



# **A Fool in the Pack**

Bariane Louise Rowlands

A collection of Poetry  
1994-2006

*Argotist Ebooks*

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## **A Note from the Author**

This book is a reformed, collection of poetry written during attending University and in the following decade of my travelling. It has been compiled as a closure to mark the ending of a long journey.

Some of the poems have been born from explorations in form at University but mostly they are explorations in metaphor, language and expression.

If it helps the reader of this book, *A Fool in the Pack* can be approached as representing a mature woman's dysfunctional youth, becoming a mother at 19 in the wrong environment and being too young to fight back at the time, having been married three times and widowed twice (the first one fell from a parachute but we had not spoken for 6 years prior to his falling and the second one managed to blow himself up in a caravan) and many years of travel and exploration. Deeper still it expresses the loneliness and isolation of having an Earth based spirituality and identity that I do not practice due to my determination to keep many feet on many sides of many fences and not be indoctrinated!

For my daughter

Willow Faylinn Rowlands

# **A Fool in the Pack**

## **A Fool in the Pack**

The fool dances on tip-toe  
Waving arms with imbalance,  
A dog in tow;  
Its unquestioning quarters  
And dry tongue from licking  
In the light of the moon  
Is oblivious.

I am the fool,  
Precariously balanced  
And charming in laughter;  
Follow me not  
For it takes but a pebble to make me fall

And when mountains are hostile  
And a simpleton fragile  
And shaling faces reach tumbling heights,  
All the track long is dancing and laughing  
For a fool and their dog on tip-toe.

## Vienna Sound Dog

*Performance poem for 'The Urban Nomad Mixers', Vienna 2005*

A faithful year pants water vapour like Cumulus.  
Honour and justice rumbles faithful breath  
And infidel gossips of greed stand in mist;  
The notes layer heavily the pockets of Bankers.

'And so it is,' Dog barked his prophesy,  
'And so it is and so it is', Dog snapped.

Dog curled up in love, he was compliant  
Until false sound vibrated.  
Dog was angry and made round shapes,  
His lips quivered like fingers.

People applauded, Dog sighed and slept.  
Earth rolled over searching for comfort  
And people spat feral words at their Disturbance;  
Dog's wild tongue silenced them.

'And so it is,' Dog loved.  
'And so it is and so it is',  
Dog sang and died!



## **Annabelle**

*An exercise in using a given tarot card to base a poem from*

Annabelle was hiding  
And she clawed at her throat,  
Naked, exposed.  
She could smell the sweet calling of fruit  
And the cold earthy flow of water.

Annabelle was hiding  
And she clutched at her chest,  
Framed, constricted.  
She could hear warm air from the land  
And the rustling song of the trees.

Annabelle was hiding  
And she gouged at her arms,  
Embroidered, seamed.  
She could feel the calling of the sea  
And the birds beating time on a wing.

Annabelle was hiding  
And she tore at her hair,  
Entwined, captured.  
She could see the sun, a blazing orb  
And the gentle pasture's dancing arms.

Annabelle was hiding  
And she scratched at her face,  
Alluring, set.  
She could touch the gloaming crescent mask  
And the deepest dark rocks of the land.....

Annabelle was running  
And she tore her belly,  
Fertile, alone.  
She could taste the edge of freedom  
And the blood coursing wild through her Veins.

Annabelle was crying  
And she cradled her form,  
Sighing, laughing.  
She could feel the tired years of duty  
And the hot rush of life from her womb.

Annabelle was dying  
And she covered her eyes,  
Exhausted, calm.  
Testing her feet in a dance of their own  
And ripping her roots out from the ground

Annabelle was flying!

## **Sculptress**

*For Rogi, New Zealand, 2000*

A song in the blood  
Swirls down to the ocean bed  
And hills are crumbling in your palm.  
Fragments,  
Chips of memory,  
Smooth and round as flesh  
Swell between your fingers,  
Burst into form,  
Ripen like slow, moving cloud.

## **The Misplaced Monkey**

*Ref: George Stubbs's 'A Green Monkey'*

There is depth in shadows  
Layered thick with barkey strokes.  
Barely caught in little light  
And cloaked in furry gloaming,  
Blessed fruit in mounds lie  
Rosy with maturity.

Silently a monkey,  
A delicacy of sinew,  
Fair haired in poetic poise  
With curling, leathery digits,  
Holds fleshy comfort close.  
He, a desperate stranger

And captive in foreign lands,  
Perhaps, a sole companion!  
In phantom contemplation  
With dusky tones (abstract  
Roots in conflict with themselves)  
His artful eyes sing home.

### **Thompsons Make Grandma Look nice**

*There has been a long debate about where my evil Grandmother originated from when she joined my Welsh family in Liverpool: Romania or Sweden? It is unknown; regardless, she had a gargantuan nose and was a most unpleasant woman!*

I brought irises, white, delicate, live Things  
And laid one across your chest and cheek.  
Its chlorophyll blood had been severed too,  
Yet it, had at least the look of life.

It was a way of touching you; they said  
You were poisonous and our flesh could not Meet.  
I placed one, gentle bloom upon your Powdered face  
And inhaled deeply the rancid scent of Truth.

Grandma Violet, I have never had the chance  
To say it, not once in eighteen years.  
I wondered who you were, a dark Swede,  
Romanian and dropped in Manchester they Said.

I saw my nose upon your face,  
Our cheek-bones were mirrored  
And I remembered how you hated  
My long, curling, blonde hair.

