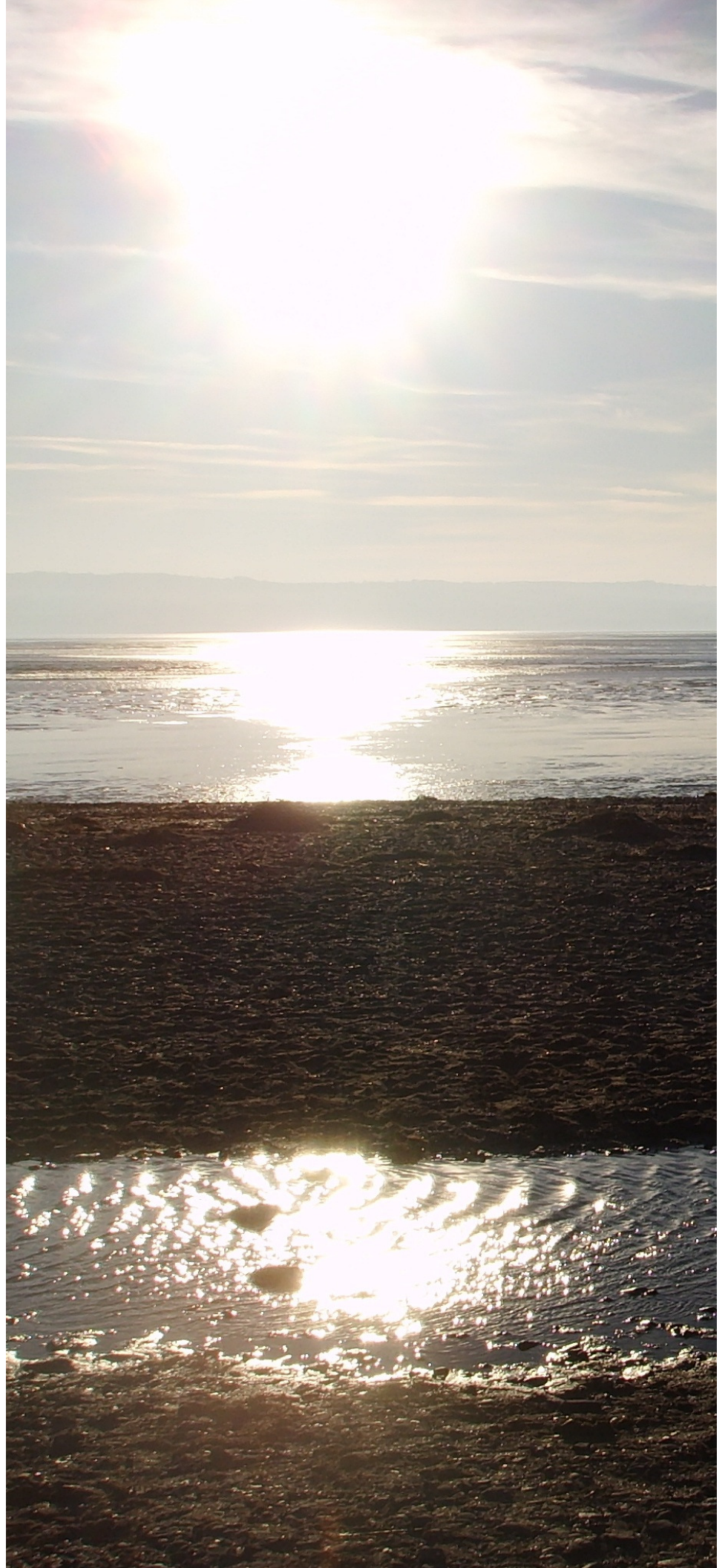


spirit soul:  
pursuance

stuart eglin







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Working with Archetypes, PhD Thesis (2004)  
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Coming through Change (forthcoming)  
Archetypes at Work (forthcoming)

# **spirit soul: pursuance**

a collection of poems by

**Stuart Eglin**

blue*water* books

**bluewater books**

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Photograph on the front cover taken  
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## Preface

I wanted to write a new sequence of poetry which would bring me forwards from the sequence I wrote in 1998 called “Brother Spirit Brother Soul”. The death of my father in November 2009 and the collapse of my marriage at the same time, meant that so much had changed since I wrote about the feelings which I had in the original sequence.

