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INTRODUCTION

Ode To Inarticulateness

I want to drink a toast
 to the half-formed
 thought: the phrase
 that gets stuck in the throat:
 to the pause and, well...
 and the well, and the and...
 and the stammer,
 the hiccup,
 the hum,
 the er...
 to the failure of courage
 at the last small point
 before the uttering
 of the spoken word...

That's where most of the words
 of most of us
 get lost
 most of the time.

And yet we need
 every one of everybody's
 never uttered utterances,
 half-thought thoughts,
 unspoken speeches:
 not necessarily articulated into well-made
 flowing richly metaphored meaningfully pregnant sentences
 but simply recognised,
 acknowledged,
 actually utilised.

I resolve (please help me
 to carry out my resolution:
 please, will you resolve also?):
 not to think too much
 nor fear
 nor most of all not judge
 too much to close
 my mouth
 and all the many mouths
 on what we want
 from and
 with
 each other.

(?around 1990)

On First Revealing My Poems At The Ceilidh

Rather suddenly
 this desire
 came
 and grew
 to sing, or dance, or speak,
 yes speak,
 something at this ceilidh -

I began to look in my mind for a poem perhaps, or a piece of prose,
 I searched along my bookshelves, I shuffled through my filing cabinet,
 I peered into my Amstrad (- yes, way back this was, in those days) -
 but how instructional pedagogic didactic enlightening purposeful political
 are the things I think about and write!

In a word - heavy?
 Written to make a point.

Am I a teacher?
 My eyes see
 the world around me,
 the world I take part in,
 the world I create also,
 as so awful and disastrous and catastrophic and constantly promising worse
 that the default position I resort to is:
 Teach a better way.
 Of course nobody learns!

Today
 I want something
 to speak which is
 lyrical, enlivening, precise perhaps, but pointless -
 that is a good point to start.

And that could be the end.

For now.

(?around early 80s?)

Words

Words words words words
 They float around us in the air
 At times they make us tear our hair
 Oh that was such a silly rhyme
 But really I don't have the time
 To search my mind or turn the pages
 Or look up quotes from earlier sages
 I hate to think what rhymes with words

SORT-OF HAIKUS AND OTHER SHORT POEMS

(during 1980s?)

Blow, wind,
Gather, clouds
Rain: where are you going to fall?

The sand shifts
Trees take root
And where is my home?

I sit here. It's warm.
It's cold outside.
I won't go out ever again.

I'm walking in a field
Flowers are all around
I try to speak with them

I thought it was fame
I thought it was a woman
but it is the ground

"Everything is interesting" - read the badge.
"That's a good badge" - I said.
"It keeps me going" - she said.
We smiled.

Sun rays shine
In the sky
Plants push firm
From the earth
My skin glows hot
In ever growing grass

Why do I want to grow trees?
Trees have roots.
Trees stand for a long time in one place.
Trees are passionate, slow, ancient.
Trees sway with the wind.
Trees thrash with the storm.
Trees do not use things up.
One day I will be part of trees.
Trees will remember.
That's why, all of that.

I know broken glass
when I see it
even when no glass
is clear anywhere

SOME CITY POEMS

(?1980s/1990s)

Request

I was running along
between two stops -
and he let me on

I threw him a smile
and bounced it in the air -
and he let me on

He shouldn't have
but he did -
he let me on

And that shone a light on the rest of my day.

Trafficwise

A quick glance
a tilt of the head
a lifted finger
a hint of a smile

a hint, a lift, a tilt, a glance,
seen, noted
change direction,
slow down
speed up,
give way,
move in.

Almost imperceptible, to a surprised stranger.
Thrilling to me, this skillful signalling.

City Writer's Low

A window flecked with rain:
A man turning pages.

No-one hears the paper in his mind
Receive the shuffle of his pen.

He does not care to hear the dripping ceiling
Begin its drip again.

What To Do?

What to do?
I'm alone.
And even when
I'm with another,
each yearns,
both merge,
then we're alone
together.

Sad Autumn

I sit.
 I look through the window.
 Most of the leaves have fallen off the big tree
 without me noticing.

It was a solid green,
 then swirling yellow on the ground.
 I didn't look up
 then. Now it's bare. I can see
 the sky, and branches black against it.

A relief, really, to have missed that sad falling.
 Some people tell me they like the autumn.
 I find I pull my blanket around me more tightly
 and sit
 to wait for next year.

Buzz

buzz:
 flowers
 open
 by day
 as light fades
 I open
 tonight
 Coffee bean
 opens
 my brain
 goes
 buzz:

Some Days

Some days
 people all around
 look glum
 stupid even
 dare I say it
 ugly!

Other days
 people all around
 look hopeful
 spirited even
 dare I utter the word
 beautiful!

The person next to me on the bus
 the person walking by on the street
 the shopkeeper, the shopper

Bright eyes, curious looks,
 pink umbrellas, orange sweaters

Or glazed, cast down,
frowning, self-encased

Is it me?
Is it them?

That everlasting question
are they in my mind's eye,
just slaves in my perception?
Or does some greater influence
turn all high or
on another day
all low?

Surely this can't be only me
and you
and them
this universal subject-object mystery.

Is it that we're all bound together?
And yes
bound too by this desire
to disentangle
what is there in me
and
just as much
in that ever-wondrous you?

Getting Across

Crossing the road can be just easy or
it can be really difficult.
Of course what's on the road, yes, that does matter -
but just as much, what's in your head.

You can know someone by how they cross the road.
My mother, bless her, would watch the lights with the greatest care,
she'd stand and wait, if they were red against the traffic, in her favour,
she'd stand through green and wait, till red came up again,
So she'd know: this was her moment.

