

Poetry Series

Malcolm Evison

- poems -

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Malcolm Evison (15 June 1944)

Born 1944 in Canterbury. Educated Bede Grammar School, Sunderland 1956-60. University of Hull 1972-75. Urban Theology Unit, Sheffield 1976-77.

Currently resides in Harrogate, North Yorkshire.

Perpetual student of Philosophy and Theology. Prolific poetry output in the 1960's, published in various periodicals and 'performed' at various readings in London. Sometime chair of Harrogate Poetry Workshop. When I took up painting (again) in the 1980's the poetic muse seemed to desert me. The dry period followed one where the muse had become far too effusive and, to coin a sculptural metaphor, the effort of chipping away at a stone to find the innate form became too arduous.

Since 2003, I have been undergoing a journey through (and hopefully out of) ME/CFS - many stages of which are reflected in my various blogs which can be found at:

<http://sinnaluvva.blogspot.com/>

<http://hmal.spaces.live.com/>

<http://blog.myspace.com/hirsuteantiquity>

Write now out of necessity rather than desire, although that simple desire to create has returned in recent months.

March 2007

Works:

'The Stillness Moves' [Outposts: 1970]

A Noble Silence

The winds howl stung
like a babble
of boisterous children

freshly released
from their desks enslavement –

eyes smart and ears burn,
tears stain
our cheeks, our words

disintegrate –
each futile utterance
yields

to the elemental
sound and fury.
We battle on

maintain a noble silence.

18 February 2007

Malcolm Evison

A Piscine Ploy

Suspended in anticipation;
slow motion animation
is the name

of their new game.
They could be simply basking
in the sun

but I
with cynics heart and eye
suspect more base Intent.

Scatter
a few morsels
of delight –

Shatter
their tranquillity.
They swoop

like vultures –
swiftly devour
a non-resisting prey.

(3 – 8 September 2006)

Malcolm Evison

A Question of Balance

Garnering the thoughts
of others, he fails
to find some of his own -

he holds back tears to show
he does not share
the fears others know.

He balances the cost of feeling
against the numbness
of blind fate. He sighs

and calculates the cost
of caring, avoids the sharing
of any others woe.

He always felt that questions
would sustain his growth -
he never claimed to know.

He bought himself
a ticket to ride
then found

he had no place to go.

(19 November 2006)

Malcolm Evison

A Smile from Memory

Your smile, cast still, frozen in time,
a type of conquest. A past

Unchangeable; a victory containing
so much doom. My song is doomed -

Is it a must that enters
the open, there to be
irretrievably
lost.
Or else eternally

Discovered. Who hears my song.
The scheme towards the one
lays bare innumerable: one choice:
unlimited destroyed: and yet
are there: always there.

I grow. I journey on -
living the memories, knowing
there is no time
to which they belong. They are:
not were or will be: never again.

Once is for always.
You are smiling still.

Malcolm Evison

A Spun Illusion

A few slender lines
of spider silk

stretch
between wild grasses

deflect
and tantalize
the sun's beams –

like wingless dragonflies -
a plenitude of insects seems
to haunt the lines –

an intermittent
iridescent sheen

darts between threads
and blithely skips

along the spider's
anchoring

(8 September 2006)

Malcolm Evison

A Way of Seeing

This room is an echo –
echo of all my dreams. The actor
waiting for a role. The preacher listening
to silent voices, expecting
tongues of flame. The fields
Are tumbling
down towards the road. Alone,
that's not like loneliness, a brightness

flows from distant murmuring.
Approaching friends, or strangers even.
The valley is alive, the room
is echoing
with hope. Pain falls
a victim to its own dis-ease. The room

is light; the light reveals
my will to see. It enters me.

I dwell
in brightened shadows,
ignoring shadowed light.

Malcolm Evison

Adam

This man, this image is the scheme
of things. This pure delight
he finds as he touches
the flesh of a woman. Man-made
this gift of God, the rib that grew

and blossomed to preserve
the blossoming. The man seeks entrance, strives
to heal the wound. Who can unite
these themes; this earth, these images,
his dreams - deeper than knowledge?

This man, this image is
the scheme of things -
within it and beyond.

Malcolm Evison

An Apologetic Denial

this is another poem
I started
to unite it all in one

Sankara has done it
he done it before
this was to be another

poem

there is no duality
it cannot be

it is words
a little weakness perhaps.

Malcolm Evison

And Black (Prose Poem)

Night falls; the day disintegrates. All in a moment.

