

Poetry Series

**jim hogg**  
**- poems -**

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## jim hogg()

Excellent poets who get very little attention on here:

Just Lines, Iris Blue, Ron Dragano, William F Dougherty, Tailor Bell, Martin Turner, Will Barber and Sandra Fowler for starters.

Some fairly random stuff. Never owned a horse; I like catapults, bows and slings, and love a single slow violin...

I was born close to the Wee Black and the Big Black - two lochs in Loch Inch grounds: wood encircled moody waters that lap at the roots of the trees. The kind of place you want to leave when you're young and return to when you're old enough to love it for its dark mysterious beauty.

Looks like there's a lot of places I won't be going to now, though. But Drummore will be fine. I knew love there a long time ago. The sea and the cliffs and the tides are there and I've loved them all my life. I never had a list of destinations, or even a vague ambition to travel in the first place. And never had a list of things to aim for except happiness, and I suspected that it might be associated with love. I didn't really have any ambitions at all, beyond making an escape.

I've read and written a lot of words. Most turned to ash and were blown away. And I've said too little about the right things and said too much about the inconsequential. It would have been wiser to have fixed and made things, to have actually done some good for even a few people, though inadvertently benefiting others isn't morally worthy in itself though... the incidental has no intrinsic moral value. It has to be deliberate... Having said all that, I've always done the little things that I could to help others. But, culpably, I didn't make that my life's work. I should have.

Civility and honesty, though pretty important imv for harmonious living, don't achieve much in themselves that can be measured or valued by the standards of the modern world. It seems that much more urgent, self directed and less compassionate qualities are essential to those who want to 'make it' now.

Lacking a clear sense of ambition shaped direction, I set out to climb too many unspecific mountains at once, without, I hope, ever using others as a means to my ends, but still, I can't help feeling that focusing on climbing one efficiently is too safe a course to follow. I've seen average talents do just that to great personal benefit, which gave them much personal satisfaction and social cachet,

and saw many highly capable individuals, who cared nothing for such things, lose their way in the maze of futility that deeper thinking or the pressure of expectations can bring. And there's luck to consider... who can account for that?

Historians look for pivotal moments. Sometimes life seems to be a flowing pivotal moment, but that may imply we have the power of choice. If we don't then it's simply about the working out of the various forces that combine to make up action in time, with us as little more than conscious pawns in the great algorithmic game.

I think the subconscious mind directs much more powerfully than the conscious part is inclined to believe, but with a touch so light we can't feel it, though even it is in thrall to dna, hormones, hard wiring, situation - including other individuals - and the limits of the possible. So where is the space for the volitional, a necessary condition for morality?

Surrendering is never easy, though perhaps it's easier than loosening the hold of vanity or shame. But surrendering to the moment, stepping outside of time, to the extent that such a thing is possible... That's hard. I always had one foot in the past and one in the future, and yet was always trying to catch up on the far future, as if the present was never enough... Is surrender the same as being satisfied...? Took me a while to work that one out.

And now I suspect that I'm developing a growing hunger for more time, which would explain a lot of stuff about old folks. No more sprinting off into the future, at last.

Beauty is vanity. Unless there is beauty in modesty? Would that be just a more subtle kind of preening? . It's also evolution's trickery at work, of course. Or was Solomon wrong and both beauty and vanity/futility no more than biology? He was probably right about everything else. Is there nothing new under the sun... are all of our creations built on the microchip for example just some kind of extension of what we are, a kind of self realisation reflective of human intelligence/creativity; for all we do with all that appears to be new is employ it to indulge various perennial emotions. Nuclear weapons included. Bigger bangs, bigger fires, bigger threats, more blood spilled... the same old stuff but only more of it.. or less.

And a single universe from a single big bang? How long did that bizarre notion prevail until someone twigged that in limitless space and time there might be scope for at least a couple of dozen more.. Our universe had to be the only one...! Ye gods..Crows learn faster than we do. Would bright working class kids

who've never been the centre of anything be less inclined to fall for such an anthropocentric 'science'? Perhaps. Might be entirely natural of course for us to explain every mystery with a theory based on the fundamentals of our experience, given our hubris and our limitations.

One night in 72 a young woman and I were parked at Portpatrick harbour. I'd stopped the van a red Ford Anglia van with windows along the side! Hand painted with a black stripe. Ultra uncool. with the front wheels close to the edge of the harbour wall so we could look into the harbour. Time to go home.. I start up, forget to check which gear I'm in and the van lurches forward, producing instant panic.. nothing else in the world mattered..and instant brakes just in time luckily. Tiny things can change everything. Fourteen months later, in late October 73, I'm dressed in full scots regalia, McKechnie tartan and white sandshoes - aye, totally ridiculous, but I was young - and I've been kebabbed into going to this discotheque at the college of Domestic Science behind Eldon St in Glasgow. I swagger through the door and at the far end of the hall I see a familiar face. I suddenly realise it's that same young woman in an unfamiliar place, and the nature of the game a good friend of ours was playing, and I turn tail and nip straight out the exit, because I haven't yet learned to handle class differences and maybe more because I'm scared of surrendering. Next time I see her she's with a guy with a Rutgers badge on his jacket and he looks like he's a match. She was beautiful. Then I see her picture on the QM Halls foyer wall one day I'm visiting Alistair and Sheena, and surrendering completely is the only thing I want to do... Later I wonder what it is that can be more powerful than even love... by just a fraction..

But, ideas. Back to that swamp again.. Big ones, little ones, systems and haphazard bunches of them. Abstract, concrete... consistent and contradictory. What exactly are they...? Germs, of at least two but not completely separable types maybe? Value based or technical/factual/speculative. Value based ideas are the ones I'm most suspicious of. They have a certain look about them under the microscope: as if they're parasites on emotion... they seem to colonise the mind by harnessing themselves to our emotions, and direct our behaviour while hiding out in the long grass of the subconscious - unselfishly allowing us to think that WE are in charge. And the more integrated the system of ideas infecting us the greater the deception. We all know, and may sometimes have been, such people, totally in thrall to a set of ideas we believe are so superior to the other guy's that we'll argue over them, be totally confounded by the other guy's failure to see that his are inferior, and sometimes gladly go to war and kill millions for them, like scratching a massive compulsive itch until it bleeds enough relief; cf the 20th C especially, all of human history, and the

future, too, probably.

Some argue that we're born with a particular set of values, or at least a predisposition towards a certain world view, from an endless range of possibilities – evolution's way of preparing us for all eventualities perhaps.. as depicted by Cohen's lines "I will help you if I can, I will kill you if I must", opposed in the same song to "I will kill you if I can, I will help you if I must".. Are we all born to live and die somewhere between those extremes.?

Unstrangely I've been fervently supportive of the free market and its opposite, at different times of course, and I'm not alone. I've tended to engage with the logic of different systems before they've gradually infected me, and they invariably did to some degree given time, but somehow now I seem to have become immune and although I find ideological commitment understandable in the young – schooling should now be able to offer inoculation against that condition - it strikes me as silly in the old... something we should grow out of earlier or be released from.... But for too long we bumble along, driven by the emotional fuel such ideas attract within us, and if we're in politics we subject the lives of others to the policy equivalents of the actions that such ideas aspire to become; basically they're subjected to political prejudices, sometimes in the shape of technical ideas, for example, that help to reinforce those prejudices by compliance: eg weapons designed to kill people who oppose our ideas and leave their buildings intact! So maybe technical ideas aren't immune either to the effects of value based ideas...It's hard to see how they could be since probably all purposeful action will be value driven to some degree. Are we just value based ideas in action, mediated through the subconscious mind, with all technical ideas likely to be contaminated by values or press-ganged into their service?

So, just who is in charge here? And whose "good" should rule then? Did Mill of the On Liberty phase have the answer? Should we apply a reasonable "harm" principle as the principal rule? I think so. Maximum freedom compatible with avoidance of harm to others. Though of course that "freedom" is at best a partial state.. Which makes Browne's simple advice appears to have merit:

"let your illusions last until they shatter,  
whatever you might hope to find  
among the thoughts that crowd your mind,  
there won't be many, that ever really matter"

But no, it's not ideas that are the problem essentially, for we are the originators, and then we become their vehicles: we shape ourselves to fit their load... it's us... it's always us, however blamelessly undirected our efforts, or otherwise.

The kind of creature we are is the problem.

Without emotion we are effectively dead.... emotion is what binds, divides or isolates us. Some of us are full of the stuff, the vivid rainbows amongst us, others are bland rainbows whose propensities are less inclined towards extremes. Most are probably somewhere in between. And those with the most emotion to fire their commitment to ideas are potentially the most dangerous I suspect, regardless of which end of the spectrum they inhabit...But ideas, both technical and value based are simply how we try to make sense of the mysteries that confront us, and the more we like the explanation the more emotion we invest in it, the more we are committed to it – the means by which ideologies become lethal.