You hated most things though,  
Almost everything in life.  
So I wrote on a card and asked  
If I might wish you love?

*A Future Full of Yesterdays*

*For my brother*

You and I, scrunched up,  
seated at the edge of grass.  
Tumbling, white water split into rivulets,  
swept their way separately  
over round, rock obstacles through the valley.

The Earth, warm beneath fingers  
Immersed in grit,  
Faces tight against torrential air  
And listening keen,  
The wind tormented the harrowed landscape

And lightly at my shoulder you whispered,  
"yes, I know".

We scrutinised bark, stone,  
Organic matters and got lost  
On the stringy plains of sound.

Looking up at you - my head  
Still like an egg in the palm cap of your Hand -  
You said, "I loved you when you were Born".

Images of faces,  
Expressions, hands, thoughts  
And games of youth all layered,  
Complicated, hidden  
Beneath all we see:

A wave of eyes are seeing  
A sea of ears are hearing  
Movement and sound.

A globe of children are perceiving  
The leafage of life,  
A tempest many coloured,  
The work of hands  
In microcosmic proportions.

We were born with eyes,  
Mine blue, yours brown;  
They were huge at birth,  
Small now and hidden  
Beneath the caricatures of age.

## Night Fall

*Ref: David Young Cameron's 'Nightfall, Luxor'*

You  
Have caught me  
Between sleep and wake,  
My sea green self.

You  
Have seen me,  
The face of reality,  
The dark figured shadows -

Grey shades imprisoned  
From aqua delight -

They  
Like your fingers  
Bruise all my dreams  
In your wicked grasp.

They  
Like broken ribs  
Push my boney shades  
To tiny rough wisps.

I,  
With painful gasps  
Slip deeper  
In skies of flight.



## **Painful Medicine**

*An exercise in letting go of a complicated youth*

I will kill you my love  
With painful medicine  
Choked down in anguish  
Confirming your extinction.

Secrets are hidden in sedimentary silence,  
Wiped clean with an oily rag.  
You are my world, my love,  
Scented with tears and time.

My anger rises coiled and sprung  
And Explodes in my throat,  
A stifled scream in spasms  
Swallowed down in the dark.

You settle in my stomach like a bone  
And I feed from the marrow,  
Sucking the life from it,  
Balking on the bitterness.

I can not see through the raging storm,  
Blood red and jelly thick,  
Interwoven clots  
Congealed with cold.

I will kill you my love  
With loving medicine  
Making room for breath  
Untainted by your name.

## The Pelt's Call

*An experience during having a stomach infection and having been given staunch medication to calm it down, but none the less, it was a strange event that happened!*

Under the raven shroud  
Breath and mind throb,  
Air cavities heave,  
The body perspires -

Wake up -  
Filaceous light is beckoning,  
Elevates haecceity from its husk.

Wake up -  
Flesh and bone, eyes stare;  
Through the port  
Crackling, static prisms mesmerise:

She is autonomous, celestial,  
Reaching heights, piercing a sky with her Shriek and searching the heat,  
Shimmering thermals,  
Buoyant freedom puffs rippling feathers.

In robotic angles eyes and head twitch,  
Such skill; weaving  
She cuts cloud with no trace

And I smell blood,  
Fresh and crimson beneath.

She, under a span of speckled copper  
Circles her ovoid belly  
Alighting to the grainy, golden vastness

Wake up -  
A shield wears my face in rainbow plumage;  
A woman of troubled journeys is all:

The sun, swift and weightless,  
Reaching inner peaks  
But back track in the dark,  
Rest in heavy flesh pallid in the night

Crack -  
She tears forward:

Mammal -  
A bear in muscular prowling  
Claws dust with flexing haunches,  
Rumbling voice through emerald canopy  
Echoes in shade, through bark,  
Up beyond mountainous, chiselled crag

And I smell water, cold and gushing,  
Tainted with soil and stone.

Her muzzle circles, tastes earthy callings, snuffles, licks, Leathery pads immersed  
In the rocky crescendo of movement.  
Silvery darting flexing her hunger  
Reaches vast, zinc essence

But I am more thrift,  
Pluck inspiration from sable depths.

Wake up.....

I see my name and its pelt calls!

Always she carries her name in the dark  
For in rest she is both woman and beast;  
The mortality of blood runs deep,  
the waters of knowledge, ever flowing.

In shields I've seen my face. I am awake.

## **Lavender Lady**

*For my mother*

A washed paleness breathes amidst cloth.  
The confines of the ottoman are dusty.  
Cut crisply at dusk, damp stems,  
Seed heads brought indoors  
Stiffen like bundled wheat.

Feathered buds left to settle  
Powder for the coming year.  
I have grown these shrubs,  
Rich, sweet, acrid scent -

A twilight lilac adorns vases-  
The objects of pictures and poetry.  
But in my memory, they lay  
Packaged as soap in white waxed paper,  
Their face printed softly upon it.

## **The Player**

*For Bruce, his painting and our percussion: New Zealand 2000*

Water, clear without colour and transparent  
In the depths of the ocean is black.  
Light leaps from the surface, therein  
No Sight can be forced.

The invisible wind, full of water  
Bulks into deep, grey, cumulous  
And brightness bends around,  
Forms Silhouettes,  
A shinning, framed reality  
Piercing lighter matter with ease.

Only wale song touches the tides,  
Crumbles ice, shattering all.