Have I been sleeping, or, is it a miracle? No-one can answer for me. I close the shutters of my mind, but always there is something. Always something there; no way of escape. Soon there will be another day, I know that – the mind cannot rest, but today, all I have done is forgotten. I can feel it, always the burden is there. Today, always there is a brooding yesterday, tomorrow will be another today.

I look. The mirror. I look into the mirror and see that I need a shave. "Tomorrow", I say to myself, "tomorrow I will shave. It is no use now, tonight. I have a pen in my hand – it's useless, how can I shave with a pen? "

Another voice: "I've caught you out. I can see you, you're shaving". But you cannot shave with a pen. You can chew it, write with it, just hold on to it. But you cannot shave. Again the voice, the same voice, "so you're shaving; going out somewhere? Take me with you? "

I prevent myself from answering.

The calendar tells lies. I know it; that's tomorrows date; it's always tomorrows date. I point at the calendar, put on a stern expression, and speak. "Why do you try to deceive me, what right have you to come here, interfering with my life? " The calendar is silent; must know better than to pick an argument with me.

I smile, slowly a smile spreads

RIGHT ACROSS MY FACE

A last mad dash, and the smile is there. I feel it. I know it. I'm smiling. And I rush in vain seeking a mirror. I will not allow it. "You must stop", again a voice, a strange voice, "you are not smiling, you are weeping. Forget your pride. It is tomorrow and you are weeping".

"It is always tomorrow", I sigh.

All mean-minded night falls.

I am the city, green is the country; and black. The city is hope written in neon. I am the sprawling grey. I can always hope, for the city is warm, but the fields beyond lie green and cold. I am the city, green is the country. "And black" says the voice, "and black".

The city is. The city dreams. The city says dream.

IT IS DREAMING

"Again". All exclaim – "again! " Yes, again.

THE CITY

It is trying to speak. Talking to you.

AGAIN

The city says dream. They all dream.

DREAM

The city is within. It is heavy. The people. Outside there is only emptiness. I am the city, and emptiness, like the face of a lonely man, terrifies me. Fear is the face of a man. A man alone. I am not alone. I; I am the city.

The people are the city is the people are the city is the people.

I am. The city is. I am the city.

Now is the sum total of then. It is not constant. Is then so very far away? I can never remember, only feel it. Always tomorrow. It is always tomorrow, even the calendar tells me it is tomorrow. And I thought I was being deceived.

No; the deceit was in my mind. No-one or no-thing can deceive me. I deceive myself. It is always tomorrow, but today there is no cause for worry. It is the night, the night and the voices. The mirror. I am still standing by the mirror, there is blood all around my mouth. I have been shaving, I must have cut myself. Lying on the floor, beneath the mirror, an open razor. I pick it up, and write a poem with it. I always use red ink; each word then seems like a sacrifice.

I pick up the razor and write a poem. The calendar reflects in the mirror. I turn the mirror upside down.

I am standing on my head. It is night-time, and I am alone with the voice, standing on my head. The voice. I hear it again, "you thought you could fool me. You failed, you miserable wretch, you failed. Why pretend to shave; anyone knows you can't shave standing on your head". No; but I can write; I cannot shave but I can write.

Ridiculous!

All the time there was only me. There are no voices. I'm not going mad. It's the calendar; it's all the calendars fault. Shave with a pen indeed. Who does he think he is? The image upturned; I cannot shave, but I write, taking the mirror into myself.

There is a silence.

Night falls, the day disintegrates. I laugh to myself; "tomorrow I will return to the country. It's a pity really; I so like like town-life, but I must return. The countryside is green, the city is neon lights

"And black", adds the voice; "and black".

Black. Reflections on black nothing. Cloth on wood in glass on wood in black. It is nothing – only there. There to be discovered. As it is, I try, I try to grasp it. I think (a mystery can only be discovered as it is) again. Somewhere out there are people. I am here and the window is black and I am in the window on the black. (It is not really black) I think again (but I must take it so) I demand of myself (to retain the mystery) . I, in taking will also take the people; they are powerless – I have decided. Out there somewhere – the people - they do not even know that I exist (perhaps I am a mystery waiting to be taken in freedom. In I am the taking as I will be taken am in the freedom of the here-being in the mystery of of ... but maybe I am not ... to them perhaps ... I am not) for I have been, all my life, beside this table, in the room, where outside it is now dark – and there is nothing only the (Black) reflections on the (glass) nothing that is out there and contains (somewhere / the people) and ...