The subconscious seems to be the automatised version of our conscious processes and its energy is emotion, in all its forms. And crucially we don't control the subconscious, though we may be aware of its activities on reflection. For the most part it is us... we are it... and we ignore its contribution at our collective peril... the antidote might be to knowingly programme it the best we can with a simple set of ideas, a simple set of values, such as honesty, fairness, independence to a reasonable degree, awareness that accommodates uneven beginnings etc, and that foster individual happiness/flourishing within a framework limited only by an effective "harm" principle. The way many "good" people do already. It's not the same as free will admittedly, but if we allow ourselves to appreciate just how powerfully the subconscious directs us then maybe it can be a horse we can saddle and ride safely; maybe we should use the little understanding we have to harness it to the pursuit of reasonable less conflict afflicted ends – which would amount to a kind of indirect free will. Maybe that's as close as we'll ever get.. No doubt some would be horrified at the idea. But hey, I'm not going to start a war over it, or even an argument, and it would hardly amount to a revolution either...

And those who break the "harm" rule? The peaceful and free indirectly or otherwise who accept and respect the enjoyment of individual and mutual happiness should be protected I believe. Those who murder, rape, maim, exploit and use others damagingly, or for their own benefit, under the sway of forces lurking within themselves over which they have no real control are not evil – since the moral needs volition – but act beyond the bounds of "civilised" behaviour and thus have to be either fixed, if that's possible, or locked away in civilised conditions to protect others.

The others: those who'd ideally be free enough to be themselves to the

maximum extent that they can. For all of us have the potential to self realise, and also an &quot; eligibility to be noble&quot; Bellow. Even if only to sing their songs, swim in cool, fresh water, and walk and talk with those they love without fear that their peace and happiness will be endangered so long as they remain vigilant, and take no more than the minimum steps required to protect their chosen lot. A better world? There's always scope for that, even if it's no more than a zero sum game in the end.

It's to be hoped that what we think and what we do aren't too disconnected. On that basis, the above rambling probably provides some insight into the origins of the scribbles I've posted. There used to be a lot more. I don't know whether I dumped the best or worst, or just the stuff I personally didn't like. The difference would have been trivial at best. I'm far from being a poet in the conventional sense. Poets write poetry, and poetry is a hard taskmaster; much more demanding than I'm willing or able to give. But I've gained some pleasure in shaping at least some of the lines in most of the scribbles I've lodged here. As a famous fictional character once said: A man's got to know his limitations.&quot; Easier said than done. But the proof is in the pudding.

# In All The Blackness

I stood and watched them walk away  
remembering the shapes and sparks  
reflected in the well one night  
their faces blank and rippling slow  
what was it that we really saw  
beneath that spread of silver lights  
how real the thing we gazed upon  
I didn't know a single star  
in all the blackness, not a one  
but oh, their light was in me then

and dark, how dark the darkness was  
the depth that I was springing in  
of that wild symphony of stars  
the terror somewhere at my back  
a little house that's disappeared  
beneath their ruined memories  
my mother's ashes, weeds and trees  
and meagre stories that remain  
my mumblings to these porous walls  
I am my mouth and little else

jim hogg



# Faces In The Well

He's here to sing his latest song;  
it's all about an afternoon  
I never heard him talk about,  
when uncle Rab went through the ice  
and vanished in the waiting loch

until they pulled him out in time,  
beneath a sky of fear and salt.  
But Paddy always shunned the light  
and suddenly refused to sing.  
It's late and wild and Paddy's off,

his forehead angled to the sheets  
of lightning and the rolling road,  
towards the cottage by the bridge.  
I stood and watched them walk away,  
remembering the shapes and sparks

reflected in the well one night;  
their faces blank and rippling slow.  
What was it that we really saw  
beneath that spread of silver lights?  
How real the thing we gazed upon!

I didn't know a single star.  
In all the blackness, not a one;  
but oh, their light was in me then  
and dark, how dark the darkness was,  
the depth that I was springing in

of that wild symphony of stars;  
the terror somewhere at my back:  
a little house that's disappeared  
beneath their ruined memories,  
my mother's ashes, trees and weeds,

and meagre stories that remain;  
my mumblings to these porous walls.  
I am my mouth and little else,

and Paddy, like a giant, walks  
and leaps and sings along the track

with Toy and all their dancing ghosts,  
a host of shadows holding on  
to all the starlight fading here,  
on stooks and sheaves I saw them stack,  
on laughter under august skies

before they swapped the fifties for  
a less convincing innocence;  
the broken kind that breaks too well.  
With oxygen in short supply  
below the ladder on the ice

they rose and shook it off like dogs,  
in harder times, but soon enough  
I saw the tightness in the men  
who struggled night and day to thrive,  
and in the poor who truly cared,

who leapt and sang to save themselves  
from all their hopes, the bitter stones  
that crowd the edge of dreams that drift;  
and in the houses all the wives  
who slaved their narrow lives away.

But not in nineteen fifty eight.  
The past was at its widest then;  
my mother's eyes still full of stars,  
the glist'ning night a flawless kiss  
above the ruins in the wings,

above the faces in the well.

jim hogg

# Stone And Sea

You rows and rows of teachers' hopes  
Remember if you have the time  
The creelers drowned and swept away  
Their wives and families standing by  
The vast and lonely ocean's reach  
And miners locked beneath the stone  
Their loved ones lost and waiting on  
Above them on the stony land

And though they'll never come to terms  
They'll tend their stock and mend their walls  
Until they must themselves give way  
To find their peace without complaint  
Where daffodils lie down to rest  
Beneath the sod or on the wind

15 03 21

jim hogg

# Fair Winds

I

The scattered clouds are high and white,  
a younger sun comes breaking through.  
It feels like home; the breeze reminds  
of all the things I didn't do.

I used to think that life was mine,  
a climbing kite in search of flight,  
and all I needed was the time  
to find a path, to gain the heights.

But time was such a spilling thing,  
and soon the years were buried deep  
beneath the grinding dross we churn;  
and now I wonder: why this need

to find that vital thing I seek?  
A frantic spaniel sniffing wild  
I hunt the hedgerows of a dream,  
the stored detritus of a life?

It might be just a word or glimpse  
a face across the railway track  
in Singer station years ago;  
a turning missed and no way back;

or name I blanked but can't forget,  
that draws me like a precious stone  
imagined in a childhood book,  
now lost amongst the undergrowth.

Or maybe I'm just looking for  
a clue that lights the road to grace,  
or better still a painless way  
to crumble into usefulness.

II

Our journey seems so very vast  
and yet we've hardly moved at all,  
with every answer mere mirage;  
that's maybe how it always was.

Though all that seethes within these hearts,  
and seems impossible to say,  
was maybe never meant for words;  
some truths will always go astray.

It's true I never gave enough  
or dared enough when fate came through.  
I bolted from that blazing love  
when we were ripe in swarming June,

when passion was a wilder force;  
but out of sync and fluster struck,  
I never dreamt the chance might come  
to hold the willing hand I spurned.

And now these wasteful hours and years  
spent chipping at the ice of self,  
or shoring up the flooding walls,  
or recollecting moments fled:

III

I'm kneeling down by Africa  
with all the awe of innocence  
when atlases were vivid things  
with spreads of red where blood was shed.

They conjured worlds that used to be;  
my father's father on his knees,  
we travelled down the tracks and streams,  
across the seas and into dreams

and glory drenched in older wrongs.  
A 'better world' and all that jazz  
soon sprung from that awakening,  
but not a sliver came to pass.

Those transformations we foresaw  
were only tiny waves on sand,  
just nibbling at some dark expanse;  
and even nibbling's much too grand.

#### IV

I watch a stranger in his car,  
enclosed within his own cocoon;  
a universe inside his head:  
his sparks of spring, his waning moon.

He's in a tale that writes itself,  
a simple player with a role,  
directed by some cunning force,  
whose goals he seems obliged to own.

#### V

But pressing matters press right in:  
my hair's a mess and growing thin;  
the fence we built is falling down,  
and thirsty cows are breaking out.

Yet all my thoughts are on a fox  
I shot across a thick green field.  
it caught my eye before it dropped  
and held its gaze there fifty years.

I didn't think of fairness then:  
I never fought and never bled.  
Now every way I turn I'm caught,  
for all I've done and all I've not.

(adapted from A Dream Reflects)

11 03 21

jim hogg

# A Single Fish For Artifice

Where are your warlike lovers, love,  
and your sensitive fighters, now?  
Arse-gallons under the turf mush.  
Tokers are gaga too and pout

like no yesterday's left unstoned.  
They've always striven to be good -  
imagining themselves enthroned,  
but not mislaid in Auden's wood.

And so they hang, about our piers.  
All mimicry, all feeble grips.  
The curse of evolution smears,  
in eyes and grasping fingerslips.  
This dancing stuff: it's all for what?  
A splinter in your poodle's paw.

So fly, and pull the stops all out:  
that Kangaroo has quite a clout.  
Berate the waves and flush the cave,  
we've seen the bust; we're cutting loose;  
the Marigolds don't need a shave,  
and Corybant has coshed the goose.

