



Twenty

A selection of 25 poems

By Malcolm Evison

Five

A Glass So Deeply Stained

sun bleached
low veiling cloud

denies all access
to the light beyond

my faith
is shrouded

when I fail
to share its light -

I pray
others may find

a breach in my opacity

*Malcolm Evison
4 February 2008*

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.

Malcolm Evison
18 February 2007

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

Malcolm Evison
8 September 2006

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

ABOUT DEATH'S DOOR

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

DOLEFUL BLUES
(Just One Of Maggie's Victims)

He seeks and fails to find
the semblance of
his once bright hope.

The family sleeps, he lies
awake, perhaps
a few untruths could make

an honest man of him.
Purveyor of unwanted skills,
he sifts through all

the cut-price vacancies –
prepares to swallow principle
as well as pride.

Malcolm Evison
14 July 1987

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.

*Malcolm Evison
22 October 2006*

FELL FALL

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

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.

Malcolm Evison
24 January 2007

GOING HOME
(For Anne 17 May 2004)

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.

Malcolm Evison
(Written for my mother)
19 May 2004

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!

*Malcolm Evison
June 2001*

(written for/about my father who died on my birthday in June 2001)

MAMMON
(creator of social divisiveness)

Behold the god of lies
taker of lives
maker and breaker

of dreams -
creator god
who captivates

the mind -
spins webs
of treachery

replaces hope
with greed
installs himself

in all the highest places
proudly proclaims
there is no god but me

and we
fall for the party line.

Malcolm Evison
2 May 2010

MAN FOR HIS AGE

Care-worn he leads
his guilt free life,
turns fears
into a bar-room joke –

he never fails
though sometimes falls
a victim to
“the changing times”.

Suburban heroes never weep,
they share with celluloid
an inability to bleed.

He veils his sorrows in
a sentimental song
and never sins –

his standards are complete
and up to date.

A true son
of a dying race.

Malcolm Evison

NEED IS A PURPOSE

Need is a purpose
whose thirst is never slaked
whose drive
is always onwards.

When met
it fails to recognize
its own fulfilment;
it yields

to further craving,
swallows its own desire,
breathes hope
(in striding forward)

and fear
of failing, falling short
of our unknown goal

Malcolm Evison
25 April 2008

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

Poem to Secular Jesus

Absurd redemption of humanity -
how can I write
or mouth a ritual creed
which brings to life
such 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

poem written in response to 'Seminarian', an earlier poem of mine, as a result of a request from Rev Dr John Vincent whilst I was spending a post-graduate year at the Urban Theology Unit in mid 1970's

REBECCA JAYNE
(2 yrs of age)

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

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

SOMETIMES
(for Janet & Graham)

sometimes a meeting
just happens

sometimes
it's simply meant to be

often
the seeker doesn't know

just what is sought -
the meeting speaks

of what may be -
sometimes

the meeting tells
all those who care

a miracle
has just begun

Malcolm Evison
February 2010

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.

Malcolm Evison
3 September 2006

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.

Malcolm Evison
May 2007

THE GOAL

knowing the next tum
could be the one
he visibly relaxes

can't trust
the satnavs
chippy voice

he still waits
for the proof -
and yes it's there

as if to prove
there's such a thing
as answered prayer

Malcolm Evison
27 August '09

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.

Malcolm Evison (1969)

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.

Malcolm Evison
06 August 2006