A lonely Albatross bursts through cloud.  
A land figure beats hard their drum,  
Its waves slicing air, searching for source.

Sun makes a player sweat down to the Bone  
No gleam penetrates, illuminates  
The silent cube of the heart;  
Such, flickers, relentless escape  
The body withers, realises not  
Its own bondage and finds no peace,  
Just the steady beat in a hall of mirrors.

A secondary heart pressed tight to ribs,  
Bubbles in blood swirl faster in dance,  
Cells strain, red rocks glimmering  
A mournful song, a sigh of swinging swell  
And the figure on land beats harder still.

An Albatross skirts the quivering gloam  
And below, little suns are spinning,  
Licking the tides, icing the backs  
Of great blue beasts drifting soulfully.

Wet sand sags under the weight of lovers,  
Their chests rise rhythmically.

Land figure lays down their drum to dream  
Of water.....

## **Dreams Within the Shadow**

*Beaumaris Castle, 1994*

The romantic vision before me Sir  
Of you, one foot poised on the bottom step,  
Hand resting most handsomely on your knee.  
Your curtsey is most honourable.

But yet, we have met before you and I  
In other such places - twisting stairways -  
Grey corridors that echo cold shadows,  
My heat magnified by the ice in stone.

The ring of your armour resounds loudly;  
In my heart, I fear your very presence  
For you are a threat to my life Sir,  
There's always passion in adultery!

How I cling to the pulse of ambience,  
Sedimentary with death in purpose.  
Aware of myself, not my position,  
"Sir, I pray do not move, for I can not".

I am ashamed of the dreams in my eyes.  
In summer the scent of the Menai drifts  
Across this court bringing visions of you  
But winter gnaws you into old age Sir.

Oh the magnificence in these great blocks,  
Ingenuity from callused hands.  
How I long to see your science and skill,  
loyalty and dauntless, nightly vigil.

But always your shadow breezes past me,  
every line of your hard face worn with life  
and I dare to think you would have the time  
to look at me with flagrant adoration.

I dismiss your loyalty to them  
And deny the cargo of ships at port.  
May your bow lie forever dormant  
And the sinews of your arms reach for me.

Even in the reek of any privy  
I am destined to see fervid shadows  
And hear velvet rustle against pale skin,  
This skin that fevers from only your sight.

Yet in the recess of my mind, is cold,  
Born from the sound of screaming men  
Who fall. I shiver at the blood and sweat  
That flows freely engraving your scabbard.

Sir, I acknowledge your strength and fibre  
That seeps from every quoin and rock;  
The air is heavy with sounds of freedom  
Crying thickly from the mouth's of white Gulls.

In each purple flower that clings to stone  
I hear your step echo and search your face.  
You are coloured through my visions Sir,  
But I have known you, in some shadowed place.



## **Red River Dawn**

*Preparing to leave Liverpool, her river, my Welsh blood and set forth for America and New Zealand, 1999*

Dawn breezes up beyond the river,  
Its steeled channel, red now in the sky's Wake.  
Sleepily, I reach myself across the heaven's Seam.  
Upon glossy pools, my eyes hold the Retreating stars.

Do you dare me to slip into the ocean?  
It is mine you know, I will sing Pan's law  
And down in the depths upon the backs of Dolphins  
Shell boats will carry it at my command

And in his stead, loose your hands in Earth,  
Your eyes open to nature's melodies  
And you will see there, beneath bark,  
The sap that you may drink of.

I might roll and dance you, till stone is Soft.  
Between, below, above is the lava of my Soul;  
It flows swiftly catching the dreams of Lovers,  
Their faces keen in the fiery glow of Heaven.

Could you be captive in a deities' delight,  
A spell that stitches the web of seas and Suns?  
I would taste your tears as waves bite the Land,  
Dust swirling swarms to no end nor no Beginning.

The secrets of myth will slip into your Thoughts  
So that you might know the hunger of Celtic Dance.  
Timeless fire sparks in mortal words will Strip themselves  
And you will be of and in the fair isle's Mossy dreams.....

## Dog Fish

*Performance piece: New Zealand, 2000*

I

Aotearoa:

Land of the Long white cloud.

Aotearoa rolling around our mouths

Down and along and into our veins

And knowing the ocean was huge,

Not a dirt Pond

Trapped between Ireland and Europe

Where the glimpse of a few dog fish meant Warrington was not spilling pollution

As much these Days,

We floated, cried, laughed in our paradise,

A cool ocean and not clear, hot blue,

Emerald Green but just real, surreal, washed

In a new, Southern Light of travellers, dope fuelled companions revealing their need to move on, be unique in their dress code and walking sandals.

We heard of Maoris beating their breasts, Thrusting tongues for tourists

On sand savouring, fish BBQ's - Pre-paid, pre-booked.

We did not attend, for the same reason we Have never liked zoos or being associated With the Beatles.

We raised our voices on a second day,

A February day high in soft light,

'Farewell to crumbling tenements,

Ignorant views fat with bias,

TV existence and fighting status,

Scrambling between media, unemployment,

Dog-eat-dog mentality, dark beer, or sherry Filled, futile voices and

Expressions from level to level

Of fearing to want more or different.

Aotearoa, Hundertwasser roundness

And no red brick! We were made!

Wellington walls painted high and fully,  
Locals we came to realise as free whites  
Washing their mark on a beaten land.