In what manner do you cross the road?
D'you wait, d'you watch, d'you step, d'you run?
D'you calculate, are you courageous, brazen, reckless,
timid perhaps?

Of course as moments in life go, to cross a road
is not among the most important
(unless of course your path meets some hard object) -
Yet it bears reflection - how we do it
may have some bearing on whatever else we do.

I have to add, though: my dear mother, bless her,
Was often very different when not crossing roads.

What Is It About The City?

What is it about the city?
 For years
 I have been leaving - -
 and coming back.

Crossing the bridges over the Thames,
 the crowds in the markets of Brixton and Camden Town and - -

Especially Brixton.
 Black and brown and white,

laughter, flashing teeth, superior wounded looks,
 bright clothes, music from deep in the belly, the body, the earth -

And Spitalfields, early in the morning:
 London, early in the morning:
 in those early days,
 buying in bulk for my vegetable co-op -

Only in the city do we start those dreams,
 those kind of dreams,
 so nearly realised.

What is it about the city?
 Without the city
 would we, could we, have the dreams
 of how men and women,
 and nature too
 could be?

TWO MORE CITY POEMS

The End Of The Cities

The sky darkens
 crowds freeze to death

Sewers overflow
 gutters run with bile
 severed limbs pile up in the sidestreets
 babies are stillborn

Strangers march over clifftops
 gypsies crush under wheels
 wheel-chairs float over waterfalls
 the aged sink in swamps in the night

Sisters betray brothers
 sons murder mothers
 fathers kill daughters for a meal
 abandoned children are freeze-dried for protein

The throat dries up and chokes the breath
 blood congeals and putrefies
 the body fluids stench
 the skin slides off

(cont'd)

flesh swells and oozes
 organs become bags of pus
 brain spurts from ears and nose
 the face explodes
 the skull collapses
 the heart breaks open the chest
 the lungs bubble
 the liver fills with maggots

I pray,
 I ask for guidance:
 the answer comes booming back:
 Roll over and die.

Moansong

The bags weren't collected again today -
 how many weeks? I've lost count
 I step over them. I take a detour.
 Cats claw them open, food rots everywhere,
 bits of it stick to my shoe.

More mess, more stench, I whoop with joy,
 I wait for the day when the street is blocked
 from end to end with bags.

Then they'll have to do something,
 then they'll have to do something,
 yes they will,
 then they'll have to do something.

Another cardboard house under the bridge this morning,
 with two rooms. A couple live there, with a dog
 and two babies, wrapped in old furs.
 The road just above on the bridge is their workplace.
 Conveniently close.

More boxes, more hands stretched out, I shouldn't whoop I know,
 but I do, I do, I wait for the time that must be nearly come
 when the begging swells and blocks and drowns
 the pushing commuting house-buying wage-earning -

then they'll have to do something,
 then they'll have to do something,
 yes they will,
 then they'll have to do something.

I've had to walk back home all week.
 I passed choked buses blocked in gridlock.
 I passed the road up in ten different places -
 roadworks but no work.

Cars stand, crowds shout, fists wave,
 water-mains burst and flow, I whoop the more with joy,
 I wait for every street ground to gridlock throughout the great metropolis -

That'll be the day,
 then they'll have to do something,
 yes they will,
 then they'll have to do something.

A pack of hungry rats burst out from a manhole today
 they attacked a stray child for its withered limbs.
 A pack of privatised thugs were out on a raid,
 they rounded up the straying old women and old men

A pack of dogs struck lucky, chewing a leg blocked in a drain.
 How can I whoop at that, I know, but I can't wait,
 more chopped off hands and feet, more severed breasts -
 when bits of genitals and gouged out eyes block the sewers
 and float up into our toilet bowls,

because that'll be the day,
 then they'll have to do something,
 Oh yes they will,
 then they'll have to do something.

We've had to boil the water for ninety days.
 Now the water's run dry.

Two million people died trying to walk away,
 they didn't want to die where they were.

There's been a mutation in the virus of HIV -
 it's carried now by coughs and colds.

You think I don't whoop at that, well you're wrong, I can't wait,
 for the skin to slide off, the face to explode, the pus to bubble up as vomit.

That'll be the day,
 yes, because then,
 perhaps whoever made us, if any Idiot did,
 will make us better next time.

EVOLUTION-GOD

Evolution is our God now.

No outstretched hand,
 no falling on the knees,
 no bowed head, no fumbled beads,
 no mumbling of words, no clear requests even,
 no gongs, no wine, no biscuits,
 no bells, no cherub-faced boys,
 not a wisp of sweet-smelling smoke,
 no guilt nor ecstasy -
 now :

we can do no more than recognise an honest look,
 straight in the eye, right in the face.

Honest and present, yes -
 there.

The time, for a start, is not to be understood.
 No six busy days, no rest on the seventh,
 Big Bang they say - but
 what void is a time void before ever there was a space void?

And then, that magic moment,
 long before long,
 deep beyond deep,
 merging and emerging of a jigsaw pattern,
 fragments and edges and corners and bits
 of clouds and antelopes and
 is it Shakespeare or Postman Pat?
 - combined and repeated,
 repeated and repeated and repeated and repeated,
 ever after ever after ever except not ever or not always quite.

A piece moves, changes, recombines, vanishes,
 multiplies, connects, to make new forms
 unimagined - by chance?
 By what!

We do not know.

We see some of what we may be, what we have been, what we mean by we,
 of when not-we is also we,
 us, all, now, then, always, never
 for ever and ever - -
 before, beneath, beyond
 our eyes, our hands,
 our busying fancying thoughts -

and we can only stand
 in awe.

