

November Suite



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)

FICTION

the butterfly principle (2009)

NON FICTION

Working with Archetypes (2003)
Coming through Change (forthcoming 2010)
Archetypes at Work (forthcoming 2010)

November Suite

A collection of poems by

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blue*water* books

bluewater books

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Sunday 1st November

Tibetan Singing Bowl

It's time now
To strike the singing bowl, sit quietly and listen
All sounds continue to fade, never disappearing
The sounds of history are all there, diminishing

I can hear every character from history, their voices
Merging into strange harmonies

And we watch stars as they were
Millions or billions of years ago
Looking back in time
As we look further into space

I can see into the past, and I can hear
All that has passed

Can we turn all this around
And look forwards, listen to the future?
Or do we sense each moment as it passes
Making our own sense of it all.

[22:52]

Monday 2nd November

Making Sense of It all

Making sense of it all.
Coming home every night,
Walking past a mountain of rubbish –
Thinking about my contribution to it.

Promote sustainability because it counts –
A powerful business approach
Adds tremendous value to our efforts
Communicates a clear message to consumers.

What does it all mean?
Entertaining great senses of humour
Looking for a god in the gaps in between,
Feeling the mind like fire.

Our deep yearning for meaning
Sustaining the energy of thought
Beyond current crises
Into the eternal insights of tremendous clarity.

An Associate Producer in the crew that is
This film in which I appear, once said to me
“What an exciting time to be alive!
We’re still free to shop like there’s no tomorrow.”

Surveillance cameras everywhere,
It doesn’t make sense.
So many cameras, no-one could watch it all
Each our own ‘best dressed person’.

Always the same, month after month
Signing on the dotted line
Watching for potential emergencies
Taking holidays before the sun sets.

Maybe someday that mountain will be a molehill!

[21:12]

Tuesday 3rd November

The Voice of Wittgenstein

“After several attempts to weld my results together
The best I could write would never be more
Than philosophical remarks

My thoughts would soon be crippled
If I tried to force them on
Against their inclination”

An anti-systematic attitude
Like John Cage’s music or Stockhausen
A permanent condition

Numbered aphorisms, as though
The world of existence could be reduced
To a set of interwoven statements

Everything succumbing to the power of language
Different voices in dialogue
The first of the post-modernists

Voice 1, then Voice of Tradition
Voice of Perplexity
And the Voice of Clarity

These voices are inside my head
All at once, they seize language
Mess with it, precise but dissective

Taking objects and making of them
A contradiction, a complexity
Confusion that removes sense of self

Uttering a word, a phrase – I love you
Lost in translation, in perplexity
A permanent condition.

[20:30]

Wednesday 4th November

A permanent condition

A Norwegian computer counting history's wars
14,531 wars in 5,560 years.
Of 185 generations of mankind, only 10
Have experienced a world of peace.

War as a permanent condition.

There is not enough oil in the ground
To keep us going for more than 50 years.
The end of cheap fossil fuel,
The end of growth as an economic goal.

Energy crisis as a permanent condition.

“People cannot stand too much reality”
Said Jung, watching delusions and fantasies
Give definition to those who saw
Extremes in their dreams, beyond the real

The long emergency as a permanent condition.

Permanent members of the UN Security Council
Voting on powers to hold nations in check,
Bringing humanity to an equipoise
Where nothing is permanent, everything in transition.

Impermanence and change as a permanent condition!

In a permanent state of transition.

[21:26]

Thursday 5th November

The night is still young

The night is young
And so was I
Brought to life,
By a shopping trip
Plucking feathers from my jacket
Like some ecstatic plastic effigy

The flight of ideas in my mind
Pulls my attention to a multiplicity
Some electricity, everything is energy
Nothing is my manual, all designed
As if it were just like sticking
Another badge on my lapel

Have you seen it, the words
Sticking like the car on my bumper
The star of the show, prepared to
Do just anything that takes fancy
For the price of a cup of coffee
Removing shrapnel from my thigh

Praying for another chance
Arranging photos on the wall
Buying clothes in colours that don't suit me
Brought to this crisis
By another cup of coffee
When the night is still young.

[21:36]

Friday 6th November

Another cup of coffee

I need another cup of coffee
Because the lights are flickering
And I think I'm going to fall over.
I haven't had a drop to drink.

It's just time that I took some sleep.
I've been awake since Tuesday
Wondering why the pain won't go away
Why a state of living is caffeine free.

I'm on the road now, watching lights blip past
White and red, blurs like angels
Road signs make no sense
In a country I don't understand.

A queasy sense of uneasy
Buying petrol through a night-time window
The guy behind the glass, reading a book
Not seeing me, a face passing into the night

And now I've my foot down to the floor
Attention down into the wheels as they hug corners
Nothing for miles, just me and my thoughts
Lights of a plane high in the sky.