Malcolm Evison

Aubade

Wrapped futilely
in the realm of beauty sleep –
dawn rarely dawns on me.

Long after the appointed hour,
the room is thunder-black -
draw back the curtains.

The sky has lost
its breathing space –
choked by the clouds,

voluptuously hanging
in their mourning drapes –
symbolic of a troubled world.

I sigh, and seek
the duvet's solace –

for me the day
has not yet quite begun.

(26 October 2006)

Malcolm Evison

Being

God spoke –
I dare not listen.

I could not face
the stillness
of simply being there.

God spoke:
there were no words –
I simply saw

the suffering of others.
I could not share

the stillness
of simply being there.

One day I knew
God could not speak -
I used my eyes,

I saw and felt
the suffering of multitudes –
I listened to their cries –

then cautiously I whispered
"I am here"

and from my helplessness
I knew -
that God was there.

Malcolm Evison

Cementing Relationships

Seeking a concrete image
to convey
 a pre-stressed thought
I lay foundations
for a fettered space.

The blue-print fails
the structure
 falls
far short of my emotion.

Set in my ways,
unable to explore
 the breaking strain
my need will carry.

Construct a hermitage
of words;
 contain
a solitude
upon the pristine page.

Malcolm Evison

Close Encounter

That day you found
time's precipice
and never faltered –

to plunge beyond
or else traverse
the tremulous ridge path –

each spelt out welcome
each a warm retreat.

The beckoning remembrance
of worlds created
by the mind and sense –

the wraiths in combat, those
still present
and others already
moved on.

That day you breathed
time's fall, and fell back
wreathed in living hours.

Malcolm Evison

Consultation

These visits are
by now routine -
on entering

the lion's den,
expect a smile
and beckoning wave

to take a seat.
Obediently, you sit
and start to contemplate

time's passage.
Words fail, as always,
to express

the visit's
raison d'etre.

Malcolm Evison

Embrace

Wrapped in each other
we break illusions
of our separateness.

As bodies merge
we lose location
finding our place

in vaster schemes.
Thanksgiving, sanctified
with each embrace,

transmits a joy
beyond our reckonings.
Today

love knows no bounds.

(22 October 2006)

Malcolm Evison

Eve

There and unknown; unknowing. This one
this moment is. There
and she does not know it. She is.

The man moves from his loneliness
toward her. She looks ahead,

her gaze, steady and confident. Her eyes
affirm the day. He cannot share it, sensing
that her lips betray, this confidence.
He reaches out to touch

her face, her lips tremblingly apart;
a silent fear disturbs
and beautifies. There are no words.

(She, he, wait for the mystery
to reveal itself) .

The touch. Words drop their silent veil.
"Amen", she says, discovering the word.
"Thank-you", he says, discovering their power.
Together theirs is praise: separate and one.

Malcolm Evison

Feel The Fear Tighten

Feel the fear tighten
as the man
looks at his freedom
and cannot find a way
to turn.

Feel the release
as he is told
that things will not change -
and share his disbelief.

Feel the joy
of the man who finds
what he had lost
during the search.

Feel the fear tighten
as they discover
the man has found himself.

Malcolm Evison

First Rite

Reluctantly compliant twigs
permit the murmuring wind
to pluck arpeggios -

they glisten as they dance,
throw off the recent rain,
as if to solemnize the ground

in Holy baptism.
Shoots drill
through the cold

sodden ground,
shrilling defiance.
Snow's residue,

a blanket stitch,
hems in the pale green spears.
A sunbeam breaks

the day's grey wash -
as if to bless
this new emergence.

24 January 2007

Malcolm Evison

Flocks and Congregations

A darkly brooding

Congregation

Of cumuli glowers

Overhead

Threatens to destroy

Our horizon

A neighbouring flock

Glowes brightly

Caressed by the sun

We ignore the gloom

And drive

Towards the light

[7 September 2007]

Malcolm Evison

Furniture Salesman

Too late, even to sell
himself. The air is silent.

Distinct servility
lurks behind

that benign smile -
lacking expectancy.

Once there was the quiet
thrill of anticipation -

a first transaction
in the adult world -

but that first tremor
soon began to wane.

Once he waxed lyrical
to tell of all

the benefits
the purchaser might find:

now he's resigned -

too late
even to sell himself.

Malcolm Evison

Gethsemane

A type
of Gethsemane.
Not so much the pain
more the agony.