(?mid 90s)

SOME SORT-OF POLITICAL POEMS

Only Human

Why is it so unbearable for him,
 so mild-mannered, grey-suited, bespectacled,
 sits on high, looks down, writes,
 only human:

to believe that he,
 so flat-voiced, blue-uniformed, respectful,
 stands low, speaks when spoken to, consults his notes,
 only human, after all:

can lie?

He should try,
 for instance,
 going to the same school.

A mystery remains.

Why is it
 that this only ordinary human,
 after all,
 can go on lying
 for the sake of those
 who. for instance,

(cont'd)

go on being able to go
to better schools?

It's not only readers of this page,
sons and daughters of grey suits,
with accents like mine
who have to answer these questions.
But also
the respectful liars,
and their less respectful schoolmates.

Exchange

Tin shack and shining hotel, stand side by side.

They avert their eyes -
but they feed off each other.

Food scraps spill,
laden trolleys roll,
plates pile high,
white-cloth'd tables stain,
leftovers return

to wait for the taking
by those who wait in queues
for jobs
to make more buildings.

Many tin shacks rust,
one gleaming structure rises,
carpets lead down hushed corridors,
armchairs create another comfortable project,
plans unheed yet more unplanned suburbs
built of tin and lived in out of sight
by those who
come to eat
and wait.

Buildings feed off each other,
people feed off each other.

Mutual feeding
in the freedom myth beloved of marketeer
(and make no mistake there's a bit of one of those in each of us)
ignores
who holds the power,
who has inherited the Earth,
whose is now the Kingdom and the Glory,
and passes as exchange between
persons equal and free. But
isn't it clear for each of us to see,
exchanging work for scrap,
two sorts of people:
classes?

We made them and we now say
where
who may sleep,
even dictate
another person's right
to eat.

Chopin's Piano

Chopin did not see
 the slaves who paid
 life and limb and many tears
 for his piano -

for the pianos of the music listeners
 the yearners for the peak experience
 seated cotton-wooled in their well-lined drawing rooms.

Chopin was before the clearing of forests, the damming of rivers, the stealing of genes -
 his legacy of beautiful music lives on.

May it inspire us right.

Spies and Priests

When do spies sleep?
 Asked the priest
 Arrested after being woken from his dream.

SOME SORT-OF LOVE POEMSOn Falling In Love

A ridiculous experience
 and an absolute marvel.

You meet
 you see
 you touch
 you talk
 you smell?
 And within hours, no, within minutes,
 no, within seconds,
 (if you're lucky - or unlucky?)
 that person obtrudes into every corner of your thoughts!

What a thing to happen:
 the strike of Cupid's dart.

I see you as beautiful (of course!)
 Powerful
 Graceful
 Clever
 I am transported by how we understand each other;
 That first kiss - half-kiss, half-hug -
 Touched deep;
 Sexual, not genital, rhythmic:
 Amazing.
 Do you hug everyone like that?
 Did you imagine I do?
 Did you? Do you?

(cont'd)

I knew you for one day,
 a sunny day, OK, admitted,
 First of February,
 Spring pushing,
 a new moon:
 all that was true -
 yet by next morning
 I was sure of this:

I love you.

Whatever next?

(about 1995 I think?)

Mushrooms

Mushrooms we went picking and we crossed the oak-strewn fields
 where the trees had been felled last year.

We talked and we walked and we found the man-made stream
 where the water seems to run uphill.

We climbed stone walls and we rustled through the bracken and we looked
 for the black-chained diamond of the adder.

The mushrooms lay in the meadow where the waking sheep
 had knocked them in the early light of dawn.
 They lay there next to their brittle stems.

We were free from our thoughts and our shackles up there on the hill,
 free from our families and friends
 and together. For the first time together.
 The boys were there too, they understand and they don't understand.
 We understood too much and did not not speak,
 even with our thoughts.

The clouds blanketed the hills and the warm wind wet our faces.
 At the Cowboy's Bluff we played hide and seek with the boys, then left them
 to catch a homing pigeon at rest:
 while we climbed alone to the summit.

We stood nestled in the crook of the cairn
 where the two sticks brave the wind.
 Our fingers touched and we wanted to kiss
 but we didn't.
 Our eyes met and we wanted to touch our flesh
 but we didn't.
 We wanted all or nothing: not yet ready for the trembling all
 we took nothing.

Later we took all - and then again
 took nothing later still.

That day we collected mushrooms, picking them from the ground
 where they lay.

(?1962-ish)

A Little Boy's Whistle

(1963-ish?)

A little boy makes his family signal
 standing hooded in the rain.
 He can't yet whistle, so he purses lips
 and pitches voice high,
 delight learnt from his Pappa and his Mamma,
 smiling on his face
 at the trick.

"Isn't it silly, I want to touch you all the time."
 She loved him specially today.

He loved
 the smell of the rain, and the woodsmoke,
 and the bracken,
 and her touch,
 and the boy's whistling.

Into his life had crept this new love
 by stealth,
 like the moon
 spreading over a hillside.

And all the smells and the touching
 and the boy's smile at his own tricks
 were spread as well
 with a greater sweetness of light.

No words had passed lips -
 Yet life was painful
 in this new sweetness.

Can delicate arrangements be made?
 Can secrets be hidden?
 Can love enough be found for everyone?
 Or must our old ideas be found true
 and curdle themselves?

For pleasure can only be given where it is felt,
 else love curdles love.

He would not deny himself the new smells
 of the rain
 and the woodsmoke,
 and the bracken.

He would return new sweetness
 to her touching love
 and the children's smiles.
 And he would find the strength still
 to sweeten his new love
 for she gave him his new sweetness.

Can we arrange it with the greatest delicacy?
 Would they be able to make their own delicate arrangements?