I'm nowhere now, nothing making sense
Over all of this, beyond recompense
Creating emptiness for a place to keep
All that is precious, that is as potent as coffee.

[22:12]

Saturday 7th November

I thought you were done for

“It would be a good idea if you came down
He is very ill, can’t say any more.”
I put the phone down, heave the silence.

Those words from the hospital leave
So much unspoken, so many gaps in the sentence
To fill with my own thoughts.

Within the hour, we are in the car
A silent family, all in the same thought
Yet separate as different bubbles.

The journey passes faster than is comfortable
Not wanting to arrive to the news
But wanting to be there before it is too late.

On arrival, the doctor stands in the corridor
Lowers her voice and tells me it’s not good,
He keeps drifting in and out of sleep.

“We will not resuscitate”, she tells me
“if his heart stops” -
The final heartbeat.

Around the bed we sit, talking quietly.
I put my hand on his shoulder,
Feel the bone beneath the web-thin skin.

His breath laboured, the mask over his mouth
His face with less wrinkles now
The blue of his lips.

Then he stirs, through cloudy eyes
He sees us – comes to and begins to talk
“I’ve not kicked the bucket yet then”.

“I don’t want to go off to sleep again
If I close my eyes I will lose you all.”
A son, daughter-in-law and grandsons.

I thought you were done for,
Thought you would be gone
Realised how much closer we are now.

[23:34]

Sunday 8th November

No rights to access

I said there are no rights
To access here, no way in at all

I was taking no risks with this one
Watching starlings dive-bombing in the trees

I realised that it was time
For good fortune to turn to a fall

A short flip. gymnast-like
Before the deepest freeze

Everything in decline, even the darkest shadow
Nothing allowed inside now

We were waiting for a sign of some sort
A signal that it was all worth while

It didn't come, so we packed up our things
Turned and gave a quick bow

Realised that everything that we had earned
Had collapsed, turned vile.

[22:39]

Monday 9th November

Had collapsed, turned vile

Had he seen what was coming, he would probably have put
More seeds in the garden, left a trail for them to follow

Collapsed across the lawn, the body lay prostrate
Waiting for them to go before moving, sliding into the hedge

Turned himself into a fugitive, just before the bomb dropped
As soon as the first rains of spring fell on the rivers of town

Vile terrorism is a conspiracy that we all live to fear
Watching our neighbours for signs, they aren't what they seem.

Follow the lead, take what it gives, don't remember why we came
Put yourself in their shoes, don't wait for the dust to settle.

Prostrate on the floor, wondering whose god you worship
Hedge your bets, take no risks of being identified.

Dropped from the group just as soon as they knew
Town was the best place to go to disappear

Fear is a constant state, stomach churning and turning
Seem to remember that there's a state of paranoia in which I
belong.

[23:15]

Tuesday 10th November

Repeat order

No more than ten minutes to complete
To compete, to repeat
No more than the place you deserve
In reserve, you swerve.

Whenever you look, you cook
You replay, then say
Why me, you see, don't agree
Just may be tempted to stay.

No choice though, so
Go now, show how
You've been here before
You know the score.

[22:48]

Wednesday 11th November

A reality check

The fast track to Buddhist meditation
Is all held in the breath
Just take a long slow breath inward
Then let it go gently and feel the tension easing.

Ah, if it were that easy we would all be doing it
Fifteen thousand times a day – each breath a meditation
Rather than knotting up and sharpening
Second by second, when out of control.

A reality check, a moment in the night
When we realise that there is something
That we have been ignoring, avoiding
Death comes closer each day, time shrinks ahead.

There is the observation that the time we have
Is limited, that a meditation without purpose
Is difficult to understand, when we want to cram
Each moment with as much content as we can stand.

[18:41]

Thursday 12th November

Change management

Awareness: noticing that we haven't given ourselves to those around us for a while now. Buried in our own thoughts, we careen through life like some out of control joy-rider, wondering when we will crash.

Appreciation: letting go just for once, and allowing ourselves to feel the benefit of all those that have a profound effect on our lives. So thank you all of you, for the inter-connectedness of everything.

Amplification: and now that we are in thanking mode rather than thinking mode, it is time to open it out. Make everything louder and bolder, say really deep thanks to those who are the closest in impact.

Adaptation: look at what needs changing, and make the shift. Realise that the changes come about incrementally with very tiny steps, that many small steps are far better than one big unsustainable move.