To carry the thinking forwards, whilst keeping a strong link to the original manuscript, I decided to select a poem from the earlier collection to use as inspiration for the new poems. I took a poem and used each line from that poem as the starting point for the new poems. In most cases, it became the title, and was the point from which I leapt for the new poem. I also selected lines and fragments from books which were lying near me as I wrote, to create sparks in the thinking.

The first writing I did on the collection was on Sunday 21<sup>st</sup> November when I had a sustained push at first drafts of many of the poems in the sequence. Just 3 days before the first anniversary of my father’s death, it was a time when I was feeling raw with emotions and wanted to use the creative process to help me through some of those feelings and draw out my thinking to carry me forwards. Whilst writing I listened to the music of Keith Jarrett. The recent album, ‘Testament’, was particularly interesting because it comprised 2 live piano performances of sustained spontaneous improvisation. This was something I was aiming for in the poetry writing, so I hoped for inspiration in the listening. The album by Toshimaru Nakamura was also improvised, using minimal inputs. It contrasted well with the Jarrett albums coming from a place where each tiny sound was significant. Then, the new album by Brian Eno. Again, improvisation working with other musicians. These albums each brought something to the words that came forth.

I hope you enjoy the poems.

Stuart Eglin, Wirral, November 2010.

### ***Music listened to whilst writing the poems:***

Keith Jarrett – GI Gurdjieff: Sacred Hymns (ECM Records)  
Keith Jarrett – Paris / London: Testament (ECM Records)  
Toshimaru Nakamura – Egrets (Samadhi Sound)  
Brian Eno – Small Craft on a Milk Sea (Warp Records)  
Choir of King’s College, Cambridge – Allegri’s Miserere (Chandos)



## in the beginning was

in the beginning all was  
enjoyable  
renewable  
never objectionable

but the compelling sense of worth  
became lost around the turn of the century  
when fireworks filled the sky, and a dread for  
the millennium bug that never came

it was redolent of the life I came to live  
spaced out, deluded and empty of feeling  
all beginnings formed endings in their own image  
the sun shining now, and lifting spirits

in the middle all was  
confusion  
yes, delusion  
deception and rejection

and the sense of wonder, then wander  
which I feel now, sets me walking an eight mile  
pilgrimage, in search of health and meaning  
wanting to see beyond the images I have slept with

wake up, shake flowers from your hair  
commit and remit, are all shadows now  
bastard children of a union in delusion  
opening eyes to a real sense of emptiness

trees no leaves  
sky no sun  
heart no warmth  
fear no hope.

## the word

In a small envelope, a note that said 'remember me'  
the word beneath that, half erased  
but I know who this is

Above the clouds  
the sun always shining  
and you are still alive

Below, the layers of song  
you look at me now, for once you're here and listening  
she has brought you out of the retreat you pursued

Now we are adult orphans, the top of the family tree  
no-one standing between us and death  
like each day passing draws to the end

Wasted steps cannot be reclaimed  
not like the sense of youth  
that we can just go back and try again.

Mistakes really count  
every word we utter  
just leaves us awake, aware and hopeful

Maybe...

## and the word was ...

and the word was open  
to any meaning we could give it

You, with a Christian station  
and I, with a Buddhist placement

No wonder we went in different directions  
left the middle ground un-trodden  
at least we both are following our hearts  
awake to intention, open to hope  
wondering where the next journey takes us  
open to other modes of transport

You, with clothes of the profession  
and I, without restraint

Meaning nothing but the gift  
of the open word

## love

love  
as it stands,  
an element that's a mystery.

I look within  
and see  
the tongue of hearts.

for no matter how much the hurting  
it's always open to me  
and it has seeped into my skin

leaving a flushed cheek  
and the fractured voice to say,  
'it's worth another try'

nothing given up on  
no memories to erase  
stand up for love.