And furred, gentle beasts sunning  
Between land and sea at a distance  
And dusky dolphins delicate skin,  
Like eyelids fluttering us round  
Deep in humour, their green view terrorising Our unknown depths upon new territory.  
Seaweed on the shore akin to Wale flesh, large and black, rubber tentacles amidst  
White pebbles made us closer to pursuit.

And just once, just once  
A sacred garden, Maori lodge;  
A pathway story wrapping round feet,  
Upwards and through a woven, wooden womb;  
We were privileged to pass through such  
A lodge, all reds and gold and pinks Sweeping murals of ancient family,  
A deep face and a mouth full of rising vowels explaining all.  
We never devoured such senses again,  
Just the once, in a rare, chance meeting.

## II

We journeyed, traversed both islands.  
Roads twisting along waving, golden Mountains, shimmering wheat fronds  
Like sun kissed oceans dancing with thread  
But in truth, they were just tree raped, Upwards land, Maori bush  
Crashed to nothing for white farming.

Settled safe in Wellington Bay,  
Mountains were dense foliage for a view,  
All wood and windows and colour.  
The swapping of art for herbal healing,  
Homes as free as adolescence.  
Morning rush hour swept over, full of Dreadlocks, flip flops, piercings  
And the business quarter, IKEA-like, Grandeur when isolated.

Our table of meetings where adorned  
With Israelis, French, Uruguayans, Danes, Iraqis, the Scottish, the Samoan  
And Pakeha of course, all but Maori;  
The Maori we found decorating tourism only Or in tattoos on white skin or amidst prefab  
poverty and the nearest Scouse existence  
Of all we had left behind in the first place. The pre-ordained, misplaced race!

### III

We were told, 'THEY had a drink problem'.  
'The Maoris, it's in their blood', they Can't be bothered';  
'Can't read, won't work, cause trouble, big Problem'!

We knew one, met one once; I suppose it was like meeting the last Mammoth.  
A wild, gentle, angry one shrouded  
Between a thousand myths and life.  
Unsure of himself and hidden always  
Beneath a black, woollen hat,  
He was the only one who offered us help.  
We wrote letters for a while, back and Forth, forth and back so we might stay  
Immigration Status from a black back;  
A token gesture that Maoris are heard.  
It did not work.

There was such much beauty and adventure.  
The white world of Aotearoa,  
Much, so much for us  
And our pasty, boiled Bodies.  
New land only ever brings you home  
To yourself and some go  
And some stay carrying themselves with them,  
Dominating everything for their own need.

Aotearoa - land of the long white cloud.  
How right the Polynesians were!

## Who Knows Where

*In honour of living in a communal house full of sentient adults with my tiny daughter when I had to work and go to University and clean up after all the sentient adults and find time to read a story to my daughter.....*

I am stalking stealth itself  
On a sharp and lucid night.  
I like it here, face down,  
Eye to the ground, grass spiking at stars.  
I am hidden flat out like a worm  
Soaking up the scent of dark -  
Its musty age reminds me I am real.

When I roll upon my back,  
Chest all twigs and soil,  
My breath floats out a plume of smoky ice  
Into the blue black of a raven sky  
Lost amidst a thousand dying suns.

The infinity of un-known  
Pours endlessly into my pupil  
Spilling over and out  
Across the lawn; I am powerless.  
It washes through the shell of existence,  
The obscurity of a million dreams,  
A million lies from a million mouths  
Is drowning heavily in silence.

So I am content to lie in the damp,  
Taste soil that covers grubs, roll around,  
My skin a sponge to Earth.  
My lungs have changed their purpose;  
I have a banquet before me  
And a carriage straight to the stars -  
The fearsome heights of who knows where!

## **Pirie Street**

*For the Chaos Octopus*

Oranges upon my tongue  
Burst into youth.  
Wine kissed the lips  
Burning my cheeks.  
Laughter was liquid language,  
Paint and poetry, embers in friendship.

We lay on the floor  
Just talking, listening  
Whilst skies ate the sun,  
Window frames tumbling from the walls  
And I was falling free  
Across the city roofs.

Skin like music, cells that sang.  
It will take me seven years  
To forget the melody now,  
'I want to thank you' but can't.....

My heart was too old,  
My needs too few,  
My want of it all too deep!

**In the Dead of Night, We Dance so.....**

*For the Internet*

In my palm  
The ocean salt gathers -  
Life line, blood line -  
Grooves filled with white crystals.  
Suns sink time after time.

And of the dark,  
Why the heavens be alive with stars -  
Auspicious gloam.  
The breath of night mirrors....words....words  
Stay a while in the silence!

Look beyond,  
Do you see what I can do?  
Tis my web.  
Stay a while, pressed lips.  
Hush now.

These hours are mine.  
I sprinkle fingertips,  
Light that dances, would you?  
Hey but the dawn rises.  
See it all skitter so!

## **Dreamcatchers**

*For Tally from Israel: A poem taken to canvas taken to poetry and in her staid the representative as a woman who had been in the forces and learned to 'resuscitate poetry' on days off*

Pursed lips, as though you are kissing Thoughts in the air!  
We are both playing language,  
You with paint,  
Me with ink.

You, watching every stroke of brush  
Like a child intense  
Watching something unknown.

That which is appearing before you,  
Re-emerging before me -  
Words once written long ago  
Fleshing our anew beneath your fingers.

What is art but signs and symbols?  
A death Has blossomed into ripe fruit  
We struggled with translation in word  
But in paint we meet

You wash the picture upside down,  
Form watches itself  
From below and above.  
A red birth,  
A white death.