But not in secret. No.
 For the old secret ways
 like the old denials
 destroy the new blossoming.
 Or are there new delicate denials
 so the little boy can smile still
 at his trick whistle.

Do We Love Each Other?

Do we love each other?

The question doesn't seem to arise.

We like each other
 We nourish each other
 We have good times together -
 That old love business --
 We are not allowing it to get a look in.

I suppose that is a little much to ask.
 Love will get its revenge
 When one demands love from the other
 When one possesses the other
 When one depends on the other.

If we can stay clear of making the ground tremble,
 If we could open our arm and even our bed to all of those
 Who like each other
 Who nourish each other
 Who have a good time together
 Who lust for each other with joy
 Who respect each others' private moments
 Who help each other to hope and to achieve
 And to pray, even,
 In the new way,
 If we can stay clear of our own trembling troubled past
 Handed down to us all,
 If we can hand down something clear of that -
 Well, then.

Perhaps we can turn the old love business
 Into the new love business!
 Clear the word itself
 To make way for love itself.

Do We Love Each Other Riposte

Oh how silly,
 how silly can you get,
 what a silly romantic piece of anti-romanticism
 was that vision.

How can we deny those millions of years of evolution
 for a piece of supposed revolution?

I demand, I possess, I depend,
 And I can be demanded from, possessed, depended on

And yet --
 That's not quite it either.

Just let's say there's a lot of luck
 And a lot of work
 To being in love.

More Often Ways Of Love

There are times when I feel
 Myself become a reptile
 Clinging to the ankles
 Of those I love:
 Ashamed.

And other times when I become
 A stiff-spined porcupine
 Warning those lovers
 Wanting my time:
 Away.

And rare times,
 Gradually more often times,
 When I become a bird that flies,
 A goat that climbs and leaps,
 A lion sitting gazing in the sun,
 An otter swimming:

I can enjoy my love
 And tell it
 Even unreturned;
 I can receive the love of others
 And give back simple fondness.

But best of all remains
 The love that flies and swims and leaps and gazes
 Two ways.

And what about many ways?
 Is that still to come?
 Perhaps?

(about 1980?)

A Clear Position

To make my position clear
 Is what's important to me:
 And for you to do the same.
 Then I could do without
 Getting what I want.

You think positions are so easy to define?
 They're not. They move, they change,
 Refine themselves, sway to each other.
 To define a position:
 That is wanting perhaps more than you can get.

Well, we don't have to be so exact
 About this defining business.
 Take a position; speak it out;
 And let it go again:

So long as we can see each other.
 Then perhaps love can flow.

Sleep

Sleep deep
 sleep shallow
 dreams deep
 fantasies forgotten
 feelings stay
 and paint the day
 in colours blurred
 and running -

my thoughts return
 at intervals
 sometimes long between
 I don't want to block them
 can't block them
 or won't block them, take responsibility they say
 so alright, won't.

My thoughts return, dear Lizabeth,
 hi, hey! to you, Liz,
 too young, too old,
 even in green trousers
 'It would be frowned on'.

Frowned on by whom?
 By me? By you?
 So who?
 We are good friends.
 We do not snog in public.

there is only one person, my good friend Larry
 perhaps another, my good friend Ronnie
 only Larry I have told
 he was delighted for me
 even though I made it clear
 it was only me
 so far as I know

Do I know right?
 Ah, there's the question.

We shall continue
 so long as you want to also
 doing only what we both want
 getting to know, getting closer,
 I hope.
 Yes, closer
 yes I hope

(2011)

Love Talk, Baby Talk

'It's time for the nudes'
 she used to say.

She meant the news.
 It was her baby talk.

'Strawnerly' she said
 for extraordinary.

She had words for parts of me, of course.

'Pomps' was what she called my bum.
Was my bum pompous?

Hairy it was, true, in those days.

I called her breasts 'Ella' and 'Berta',
or both of them 'The Elbertons' -
because her surname was Elbert.

All that was long ago.
Are we more direct now?
What are today's baby words
for grown up contact?

I ask myself:
do we ever grow up?

Sonnet To Us

When I look up, my dearest love, this night -
Or down - I see us: riding on our spiral,
Forward, closer to each other, and to the light
Which shall one day shine through the archetypal
Patterns we were made by, and now remake;
Through hope, the void, love, fear, distance, sex,
Our path returns, deeper, because we cannot fake,
With each step on that generous double helix.

I know it's a sweat at times, or grandiose, even silly,
But please stay, don't cut off, stay where you are:
That's to myself as well: be there fully.
Because, inside, I know how much I care.
Still, How will it end? I ask. No-one can tell.
There's no more we can do to do it well.

(about 2000? - the only poem in sonnet form I have written)

Cupid

A touch on the arm
young woman,
so slender

A touch of my fingers
life flowing,
so old

You'd think too slender and too old
for Cupid's dart

Yet that was the moment, the start
of strong feeling

Love?

What is this thing?

(2011 I think)

TWO GENITAL ODES

(?mid 1980s)

Ode To The Clitoris

Who am I,
to write about the clitoris,
me a man?

Well, Ode To, it says, not Ode About,
I can address you, clitoris,
honour you even,
a cat after all
can look at a queen?

So then, O Clitoris,
I've heard some facts of interest
about you from a feminist
friend: women it seems
have no trouble having orgasms
with themselves,
nor indeed with other women.
Only when a man is involved
then is it
that there's trouble
not just sometimes
but pretty often
perhaps even
almost always
one might say.

Second fact: in pigs
I mean the female
pig: the sow
has her clitoris
in the vaginal passage.

For anyone who possibly
may not at once
see what this signifies
it means of course
a sow
may well enjoy her porcine climax
from direct movement
on the penis in her vagina.
How Freud would have approved:
all those female sows
having their mature
vaginal orgasms.