He read a single line and left  
a one word sketch to net the mind,  
where meaning's fled and might be dead.  
It's rumoured that The Golden Hind

has had enough of human stuff,  
of modes and means and mines and may  
wax corybantic with her club,  
over the halls and Faraday.

jim hogg

# Gemini Sunset

I saw you first across the fields  
between the primal and the dream  
when we were barely fully grown  
it must have been a while ago

we spoke from time to time of wings  
of perfect love and broken things  
of forests and of distances  
of passion and of mysteries

another man soon took your arm  
and I, another woman's hand  
the truth, of course was sealed away  
and Gemini was forced to fade

a little time, a little life  
the heavens turned round twice or thrice  
a thousand songs had come and gone  
as you and I kept moving on

you took my arm when I was lame  
and rolled your sleeves up on the waves  
but your parabolas and art  
were quite enough to bind my heart

and later, when the stars came out  
we didn't look or call them down  
we broke the ice and sipped the flames  
'til one of us got clean away

I heard you breathe and felt the spell  
when nearly thirty years had fled  
towards those tiny points of light  
across the blazing fields of night

the walls were high, inside my mind  
though rising suns will always shine  
but you, who I would always love  
became a stranger on the bus



(song)

13 02 21

jim hogg

# Bits And Clips II

## Bits and Clips II

A single gannet circling high;  
a red and yellow patterned sky,  
and full of wonder underneath,  
two brothers working at their creels.  
The moments pass, the pattern breaks;  
the gannet plunges arrow straight  
beneath the surface of the sea,  
and on the hill, two startled deer.

Our secret apple tree was felled,  
so out across the fields we sped;  
above us lengthy northbound skeins  
of noisy geese like flights of planes,  
but further on, a brush with guilt:  
the hanging tree, the finch we killed;  
it's yellow body on the grass;  
our sheepish glances as we passed.

They met by chance in Miller's bar;  
a girl he'd worshipped from afar.  
He'd hardly thought of her for years,  
except by conjuring in dreams.  
The shifting sands of life contrived  
the sweetest time and then goodbye;  
yet if we could, who'd say they would,  
return and replay every move?

The past's another place they say,  
of haunting hints and flitting shapes,  
of laughter, tears and lessons learned;  
it's where the future first was fledged,  
in restless waters, singing winds,  
with all our little wars and spills;  
and time, it ripples on of course,  
to background strains of Billy Joel.

(song)

28 12 20

jim hogg

# Bits And Clips

A broken down familiar place:  
the pyloned power lines that sag;  
the deep and shadowed loch that waits;  
the plans behind the plans we had;  
the 'keeper chasing with his gun,  
with Bobby Johnstone ducking low,  
and Brandy barking as he runs  
below the reaching sycamores.

A face I can't quite recognise  
yet know I know her glance and style:  
a sunlit wave that once washed up  
this vain peninsula of life.  
She's speaking softly to herself  
and you and I and all the birds,  
are listening rapt as if we grasp  
a hidden beauty in her words.

There's scribbles on the railway bridge,  
that seem to speak of something lost,  
of harder times and lives fulfilled;  
another age, a world that's gone,  
when kids still danced the night away,  
where only ghosts and highways meet,  
and of the tunes they used to play,  
there's not a trace, nor single tear.

It's autumn and I didn't know.  
I missed the show: where have I been?  
How differently it's all turned out:  
the little hopes and massive dreams  
that brought us here, are wearing down,  
and though at last the running's done,  
and we're so far from where we were,  
there's beauty in the winter sun.

(song)

(adapted from A Dream Reflects)

jim hogg

# Wall Of Water

I've heard the yelling in the night  
Futility instead of light  
Yet every winter's day I glimpse  
Old folks in coats with purposes  
Who've passed the church's open hatch  
Their chores and obligations clear  
Some kind of honour still intact  
Who builds the maze that steers them here?  
Who builds the maze that steers them here

So many mysteries in us  
And who will say they've lived enough  
Emotions surge and thrill has wings  
We are a trillion different things  
So many unmatched pieces thrown  
Together into nature's mix  
All washed up on some endless shore  
With hints of chaos threatening,  
With hints of chaos threatening

I'm waiting to disintegrate  
but stumble on in shrinking space  
Too old to take a woman's hand  
I ask "what kind of truth is that?"  
And for a moment dare to think  
While barely brighter than a crow  
That almost everything is myth  
except this little boat we row  
except this little boat we row

I kick a stone; it bounces on  
Of course it's real, of course it's not  
We walk towards the river's banks  
We're drawn towards its flowing mass  
And stand like watchers on the shore  
Communing for a moment with  
Some wordless truth or great unknown  
Or distant echoes in the wind  
Of lavish youth we barely sipped

Of crying over milk that's spilled  
and wall of water waiting still

(song)

jim hogg

# Eternal Summer

I wrote you into history  
With several others, I admit  
A serial of songs unsung  
Of moments shared when we were young  
Old photographs of glory gone  
As precious now as each new dawn  
But now, at last it's all too clear  
The final lap is edging near

And every spring, the same relief  
Though possibilities decrease  
Another summer's worth of life  
The cherishing of untilled time  
Our families' children want to do  
Their own thing now, as we did too  
When song and dance and dreams drove us  
Beyond the streets where we grew up

We had our chances through the years  
Adrift on hopes, assailed by fears  
We ended up a world apart  
But found a harbour for our hearts  
And so the sun begins to set  
On all the wondrous things we've known  
The summer rain, the night we met  
The blissful ache of flesh and bone.

(song)

jim hogg



# Song For Beth

We never danced in all those years,  
now I can't speak and you can't hear,  
but we both know the future's past,  
all howled away through sheets and masts,  
in harbours left and harbours missed:  
the sounds of life unravelling,  
the aftermath of tinder hearts,  
and all consuming question marks.  
What if we could have pulled it off,  
a masterpiece of blended flaws?

I see us yet in Holland Street,  
the tenements all blasted clean.  
It's early days, it's early March;  
a Corporation bus growls past,  
the seventies about to end,  
but time was not an issue then.  
The Griffin's not too far away.  
I clear my throat and try to say:  
&quot;I pulled the house down by myself&quot;...  
when youth was sunlight, youth was verve.

Naifs at large we never knew  
the future was so sly and dour.  
You had a life, a spread of things,  
a wealth of choice and openings,  
until I banished both of us  
to wasted time and distances,  
because I chose to not refuse  
the gentle sanctuary of you,  
to hold your placid gaze once more;  
yon calm blue sea and sandy shore.

As fishing boats trawled north and south,  
we lay alone on hallowed ground,  
regaled by whispers of the sea,  
and distant voices on the breeze  
that carried off beyond the bay,  
towards that not so distant age

beneath a sultry august sky;  
the bales of hay were seven high  
and you were only seventeen,  
with mysteries and rosy cheeks.

The field was lined with hawthorn trees  
that stretched away to English scenes,  
beyond the gate we should have closed,  
beyond this wading with these ghosts.

There's tragedy in everything.

I'm stricken by the sadness in  
the sunlight on my arms and hands,  
the watching world on riverbanks,  
the birdsong coming from the trees,  
and wish I could have been your dream.

(adapted from A Dream Reflects.  
Words and music 23 07 20)

jim hogg

# Time We Never

An unexpected face to face.  
Another time another place.  
Emotions primed, the evening warm;  
some kind of beauty holding on.

The shadows of a pub porch light  
on lavish youth and surging tide.  
Her very name, her breath, her sigh;  
I ran but never told her why.

And now this heart's in quarantine.  
I'm hunting hours in floods of years  
to stretch them out forever in,  
this busted cage I locked her in.

For now it's much too late to shed  
the spans of time we never spent.  
I said goodbye on some back road,  
as if I could just let her go.

But we're not tamed or framed within  
those moistened lips, that ancient ship;  
and all around us not a trace:  
just rusting leaves and shrinking space.

That village pub is still unlet.  
The car park overgrown, bereft.  
The old stream flows on just the same,  
past where the wheel once milled the grain.

(chorus)

You ask how much, how deep, how long?  
It was no ordinary storm,  
and life felt like it must explode,  
in waves that washed away the shore.  
But now it's just the wind and me,  
some aging faces and the sea.

jim hogg

# Ordinary Day

I'd like to think there must be more;  
the house we lived in long ago  
amongst the sycamores and stars,  
was stuffed with hints of futures past,  
and teeming surge of what's to come,  
beyond the tide that never turns.

And so I sprinted off towards  
a headlong hurtling at the rocks;  
the war that never seems to end,  
and barely feel a sense of self  
in this spent arc of what I am,  
in plans that dwarfed the plans I had.