Not the absence
of sleep –
more the ache;

an ache which penetrates
each sinew. If only
one had slept

like others do.
Oh, how you'd love
that luxury. Wait

for the next event –
everything burns,
each pore secretes
anxiety. Has it

all come to this?
Who knows
what follows
the restless night.

Malcolm Evison

Going Home [for Anne]

Life ebbs and wheezes –
we look
for signs of grace.

She slides
into the arms of love
and finds her peace.

We simply hear the space
she left behind. We smile
knowing this cannot be
the time for tears.

Her rest is welcome
as our spirits rise
to share in this release.

The process of decay
has ceased
to prey upon her mind –

She glides
into the arms of sleep.

[Written for my mother who died in 2004]

Malcolm Evison

Her Book

Loose pages from time
collated and combined
to form a seal. 'Fidelity'

italicized, illumined
on the manuscript –
an idol or ideal

once thought immutable.
Priestess enfleshed
as traditor, she stumbles

on her many tentacled
equivocation –
recalls the ritual

rending of the veil.
No longer able to maintain
her former love's sectarian claim

she riffles through the pages
of her life. A few words
underlined, her youth transcribed

on parchment; genial memories
transformed into mysteries –

a facile binding
of a former liberty.

Malcolm Evison

Impromptu for Jack

Not so much a moment
but all time,
the steady refrain

that "God is good".
What is this thing called good?

Through all the pain
and all the joys
the theme remains –

a constant strain –

"I'll praise my maker,
God is good". No statements here,
a simple claim
from some deep tautological mine

"God is good".
And now he's home
with Him he served

the joy remains –

not for a moment
but for all time.
The universe proclaims

that God is good!

[Written for / about my father who died on my birthday in 2001]

Malcolm Evison

Lakeland Deceptions

The fell cries treason
as its image liquefies.

The slip and slide of scree
denies solidity

to the crawling rock.
A swift uncertainty

alters the footsteps flow -
a summons to the depths below.

The blue stability
of sky and fell

reflected in the lake
dissolves anxiety.

Malcolm Evison

Langdale Pikes

Thrusting, as if to burst
the blue day's calm -
these pinnacles erupt

to destroy, or magnify
the ranging line -
we tremble as they breast

the solitudes of time.

Malcolm Evison

Lines Beside The Garden Pond

I sway, as if to breathe
the passing breezes tail -

the water sighs
in confirmation
of the lilies dance.

Beneath this clouded
water's front,
I witness gold and ruddy sprites,

a piscine dance -

a knowing prelude
to their feeding spree.

Malcolm Evison

Listening To Mahler [A Response in Six Movements]

1

Have I lost the need
to weep

the power and the beauty
the freedom and the fire
tremble through my body.

The beauty – the beauty
the beauty and the power
tremble through my mind –

heavy with joy I want
to weep –
drunk with longing I need
the tears to weep
at the tragic and majestic
power – the power and the beauty.

Beauty, power, tragedy and fear –
and I can't weep.

Have I lost
the power to weep –
the beauty, such beauty and
such power.

2

relax
 a little
gently, slowly, rest –
now waiting, urging on the day
grasping
each nuance as it comes.

Slowly burning
through the air –
 my song
resounding in the sea
 gently, lyrically
and then
I start to skip-a-long, to dance,
dance arminarm around the earth
and then start dreaming.

Lushly sliding, skipping and prancing
struck dumb
 for a moment
succumb again

to the power,
the tragic happiness of knowing
of being and living
 enslaved
by the melodies of life
free and captive to her whims.

Free and beautifully gliding
living and alive.

3

moving, singing
dancing and laughing
cutting sharply
all springtime and in love.

In love and diving
deeper diving – driving lower
then exalted / and softly degraded
and next I'm snarling
at my fears.

And violently into the present time
I'm tossed, active being
to and fro-ing as the cancer
spreads
 and bursts
into a shower of crystal.

My ears hesitate behind
my eyes – my mind is dreaming –
and I am sharing your pain
and your pleasure
living within you, viewing wider
horizons
sharing my body and mind
with you; with all
born out of the grass and trees –
as each new thought becomes
a world, and each new world
is me.

4

the words of two minds
and a thousand ears, become
those of one world.
Words of belief, of faith and trust –
songs of the children

unborn and dying,
accepting their deaths
with dignity
living their lives

with pleasure and ease.
Delights of the dream arouse
their desires – a sombre pleasure
a woeful joy. The need for love
as strong as I need tears –
weaving the largest into the smallest
weaving past greatness
into the hearts of children.

And this laborious mission
has a goal of joy – your eyes are smiling
and in their reflection
I see my life.