Why then not women?
What is this evolution?
Are you moving, O Clitoris,
becoming more forward,
turning further outward?

(cont'd)

"Is what you mean",
said my friend (another woman)
"changing into a man?"
somewhat indignant
at this idea, denied at once
by me.

So how did we put it?

Such evolution means, you see:
you don't need
to stop yourself
from having pleasure
as a way of not
having children.

So difficult it is
where pleasure is concerned
not to speak the statement negative.

you no longer...
without having to have...
you can avoid...
still have as few...
you can have...
You can make
the pleasure you want
and get
the number of children
you want...

Step...

Step
by painful step

we moved

into the positive sense,
as painful ever as
the slow escape
from that ideology
those maxims
those deepest prisons
of penetration and possession
of ploughing and planting seeds
and of always increasing
productivity

step by step
to learn to dance
again.

Hasten that day,
it will be good
for all of us
o clitoris,
we men too.

Ode To The Penis

O Penis
 friend
 ready to hand
 for my most obvious
 pleasure. With you
 I can say mine:

My penis,
 The clitoris.

Yet both stem
 from one place
 in embryo,
 the same thought
 in two directions,
 one inside,
 the other out,
 earth and plough
 as used to be said.

So it's not enough,
 too easy, to say mine,,
 or I shall only stay
 with the old style:
 acting upon, penetrating,
 planting your fields
 and factories, banks and
 monuments that you possess
 and fight to make the best
 and greatest in the world.
 And that way leads
 now we know nowhere
 except collision, fire,
 eternal clouds of dust.

So dancer of dances:
 go the new way,
 find others like you
 both outside and in
 where soft and hard join:
 flood earth and sky
 with other fire,
 loud joy quiet music:
 I'll let your steps
 take me.

So far
 I only know it's there
 even though I can't see it
 yet

SOME CELEBRATIONS, EXHORTATIONS, REQUESTS,
PROMISES, HOMAGES, QUESTIONS

(?late 1990s -

late 2000s)

Stay

I passed
 I met
 I missed

Who?

You.

Gosh -

I miss so much
 I pass so much
 I meet so much

"I think, therefore I am?"
 Not so.

I meet, therefore I am
 I pass, therefore I am
 I miss, therefore I am

I am who I meet, pass, miss --
 I am who I meet, pass, miss, in me!

What I miss is what I am most - perhaps

How to meet what I miss?

Move around? Run? Fly? Swim?

No.

Stay where you are
 Stay where I am
 Stay where we are.

Stay where he is
 Stay where she is.

Stay where?

Stay

Let Each Say It

How Are You? he said.

What a complex question.
 Or rather

the answer would be complicated.
 So many things.

(cont'd)

Somehow our conversation started on a little path
to politics.

It's all the same, he said.
Capitalism, socialism, market, equality, regulation -
I'm just waiting, he said,
for it all to collapse, that's what I'm waiting for,
explode,
fragment,
separate,
disappear -

hit out and kill.

We need
to speak,
smell,
listen,
feel,
face-to-face, together,
open, touch, and connect -

it's called -
Have I forgotten? No.

I want us both to let each other
say it.

Why Am I Here?

Why am I here?

I see, I hear, I feel -
I look, I listen, I touch

I read to me,
I read to you

Why are you here, listeners?
Why are you here. speakers?
Why are you here, friends?

We listen, we speak
We are here together

While I am here,
I want to make my mark
I want you to make your mark
I want our marks to meet.

I am here. Can I know more?

I write, I read, I listen,
therefore I am.

I want to make my mark
of which this, now, is one small piece.

What Do I Know About You?

How do I know what I know about you?
How do you know what you know about me?

We talk, we look, we touch, we smell - -

Perhaps our bodies merge,
I am inside you,
you enfold me - -

And in our brains,
your brain and mine,
that of one and that of other,
cells buzz, they fire, make connections,
many multiple connections, connections into millions,
even only when we look.

A needle is pricked into your hand,
I look,
and the buzzing, the firing, the connecting
is very much the same, in your brain and in mine.

I watch, you buzz,
you watch, I buzz.

So how much more
when we dance, make music,
how wondrously more when our bodies merge,
when one enfolds the other,
when I am inside you, when you are around me.

This is no poetic metaphor.
It is actual, it happens, an image, yes,
it can be seen, on the screens
of modern science which gives us this knowledge,
the knowledge itself
perhaps as wondrous as the merging of our bodies,
or as that simultaneous buzzing in our brains.

This we know now:
It's not enough to think.

We know much more than we think we know
about each other.

Will You Be My Friend?

What do I want from you, my friend?

Will you be my mother?
Will you take my hand when I cross the road?
Will you hold me tight when the tears run down my cheek?
Will you hold me warm while I cross over into sleep?

Will you be my father?
Will you maintain the borders of my place?
Will you let me imitate the way you stand up straight?
Will you show me how to make a fist, and when to obey the blowing of the wind?

(cont'd)

Will you be my sister and my brother?
 Will you share secrets under the table?
 Will you fight and hate over the love and time and toys we can get?
 Will you plan Utopias, root out plots, and build together castles of protest?

Will you be my hero?
 Will you be beautiful, kind and wise?
 Will you take me up high mountains and to the depths of darkest seas?
 Will you be my source of human power and of all that I can ever dream?

Will you be my God?
 Will you let me make you in my image?
 Will you heal and guide me when I sink to my knees in despair?
 Will you grace and lift me and receive forever whenever I adore?