It's all for love; it's all for blood.  
We all fall down; we all fall up;  
from nets we're in, to nets we've thrown:  
this tangled tapestry we've sown.  
It's scramble down towards the beach,  
or breathless climb up through the trees,

against the guns, across the bones  
and choice of ice cream on the slopes.  
Or myths that flood our lives like blood  
with trigger words that summon up  
these strangers baked inside us all,  
who'll kill for gods or demagogue.

What kind of truth joins all the dots?  
Hypocrisy, or ones and noughts,  
a tender kiss, a falling leaf,  
or rolling fields of blood and grief,  
when every ordinary day  
eight billion dreamers twitch away

their solitary silences,  
within their deeps and distances?

And in those shadows, many worlds;  
each moment ripe with stones to turn.  
It's ring a ring o' roses round  
the hanging tree, the lost and found.

(chorus)

Beginnings are such precious things  
between the gun and crazy sprints.  
although there's nothing new at all  
beyond the words, beyond the walls.  
It doesn't matter where I stand,  
the ghosts of every season past  
start dancing in the old town hall,  
though I can't be what I once was  
on restless waters, singing winds  
in sweetest moments on the brink.

08 07 2020

jim hogg

# Many Worlds And Andy Williams

Remember when I was too shy  
to kiss you underneath the sky,  
full half a hundred years ago,  
when Andy Williams had a show.  
Our skin was still devoid of grooves;  
our hair still black, and thick, and smooth.  
I'd loved you since I don't know when.  
It might have been when we were ten.

The house you lived in way back then  
has all been changed now, someone said;  
new windows, doors and coats of paint;  
so much is gone without a trace.  
But it's not hard to raise the past  
and see you walking down that path,  
to meet me on that quiet street,  
when we were young and flushed with dreams.

(chorus)

I carved our names into a tree  
for all the passing world to see.  
And of the few compelled to pause,  
some might have dwelled on love so  
fond;  
but that old tree's been gone for years,  
except from fading memories.

They say there's many worlds like this.  
In some of those I hope I kissed  
that girl I knew so long ago,  
who used to live across the road.

(chorus)

I carved our names into a tree  
for all the passing world to see.  
And for the few compelled to pause  
and wonder what the future brought,  
there's all these cherished memories  
of kids who once were you and me

(song)

jim hogg



# Last Lines

We're hand in hand and silence crowds.  
I feel compelled to blurt out loud:  
it's deep enough and running free;  
that teacher might have stepped in here,

through swirling flakes of falling snow,  
when she was eighty four years old.  
A favourite spot perhaps, at night,  
where bitter-sweetly stride by stride,

she walked away from everything;  
the fading past, the coming spring.  
Or maybe there was nothing left  
to hold her to the life she'd led.

I pictured how she must have looked  
in knee length coat and winter boots;  
her make-up done and hair brushed back,  
abyss of aging in her heart;

her face a mix of grit and fear  
lest passing strangers see or hear.  
And wondered too just how she felt  
when she last bent to wield her pen,

connecting all she was and willed  
in all the lives of all those kids,  
with only two or three more souls,  
or none at all for all she'd know,

in this great teeming web of need  
when she decided to cut free.  
And did she wonder too, that night  
when fighting that last lonely fight,

if Woolf was with her as she strode  
into the wintry Kelvin's flow;  
into that graceful tying off;  
her modest words protected from

the icy waters of the stream  
by humble shield of polythene.  
I read them through but couldn't say  
I knew enough of life to claim

I'd drained them of the dews and deeps  
her navy ink would never yield.  
We strive for pearls, we wring the stones,  
and dream beyond mere flesh and bones.

She must have wanted to be read  
was how I read it way back then;  
to leave some sense of who she was,  
a lasting trace when she was gone;

beyond her name and empty house,  
beyond the strength that snuffed her out.  
is that the kind of truth that bleeds  
her little hopes, their massive dreams?

I doubt there's any way to know.  
The Kelvin flows on as before;  
her noble cause boiled down to this:  
mere moments on the careless wind.

02 07 20

jim hogg

# This Life

A giant flake of falling snow;  
a symbol of the great unknown;  
a history of more than life;  
the mysteries of endless time.

We set off down the usual road  
towards the building of a home,  
with many loves inside our heads,  
but most of all, the love of self.

And bittersweetly stride by stride,  
we loosen and begin to slide,  
in this great teeming web of need.  
Some days it's just the wind and me.

So many choices compromised;  
a time of reckoning arrives;  
a trillion stars, her perfect mouth;  
a falling moon, the rising doubt.

The same old streetlight shadows creep  
to keep their secrets out of reach.  
And hopes, we must have had a few,  
but rushed a bunch of stupid moves.

A raven glides high overhead,  
above these lives that rose and fell.  
We dreamt of pearls, not breaking stones,  
when six of us once played alone.

(chorus)

But there's a certain sweetness in  
this living and this dreaming thing;  
the rule and beauty of the flesh;  
the hand we offered now and then;  
the moonlight on a frosty night;  
the love that slayed us for a while.

280520

jim hogg

# A Dream Reflects

'Take off your coat and come inside'

Way down below us on the shore  
amongst the stones and wash of waves  
there's something wrong but I don't know  
the overturning boat is mine  
we scramble down towards the sea

past people, places we once knew  
and signs that seem essential, yet  
as if they never were quite real  
convincingly, they're vanishing  
away from greedy hearts, I say

or broken worlds, as if I know  
but all around us not a trace  
of anything that we can hold  
of wisdom's voice or wilderness  
or legends of a bay like this

I'd heard about, before the sea  
receded silently away  
from shallows, and from aisles of time  
we're lifted, carried, soon we're there  
somewhere in nineteen sixty five

a broken down familiar place  
I didn't mean to bring you here  
beside the cottage in the woods  
to race against the worms and birds  
I'm sure I had another plan

a stack of reasons bigger than  
the little things that move this world  
but no, our apple tree was felled  
a chainsaw in some cretin's hands  
and out across the fields we sped

like streaks of terror underneath

remotely fired missiles from  
destroyers miles from any coast  
with Bobby Johnstone ducking low  
beneath the reaching sycamores

and Brandy barking as he runs  
from all that carnage by the lane  
on legs too short to be his own  
'the grass is wet' I shout out loud  
as if the rest have lost their minds

'that's good to know' they surely thought  
we skirt the farm, but freak the horse  
I snag the new electric fence  
it's live and belts my arms and legs  
the stumpy dog flies underneath

the scattered clouds are high and white  
a younger sun comes breaking through  
it feels like home; the breeze is light  
and calmer now, I start to see  
the pyloned power lines that sag

in rolling waves across the fields  
connecting us and felling birds  
the scribbles on the railway bridge  
that seem to speak of something lost  
another age, a world that's gone

that's out of sight but haunts our blood  
and just ahead I see again  
the hanging tree, the finch we killed  
our sheepish glances as we passed  
its yellow body on the grass

my eyes are under siege it seems  
as everything that was invades  
from memories or truths of scenes  
inherent in the world or us  
or maybe something in between

the data keeps on coming in

an endless interwoven stream  
a single Heifer gulping down  
the still and shadowed loch that waits  
as leisurely it swatted flies

while watching us with deadpan eyes  
a smoker in a Standard car  
enclosed within his own cocoon  
a universe inside his head  
a scuttling Coot, remains of war

through all the woods beneath the years  
the dance of wind and living things  
some mottled leaves, this whirling world  
and futures sprinting after us  
awash with options a la carte

a blur of crucial moments where  
I'd have the chance to choose again  
to take the whole damned thing apart  
abandon all I've done and known  
spill all the stills and running reels

and somehow leave myself intact  
as all my senses scream 'I'm here'  
and running from a question mark  
towards a bunch of stupid moves  
once shooting stars, that's what they were

when hope was proud, when I was blind  
not hankering for innocence  
or different kind of vantage point  
but stupid moves are not enough  
to stop my feet from stepping in

to stop my mouth from mouthing how  
if we could take another run  
at all those thrills, at all those odds  
if we still had those eyes that shone  
if we were there like we once were

in meadows rolling rich and green

beside the gently drifting stream  
the loping hares too fast to chase  
their leverets loose beneath the geese  
all clamouring across the sky

in low and lengthy northbound skeins  
once woven into all our lives  
if we could be tuned in again  
the harnessing all cast aside  
I'd tell you many secret things

by which I might have changed it all  
but wait, a blast, vast shadows scud  
to cymbal crash and lash of gale  
like roar of armies brawling blind  
derangement of the whole shebang

the light is gone: it's wild, it's pitch  
and I can't speak and you can't hear  
this is no ordinary blitz  
this sudden night is ash and ice  
the moon is black, the future's past

the plates of understanding clash  
and from the substance of the storm  
a massive apparition forms  
and stoops to seize the very Earth  
without a plan it seems, and fades

down to an old friend passing by  
whose face I can't quite recognise  
yet know I know her glance and gait  
she's speaking Spanish to herself  
and you and I and all the birds

are listening rapt as if we grasp  
a hidden beauty in her words  
she disappears; all seems serene  
'til hints of something grow and taunt  
a great confession seems to loom