5

Gloriously the birth and mirth
of Christ, who lived a hero – died a man.
The innocent know far more understanding
than the callous heart –
their voices echo and thunder
from a mountain stream into
a waterfall.

Cutting through the hills and trees
carving the tree
into the shape of man –
until the wood takes its revenge.

And in the days of youth,
which is our life – there comes a reckoning

the tingle and the bitter fruit
of age

still
we rejoice.

6

Body and mind alone can never make
a man –
as we walk
through the valley

of tranquil thoughts, the beauty
pressures us
to face the truth –
each step discovering
the jungle and the pit, each life day
drinking from the streams
pausing a while and kneeling down
to praise the men who made
us what we are –
and God who we created
gave us life, as it floats sweetly from
the wounded side
of Christ.

Casting aside the altars, so every man
woman and child
may wear the ring of wedlock
in their soul.

Calmly I retrace my steps
and see my faults,
back to the garden – sit down
in the fields and sigh for the sun.
throw wide your arms and thighs,
embrace the living – forget the dead
who readily received their joys,
who gave us life and pleasure.

I need to weep no more – I sit
just sit and listen
listen to the open spaces.

Malcolm Evison

MidWinter Trees

Up close the trees
stand starkly bright -
they catch the sun's
low grazing light.

Their distant serried ranks
transform
the ranging hills sharp line.

The sun crowned tracery
of twigs is fused
into a frond of flame.

18 February 2007

Malcolm Evison

Mimi

Wrapped in the warm fragrance
of the everyday
she moves mountains –

only to stumble
on the commonplace.

Complacency
so easily destroyed.

I try to capture it
with words, they writhe
relentlessly. She laughs

allows the world
to write
its affirmation.

Malcolm Evison

Mission Betrayed [Redemore 22 August 1485]

Misjudged by many of my peers,
betrayed by those in whom
I placed my trust. Today

I sift through memory,
acknowledge scheming in my blood -
the unquenched thirst

of generations. Betrayal
led me to accept defeat
out of the very jaws

of victory. I clung
to pride.

A Judas multiplied
was on my side,
in faith, I thought them

little Christs. Their company
made for me
a lonely ride.

The wetlands bogged me down,
Canuted by the rapid-turning tide.

Today I made myself
a pawn
for Tudors grasping hand -

Today I died a King,
upheld the remnants
of my dignity.

My crown was no more theft
than fate contrives
to thrust on monarchy itself -

Today I have my pride.

Malcolm Evison

Mist In Fell Country

Mist mellows, swathes
the bracken waste, moves
mountains and retrieves

a shadow of their former state –
a throbbing sigh, veiled certainty.

Prey to this cold allure
the crag-fast fear subsides:
tamed by its achromatic spell
the enthralled mind contrives

a vision which can penetrate
the substance of the rock. Unlock
the memories of strange
remoter climes; time lost

in mystery, fusing the venerated
past with present vulnerability.

Mist swathes the bracken waste,
tastes history, mellows and moves
a range of fells, slowly retrieves

a shadow of their former state –
veiled certainty, a subdued sigh.

Malcolm Evison

Momentum

The day is singing;
the moment being sung.

Between

the moment and the image
lies the will. Between
the will and the reality

the act.

The moment is
a hollow cry, the silent ache
of hope. Forget

the moment; seek
and become the day.

Malcolm Evison

Morning

Blackly embroidered
against the morning sky,
three trees.

Filtering silver
through the mist; the sun
emerges into day.

But nothing seems
so real as in my dreams.

I grow into my death
it does not bind me:

the silence penetrates
my thoughts –
the face of Christ. In death
he conquered life,
turning even the shadows
into a source of light.

Death conquers life, life
death. The black and white,
merely the parts of one.

Under the endless weight of time
lies truth. Beneath the endless weight
of sky this earth. Waking
then walking through the quiet scene
the mist defines the dream
as truth.

Mist filtered early
morning sun
blackly embroidered trees.

The frosted earth
and silver sky destroys
all barriers.

Malcolm Evison

Morning Song

The large whites demonstrate
flirtatious flying

red dragonfly reflects
a darting counterpoint

to food frenzied
goldfish

the morning radiates
pure energy

unlocks
my heavy-lidded eyes.

16 August 2006

Malcolm Evison

Night Shifts

Aimlessly walking through
the quiet town, an echo
painlessly affirms belonging.

Night falls;
the day disintegrates -
all reference fails.