## **I took it and put it in a safe place**

I took the pain  
put it away, safely forgotten  
in a place I would never find again  
once bitten, once died.

Old diaries read out loud  
in the solitude  
of night, rain driving against the window  
washing sands of regret

Throwing stones, breaking glass  
alone all weekend, fantasies  
the head-theatre a controlled play  
where the ending still won't go the right way

Safety a meaningless relic,  
Remember softness, remember comfort  
recall the words you spoke when we were small  
small world big dreams

Where are you when I need you  
stripped down, no trimmings  
just the bare bones  
a piece of me taken away

Solitude or sol-etude, the learning of the sun  
hold tight we're going down –  
to the darkness of the night  
open to the deepest meanings

Because that is what dark journeys bring  
a touch of madness goes a long, long way  
when the empty paths of pathologies  
are a cure to the sighs of night.

## remembered where it was

remembered  
where  
it was

separated  
when  
I was

remembered, separated, unified  
now realise that it is at times like these  
that we are able to unify self

clever, he said, sarcastically

anxiety  
laughed at  
pain

agony  
felt no  
gain

where it was is where I am  
now, no-one will gain  
from this disaster

for self-loathing  
is a game of the victim too  
and when we comfort ourselves

we comfort the strangers whose pain  
we feel the same  
as any dissonance that sits within us

ease  
spat at  
tough

please  
said sit  
back.

Enough.



**but didn't get it out too often**

didn't get it out too often  
didn't get out too often

festered in the dark

like a hibernating animal  
cold, asleep, waiting for spring

## for fear of losing it

for fear of losing the memories  
I wrote them all down, detailed notes  
in a tiny brown book with a ribbon binding

I sat for hours, days and weeks  
writing and writing  
my hands sore as the pen passed across the page

Not wanting to miss any detail, I set out lists  
then wrote the stories for each item  
reliving each tale as it was told

Soon the book was full; in the drawer  
I found another and began to fill that too  
occasionally hunger would prompt me

I'd pause and eat something from the kitchen  
not too long though, as I wanted the rhythm to continue  
words following words, each phrase a permanent recollection

How much would this mean when I could look back  
read each memory, have it there to cherish  
pictures in my head, sounds and smells, all on the page

Round and round the memories go  
after three and a half months, I stopped  
put the books (now there were 9) in a drawer

I didn't go near those books for another 9 months  
then one day, as I watched a film on the television  
I began to weep, a silly thing, it just plucked a memory

As if on auto-pilot I went to the drawer  
took out the books, opened at random  
and read about a life I had forgotten.

No sense in the worry  
for fear of losing it.

## then one morning

then one morning  
eyes slightly out of focus  
I was taken by surprise

there in the mist, early hours  
was a deer, standing in the garden  
grazing, eating berries from the trees

the winter had been hard  
this deer was thin, lack of food  
had left it no choice but to come to the house

I stood and looked out of the window  
motionless, I waited for the deer to turn  
then it looked me in the eye, ten seconds

Then gone

Just the connection, an open  
one sense in which I can move on  
let go of the me of last year

Spring time, will be here soon  
new growth, beginnings  
a chance to escape the famine of winter

Hope.

## I looked it out

I looked out at it  
I looked at it out there  
I looked at there out of it  
I looked at the out of it there  
I looked and it became an 'at'

And the 'at' was a place I had been  
I should have seen it coming  
this 'at' had hands in front of its eyes  
for it didn't want to see through  
to its destiny, wanted it all to be  
a surprise filled with tears, wet eyes

Look out at it  
remember to pull up a chair  
hug for dear life,  
wait to let go  
and remember not to spend too long alone

The 'at' was empty now  
just a symbol in a text sent from your phone  
no smiley face, but surely a trace  
of the cries, the shouts and the tears  
each one, a line on the page

Look it out,  
let go  
rephrase.