Will you be my King and Queen?
 Will you take what is mine and make it mine in yours?
 Will you wear my special wants and moods as shining jewels among your splendours?
 Will you make an ordinary low-profile, stiff-upper lip home
 where I can sit tight on my own desires?

Will you be my dog?
 Will you be mine, to bark and snarl over what is mine?
 Will you let me shout at you, hit you and order you about?
 Will you let me touch and stroke you and wax sappy over your wet snout?

So what is it I want from you my friend?
 What shall I say to my true friend?

Talk and stay
 Be here while I'm here
 Dance and flow
 Say the things you want
 Tell me when it's bad
 Leave me alone sometimes please
 Go when you want your own space
 Share me with your brothers and sisters
 Let me share you with mine
 Build a place that we can both live in

Let's build together a part of that new world
 Us and with others --

Will you be my friend?

Minimal Meditate - Exhortation to my friend Michael -

Listen now.

Stop.

Don't try and don't try not to try.

Direct contact is all.
 Not caring how others judge is all.
 My centre is all.
 Your centre is all.

Nothing is all.

Set up vision together.
Set up space for setting up vision.

Use maximum 15% of habitual overblown rhetoric!
Tell people you want to do it with them.

When no new news, wait.
When on tenterhooks, sit, but loose.

There is no turning back.

I am going to celebrate
my daughter Jessica's birthday.
She is less than one year younger than you!

I exhort
I advise
I dispense wisdom
I share experience
But I refuse to get old!

Carry On Screaming

(early 1980s With respectful acknowledgement to a great team of comedians)

Three children is my lot
perhaps even too many?
Grown up now they are.

All around me people complain
they are pressured, they are hassled
by their kids:

who go on hassling, go on pressing
their complaints

on their tired parents.

Yet we go on wanting them, go on having them.

(Carry on screaming is it?).

It seems inescapable
the life impulse
the little darlings
the great deep dark flow

as deep as ever was

our future
our hopes
our dreams.

The worse things get the more we want
of them to do it for us.

Can we not ever hope now
or imagine now
that we could live our dreams?

(cont'd)

That we grown-ups could live our dreams ourselves?

The worse things get, it seems,
the more of them we want

to live our futures.

What future now, though,
for our children?

For ourselves?

Our future now, though,
is an explosion
of one kind
if it isn't the other
first.

Carry on screaming.

Father

My friend Larry
is a father.

Two boys he hugs,
caresses,
comforts,
listens to, gives them food,
would have wished to give them his breast,
carried them long hours on his back,
changed many of their nappies,
lets them cry,
cries with them too at times.

Also he throws them around,
fights hard,
hurts them by mistake,
says You'll have to,
tells them I said no,
shows them the meaning of hard work.

Larry, my friend,
would you had been my father too.

Dear Larry, Dear Ratnadevi: (My humble offering - Thom) - (2002)

Ten years - ten years!
A whole decade
Ten bursts of bud
Ten flowerings
Ten brownings and sheddings

Ten curlings, warm and cosy under covers
(so far as our busy, trendy, cluttered, sound-bitten, market-swamped, celebrity-laden
bustle permits)

Ten new awakenings!
 I bow to you
 I bask in your glow
 I glow in your sunshine
 More, more, I say, more to you, more in the world
 Dance and feast and love and sleep
 And wake again - -

Well - I say...
 I say, we say, things
 But how are we to do them?
 You are living this thing
 And each living of a truly human thing
 Makes truly human being more
 A path we all can tread.

I promise not to moan on the phone

I promise not to moan
 on the phone
 on the phone
 on the phone

We've had enough of moaning
 of moping
 of drowning in those silly sorrows

And yet and yet
 and yet
 are they so silly?

We need to speak
 we need to articulate
 we need to express
 we need to make manifest

Or they will fester
 and swell
 and blister
 inside

And pester us
 in unexpected times and places

And make us hit
 our friends

And make us mutate, yes mutate, transmute, disfigure
 our friends into our enemies
 to hit and to wound
 to squash and destroy
 to hide and deny

So I promise not
 to moan on the phone

But allow me
 humour me
 indulge me

In a little moan
or a short grand moan
a short grand great big rant even
when we meet

And I'll do the same for you

And then we can have some fun
And then we'll have some fun

For Samhain

Tonight we meet together
for the fields that lie fallow
and the winds that rise,
for the leaves that turn colour and fall
and the trees that go bare

Tonight we touch hands
around the fire while the old wood
cracks and burns and the sparks fly
and the ashes glow
and sink and crumble

For tonight the old year ends
and dies
and a part of each of us
dies with it

And this is the night when the dead come
to visit us their loved ones
and we return to them to learn
new paths, new visions

And we understand in every end
a new beginning, in every dying
a new start, in every death
a new gathering
in the dark
under the ground

Tonight is the night to journey down
and through and under,
below and deep
to the Dark Mother
and find with her and through her
whatever may be
unknown and gathering
in the caverns under the earth

So we can come to know
and open ourselves to
what dark truths and energies may lie
there within.

For the time will come
when we shall rise once more
and grow and heal
ourselves and all around.

GETTING OLD

Wisdom's Lament

So am I a wise old bird now -
or elephant, or dolphin?
Not to mention the old goat, of course.

True I've known a lot,
people marrying, divorcing -
going away, being lost, surfacing -
done it all myself even.

True I've felt kicking limbs in swollen bellies,
seen new people emerging,
blinking,
wrinkling their fingers,
looking around,
or scowling,
writhing,
screaming -

True I've sat with those who are leaving,
while they gasp in protest,
or sigh in relief,
to become
in one short moment
lifeless meat,
with my hand left feeling the cold of what was once a person.