I cannot wrap this world
in meaning. Slowly it burns
out the old images, the worn

words, the soiled. This is
the turning point; the nights
calm trodden underfoot.

Hold out your hands;
capture a fragment
of the neon-splintered

sky. A window brightly
shouts its wares.
Stares

into darkness
and reveals
its own banality.

(1978)

Malcolm Evison

Nocturne - Coniston Water

Sudden blackness
turns away the light -
the lake suffused
with night, mirrors

a range of hills
reaching for fallen stars.
A dark reflection

trapped

between opaque shores.

Malcolm Evison

Not Waiting but Sounding

We don't wait, we wonder
if now is the time
for songs to flow –
strive to illuminate
the process of the mind.

We don't write, we struggle
with unresolved dilemmas
from a troubled time.
Snatching the fevered line
out of a verbal stream.

We capture sprats from our
sense saturated scheme
of things, our thoughts
inscribed by rumours
of some impenetrable theme.

Our words may seldom praise, although
their aim is affirmation –
our images may never raise
the hopes of those who know
and share our fears.

Often we take the bait
our tamed imagination feeds us –
swallowing dreams, regurgitating
woes. We seldom wait, we wander

out into the unknown.

Malcolm Evison

Old Comrades

Wearing the anguish
of old age
like some military honour,
he follows the cortege.

He remembers the Somme,
and how his thoughts
had turned to the mill-girl
two doors down.

Sometimes the dream looms
larger than his life.
A smile emerges, creasing
his well-worn mask -

his sorrow smothered
by her freely-imagined warmth.
Flossie her name was,
now she's gone -

his death was living,
hers is snugly wrapped in wood.
He wears his grief with pride;
alone, misunderstood.

Malcolm Evison

On The Road To The Isles

Numbed by this alien terrain,
where truth spells a montony
of rain, we ride entombed

towards our Shangri-La.

Each fresh horizon
taunts the tired eye,
echoes the fretful sense

of hours gone by.

A weariness pervades
this no-man's land.

Go West young man!
We make our final fling -

turning to be embraced
by fire. The mist resorbed,
light's pan-theophany

revives a blighted mind.

Rainbows and thunderfall engrave
their echoes on the boundary
of our wonderment, refresh

a dormant sense.
The sky line seethes -
sun sanctified.

White, searing, the unseen sun
burns from the core
of mountains, transforms

a shroud of haze
into a panoply of light.
Rocks swallowed by, still seize

upon this shimmering -
a spectral residue
of more torrential times.

Malcolm Evison

Poem to Secular Jesus

Absurd redemption of humanity -
how can I write
or mouth a ritual creed
which brings to life
your crass stupidity.

This problemed world provides
no sanctuary. The Word
screams out for light; a sacrifice

of dreams and power -

a hapless Saviour snared
by well-intentioned tomes.

Bookloads of words
can never penetrate
reality -

the God-shaped question
yearns
for my reply. No theory

supplies the key
to one who shuns
inherited divinity.

No core of righteousness
resides within -
the journey outwards
is where truth begins.

Malcolm Evison

Raindrops Keep Falling Overhead

Full-bounce, full taps -
the odd rim-shot
snapped out

the rapping rain asserts
its skylight presence.

Entranced -
I listen as
it riffs away -

a paradiddle plenitude
marks my emergence
into day.

Then lightening
fires a cymbal crash

a bass drum sostenuto
now holds sway.

18 August 2006

Malcolm Evison

Rebecca Jayne

Observing the precarious
existence
of household plants

swiftly followed by
the sideways glance
at buttered scones –

aroused by appetites
of taste and touch and sight –

she reaches out to clutch
the flower, trembling
with anticipation of the feel

or knowledge of restraining hands.

Seeking adulation
with every tentative step –
the pleasure of each stretch

a fleeting reminiscence
of the unencumbered state
of birthday grace.

Malcolm Evison

Reflected Glory

Macbeth of a sudden
broke his leg
as he bade the green room crowd
'good luck'

at this the mirror
was all broken up
and vowed
never to say aloud

the name of the king
now lying
in shattered glory.

[19 August 2007]

Malcolm Evison

Rude Awakening

The telephonic shrill
urgents me
blearily into dawn.

Discomfited I roll
myself across
a seeming endless

counterpane,

set foot
on an insecure floor,
retrieve the handset

and receive
a droning earful.

Bliss was it in that dawn
to be asleep,
to be awakened serves

to remind oneself
they're far from heaven.