I didn't mean to trouble you



you lay asleep a thousand years  
beneath convention's tender bolts  
you had a life, a wealth of grooves,  
no martyring, though maybe doubts

until I banished both of us  
to wasted time and distances  
to several cups of bitter wine  
horizons new where loners hide  
where everything falls into flux

and wishful thinking shapes the world  
between the notes of some old songs  
though now and then I get the urge  
to burn the threads that bind those rhymes  
to destiny's incompetence

but soon or late the past permits  
some kind of ragged comeback deal  
and I'll be there, it's guaranteed  
to make the same wrong moves again  
and one last push to clinch the dream

where thrill will rule with just a touch  
where every word means so much more  
and ask, what kind of truth was that  
I haven't got a clue but guess  
it's innocence, it's 'touching souls'

it's intimacy without taint  
it's how I wanted life to be  
I really should be more concerned  
for meaning might still be the key  
but what that means just isn't clear

and these surroundings hold no clue  
I'm stumbling on in shrinking space  
in humid heat beneath tall trees  
with bushes beating at my face  
it's pretty mushy underfoot

and so I lunge for solid ground

in hopes of moving swiftly on  
beyond the swamp that lies between  
mere selfish thrill and nobler things  
towards a place where I can rest

but up ahead, just out of view  
I hear the sounds of someone else  
who's struggling to escape, like me  
I want to shout but don't have time  
there's too much chaos closing in

and too much urgency and threat  
when suddenly he's in my head  
'collective noun for pies' he asks  
'complicity' I answer back  
from deep within without a thought

like holy words I can't refute  
I'm moved but know it's craziness  
or aberration, mental drift  
towards a dream within a dream  
and think 'I must get out of this

I've set a trap and I'm the catch'  
the lure's some kind of crazy truth  
or crossroads where I have to choose  
and never stop, to stay alive  
to take my place in this old dance

this constantly evolving now  
I used to think that life was mine  
and all I needed was the time  
to carve a path, to gain the heights  
a climbing kite in search of flight

except, my feet had other plans  
it's always 'crunch time' someone said  
and time is such a spilling thing  
for soon the years were buried deep  
beneath the grinding dross we churn

it never seemed so true before

the jungle's more than at my door  
it's in my head and in my hands  
I'm in a tale that's being told  
a simple player with a role

directed by some cunning force  
whose goals I seem obliged to own  
in all my dreams I've never thought  
to question why, and so it goes  
I chop my way through undergrowth

machete skilled though not surprised  
towards the tolling of a bell  
it leads me on towards a light  
that seems to shine on Kelvin Grove  
just through the gate from Eldon Street

there's not a single soul in sight  
nor sounds of traffic in the air  
my chopping comrade's slipped away  
or was he ever really there  
or merely echoes of myself

another me in dire straits  
embattled on some other path  
another destiny I'd skipped  
so closely paralleled with this  
his fate so little different from

this trial of wits I'm wrestling with  
and is he fighting to ignore  
this needle none of us can thread  
for though I'm here, ensnared by was  
and just a little torn by if

the moment always slides away  
as self awareness runs it down  
while trying to impress itself  
the small ambition of a bud  
beguiles, but maybe I'm as bound

as rooted as the simplest bloom

can even birds be truly free  
enough to slip the laws they need  
a question that defies all sense  
when maybe all we want is just

to run, to fly, to say goodbye  
to slough responsibility  
or set up home in memories  
or deep within a certain dream  
to find our way to taintless joy

or just forget ourselves at times  
to slip this human bondage whiles  
and be just what we really are  
for underneath it all may lie  
beyond the reach of thought and word

a fear, or urge, that balks at ends  
and yearns to break the grip of now  
or quest for joy that never quits  
within the walls of what we are  
a creature fuelling consciousness

a basking shark in Primark's worst  
that filters through the flowing world.  
and part of it is flowing here  
some specially selected scenes  
until I get them right perhaps

or find that vital thing I seek  
a frantic spaniel hunting wild  
amongst the hedgerows of a dream  
the stored detritus of a life  
it might be just a word or glimpse

a face across the railway track  
in Singer station years ago  
a turning missed with no way back  
or name I've blanked but can't forget  
that draws me like a precious stone

imagined in a childhood book

or maybe I'm just looking for  
a clue that lights the road to grace  
I kick a ball around, alone  
until I spot a comfy bench

below a row of shedding Elms  
that split the light from Kelvin Way  
I sit a while; I might have slept  
or dreamt of kickabouts up here  
amongst the snow with flatmates gone

it feels as if it's later on  
a new beginning, something's lost  
the threads of life have sprung a tear  
but I'm exactly who I was  
beneath this rift I'm rolling on

my jacket's torn, the ball is gone  
my head keeps turning to the left  
yes, there it is: that old tin can  
Napoleon might have had a cat  
and Feynman might have had a cut

the breeze is pushing rusted leaves  
discarded dreams of rusting lives  
quite noisily along the track  
it's autumn and I didn't know  
I missed the show: where have I been

how differently it all turned out  
it's looking like I'll never see  
'the pyramids along the Nile'  
'the lights of Cincinnati' town  
or Congo seen by Mista Kurtz

now maybe I have feeds to read  
addictions needing fix or scorn  
but wonder where you are instead  
and if I should have worn a hat  
or learned to swing a baseball bat

until we meet by sandstone walls

reflected in some window pane  
of tenements I'm sure still stood  
where colder glass and marble squat  
and I can't puzzle real from false

there's Alan Bradley from 'the street'  
I thought he'd died below a tram  
and Claude Monet across the hall  
yon priceless Dali holding court  
by Woodlands Road, by river's edge

the striking bells of Destiny  
and random things all spilling in  
until we hit the cobblestones  
we're right behind the Doublet now  
and clarity of sorts descends

the scenery falls into place  
as if it's all been newly built  
with scribbling on the wall ahead  
of anagrams of 'see' and 'din'  
in rows across and up and down

instructions for a treasure hunt  
or key to fixing all I've wrecked  
I start to laugh but can't say why  
(I'm keeping secrets from myself)  
and realise I hadn't heard

you telling me that dreams are weird  
that time has no dominion here  
according to some dream you've dreamt  
although I'm quite surprised to learn  
my dream would put such words in yours

but look around at all the bricks  
like pages in so many books  
so eloquent but left unread  
and think of secrets men have kept  
the sentimental songs we've sung

and all the things that humans build

for reasons other than their own  
the list is shorter than I'd hoped  
there's Kelvinbridge and Underground  
a gun-shop higher, out of sight

with shelves and shelves of cartridges  
so deftly made, so intricate  
for killers yet to see the light  
a light that's always under siege  
for still we kill by appetite

our species speaks to us in tongues  
professes heart to all the world  
but acts as if it's paramount  
and all our crimes are justified  
and somehow never really grasped

the honey bee, the humble hive  
and aliens who sneaked a peek  
would surely batter on to Mars  
in search of better odds than these  
the will to live outweighs the dream

the need to breed shapes everything  
and sermonising such as this  
is just a torrent of the mind  
a spiel below the line of sleep  
a flushing through that serves to damp

the urge to give the best we can  
though all that's good is under threat  
proud keyboard gunners all, we spray  
our indignation at the waves  
that refuge of the impotent

yet every winter's day I see  
old folks in coats with purposes  
who've passed the church's open door  
their chores and obligations clear  
some kind of honour still intact

though rarely rationalised as such

who builds the maze that brings them here  
or me to them, I have to ask  
from scaffolding I cannot feel  
like gravity, that holds us through

the blind but winning crudities  
of history that drives itself  
or maybe mysteries in us  
we are a trillion different things  
all washed up on some endless shore

so many unmatched pieces thrown  
together into nature's mix  
and inside every living thing  
a little spark, a little dot  
the self I am, that looks within

and watches how I eye myself  
I'm waiting to disintegrate  
to crumble into usefulness  
a sense of mission hanging on  
a feeble thing that's laced with guilt

then once again I dare to think  
while barely brighter than a crow  
that every single thing is real  
that maybe you are really here  
and this is not a fucking dream

of course it is, of course it's not  
it doesn't matter to a dog  
I kick a stone; it bounces on  
we walk towards the river's bank  
Adidas feet of blurring blue

we're drawn towards its flowing mass  
and stand like watchers round a blaze  
our minds on automatic mode  
communing for a moment with  
some wordless truth or great unknown

emotion spun from everything



that wonder's sucked inside our heads  
we're hand in hand, adrift until  
the stillness and the silence crowd  
I feel compelled to blurt out loud:

