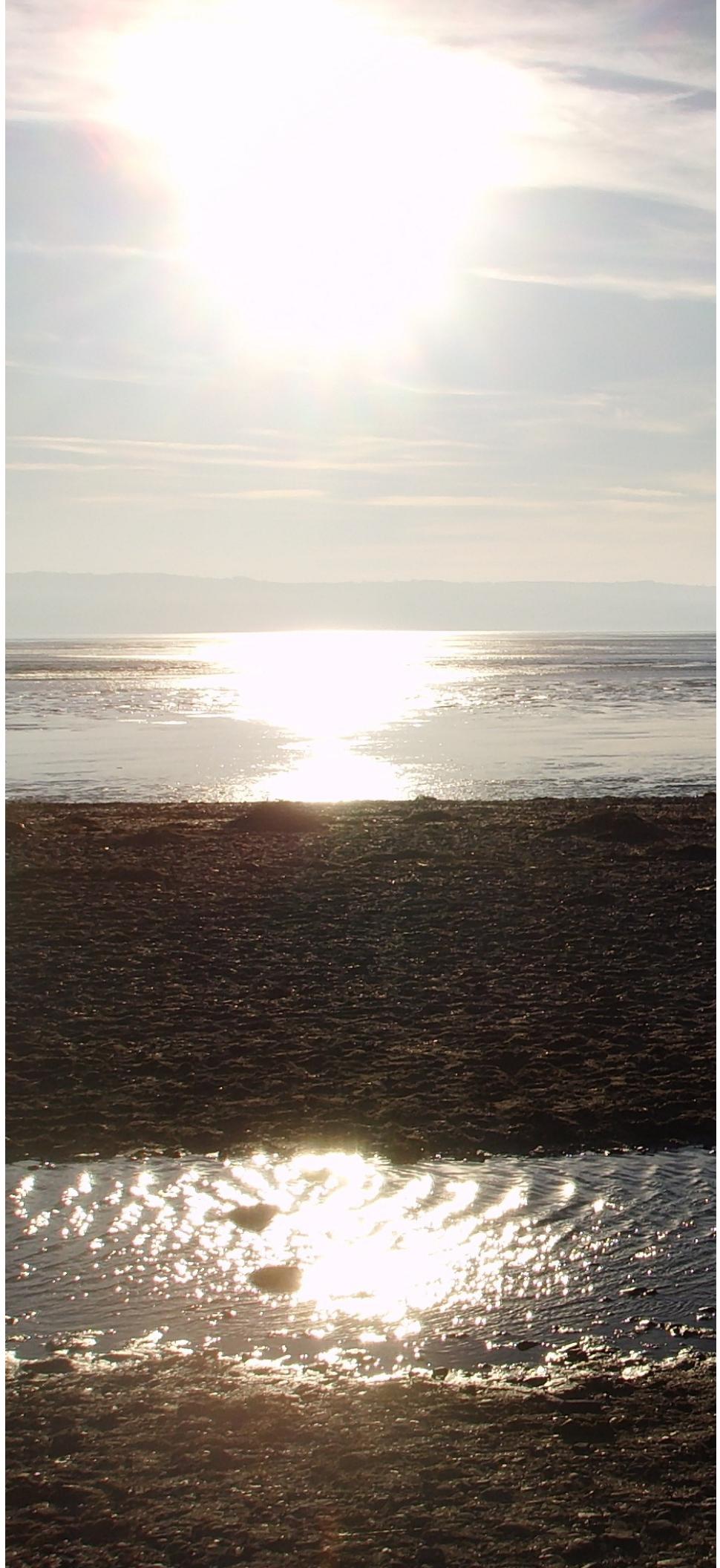


spirit soul:
pursuance

stuart eglin



BY THE SAME AUTHOR

POETRY

Sharp Blue / Breath (1985)
edge of water (1989)
the kingfisher's testimonial (1992)
Case Notes Poems (1995)
foundlings (1995)
Blue's Song of the Earth (1996)
angels under the carpet (1997)
Umbrian Images (1997)
Brother Spirit Brother Soul (1998)
sounds, sights, smells, soft, sweet (1998)
the kingfisher's bequest (2001)
zen words (2003)
the alice conversations (2004)
Avenues of In Between (2005)
Spin (2006)
Scrapes against the Soul (2009)
November Suite (2009)
Father Brother Son (forthcoming)

FICTION

the butterfly principle (2009)

NON FICTION

Working with Archetypes, PhD Thesis (2004)
The Coaching 30 (forthcoming, 2011)
Coming through Change (forthcoming)
Archetypes at Work (forthcoming)

spirit soul: pursuance

a collection of poems by

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blue*water* books

bluewater books

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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 21st 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 to 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 jolts 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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