[18:50]

Friday 13th November

Bury the meaning

One big unsustainable move
Is all it takes to topple the dictator
Repeal all laws that have been passed
And repel the revolution before it takes hold

Empty vessels make the loudest noise
When struck with a stick
People in glass houses should not throw
Their voices even when they think
They know the answer

Closeness and impact are a moot point
When it comes to affairs of the art
Bury the meaning, and place a large
Sculpture as far up the hill as it will drag
But don't forget to let it cool!

All times are approximate
No-one can be certain how we came
To be planted here, realising
That every opening is another closure
And we wait in pain for another resolution.

[19:08]

Saturday 14th November

Delusion

Right in front of me, on the hospital ward
Three cats are playing, leaping on
Bedside cabinets and lockers.
Two puppies are on the bed of the man opposite.
They keep putting tablets in the water,
And food tastes of pepper.
There's something going on here,
They're talking behind my back.
Trying to wear me down, step by step
Until I'm too weak to fight back.

But near death, there is still incredible strength
Even when I don't know what day it is,
When I am wondering who I can trust.
I can go without food for a couple of days
If it stops them poisoning me –
I'll show resilience like you've never seen
And I just wished I knew where I am,
Who that was and why I am here.

Why do dead people appear in front of me?
How can my eyes see things that can't be?
Is there a way to make sense of all this?
I want to remove the fog of winter
Re-awake the connection that should be
Stop the waking nightmares, the shouting
All that I have seen, as vivid as living
As open to fantasy.

[23:06]

Sunday 15th November

from Revelations

You and your credit card
Like life-long friends in a credit crunch
Wondering what hit you, as you spin
Disaster striking like a hit and run.

The silver bird is heading for you
Watching you as you stumble,
Beak slightly open in anticipation
Sufficiently intelligent to catch prey.

Just a few small actions, like some complexity theory
Create a whirl of impact across the globe
To turn a world of anticipation
Into a dread of despair

As the predator turns prey
So do mountains shift on their foundations
And leave for the oceans,
All a mix of chaos and creation re-enacted

Down, down we go now
Into the pit and the game changes
From the time we get there
We will know no bounds, no escape.

Out now, like a train from a tunnel
Into the light, into the revelation
Faster than the speed of sound
And into a fantasy of all understanding.

[11:23]

Monday 16th November

The tree in winter

Like an endless summer, bright sunshine
But an edge of coldness, a pinch at the tip
Of the fingers

Films passing as moments of breath
And snow flakes in the trees
Powder as it falls

Winter approaching and a season
Days short, chronic hibernation
In total darkness

Seasons are my inspiration
Leaves gone in this emptiness
Picking out

Just one blackbird hopping as if
He has cold feet, looking for food
Finding none

Solitude
Loneliness
Old and
Cold now
Only

[21:48]

Tuesday 17th November

Spectacular fiction

Well, I ask you!
I'm who I am and that's no lie
I try to be the best I can and stand for no nonsense
So I was a bit shocked when
Events took me back to my school memories
And there in the middle of them was
A different me
One that all those around me remember
And it was a different me to the one I know
As if the whole of the time in between (30 years)
Had been a work of spectacular fiction
An illusion
Someone who I had been acting, full on
That has no connection with the real me
- and so, trapped in a fantasy world
I am looking for a trace
A place that I could be, the lost ego
(it would make a good reality tv show)
"Looking for the ego – before you get there"
Is it too late to re-write a life?

[21:59]

Wednesday 18th November

Life: a re-write

And this time, it all went backwards
Like that film – you know – starting old
Then heading for young.

So, I take the pen, an empty page
And create a re-write of the life
Massaging out the bits that I don't like

Like some language-bound version of 'Second Life'
Choosing everything as an ideal version
Of me, perfection where I want it

So, like the place in heaven – flawless
And about as boring as a painting in one colour
No, not one painting, every painting

So – the importance of contrast
Dark and light, happy and sad
Would just drive me mad

So, if we are working out a re-write
Let's keep in the mix of bits
Leave it pretty much as it is!

[22:06]

Thursday 19th November

Public Life Private Space

Pretty much saying
Leave my kids out of it, leave them out of
Politics please.
Don't despair when I seek privacy -
It's just that moment when a public life
Needs a private space.

Public connection and private life
Show the risk of privacy,
Something that is a modern invention.
We have buildings with separate spaces,
Where once we lived in communal places,
No private space.
Does the hyper-stimulated world we live in
Create cravings for space and solitude?

So, with mobile phones and mp3 players
We create our own spaces within crowds,
Conquering the loudness and chaos
With our own choice of sounds and conversations:
A bubble of virtuality, not virtue, where others
Cannot come in unless we open up
- the energy of our personal space
more tangible than it ever was.

Children and politics don't mix
Unless the public life is bite size
And we can split the atom in every moment
Total stimulation for the over-active brain.

