kidnapped.

Each rejoicing in their new found freedom

From years of imprisonment.

Liberated after long incarnation,

In wonder at their new found freedom

Each seeing for the first time

The colours and the smells

That we take for granted.

Why is it that we only appreciate?

What we have, when we lose it.

Forgetting to greet each day

And say I am free! I am free!

# MEMORY

You'll never be free from the memory

Of the one you have loved and lost.

It will come back to haunt you

At an unexpected cost.

It will reside deep in your conscience

Apparently gone and forgotten.

And then something quite unexpected.

Will cause it to erupt into pain.

You will live your life very fully.

Continuing with things you enjoy,

And then the sound or a voice will catch you.

And you are back in that river of pain.

The tears will come without warning

Pouring in streams down your cheek.

It will come as an enormous surprise

That this sadness is still deep inside.

They say it will get much better.

And you're soon learn to live your new life.

That the pain that you carry within you

Will hide in a corner, but remain.

# MY LIFE

Is this the life I want?

Satisfied with what I’ve done.

Maybe today maybe my last.

Or will I when that day comes

Sooner than I think

Lament so many things.

Will I face it with regret?

Wish that I had done better,

That I cared more.

The many opportunities that I ignored,

And let go without a thought,

And missed the things I could have done

The friends I could have helped.

When you stand at my grave

And read my name and date.

Will there be memories of someone fine

Or will you express disappointment

And simply pass me by.

And say that I failed

That, which I could have done.

He had the opportunities

But let them slip through his fingers

Always saying I will do it later

But later never comes.’

# PEACE

The gentle waves lap lightly 'gainst the shifting sands

Each giving way to its fellow as it breaks.

Hues blue, green and white together mingle

In the to and fro rocking of the swell.

The wind, a soft whisper in the trees

Caresses the water as it passes by.

While flights of birds arriving from the fields

Rest awhile before returning to their nests.

The clouds are hovering hardly moving,

Promising another day of gentle sun.

Flying fish flutter across the breaking foam

Preparing to settle as the night comes on.

The moon begins her gentle skyward climb.

The sun gives way and settles in the west.

The scene is calm, at peace and full of bliss

As the farmer returns home to his well earned rest.

# ROUTINE

I need a routine in my life

To help me to get through,

The long list of chores

That are becoming such a bore.

I need to introduce change

To help me pass the day

How am I going to manage?

When everything is left to me.

There is not enough time

I just can't fit it all in.

Why can't I just stand and stare

Like other people seem to do.

Carefree and act irresponsibly,

Have a bit of freewheeling,

Responding to my every whim.

Exploring the wide-open spaces.

Searching for an inner peace.

Just live and accept myself

To be free to come and go,

But there is so much to do.

# TIME

Time why hurry so?

Stay and rest awhile with me.

Stop and see the world go by.

Relax and be.

Yesterday is now a memory.

Tomorrow not yet here.

Time is just a vanity,

So stop and be.

The now is all we’ve really have.

So don’t let it slip by.

See it for what it actually is.

The only time we’ve got.

I wake alone and calm.

Time stands still and waits

But suddenly, it races

And the day has gone.

Time where do you go?

In what place do you hide?

Tell me your secret

So that I can also find

That calm tranquillity.

The timelessness of peace.

Where you no longer rule,

And I can be at ease.

# WHAT ARE WE?

I’ll say goodbye and walk away

And cry

Coming and going

Is all my life..

A pen lying on the table

A jar of peppermints

Your toothbrush on the shelf

An open address book.

Scissors lying on the counter,

Dishes drying in the sink,

Bread burning in the toaster

A kettle whistling to be answered.

Cushions piled up on the settee

Still dented with the shape of you.

The TVs eye still closed,

A half open book on the floor,

The things we left behind

That make us what we are.

# WHERE AM I? WHO AM I?

How do I describe the feeling I feel

It's a sense of disconnection

I am not quite in the world your world,

What I see is not what you see?

What I hear is not what you hear?

What I smell is not what you smell?

Even the pavement I walk on

Is a different pavement

I am on it but not quite on it

Here, but not quite engaged,

Listening, but not hearing,

Touching but not feeling,

Smelling but not tasting.

Time passing but so slowly

Not stopping and waiting

As if each day is the same

I'm always waking up,

Going to bed

Eating the same meals,

Each week is the same,

Each day is the same

Each hour that passes is the same

I'm in the same place, at the same time

Without stopping.

Passing without leaving any sign.

Reality is an unreality

Footsteps but not my footsteps

Voices but not my voice

Somewhere within me I reside

Searching and not finding

Nothing just lost and confused,

I'm waiting but nothing happens.

I'm sitting and listening but not hearing.

Is everyone like this?

Are you like this? Am I making sense?

My sense? Your sense? Nonsense?

Where am I? Who am I?