'that teacher might have stepped in here'  
when she was eighty four years old  
a favourite spot perhaps, at night  
where bitter-sweetly stride by stride  
she walked away from everything

or maybe there was nothing left  
to hold her to the life she'd lived  
I picture how she might have looked  
her make-up done and hair brushed back  
her fifties coat and winter boots

abyss of aging in her heart  
her face a mix of grit and fear  
lest passing strangers overhear  
and from compassion intervene  
and wonder too just how she felt

when she last bent to wield her pen  
connecting all she was and willed  
in all the lives of all those kids  
with only two or three more souls  
or none at all for all she'd know

in this great teeming web of need  
when she decided to cut free  
still wondering, but desolate  
and did she wonder too, that night  
when fighting that last fight alone

if Woolf was with her as she strode  
into the wintry Kelvin's flood  
into that graceful tying off  
her modest words protected from  
the waters of her icy end

by humble shield of polythene

I read them through but couldn't claim  
I'd drained them of the deepest truths  
her navy ink would never yield  
inscrutable as Dali's hand

we strive for pearls, we wring the stones  
'til by and by we jig alone  
she must have wanted to be read  
was how I understood it then  
to leave some sense of who she was

some kind of trace when she was gone  
beyond her name and empty house  
beyond the strength that snuffed her out  
is that the kind of truth that bleeds  
their massive dreams, her little hopes

I doubt there's any way to know  
the Kelvin flows on just the same  
her noble cause a grain of sand  
mere moments on the careless wind  
while here and now the traction's gone

the cobblestones tilt steep and fast  
I'm loose and slipping out of sight  
to scraps of songs I used to sing  
a distant yelling in the night  
and thoughts that skirt oblivion

in mood and fact yet shorn of will  
for once I feel I'm coping with  
this gentle plunge or swallowing  
but halt and settle suddenly  
on ledges of a crumbling cliff

I'm stealing eggs from herring gulls  
my Liptons bag is quarter full  
a rash of stars on all their shells  
they're gorgeous and they're glistening  
they're scuttled gods, galactic lords

I'm so enthralled I'm wavering

the cliff's a ship and starts to pitch  
in rising wind and flying spray  
I'm blinded and we're teetering  
I lose my grip; the gods all fall

I'm falling too, I'm falling through  
the sea's at least a mile below  
and, gratefully, I'm falling slow  
I've never dreamt my death before  
and handily I land within

a darkened room I seem to know  
but there's a catch; there often is  
the handle's missing from the door  
and chinks of light that slide and hide  
in coded patterns roam the walls

as shadows twist and tumble wild  
and I can't tell what's up or down  
there is no roof, there is no floor  
no solid ground, no north, no south  
I'm panic struck and lost in space

an astronaut without the cool  
a naked body dressed in guilt  
my inhibitions breaking wings  
yet as before, conveniently  
and not without much real relief

in sudden sunlight in some street  
I've dreamt my way to better times  
I land quite smoothly on my feet  
and find your arm, your sporty car  
your nonchalance, compliant airs

and photographs I'll bin too soon  
of Highland Games and you half clad  
the brave stravaiging that was ours  
a breathless climb up through the trees  
against the guns, across the bones

a choice of ice cream on the slopes

a cold and winding river's course  
a hawk ascending, castle walls  
I see it all from Ochil hills  
and must have told you once or twice

while running down another life  
of shiny boots and pounding miles  
semantic games and fruit and nut  
of that strange pattern breaking spell  
that taught: surprises never end

although there's nothing new in life  
that's not the way it looked back then  
the sun stayed out all through the night  
with broom in bloom and bees in flight  
and laws, all boiling in my head

a noisy lover at weekends  
when passion was a wilder thing  
which gives me cause to glance away  
embarrassed by the memory  
of all that rampant selfishness

those pools of feeling bubble on  
some blisters don't know how to heal  
we walked alone along a lane  
that girl with auburn hair and I  
through sprints of rabbits under trees

the sombre sounds of Jackson Browne  
behind us towers, flags and months  
and threats of Ochil's heights again  
or athlete's foot, a gift for life  
a javelin flashing in the sun

the ceremonies, Abba songs  
some vain attempts at glory gained  
the loss of Faith was pre-ordained  
(the charge was high, the die long cast)  
so like the loss of clouds and rain

and scorching of the countryside

in helicoptered photographs  
so many histories in play  
and possibilities undone  
once particles commingling wild

we held formation for a while  
as row on row we bashed the square  
and fled to little clots at night  
defences broken by fatigue  
while overhead, insistent blue

the portakabins sauna hot  
the lecturers all drenched in sweat  
until September proved itself  
and all of us have spoken up  
some from the heart, some from the page

still cinematic in my head  
those swaggerings of innocence  
before the scattering to come  
and constant wearing of ideals  
the rocks of Damocles hold fast

but we at last are off the leash  
I'm maybe sad, I'm maybe not  
I'm twenty one and full of me  
a brave soliloquist alone  
a questing thing with reams of time

I buy up all the biggest books  
I cram my head and dull my mind  
and write a letter to my love  
(a tilt at yon exquisite thing  
that blooms so fetchingly then flits

beyond the hand, beyond the heart  
- as if my failings played no part)  
so superficial I'm ashamed  
but all in vain; I chose too late  
to right the wrong to both of us

when impetus was everything

and she was fully who she was  
while I had hardly made a start  
in some respects I never did  
adrenaline for therapy

was easier than opening  
the shifting shades of who I'm not  
while in the world that others see  
she wasn't there and never was  
for all the difference knowledge makes

we judge according to our tastes  
and live so much behind our eyes  
and so, no Solomon, I thought  
I'm blind man's buff and bumbling for  
the watching world with darts in hand

and when the stress became too much  
the easy sanctuary of you  
yon calm blue sea and sandy shore  
but didn't see it then of course  
a bunch of lives I thought were mine

were not enough and so I lunged  
at your reflection for a while  
with mine, and didn't get it right  
the chrysalis of us deceived  
by big ideas, righteousness

naifs at large we never knew  
how sly and dour the future was  
or games our inner blueprints play  
or if we could have pulled it off  
with our peculiar mess of flaws

but at this moment all is still  
the past and future meet and merge  
the instant flows but feels too full  
I sense an insight coming on  
momentous words are on my tongue

when whoosh, you're off: you arc away

a sudden flight, a breach in time  
cascading images unleashed  
of other lives we never lived  
and conversations never voiced

a million marks we never made  
amid the mounds of nothingness  
no explanation, no goodbye  
or was that me, it isn't clear  
though sometime later, sometime now

your back against the midnight wall  
your nakedness revealing all  
the inner landscape I'd disguised  
to hordes of gawping passersby  
you stride my way, and side by side

we step into the stream that winds  
down where it always used to flow  
and drift until we find ourselves  
within that quiet time we spent  
below the cottage in the bay

detached from conscience for a day  
we turned our backs and dredged the past  
as fishing boats trawled north and south  
we lay alone on hallowed ground  
regaled by whispers of the sea

and distant voices on the breeze  
those comforts carry us until  
a tide within me rises up  
like doubt, or is it questioning  
nomadic urge or yen for risk

by tidal point or some high cliff  
where I'll be thankful, I expect  
a little rueful too I'm sure  
for there's a shadow on your face  
as if the past's too strange at last

or every memory has fled

what kind of truth I ask again  
as if a dream would know itself  
or tolerate this wondering  
or if I'm being dreamed or not

or know about the world beyond  
or bridge between, or bonds that break  
to whom the sinking boat belongs  
or solitary tree betrayed  
or slip, beyond redemption's reach

but penance has its upsides too  
the costs that spiral on but teach  
some masochistic empathy  
from which may sprout a purer strain  
I'm looking for a better view

for every man? I don't presume  
I've seen the struggling of the poor  
and been the best intentions too  
with better heroes, bigger dreams  
all broken down on bitter rocks

between the meek and wild there's room  
for standing tall and reaching out  
autonomy's a rogue-ish card  
farouche as wind and wave below  
this slippy heugh where I can't find

your letters and the keep-sakes which  
spun out of sight on some strange breeze  
as sweet as mustard gas I guessed  
escaped from Beaufort's lonely deeps  
I read them years and years ago

upon the very hill we're on  
above the tide, below the light  
where everything comes into sight  
a red and yellow patterned sky  
a single gannet circling high

my brother with me at the creels



a watchful fox, two startled deer  
her attitude, her rolled up sleeves  
the downhill chute of passing years  
the uphill struggle to connect

the granular, the infinite  
a white light dream, a hasty snack  
her perfect mouth, a trillion stars  
the sensual, the harmony  
that might have been attainable

the self awareness in her lips  
a sunlit wave that once washed up  
this vain peninsula of life  
each fond remembering of her  
so many petty dreams of men

their haunting hints and flitting shapes  
on restless waters, singing winds  
and all their little wars and spills  
the monstrous sea awaits it all  
the urgent call of risen blood

the stoic stones upon the hill  
their witnessing of everything  
a raven glides high overhead  
a graceful swallowing of light  
devoid of gods and cluttering

beneath the rush and clash of clouds  
and spinning things that spin within  
still larger spinning things within  
the endless sprawl of blackest wings  
there are no walls, and no first cause

no start nor end, except of us  
my intuition seems too sure  
I think I'm large, I think I'm small  
it doesn't matter where I stand  
I'm not about to fall for that