We are liquid language,  
Fluid meaning,  
Living understanding twisting knowledge.

Beneath our lives what beauty,  
such belonging.

Our minds, poetry  
But not words from mouth,  
Images of mind,



Shapes of heart,  
Visions of living itself.

We are dancing!  
You with paint and me with ink.  
Our hands merging,  
plucking inspiration out of the air  
and drawn from within,  
reaching down to the whirl  
of where we are both organic  
And no form exists.

To exist, to become poetry,  
Language carved out of the stone,  
Coaxed up between the ribs,  
Embroidered upon the page.  
Poetry, paint and canvas,  
A world beyond words.  
I am silent!

## Promising Earth

*When I was romantic about love in my late 20's*

Watch my hair, it falls around you,  
Follow its course along my spine.  
My skin has no form till you find its shape,  
I feel myself made, caught in your palms.

Will you turn me, mould me as Earth,  
Knead pliability till you are consumed.  
I will hold you so that you sigh of home,  
In me, in you, beyond base beauty.

The Heavens have lost their stand and Earth,  
Its stony spin dwindles to nothing.  
Let it stop, all be still for this time  
For you are mine and I am yours.

Our flesh feeds life so that it might rest,  
Air a sigh, fire our heat.  
Earth is touch, and water ebbs,  
Know this land with plentiful embrace.

If I strip bare the Earth's contours,  
Reveal to you its fragile pulse,  
Open to you what I have denied Heavens:  
Will you know me, hear, guide, teach me?

Do not bypass bark, knoll nor stream,  
I am waiting there for you to see.  
Come be, there's singing, truth and life.  
Beneath suns, amidst night,  
I feel you leave me!

## Childhood

Asleep, I tried to dive into the pool,  
Hands tied into fists,  
Face avoiding the crash.  
I sliced only the surface  
And could not sink deeper.  
Echoes of children were laughing  
Like drowning hysteria  
Filling the blue corners,  
Swirling and swelling,  
Burning my ears like the crack of a match!

## The Mexican Drink

I will never forget the taste of satin,  
It binds me in the dark.  
Your lips  
Bite my wrist,  
Blue blood, a grey ocean.

I bleed into the waves,  
White hooves beat my heart;  
Carry me, dance below,  
The mottled light is precious.

Your hair is the drifting bed,  
Reeds free in the current.  
Twist me at your pleasure,  
I will keep you safe.

Stars slip in and out of view,  
Ships pass over, their hulk  
Cuts pulse - bellied shadows.  
They will not touch you.

You are mine, do not breathe,  
Need no cloth of sunlight.  
Play amidst the emerald sway,  
I will keep your there, save you go!

The ocean is an infinite echo,  
I weep for its song.  
It is me you feel, a cry  
Caught up in the clouds.

## **Painting Alexander**

*For Craig*

At the easel, poised,  
Eyes leading your head  
With gentle precision.  
The colours were timid.

Looking up briefly  
To me squatting on the floor,  
Chalk and acrylic stained hands,  
Wine lips and nicotine nails.

There was a feeling of air about you,  
Something I couldn't define.  
You moved as though made of water,  
Silent fluidity,  
Not even a ripple of clothing.

Occasionally I would look through a kiss  
And see the blue mind in your orbs.  
You were delectable, an afternoon ocean,  
Deep as the clouds you adored.

I was weathered by storms,  
My leathery soul, wrinkled.  
Your tone was soothing;  
I was always waiting for it to end.

Beneath your gaze, the skies were warm.  
Feeling you behind and looking forward  
I almost thought it was ok, for a while.  
But nothing is ever so simple.

## God's Pilgrim

*For my second husband, a religious, clever, psychopathic maniac who tried to mock me and control me in the name of God, and his bread stomping existence when I was a Pagan and just fine with my Welsh blood (which I have). However, he fell from a parachute in the end and his GOD did not save him! Therapists are still trying to save me for having even been around him and dragging my daughter along for the ride*

The window in my back, open,  
Clattered a warning song  
And the moon watched  
Like a thoughtful eye in the dark.

Beyond, out there,  
Out there deep within my belly  
I could not curl up against the fear.  
You were watching, waiting,  
Settled inside in silence,

I couldn't get you out,  
Exorcise your eyes.  
You walked like a father  
Slamming doors and lashing  
Out against my shadow,  
Kissing love at my nape.

This was love was it not -  
Screwing my every nuance?  
Candy hands of erosion  
Whipped me to the bone.

Lovers see each other anew  
Touching the mirror fervidly  
We love who we think we are  
Dream of who we might be.

And I chose you for a reflection!

And now you are gone and I  
Have been turned outside-down,  
Love spoken to the sky  
Burns me like acid rain.

Not fit for anyone else now,  
A prisoner to fragmentation,  
My darkest belly naked,  
Ripped open by a cat's tongue  
Like sand upon stone.

You wore me away.

How could I have hoped to win?  
You had a pilgrim's God in your palm.  
I had only a lost Celtic sigh.

I feel my blood hidden in the hills  
And see old men drunk on coal.  
I was more than a poetical fancy.

You wanted to dance beneath my tongue,  
Breathe in and touch old colours  
And after asking me the way,  
Take it and twist it  
And save me from my own heart.

So now I am alone.  
Was this your sense of victory,  
This your sense of saving!  
But things are not as you supposed  
For I am yours no longer.