Projects that hold me
people I'm drawn to
women I fall in love with
are rare on the ground now -
as for women who fall in love with me,
well the ground seems full of trees and hollows,
trees and hollows too that hide
projects that might grab me -
not true -
they grab as ever but
my grasp is not what once it was -

It creeps up on you, that wisdom trick, that oldness business,
at the creeping rate of one year per annum,
could that creep accelerate,
could it soon make two years per annum?

I know this much, I'm wise enough to know
that I'd rather be a young and foolish donkey,
or prancing gazelle, or plunging hippopotamus
than a wise old bird, or elephant, or dolphin,
not to mention the old goat of course.

(may 2008)

How Much Longer?

I wake

my eyes
allow

a small crack

light creeps
round the curtain

getting up

is well outside the bounds of what I desire

how much longer can I stay like this?

I want

I want I want I want

I swim in a sea
past the shining of waxed legs
and the half-hidden bulging of hollows behind knees

I dodge through a whirl
of gleaming saloons
and purring convertibles

I wander in a garden
of shelves and stands
bepetalled with famous faces

And, stretching back in time behind me,
there are some startling hills
and full-leafed trees
and infinite meadows

which divert my view
from thrown out scraps,
broken stumps,
dry earth,
and withered weeds.

I want I want I want
more flowers in full bloom,
more undulating glades,
more rides to stir me
on horseback, on motorbike,
on switchback or trapeze

I want you
and you, and you, and you
I want you and me,
and us
that most of all, yes, us.

One day. I suppose,
what I shall want -

(cont'd)

I shall want
to lie unmoving,
to close my eyes,
to never wake again.

It and Goodbye

The pieces have to fit together
it needs to make some sense
Hasn't there got to be a reason?
there's this big question: Why?

No, oh no, that's not the point,
that isn't it at all
'Why' is just a useless quest
with an answer never ending

I have to buy a present for my daughter
I have to pay the gas bill
I have to eat - well, of course
I'm hungry - but why?

I *want* to buy that present - it's her birthday
Do I wash the car, mow the lawn, feed the cat?
All the ordinary stuff
that doesn't really matter (unless
you have a car, or a cat, or a lawn).

Only being with each other,
You, and me, and us -
Some call it love, and sometimes, yes,
And Yes, perhaps it is.

Or perhaps there's *it*, yes 'IT',
there's it to bring in too
whatever it may be.

That's why, and nothing more.

Then, just perhaps when we're near to getting ready
to begin to understand
We also know the time is getting near:
it's time to say goodbye.

(May 2008)

One Day Soon?

All those attachments!

Children, yes,
grown up though they be.

Projects unfinished,
or finished, yes, and not
(yet?)
achieved.

(cont'd)

Friends, caffs, pubs, shops,
the art, the films, the politics, the talk,
the city, the metropolis, the all-embracing conurbation,

getting about this sprawl;
so big
one never can get to the end of it.

Attached to that?
Addicted perhaps.

I'm working on it.
One day, soon ---

Oh Sudoku

Oh Sudoku
what rhymes with your name?
Fuck You -

Yes, not just a game
but an addiction
that takes hold
at moments when my mind starts aching to establish the fiction
(now that I no longer can ignore that I am getting old)

that things will be in order

and sorted

before
I can get moving
on the next giving
or the next living
or the next dying

without leaving that mess behind.

So Fuck You, Sudoku.

I resolve
to be mindful
when that ache starts
and turn to
a pastime
more meaningful -

Which is to say a real sorting
and ordering
of things that really matter

And then ... Oh Joy

I'm back to living!

Spring Clean*(April 2009)*

Oh God!

I wish I'd done this every year
like my mother used to do.

Two thousand and two?
Why that cutting? Why that whole paper?
I have to read them through to work it out.

And my stuff, my own stuff,
stuff, yes.

Some went out into the world.
Some stays, half finished,
interesting, yes,

achievements, regrets --

The deeper in, the more there is --

And then:

To keep or not to keep --

I think I'm clearing out
a friend says 'archiving'
my daughter calls it 'saving for posterity'.

Will posterity be interested? How nice.

What I want is
Just not to leave behind
a mess.

One Day

I'm going to die, I'm going to die
one day

that day
will surely come when I'm no more

or am I?

what of me,
if anything,
will stay?

my memories?
not mine, but of me

my flesh?
all eaten, or decayed, which is the same

my thoughts?
my bits of energy

(cont'd)

or something

somewhere

floating around dust in dark corners of the cosmos
stardust, spangled, singing on high,
smiling,
sitting on beatific cotton wool?

how comforting.
but
surely not?

what, then?

nothing?

'I believe that when I die I shall rot, and nothing of my ego will survive',
said Bertie.
who am I to quarrel with so eminent a thinker.
or imagine he might be watching from on high?

So - nothing

but that's one day

today is today
the glory of this day
stays

Letter To The Editor

Dear Editor
I wrote a good letter
said John Retty

Better than my poems
should stick to that maybe
he said. Or didn't say,
I have to admit
but implied.

Is this a poem?
Internal self reference
is not a point in favour.

So what is this about?

Searching
meaning
acting
thinking

making sense of how to make sense
of the mystery of why I'm here

before I'm not anymore

SOME EARLY AND NOT-SURE POEMS
 (PLUS TWO JOKEY FOREIGN LANGUAGE ONES)

Metropolitan

The bigger the town the more the hurry. Off they rush
 Like chickens from their hutches infected
 By an unknown panic.
 Time, time: to the works
 Before the whistle blows,
 The post arrives,
 The students come,
 The rush-hour.
 Can I take your bag? No - Porter Miss? Now mind your backs
 There. Thanks, no, I'm alright.
 Straight ahead and down the steps a long queue
 Waiting for tickets, how do they work
 These machines? They even give you change.
 Excuse me, the klaxon of pedestrians sounding in her ear,
 While right is might and might is right pushed her
 Sideways and delivered himself a ticket. Ah
 So that's how it's done, and better than the queue.
 A moving staircase, step on boldly, boldly,
 Throw forward with your weight and your suitcase, down
 Into the catacomb.