I've felt that insight stuff before

too near the brink of nodding off  
all crystalline and flowing free  
a waterfall of wondrousness  
that seems irrevocably real

becoming cardboard with the dawn  
a puzzling wonder in itself  
and puzzling too that I should feel  
that at this moment nothing's right  
like life's a myth and time's a dream

my brow is tense, I raise my eyes  
and realise I'm much too calm  
I see the light and rush straight up  
to surface through the breaking ice  
to background strains of Billy Joel

I recognise this dreaming scene  
I'm tracing out on vast white sheets  
some enigmatic diagrams  
I must have thought were clever plans  
like meteors they come and go

we'll build the future now I thought  
as if free will is not a myth  
as if it's not already built  
by everything we'd ever done  
and waiting for us patiently

the destiny of all our dreams  
a ruin here, a ruin there  
was how it went, and how it will,  
you live enough, you try enough  
you get to break a lot of stuff

but that's no help in tracking down  
the plan behind the plans I had  
I pull at threads of veils of veils  
until I almost understand  
the kind of truth I'm lost without

can not be understood enough

I'm busy making sense of that  
when uncle Paddy waltzes up  
he's just flown in from Donegal  
although I'm sure that's not his home

he's here to sing his latest song  
it's all about an afternoon  
I never heard him talk about  
when uncle Rab went through the ice  
and vanished in the waiting loch

until they pulled him out in time  
beneath a sky of fear and salt  
but Paddy always shunned the light  
and suddenly refused to sing  
it's late and wild and Paddy's off

his forehead angled to the sheets  
of lightning and the rolling road  
towards the cottage by the bridge  
I stood and watched them walk away  
remembering the shapes and sparks

reflected in the well one night  
their faces blank and rippling slow  
what was it that we really saw  
beneath those tiny silver lights  
how real the thing we gazed upon

I didn't know a single star  
in all the blackness, not a one  
but oh, their light was in me then  
and dark, how dark the darkness was  
the depth that I was springing in

of that wild symphony of stars  
the terror somewhere at my back  
a little house that's disappeared  
beneath their ruined memories  
my mother's ashes, trees and weeds

the meagre stories that remain

my mumblings to these porous walls  
I am my mouth and little else  
and Paddy, like a giant, walks  
and leaps and sings along the track

with Toy and all their dancing ghosts  
a host of shadows holding on  
to all the starlight fading here  
on stooks and sheaves I saw them stack  
on laughter under august skies

before they swapped the fifties for  
a less convincing innocence  
the broken kind that breaks too well  
with oxygen in short supply  
below the ladder on the ice

they rose and shook it off like dogs  
in harder times, but soon enough  
I saw the tightness in the men  
who struggled night and day to thrive  
and in the poor who truly cared

who leapt and sang to save themselves  
from all their hopes, the bitter stones  
that crowd the edge of dreams that drift  
and in the houses all the wives  
who slaved their narrow lives away

but not in nineteen fifty eight  
the past was at its widest then  
my mother's eyes still full of stars  
the glist'ning night a flawless kiss  
above the ruins in the wings

above the faces in the well  
I catch your placid gaze once more  
your ray-bans resting on your hair  
and for a moment wonder why  
a certain lounge is still unlet

the car park overgrown, bereft

where I surrendered to regret  
without a clue of what that meant  
I locked the cage, turned swiftly round  
and made a clean-ish getaway

or so I told myself at length  
another history adrift  
between her lips and perfect thighs  
that short red dress I should forget  
I never left but never knew

so firmly was she locked within  
because I lacked the strength to dare  
when somehow love was not enough  
clichés, it seems, are hard to shake  
these hearts of ours conceal so much

especially from ourselves of course  
it's strange that this should happen now  
how could I not have realised  
I've hardly thought of her for years  
and fight the urge to never stop

but yield to aching images  
a tumbling avalanche of thought  
the chimney smoke that curved away  
a snowball's parabolic flight  
the shadows of a pub's porch light

on lavish youth we barely sipped  
the undulations of her love  
its urgent, sheer efficiency  
the inexpressible on rails  
the strains of Bonnie Galloway

and her sweet words in Eldon Street  
an unexpected face to face  
the Tigh Na Mara, early June  
a single life, a single chance  
the compass needle pointing true

the evening warm, the shadows long

the dazzling scent of bluebell blooms  
amongst the trees just up the hill  
a holy moment forms in time  
some kind of beauty reaches through

and binds us sweetly to this life  
so close, electrified, dissolved  
it wasn't easy to 'forget'  
a vast release of years impends  
it's harvest time and I'm the crop

I'm hanging by the same old thread  
both here and then, it's all the same  
although I'm not alone enough  
nor old enough at any age  
to face the fact we'll never speak

or touch again within that realm  
except by conjuring in dreams  
though this is not her dream at all  
at least it didn't seem to be  
yet all of it's a jive round her

just as it was before that spring  
who shapes the show then, if not me  
how secret must our secrets be  
there is no balance in this dream  
my heart has been in quarantine

the anchor drags, the pegs burst free  
I'm pleading with her not to leave  
not fade away from memory  
I'm hunting hours in floods of years  
to stretch them out forever in

some uncorrupted space I've saved  
for some day's perfect song in which  
I won't run out, no, not this time  
and she emerges real as life  
from all these details in my head

but still that doesn't seem enough

the cage I trapped it all within  
looks set to break, I blunder through  
before a single word takes shape  
and silently I'm launched again

I'm in the glen and hungering  
in ways that only she could whet  
it's Tuesday night and I'm alone  
and loaded down with heavy posts  
I'm rushed, it's hot, and I can't make

the date, the place, 'I won't be long'  
I've hills to climb and gates to crash  
a father's disapproval too  
he thinks I'm playing fast and loose  
I never kept him in the loop

I'm in a car that's broken down  
by passion I can not control  
I maybe should have mentioned that  
and more besides she's never heard  
about how much, how deep, how long

it was no ordinary storm  
she had the right to know the truth  
and part of it amounts to this  
(though every thought is suspect now)  
that leaving her was my attempt

to slay the world that spawned my shame  
her loss was perfect punishment  
a victory against myself  
against a love that terrified  
and though at last the running's done

and we're so far from where we were  
this desperation's on the flood  
a time of reckoning's arrived  
it seems too late to flee this dream  
that feels as if it must explode

when suddenly I'm safe again

your gaze again, where this life led  
the line of least resistance round  
a mocking truth I didn't see  
it's you and I on Holland Street

a student and a lumberjack  
(I wonder where that jacket went)  
a cold and smurry afternoon  
it's early days, it's early March  
the tenements still grimy black

a Corporation bus growls past  
the seventies about to end  
but time was not an issue then  
the Griffin's not too far away  
and not too soon I know the words

concerning blame I can't quite own  
omissions mainly I suspect  
some right I guess, but mostly wrongs  
so many worlds that never were  
yet silence overwhelms my tongue

as much from habit as from dread  
I clear my throat and try to say  
'I pulled the house down by myself'  
which wasn't what I had in mind  
exactly as you walk away

you walk away, you slip away  
beyond the door I should have closed  
beyond the words, beyond the walls  
towards a not so distant age  
exquisitely you're standing where

beneath a sultry August sky  
the bales of hay were seven high  
and you were only seventeen  
with mysteries and rosy cheeks  
and steered the tractor standing up

towards the valley in our thoughts



the gorse and broom were dry as dust  
the field was lined with hawthorn trees  
that stretched away to English scenes  
by way of trains and swimming pools

a quick hello to Livingstone  
The Moody Blues and Wishbone Ash  
and subtle things we knew too well  
with roots in us and circumstance  
their expectations and their hopes

yes, you and I were bound to fall  
between the islands and the hill  
the railway tracks and history  
and whistling through those sheets and masts  
a signalling of loneliness

in harbours left and harbours missed  
some days it's just the wind and me  
and time of course, a place to think  
to ponder on the mystery  
the flight recorder of the heart

to make one jigsaw out of two  
is tough for sure, but all the same  
I wish I could have been your dream  
I gathered in but never gave  
enough to break the dam of fear

that kept my questions to myself  
(I'm sure those teachers must have known  
so far away, across the void  
yet deep within my anxious head)  
so many choices compromised

and distances that only grew  
because I couldn't raise my hand  
because I couldn't kiss the girl  
and so the wanting overwhelmed  
and damage spilled beyond this life

beginnings are such precious things

come with me and I'll take us back  
(to justify my selfish self)  
exactly where I can't be sure  
a threadbare magic carpet base

it's nineteen sixty one or two  
I'm kneeling down by Africa  
with all the awe of innocence  
the Commonwealth was something then  
those spreads of red where blood was shed

when atlases were vivid things  
that held the worlds that used to be  
my father's father on his knees  
he took me down the tracks and streams  
across the seas and into dreams