You may have your God.  
Ask him of his delight!  
His name it was that silenced the songs,  
Stole the celebrations  
And you who raped my soul.

Yes, ask him his delight.  
His name's upon your palms.  
My blood is buried deep and safe  
For I have indeed cast you out.



## Quarry

*'A hunted animal; prey; a victim; a hunter's heap of dead game'—from Chambers Concise Dictionary.*

The dismal flesh was exposed, grey and cold,  
Pillaged of pride and raped of all life;  
Jagged, tortured and selfishly defiled  
With waxy sheen running down damp and dull.

Framed and frozen was its un-marked grave,  
A chilling sketch cut deep-down dark.  
The wound screamed out from its icy grey bed  
Of earthy green now barren and stark.

Slab on slab of shale and sheets -  
A dishevelled bed by intruders hands.  
Their wheels in chunks and clawing nails had  
Gouged and ripped life from the land.

This soul was fading destruction ran rife  
And a silence descended in the waning light.  
The shadow shifted, emerald sparks seeped through  
Revealing glimmering strength and a will to Fight.

Rock on rock, green spurning grey,  
Water climbs high, roots reach low.  
An oasis rose, surged up from the dark,  
Fertile and ripe was the quarry below.

## **The Half Light Lady**

*An evening to yourself as a single parent with a young child*

A swollen door swings shut with heavy Groans.  
The half light lady, steps out in the dusk,  
Breathes deeply the stillness.

Disguised beneath a canopy of grey,  
Houses sit pretty under lamp lit light,  
Netted glass shadows and graduate brick.

It is her time, half time, light enough to See,  
Easy with shadows in which to hide  
Whilst tip-toeing pavements down to the Pier.

A river is thick, melted with rubble  
But a half light lady sees moonlight Ripples,  
Hears whispers on a breeze tinged with salt.

In the half light, half life has only half Sounds,  
Half sight for those who in a half world do Live.  
She lets her eye float with the tide.

Taking her time, un-moving, no rush,  
Not missed, nor watched, nor wanted,  
She returns home to a heavy door,  
Closes it under the lamp.

## **Blue Vine**

*He shouted for eight years until he blew himself up!*

Green Chlorophyll hands applaud in the rain.  
Beyond this blue window, tunnel vision  
And the dark spaces between such.  
Ah, a million worlds wait there!

I envisage myself lapping up  
Drop after drop of mountain fallings.  
I turn on the tap and hear you shouting,  
'Get out, get out, get out of my life'.

What is this life I should leave?  
It can not be just a door, surely!  
There is no substance, in that,  
Nothing I can truly remove myself from,  
Only a space and a voice.  
You are a trickster of meaning anyway.

I am not and tiny fragments of me float out  
Into the density of foliage;  
I am embedded in the wall and  
Seep into it, disrupting its foundations;

A well seasoned brick, precarious and Impervious.  
Did I trickle into your cells, a web,  
Like mother spider with her spindles?  
I will always be here, in the fabric,  
Like those before and beyond me.

I adore the green berry rain from this Creeper.  
My feet are made of sand,  
A thirst and confusion of what I am:  
Water to fire, my sweet quenching and Deaths.

## Old Friend

*A one night stand with a friend who stopped being a friend because of the one night stand probably because I did it because I thought it would be more but did not care that it was not afterwards..... which is what women do!*

Stone rises up ancient and full of stories,  
Its mossy surface cast with darkness, grey and green;  
Leafage caught in the cracks, small flowers, Bold or soft  
Reaching beyond iron rails where the world sleeps on oblivious,  
Dreaming its thoughts like foot prints upon our graves.

What causes the body to quiver so?  
Your mouth, seamless and flowing, painting my thoughts?  
A vision of tomorrow that will never quite arrive?  
The chill of dawn kept us secretly climbing  
Towards scents of skin that would only frost further the daylight!

We trespassed the churchyard, took off alone -  
Had wandered away before the concert ceased -  
Roots and limbs intertwined,  
The gleaming loam of night-lit lichen,  
Quietude full of age we sprinkled with Youth.  
We sang, still friends until you walked away.

I pondered minds trapped!  
Life is a map of situations and none are real.  
We live in fear and miss the songs and Dances.  
People come and go; each exchange wakes  
With brighter or darker eyes.

A moment of wild, just a moment it was -  
The sky reaching down through gloom.  
We welcomed the brambles in our hair  
But the light made me mucky and tattered.  
You were still beautiful of course.

If we should meet again and touch in warmth  
And reveal need as pure organic pressing,  
It can be light and deep, exploring,  
Asking nothing save given time

As only a stupid woman ponders!

And as only a brave woman can know,  
Tentacles slowly sink back leaving  
A slime trail of garnished splendour only.

I have your taste upon me by choice.  
I wanted no further than what you had to offer my friend.....

## **A Lover's Life**

*In honour of co-dependency*

If you'd let me,  
I'd spend all my days now  
Painting and writing you.

You could be my study,  
My occupation  
Into my own poverty  
Because I should love myself enough  
And make my life mine.

I want an adult love but this time, this Year  
I am a child, enraptured, captured.  
Staring up at you  
I can only dream about floating upon your Whims;  
I resent it, hate it, could be angry at myself indeed.

The morning is a thrill, even if life is sharp.  
Waking next to you as you leave  
Before I am ready to let go,  
I have nothing to say.  
I have been here before and trust nothing  
And beyond such art, I just want to laugh.