(4 August 2007)

Malcolm Evison

Sanctuary

Witnessing a fresco
in the chapel of my mind -
I could not rest.

My past -
emblazoned on the walls,
of this my secret hermitage -

I wept.

All colours had gone,
and only words hung there,
empty and cold.

Quietly in the night
I saw eternity decay
and knew
my life must change.

I awoke -
you arrived -
my transient future.

[1968]

Malcolm Evison

Seminarian

A sanctuary, this studied room -
a sacred place without divinity.

Here he first began to scour
the weed-strewn paving of his mind -
thought-loads of words strove to devour
his piety.

The books, which thronged
his living space, provided sustenance -
a new found grace.

Alone,
a hermit walled in by abstractions,
striving to fill a god-shaped absence
with well-honed words.

Roomed in his study, studying his mind,
vacuity - that most tenacious weed -
has left him blind.

Malcolm Evison

September Song

Time past time yet to be
Discovered. I gaze out
Across the hills, the scene changes

Image merges into image. The clouds devour
The openness; still it is growing
No-one can capture the full and flowing
Taste of life, no-one has time enough

To even care. We do
What we must do to pass the time,
But why not more of it – just take it
Let it grow from us.

The sky grows, my eyes close
Once again. Trees and open fields,
Wind tears them all –

This one this all is mine

I breathe, I grow.

Malcolm Evison

Song For D

Sometimes an unforced smile
masks out fragility, band-aid
applied instead
of tourniquet. Sometimes

a fought for strength
defies understanding –

proclaims that everything
will be alright –

denies the fault line
that strives to undermine
the songs foundation.

Sometimes
we must return, strive
to uncover

a truth already known.

[3 September 2006]

Malcolm Evison

Splash Into Spring

A sprinkling splash,
a sudden flash
of ruddy gold -

the first spring stirrings.
A long, slow, turgid rest
supplanted

by these vital chimes.
Today
they share the sunshine's joy -

and ripple wilfully.

Last seasons debris
stirred and shaken,
the fish escape

their sedimentary rest,
herald the promise
of brighter days to come.

Like me, they must have felt
they'd plumbed the depths
for far too long.

[14 March 2007]

Malcolm Evison

Squirrel In The Rain

He perches, in sparkling eyed contemplation
of the goal. Like some celebrated stylite,
he squats on his post, oblivious
to the hostile elements. My stare

intrudes upon his gaze; defiance
resonates across the intervening space. And then
the sudden leap,
a precarious landing on the ridge; teeth bared

he nuzzles the meshwork tower,
seeking nutrition.

Losing his grip,
he hastily takes flight, back
to the stepping stone beam -
the garden fence's parapet.

A sudden sure footed spring onto the post;
I stare at him, he glowers back at me,
brush-tail twitching. I sense
a mood of defiance; he leaps once more
to the bird tables roof.

A turbulent manoeuvre finds
a covered plateau. A sense
of instability
takes charge. He beats
a hasty retreat.

Post squatted,
he focusses once more.
He steels himself,
then springs.

The glistening plastic proves
more than a match; he takes
a floundering fall
into the sodden undergrowth.

Bedraggled, he climbs the austere fence,
tail discomfotedly curled,
shakes vigorously. The watery beads
propel themselves from body into air.

Straight tailed, disconsolate,
he beats retreat
along the wooden parapet.

22 May 2006

Malcolm Evison

Tao

Proud and unsanely tread the way
toward the way which is
the way you tread

as all the new beginnings
fade away

into a past
which never dead
is now

the only way to tread.

Malcolm Evison

That Day (for Helen)

That day we found each other,
or perhaps the day
found us.

Though neither of us knew
what we were looking for,
a clasp of hands, an affirmation

of each others presence -
meant more
than either of us knew.

That day we found
each other -
and suddenly we knew.

(May 2007)

Malcolm Evison

The Body Snatchers

The body snatchers called
and found me void -

where once there was
a vibrant heart,
and thoughts teemed

endlessly around -

a residue
of aches and pains
delineates the core -

and Sisyphus rejoices
to have found
a new companion.

Malcolm Evison

The Fear of Fall

Though clouds have cleared
still I fear

their returning fall.

Your smile reflects
my whispered yearning –

presence and absence
jointly affirming

love's own reality.

Each meeting proclaims
a joyous creation –

departing pre-figures
my fear
of the final fall.

Malcolm Evison

The Old Man

They hang; a heavy weightlessness,
like long forgotten memories
seeking renewal. The man sits,
beside the window, looking
at the clouds. Remembering.