But why no dwarf and pick-axe,
 No glow-worm, diamond, cyclops-eye,
 No monster in the labyrinth?
 Is Theseus dead, killed by the hand of the back-room robot:
 The banker, the clerk, and the underwriter,
 His alpenstock a furled umbrella,
 Hat shining on his head, not even doffed
 In honour of Earth's very bowels,
 Does his hair shine too, or perhaps
 He has lost it?

Is this the same soul that dug
 Once secretly, conceived
 In ecstasy, drafted
 In conspiracy, broached
 The first soil and toiled in the candlelight
 With stake, trowel, hammer and often bare fingers?
 Flagged and forgot,
 To revisit with memories
 Now smaller than ever
 Now only for animals
 Now leaves
 Now dung
 Now nothing more than rotting in the corners, rotting, rotting
 Now,
 Now it can't have been so small.

Now tunnels are efficient.
 Drum drum went the beat of the roll-to doors and the train
 left at its one- minute interval.

That was the first poem I wrote.

Actually that isn't quite my first poem. When I was a kid, maybe about 10, I wrote this two-liner - in my memory, no paralysis of hand or finger (but title invented now):

White Ground

Pussy was walking in the snow
When suddenly she had no feet.

My Manifestos

I had a conversation with a dancer one day (or so he called himself)
The group he worked with had a source in some Italians
Called the Futurists
Who had, he said, written many manifestos in the past
About a lot of Ordinary Things:
Like, well, like getting up in the mornings.
He gave that as an instance. I got excited.
It has so many ramifications. And besides,
I'd recently split up with a lover who almost always
lollled around in bed till nearly lunchtime -
other people's lunchtime. Which frequently included mine.

So this is one of the ramifications.
She claimed it was a polarisation, 'I like the mornings too',
she said, 'but always when I'm with you
You take all my morning energy. '
She was very psychological. Had a degree in it.
Full, when we had rows, of clever psychological shit.

I like to work in the mornings.
Is that part of the Patriarchal, Production Distribution,
Exchange-orientated Accumulation-orientated time-schedule?

Anyway, I got excited. Where could I read this tract
On something so ordinary? He said 'Well, I don't think
they actually did one on that. Just an example of the kind of thing...'
What a disappointment.

This, then,
Is the Introduction
To My Manifestos - on
ordinary getting up,
and eating,

erections,
and coming,
getting dressed, washing, judging yourself better
than others, or thinking others are making judgements
on you. Making a living,
having children. Being young and getting old. Having,
and not having, a secure base to do these things in
And from.

We live in difficult times.
It does not work
to aim to be special.
But to be ordinary, if that means doing what you're told,
is also not something that is at all possible.

What about My Manifestos?
Because I am ordinary, and not special, I have not written them.

Yet.

My Today's Theory About Monogamy

Dear Sally, here's what
I've discovered, I think,
what I think about
about monogamy
today.

If you can be with me, and not
think of her meanwhile (or him),
then be with him or her and not
think of me, well, then,
non-monogamy, one might suppose,
might just work,
for you and me and her or him,
assuming I and him and her
can do the same.

If I can only be with you
while thinking
about him or her, or be with her or him,
while thinking
about you,
well, then non-monogamy seems to be
what's interfering with my being with
you or him or her.

Of course:
if I don't want to be with anybody else
but you, or her, or him
and you, or he, or she,
don't want to be with anyone but me -
well there's no problem.

Or is there?

In 2010

(2010!)

I say, in 2010, watch your step
I say, in 2010, watch with whom you step
I say, in 2010, watch with whom you don't step
There is need to step more steps with those with whom I don't step.

I say, in 2010, be me
I say, in 2010, whoever me is now, stay with me
I say, in 2010, let me see you
I say, in 2010, let me see you whoever you may be
There is need for me to be me and you to be you.

I say, in 2010, sort out, clear space, make way
I say, in 2010, keep what you need, keep what you remember, keep what lives
But, I say, in 2010, do not keep for keep's sake, do not keep just so as not to sort.

I say, in 2010, do not leave for others to sort what should be yours to sort.

Time becomes short, becomes shorter, to sort what it is for me to sort.

And, finally, two jokey foreign-language 'poems'! I do speak quite good German. The Russian 'poem' is nonsense - made up of most of the Russian words I retained after a visit to my mother's country of origin, Georgia - she spoke fluent Russian as well as Georgian, like (at that time anyway, still under Soviet Russia) all Georgians. (I don't know the Cyrillic alphabet however!). (Plus a few names of people and places...)

Geschichten Und Gedichten

Ich möchte gerne
Geschichten und Gedichten
finden

Ich möchte gerne Geschichten und Gedichten
lesen

Ich möchte gerne Geschichten und Gedichten
Schreiben

Und hauptsächlich möchte ich Geschichten und Gedichten
leben

Hoppla!

Eta Babushka?

Slushet astarojne
Sadidje,
Priblizizilnia abisiana
Ja liubliu Katerina.
Da niet spaceba restarahn grossartig.

Eta Babushka? Spacone notche.
Dobre outre, Solzenytzin.
Bakunin Krapotkin Bezhukov Trotsky
Gavrilovitch Plekhanov Omsk.

Gavarit par Russki, Engelchik?
Ja ni hachoo sirr.
Couchet! Couchet!
Dom, Tovarich.
Desvedania.

(And desvedania means, of course, Goodbye!)