I sleep to kill the hours where I can't love you.  
You can not be my reason for life.  
I don't accept you standing behind me,  
Too many have played such.  
But this is about me wanting you.

## On the Edge

Her feet devoured the ground hungrily, Crunching  
And the water rolled, swaying, rocking  
And the sea's gentle pull was luring, Cradling  
As a ripple rushed up to meet her, greet her.

So she eyed from the shore its icy dark Solitude  
And was awed at first by its powerful Magnitude  
But it chilled her to think of its un-warmed Bite  
And the limbs that would numb as she slipped From the light

But oh how she wanted, yes, how she longed  
To float on that tide a place she belonged  
And with wanton desire she let ripples Embrace  
Until the bed down below was a satisfied Place.

But the sea was too cunning, too devious for That  
So it licked up her soul and the rest out it Spat.

## Cumulonimbus

Look skyward to a flock that's simmering,  
Deep within lies a monstrous obscenity;  
Dark copious form of liquid blackness,  
Emotive squall with downcast obliqueness  
Mirrors a heart that sleeps silent and low.

A passionate force till the wind dies down,  
Clouds draw back as suns suck moisture;  
All is arid and still, suspended pep  
Of suffocating immobility!

Why as the world revolves do people walk  
With laws from sunshine, palsied voices?

So I rush to the bend with open arms,  
Embracing anger, feeding, stalking,  
Lustful for life and impassioned by storms.



## **Froggy Grumbles**

*For my brother and I as children in Liverpool, when we found a cesspit with some nature in it*

A Bulbous green toad croaks  
In the sleepy silence of night  
I hear its throaty calling  
A swallowing membranous movement

At morning we shall search  
In boggy brown water soft sludge  
Dripping dew green spikes of grass  
With hovering hands and delight  
Our ears cocked, for a froggy grumble

Such greeny brown multitudes  
Of leaping, slithery, mottled sheen  
And the wet pad, pad, padding  
From all the webbed knobbled knuckles  
Caught up in our pink skin nets

Of dreams and memories -  
Aeroplane hot skies  
Stale bread supplies and fizz  
And bamboo poles on shoulder rest  
Amphibian games for soldiers in shorts

## **In Oceans**

The solitary echo of souls  
Ebbs its silky silence -  
Unfathomable -  
Out across the water  
To touch horizons and beyond.

The plight of all lies  
As the fingers of the ocean,  
It clings to earthy shale  
Forming columns of vitality  
Ever changing on the shore'

I watch as the salty wash  
Reflects the interchanging of sky and sea  
And the stars play peek-a-boo  
Through an abstract nebula  
To kiss the nape of life.

Life's unstable temperament,  
Tortured within itself.  
To wondrous for silence.  
To simple to mention.

## Earth's Pawing Flesh

Sunlight flickers, as does the fan,  
It opens in creases across the valley.  
Have you seen the mountains, their form;  
My world's flesh upon it!

Dispel this dust oh dawn of mine,  
Take me as the brook to sea.  
Strip shadows with the sting of salt;  
My soul's breath beneath it!

Throw open the shutters of life,  
Let light fold knowledge to nothing.  
All is new and bright is colour this day;  
My eye's view beyond it!

Dance to the tune of stones,  
Their rumble bellows beyond time.  
Ancient sounds of wisdom echo on so;  
My heart's pulse is of it!

## Sixty

*Written for a competition for Penguin book's 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary in my local area!  
It won and I received a set of books*

There were sixty,  
I counted each one -  
Hovering, frozen,  
Ice white and silver bellied -  
A fine web cast upwards  
By the surging spittle  
Impassioned by storms  
And a great tidal moon.

One by one  
All sixty ascended  
To rest behind the surge  
That spiralled alone to the shore.  
I watched their feathered luminous  
Rise and fall,  
Counting.  
There were sixty.

## The Iron Horse

*'When She Cam' Ben She Bobbit /The Anvil /Duncan Johnstone' (title of a track from the 1992 album The Iron Horse, by the band of the same name).*

*'Perhaps all music, even the newest, is not so much something discovered as something that re-emerges from where it lay buried in the memory, inaudible as a melody cut in a disc of flesh. A composer lets me hear a song that has always been shut up silent within me.'*

*From Prisoner of Love by Jean Genet*

I

In human hearts I search  
For the moist fertility  
Of fruitfulness  
And for the silent rhythm  
Of music.....

Seeds surge in clammy land blacker than black.  
Creaking roots, delving shoots, air screams Or sighs  
And stretching, barky bodies grumble  
Whilst chlorophyll spears whisper -  
Foraging forms pursue blood or plant,  
Their quick breath whistles intensely.

The flaky crumbling of stones fall  
Their repercussions leaving tracks.....

Chaos.....

The final flake floats silently down  
Through dark pools

Ripples.....

Ripples.....

Ripples.....

Infinitely gentle

They catch the light in human hearts.

## II

Such sweet strains of the lassie and the lad  
That's always hidden in layers of thought.  
My heart blunders a dance of reticence -  
Hibernating - I dally for your call,  
When it lifts, I blossom, pursuing dreams:

Dance lassie, skip lad,  
Dart with mossy feet  
And gambol purple heather

For there's a smile in string and a wink in The pipe,  
The drums roll down the mountain  
As voice rises up from the earth.

So dance lassie, skip lad,  
Let sweepin' shadows  
Silence your voice,

There's space in the land if you'd only look  
And freedom in the wind  
If you'd take the time.