## wanted to get it out to show

### I

wanted to get it out to show  
but couldn't because it was locked

wanted to show that I still can love  
but I won't because I'd rather go slow

### II

I'm an idiot performing in a show  
hoping for applause at the end,  
but I think the audience is a no-show

Play the piano now,  
draw out the melodies of loss  
push my head beneath the water

### III

It's a long way down,  
throw a line, wait and catch  
don't repeat the lines you heard before  
they will be angular this time

Need a harmony to hold onto  
a line that I can hum, vary  
one note at a time  
until I am in some far away place

Not knowing the way back  
should have taken note  
remembered each twist, each burn  
for the return.

### IV

That'll be it then  
just one note, held, sustain  
forever.

Why we have to hold our breath,  
why we speak in time.

## share my treasure with a friend

I want to  
share my treasure with a friend  
find all the letters I didn't send  
there's too much to do.

I haven't a clue  
why I wrote them to you  
these letters just won't do  
now that it's at an end.

The friend wants to know  
what the treasure looks like  
I say, 'I've forgotten, it's been so long'  
but I do know really.

There's a postage stamp on the envelopes  
there's more to these words than I care to recall  
I open one up, skim the lines  
then tear it into jagged pieces

A match strikes, to burn the paper  
it's the only way to let go  
leave space for the treasures I want to share  
so I can glide as a bird through the air

So I open the box, inside is the treasure  
this friend wants to see  
and it's a piece of paper  
the words on it say

'I want to  
share my treasure with a friend...'

## **but to my horror it had gone**

One day, many months ago  
I closed my feelings down,  
had only a smile on my face

Wasn't going to let anyone  
know what the true feelings inside were  
a laugh when needed, a joke for all

Kept it like this as days passed by  
wondered why the gnawing emptiness inside  
was hurting so much, the drink didn't ease the pain

One Sunday afternoon late autumn  
was the time to open up the feelings  
safe and in private silence I unlocked the key

Click, click – delete  
repeat, repeat  
I couldn't get in.

## inside the carefully folded cloth

Inside the carefully folded cloth  
I am pure and light,  
the union of two truths,  
the opening of a flower

Each petal a different hue  
unique and sharp  
dressed in emptiness  
caught with the wind.

When I see the aura  
I realise that the cleansing has happened  
I can let go, transform  
stop the concern, just leave the flow

There is no relationship  
no history, no past to hold onto  
the heart aches, the mind is numb  
but the cloth, like a shroud found in the tomb

Can only be mine, if I have died  
become something new  
truth of existence, truth of non-existence  
waiting on the outside

Move onward, pick up the pace  
scattered like a dandelion clock  
my feelings and thoughts  
to create new growth.

Only be clear, mine is an improvisation  
dark and light, harmonic and dissonant  
breath on the back of my neck  
hand on my shoulder

Inside the carefully folded cloth.



## and scraps of tissue paper

...and scraps of tissue paper  
fell to the floor, like leaves from a tree,  
predictable metaphors a speciality.

Shift from freefall  
to the meanings that we all would use,  
if we could read in this half-light  
spitting on the floor and escaping decorum

Lack of space to reflect  
but I can see the light glancing on surfaces  
as it escapes the room

Gold lies in vaults, its shining  
lost on those who crave it  
when we open too much we leave  
the mystery of wanting more, washed up

I watch old comedy films for light relief  
pitching the lines for a laugh  
wondering when the end will come,  
the happy ending that they always have

So that's all we need then  
light entertainment a place to be  
stay in the studios that use those scripts  
keep away from the Sunday night drama series.

## there was nothing

there was nothing as I looked out –  
fading light  
Sunday evening  
an emptiness I fear  
colours changing in the dusk  
in this shade and light,  
there is too much darkness

too little in memories  
fine weather now, but I remember the rain  
constant, thick and all-pervading  
held me in like I had nowhere to go  
like being out on a small boat, in the wilds  
hearing each creak and crackle crisp and clear

there's a memory I do hold  
the bended knee, the words flowing  
the running and the laughter

little jits of memory jolt me to confront  
whilst other moments let me forget  
don't wait for me to come, I may be some time.