[22:24]

Friday 20th November

To the end of worlds

Before
The dark is rising
Now hear all of this
Last night the stars shone
And I watched them twinkle
One drop in each shard of space
Another droplet like a tear from the eye
Flip inwards, peopled with creatures
All standing shell-like, open to us
Watching the night sky
Pacing forwards and
Backwards, until
The sky empties
No stars
No sun
No
N

[18:21]

Saturday 21st November

When I am gone

No stars no sun
No butterflies
No moon no clouds
No time to try

Closing time
Is the only time
That I remember
What is mine

No scars no fun
No shutters cry
No sooner, no loudness
No wine to try

Endings come
Before beginnings
Remember me when
I am gone.

[21:55]

Sunday 22nd November

Open to the eyes of death

Looking into the eyes of death
Milky and indistinct
I see the absence of you
Then you come back to me

For now at least, you are conscious
It doesn't last, each time you speak
You fade faster, the moments ticking
Like a taker of time

Removing the last few days of you
Until there is the uncertainty
Of memories that lose facts
Pieces without context.

For now, there you are
Disorientated, fearful
Wanting more than you have
Been left, open to death.

[19:31]

Monday 23rd November

An easy word

Say what you think
Don't fear the consequences
Leave all the pleasantries
It's worth nothing

Solitude is an easy word
But loss is less.

[21:13]

Tuesday 24th November

“Can you get here quick, he is dying?”

The white board on the wall has “Mr”
Scrawled on it – no more
As though his passing has removed the name.

His slippers are on the floor
Under the chair in the corner
He lies on the bed, open mouthed

The skin is smoother now
Paling but still
Nothing of him in there

A curtain pulled across
For the privacy of a son sitting alone
Empty and wordless

- and then I take the carrier bag
Towel, clothes, glasses and slippers
So little left of a life

And I walk down the hospital corridors
Feeling like I am taking the remains,
Just a few clothes, with me

To sit in a hospital canteen
And eat tasteless toast with coffee
Staring out into the early morning as light appears.

[12:13]

Wednesday 25th November

A small taste

There's a small taste of what we came here for
Underneath the window
A cat sits and washes its fur

Resting on the floor
In a small jug, froth on the top
The milk and cream the cat got

It's time we let it go,
All this fresh conceit, remembering
How we came to be here

Like an overwrought eagle
Gliding along air currents
A paucity of talent.

Nothing makes sense now
A parentless piece of peace
An empty epithet of regret.

[20:53]

Thursday 26th November

18

Remember 18
Remember the first time doing things

Remember drinking legally
Remember voting

Remember making decisions

Seeing the shift to adulthood

Now

As a parent
I see the excitement of the shift
But,

With it comes another step on
In my own life

Lack of parent
Speed of passing time

Signs of mortality

[19:27]

Friday 27th November

The blow

A smug statement
Was all that was left
After we had spoken

And then you opened the can,
Took a sip, and watched me
As I walked away from you

You had done it
You had said what you came
To say

And I walked away with those words
Rattling around my skull
The sense falling apart.

[19:17]

Saturday 28th November

Devotion

Living in caves, hewn out of rock
Finding contact with the spiritual,
Not in the skies, but in the earth.

Painting on the walls
Creating a sense of wonder
From the pagan emptiness.

Digging out with bare hands,
Penance as a form of worship,
Sufferance showing devotion.

Does this mean, then, that living in a great and noble
Way
Is
Best depicted through pain and discomfort?

What then, does this give as a meaning for life?

[19:35]

Sunday 29th November

Photographed collages

Somewhere beyond my childhood memories
Is a safer place
Where hilltops wedged with snow
And muddy river beds
Are the vivid scenes that
I have known

And a firework eruption
Is like a tree, ripped apart by weather
And your smile, your view of
The statues above the door, stone and still

Childlike wonder, will one day return
Tree hugged walkways and
Remembrance of sunshine

Untidy thoughts now
Holding everything together
Like a child with too many toys in their arms
Feeling things falling, wanting to get control

Clouds line the sky
All waiting their turn
And a small lake
Mocks my reply.

[20:49]

Monday 30th November

Time traveller

In each end
There is a sequential beginning
A clash of sorts
That I wished I understood.
If only the mind could unravel
The order of things and take a good
With each piece of bad, so that
I could see
What is round the next bend.

Just making up words
As they flow through me, to
The end of the line,
Hoping for insight
Hoping for depth of meaning
In an ending that seems to close down
A whole era, a time of my life.

And in the loss,
All I can find is memories
Of places I've been and things
I've seen, that I will never
See again.

If only life was
As easy to repeat
As a TV programme.

A great big memory box for re-living.

[23:00]



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