Yes, dance lassie, skip lad,  
Let the song in your heart  
Feel the beat of your heels

And as torrents sweep the valley  
Be still lassie, stop lad,  
Let roots quench their thirst  
For all is drinking its delight.

So dance,  
Dance to your voice,  
Sing of your heart  
And find the way home.

### III

The moon was pregnant -  
Portent of my life -  
In ripe expectation  
Peaks of stone and bracken  
Glowed soft, phosphorous ice.

From the window of night  
I watched the countenance of my world  
Asleep under the dusty colour of darkness.

He came then,  
Once,  
Forever  
Skipping deftly, kicking  
The earth in harmony over the silence.

Silence.....

The silence of my dreams  
That lay thick and heavy in his clutch.

And when he stood,  
A smudge against the lunar belly,  
Spindly silhouette on scraggy shelf,  
Some grey and pointed bone shadow

.....Movement.....

I thought of one who might sing  
.....Sound.....

A poised breath that inhaled me from my place.

I touched his naked feet  
In utmost anticipation  
And such deep notes moved earth,  
Whispers, dancing breath  
Birthed from one graceful arc -  
A land sweep, palm to mouth.

I feared his notes  
That ran like water down my throat -  
Cool, clear and undeniable -  
My body caressing air.

He gave me...  
Touched me...  
Pulled me...

With sinews of string,  
A heart of pounding,  
And breath of pipe.

The melody of life,  
Flushed with ochre harmonies  
Sifted my blood,  
Far too long congealed

And the moon kissed my face awake -

A burning lamp,  
Eyes that flickered  
To fill the dark with sparks -

And I,

Released,

Succumbed to the thronging valley  
In sweeping delight  
To the sweet elixir of his voice  
A weight to still my own.



He turned then and was gone.

I know not where he went  
Or why he came

But I sang his melody  
Long after the sun had touched my face  
With charring fingers.

I sang of my own true heart  
Reflected in blue veins -  
Silver rivers and foaming green tides,  
Of rocks that have held my dreams,  
Trees that have heard my whispers,  
Of each dawn and dusk that have quenched my lungs -  
The earth in companionable pulsing  
With each step of my feet.

I sang of my own true heart  
That ran thick with visions  
Of a melody long forgotten!

## **The Moon Spinners**

*For Mum and her bedtime stories*

In the darkest dampest caves  
Of water and stone,  
Are deities;  
Such aqueous beauty  
Noontide madness gouges the mind.  
They bask in the force of white coal  
Where no other dare play 'cept Pan.

Personifications  
Of green blood coursings  
And rock and misty quarters;  
Their flesh is immature,  
Languid with fertility.

Spirituous centenarians  
With voice of flute  
And needle fingers  
Stitch the light  
Of darkest hours.

On a bloody night  
That keeps no secrets,  
A harvest moon's silver thread  
In vanity reaches down,  
Caught up by nimble hands  
And flickering in ripples  
The lambent yarn rocks in:

It twines, diminishing -  
Seeds burrow on pregnant land.  
It twines, diminishing -  
A canopy for meagre forms at play.  
Large eyes search hungry in the dark.

Spinners work their pearly way,  
Three nights of lusty ebony  
Whilst moon globes mount high  
Grubby upon the shore,  
And bathed in briny motion  
float out in buoyant rhythm:

They untwine, expanding -  
Blue smoke in the night.  
They untwine, expanding -  
Hunters rubefy the black.

And Laughing in silken guile  
Amidst songs of watery spirit,  
The Moon Spinners!

## **Bird Dance**

*For Ray, Ti Chi master*

You are abeyant  
A mirage carried on the breeze  
Molten movement  
And fluid ice

The ocean is centred  
Through the gravity of your stance  
Falling, flowing  
Bewitching

There is a tension on the tide  
Coiled and foaming

Your energy rolls in  
And on  
Through you, through me

Poised on a rock  
The cormorant, a black shadow  
Proclaims its message  
From a feathered wing

## **Blue Rhythm**

*For Bruce McNaught, painting and Bohdran playing*

Blue scratches like hollows  
Are veined with ice and shadows.  
Intensely the world ripples  
Held within dreams.  
I cup my palm to the rhythmic skin  
And play out a dancing light,  
It stirs until the heart flies  
And beyond is the theatre of music.  
It leads me, compels you,  
Sailing across easy waves  
To clouds that are oily rainbows,  
Mountains like moonlight flesh  
Seem lonely climbing.  
I am a spec before your midnight valley  
Where all is purple and grey.  
The world spans out around us.  
We are the adventurers!

## **A Separate Empathy**

*Just an exercise in failed metre and my thoughts too*

And we trod that rich abundant stack  
Where underfoot, crisp on ear, darkest Emerald grows  
And wafting leaves all but a shade of frosty, misted shadows.  
He took my hand to warm, his fear to lay Behind his back,  
Smiled at me and pulled me close upon that Muddy track.

A beach of purest ash and sky an iridescent Sheet,  
The sun a sphere of luminous - minous to the Sea -  
Gave effusive warmth and blinding calm of honeyed life to me  
But he touched my face and sightless eyes bored into mine to meet  
And embracing me upon his chest, my vision did rest upon his feet.

If there was a one, who at a distance sat along the rivers edge  
And tasted cool dark ripples, his ear for a cateracts melody  
Or floated up, struck by the light to meet my astral body,  
He is the one, where from my soul, my love to him I'd pledge.