## **where once there had been love**

now only pieces of the jigsaw  
temptations that need no introduction  
an alien place, where there are no friendly faces  
just the bartender and a man sitting on a stool  
or an empty beach with a heron walking through the shallows  
cloud darkening, tidal sounds turning  
or an open moor, fox cries and the caw of crows.

each piece of the jigsaw  
waits for me to say yes  
then comes into view  
plays for a few moments  
then disappears

here's one for you, here's one for me  
one for us all to see  
one for the bartender, one for the drunk  
and one for the solitary figure  
walking along an empty beach

the scenes of a movie  
where once there had been love.

## **there was just a vague and unsure friend**

there was just this vague and unsure friend  
watching for me at the street corner  
an echo of myself, come back to haunt me

everyone wonders where I have been  
all vaguely remember the younger version  
unsure where I disappeared when the lights went out

it's an empty street corner, not a busy one  
everyone's gone home now,  
the lights in the pub have gone out

on the floor, sitting and waiting  
watching for the chance brought  
by a car light – but no car comes by

factory lights in the distance, gentle hum of machines  
some work all night,  
I walk until fields replace roads

up on the tops, air cold on my throat  
fear now, unease and despair  
everything wants to come out

and the vague and unsure friend  
has deserted me now, left me lost  
in this world where nobody lives.

## **a birthday card with 'best wishes'**

remembering on a birthday  
reflection  
collecting is a man's condition

it's not about the number of cards you get  
not a popularity contest  
there's more to it than that

what people write in the card  
does matter, you know  
it tells you what they feel

and in amongst the pile of cards  
as I sift through them to  
stand them on the shelf

a birthday card with 'best wishes'  
better than 'worst wishes'  
but not as good as 'love'.

## **talk about trivialities**

talk to me now  
talk about anything  
talk about trivialities

don't forget to sing

talk to me now  
pass the time of day  
remember taboo subjects

don't go there today

talk to me now  
you know it makes sense  
I've plenty to tell you

don't wait until I've gone

talk to me now  
it's dark now, you see  
no-one will believe you

don't tell them, in case

talk to me now  
talk about trivialities  
better than anything that hurts

don't tell me in case I scream.

## where did you go to?

Where did you go to  
when the cloud came over the sea?  
did you remember that I had been there  
seen all that I could see?  
there's a long fuse on this one  
I've patience you wouldn't believe  
but there is a limit to where I will go  
and I'm waiting for some clarity

Where did you go to  
when I was mourning my father?  
what did you see?  
did you think this would all be easy  
what made you think that.  
could it be more than I can see?

I'm waiting for a change of perspective  
I'm sure it will come if I wait  
don't put me down to the basement  
I've more to achieve still, you see  
there are spaces I have yet to go  
and I will when I'm ready

In the meantime, I will wait in the shadows  
and see what comes over the sea.

## how do I get back to the word?

When I began, I was full of enjoyment, excitable  
met a new friend  
then it all went sour

How do I get back to the word,  
the original, space as a place to fill with joy

Choral voices curling around the building  
create something that transcends  
and light through windows  
smell of candles burning

The peace which passes all understanding  
is something inside

Stand back now, place face against  
hold the harmony within until  
it aligns everything and creates  
something completely new

Above and beyond.



## **or, how do I get forward**

in this empty space  
stuck, not in nor out  
it's a place of limbo  
no colour, no sounds

how do I get forward

what is the way out, onward and  
embracing living?

By days, there come times  
when I feel I have left this place  
moved out and beyond  
escaped to resume

But then I pull back  
as though no progress had been made at all

Or, how do I get forward  
when I am stuck

## to the word - refreshed?

To the word –  
for words are everything

Cycles of time,  
remembering that all movement is forwards  
that is all that there is  
refreshed

Blistering light  
shine into the emptiness

Only when totally empty  
can the vessel begin to fill again

Words are everything to me  
all that I am, all that I will be

Refresh me  
pour into me the essence again

Go forward  
and shine

As it will be  
world without end  
everlasting.





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