But nothing quite fits. If only
he could pass, at will, into
insanity. That would remove
the purgatory – desiring flames
to quench the smouldering remnants

of a life. He sits, beside the window,
watching the clouds. And waiting;

waiting for night-fall. Remembering.

Malcolm Evison

The Poet

That is, if I dare say, my destiny. To grasp
and to expand, each feeling moment. Eternity
not mere renewal. Fearing the used-words

of my thought. My destiny. Are the words mine
to use, is any word, a property. I speak
in fear of loosely spoken

words. My destiny!

Today and alone, I return. To what –
all has changed and still I know it is.
My returning. Home and the word
And the thought of the word. Home, and the skies

are open, and a song
of welcome pounds through my veins. Home,
and my eyes can see the song.

Today. And no more alone. I return.

And night conceals. Not even a whisper is heard.
So silently another dawn – and the fields,
the fields open as if to swallow me. I sit
and remember
(before the night/ another today)
a home. A destiny.

Alive. A sound. A shattering.
A whisper of you
from you for me. All is alive
with sound. The yawning trees, the birds

burst into song – the trees and images
of you. The blossoming and songs.
Songs in my mind and you

beside me. A song. A touch of you
on me; I feel

that you need me (not only I need you)
a sound, a touch – transforming words into
a destiny.

[written sometime between 1969 and 1971]

Malcolm Evison

The Yo-Yo Man

Whirling, it made the day
seem shorter than
all other days had been.

It sang and leapt
at his fine tuned command;
his finger tingled,

as the loop pulled tight.
He winced a smile. For now,
he'd thrown his cares away;

next time, perhaps,
he'd simply let them go.

Malcolm Evison

Transformed (for Helen)

Right now I feel
the urge to scream
forget the aching limbs

dance deftly
on the brim
of my emotions.

Right now
I feel the lure of love
the light

that breaches
my stoical defence.
I see your face

I glow with joy -
right now
there is no you or I

as we rejoice.

Right now I am
alive with you -
I feel -

imbibe the air of this
our perfect world.

[13 December 2006]

Malcolm Evison

Travelling

When he travelled
His thoughts remained
At home.

He often felt
Estranged from all
He saw

But seldom
Dwelt upon
His own shortcomings.

Sometimes his thoughts
Took flight, but then he felt
Unable to depart

From his fixed
Certainties.
Well travelled,

He discovered
The value
Of remaining here.

Malcolm Evison

Unveiling (for DH)

Some days, a few words
scribbled down in haste,
a simple melody, a subtle
turn of phrase, unclothes

another's world. And there,
beneath a supple shell, you find
a heart that bleeds;
it seeds itself beneath

the skin, you share the pain,
then seek to radiate the joy
their presence in the world
discloses. Some days you know

that you are not alone. The wave
that rises, through the words and song,
washes away your frown. You share
a smile, a caring strength;

you know your world
can never be the same.

Sometimes, a word of thanks reveals
that we can overcome;
sometimes a body sings the joy
of sharing; sometimes

we simply share
the pain of caring.

[6 August 2006]

Malcolm Evison

Windblown

The howling gale subsides
to lullaby proportions -

the wind's bluster
suddenly becalmed -

I watch the scudding clouds -
their bellies washed

by a low surfing sun -
no-one has told them

to stop their scurrying
so I return to mine.

27 January 2008

Malcolm Evison

Word

The pain of not to know
a words true meaning -
(a heartfelt paradox
so tautologically entwined)

brain travels inscapes
of the mind

the universe declaims
I AM - the exocentric
altar. Delving
through layers of time

exploring a fresh terrain -
we dream of worlds
where words were not yet

known. We fail to understand.

Seeking our solace
in links with primal man -
we feel the air vibrate

with all our fears,
and through the storm
we hear the voice that tears
at our discretion.

All is, and nought eludes
our sense, each particle
is new, and each the wholeness.

Then vision fades.

Unable to untie
our deepest fears,
from realms of theory,

we seek salvation
in vacuity -

unable to unite
the reasons for this life
with joy in living

we yearn for sunlight
to dissipate the gloom -
at each encounter
ache for renewed creation.

The phase explodes -

gone is all sense
and reason yields
to circumstance.

Our reminiscence magnifies
the mis-spent days -
heroic sacrifice
now reeks of self-abuse.

Our word-linked knowledge
looks to primal man -

speaking of worlds
where words were not yet known -

no matter how we squirm
we fail to understand

that words
are still the master
of the man.

Malcolm Evison