and glory drenched in older wrongs  
while here at home, well, life went on  
as kids still danced the nights away  
where only ghosts and highways meet  
and of the songs they used to play

that spoke of love round Damaglaur  
there's not a trace nor single tear  
not even echoes, save for here  
I used to crave those seeming times  
that simple child a fugitive

though trapped for sure within this life  
a sucker for compelling lies  
and rhythms of an older song  
I'm telling me, I'm telling you  
the plan I drew in retrospect

needs only minor changes now  
to win the willing hand I spurned  
to save the tree, to right the boat  
to leave you high and dry, unmet  
to catch yon lofty Raven's eye

that sees no more than keeps it safe

from Curry Point to Creechan's shore  
and right on cue we're in the bay  
yon neat lagoon between the isles  
amongst the gravel and the rocks

awash with scents of wrack and salt  
and gruelling hardship fondly missed  
I'm wading in the water with  
the ghosts of many winters past  
the glassy ocean fully ebbd

when without warning I'm alone  
with just a sense of severing  
and all my fraught imaginings  
I didn't mean to trouble you  
the misted headland stands too close

a stunt the Mull had pulled before  
the rocks rear up like aliens  
reflections crowd around my feet  
as if afraid of vanishing  
like briefest lives that won't let go

all jostling for a saving heart  
or secrets needing to be told  
apologies I should have made  
there's so much sorrow in the air  
the sky has never been so close

so laden down with loneliness  
I look straight down and see myself  
my face looks forty years too young  
I'm scrambled by the urge to swap  
to delve beneath the rippling blue

and find myself unspoiled and free  
imagining I've made the deal  
I glance back up and grok my fate  
deserved or luck, I'm not quite sure  
impatiently the rising tide

starts rushing round the rocky mounds

the south-most island has no name  
and so I name it after you  
except it's hers, instead of yours  
I yell it loudly just in time

as if that drowning isle could hear  
and take it under, out of reach  
and felt myself cut almost loose  
enough for reconnecting to  
whatever might have been my world

but out of sync and fluster struck  
the sea is rising much too fast  
the rocks and ridges disappear  
it rises 'til I realise  
the past is here, the future too

all woven through this flowing now  
and this is where I must belong  
within an ordinary life  
a fisherman just like before  
and not of men with book in hand

but rebel eager for the leash  
again, or self forged chain that drags  
a fading jumbled mass that's held  
by urge to salvage something from  
a thousand tomes and endless words

a host of insights come to naught  
though all that's left of all of it  
perhaps the peak of pointlessness  
is maybe just a telling glimpse  
beyond the lives we try to live

enmeshed within vast metaphors  
extruded by that vague domain  
that stalks the world within, without  
the heads of homo sapiens  
since long before the first words came

imaginings or flaw that flows

from faulty workmanship perhaps  
though mostly we are unaware  
to what extent we cannot say  
and that's no loss and no offence

for tigers too are not distressed  
by absence of mere abstract thought  
it seems that life and living gain  
few boons from efforts to explain  
or might it be that we've misread

the ranking of the rational  
in lives that thrive submerged in myth  
and symbolism that connects  
the real, the dream, the threat, the thrill  
the precious birth, the dreadful kill

the fleet of images that show  
much more than words can ever tell  
for when would dreaming ever burn  
for anything but hopes and fears  
however dressed in this charade

where prejudices rule the roost  
and shape our features and our works  
though all that seethes within these hearts  
and seems impossible to say  
was maybe never meant for words

some truths will always go astray  
our journey seems so very vast  
and yet we've hardly moved at all  
the leopard must protect its young  
with not a thought for right or wrong

for danger doesn't stop the clock  
the moral feels like afterthought  
that tags along with all that was  
with language just a cushioning  
that serves to hide us from ourselves

is naming just a distancing

was all my reasoning just froth  
a bunch of words that stood for fear  
that night I ran in Creachmore lane  
from primal, cataclysmic love

when we were ripe in swarming June  
what kind of truth joins all those dots  
fells all the walls we're locked within  
the heart of dreaming, maybe, or  
a more explosive route to grace

eight billion dreamers twitch away  
their solitary silences  
until the moment summons up  
the thund'rous beat of booted youth  
machined in massive ranks of will

from strangers baked inside us all  
to serve the state or demagogue  
or gently, as the scene demands  
the urgings of a tinder heart  
it's all for love; it's all for blood

we all fall down; we all fall up  
it's ring a ring o' roses round  
the nets we're in, the nets we throw  
the old swing tree, the Old Mill lounge  
the question might be wrong of course

and every answer mere mirage  
I barely feel a sense of self  
in this great swell of wondering  
this tiny arc of what I am  
and does it really matter now

the stars all seem oblivious  
Sinatra, Sartre spring to mind  
their offerings devoid of light  
and not exactly nourishing  
though good enough for passing time

but maybe that's all this life is

a hot and sweaty passing through  
spent chipping at the ice of self  
or shoring up the flooding walls  
or recollecting moments fled

while watching the shapes of the world  
resolving themselves into sense  
through misted, out of focus spex  
and so we laugh as if we know  
exactly what is happening

which might suffice when hunger strikes  
but takes us where when hunger fades  
if noble purpose has no place  
a closing Act where types like Trump  
assert their truths and try to steal

whatever kind of show we'll wear  
or billionaires come swooping in  
to save as few as greed permits  
yes, here we are, a step away  
from intellectual disgrace

as elbows, teeth and graft and gain  
win almost every argument  
while all too few still deign to sift  
the ashes of our fragile dream  
for that one telling principle

and though I care about that now  
I think I must have tripped and fell  
I'm reading scripture upside down  
while time is passing right to left  
and fleetingly my room became

a very unfamiliar place  
a metaphor for my mistakes  
not just the errors that I am  
the lines of wrong web all of us  
or maybe I've just missed the point

and scramble for another tack

to bring these flailing threads to heel  
a line I'm sure I've used before  
'sensation's where they all converge'  
when my beginnings break the spell

the cast that launched this thing arrive  
united in this breaking down  
to help me choose a better gear  
for even introverts forget  
from time to time, to watch the road

there's beauty there and duty too  
they march right up to make their case  
as if they're overfilled with fate  
and seize my eyes to make me see  
a father's and a mother's love

that perseveres where both still live  
to make me search amongst the stones  
for scraps of silver, scraps of gold  
an open heart, a kindness done,  
the work we do, a clearing sky

and all the little things that count  
and why they truly matter now  
for now's the moment of my life  
this everlasting now of mine  
this surfing on the only wave

where action gets it on with time  
not time again, it isn't 'real'  
it's just a little trick we play  
to organise the universe  
which really is a massive mess

composed of actions in a queue  
the stuff that's done or still to do  
the laws of causes and effects  
are very hard to disregard  
the past is future gone for good

yet, where the old one was renewed



or, from a cooking point of view  
it's stew that keeps on making stew  
tomorrows teeming with the past  
though some of course gets filtered through

that unlit place between our ears  
which stirs in our peculiar stuff  
behind the veil of arrogance  
I realise I'm rabbiting  
a needle planted in a groove

a mob of echoes passing through  
when all at once I'm struck alert  
within some other zone or state  
that isn't now or even close  
but all of it's as real as real

some orator is clacking on  
'this strumpet culture reeks of blood  
its measly gifts to fairness, crushed'  
is all he says the whole day long  
I'm minded to applaud his work

to sheath this thing and pledge my sword  
or was it just another meme  
or echo of some deeper dream  
abandoned far too easily  
those transformations we foresaw

were only tiny waves on sand  
just nibbling at some dark expanse  
and even nibbling's much too grand  
but pressing matters press right in  
my hair's a mess and growing thin

the fence we built is falling down  
and thirsty cows are breaking out  
yet all my thoughts are on a fox  
I shot across a thick green field  
when it was young and I was young

it caught my eye before it fell

and held its gaze there fifty years  
I didn't think of fairness then  
I never fought and never bled  
and every way I turn I'm caught

in all I've said and never said  
in all I've done and all I've not  
what kind of truth is lost in this  
the kind that costs, the kind that calls  
that's maybe more than we can stand

or lurks amongst this slumbering  
these sounds of someone murmuring  
and instantly I scramble up  
distracted by an unformed thought  
forgotten word or distant knock

and sense of something left undone  
there's no-one there, but now I know  
I'm galvanised and have to go  
the lobster pots have gone unhailed  
for months it seems, or all my life

and so I launch without a thought  
an unknown boat and fail to check  
the fuel, the bait, the tide, the time  
it's windless with a rolling swell  
the sea itself's a misty mess

the creels are miles from where they were  
and chunks of land are closing in  
like mocked up versions of the cliffs  
I'm struggling to do simple things  
the gaps between my thoughts extend

I'm fogged and fighting for control  
but feel myself unravelling  
I'm overboard beneath the sea  
my preconceptions all astray  
unmoored, unsure, with virgin eyes

I'm in another universe

of places that we've never been  
and time we surely never spent  
a set of keys that can't be mine  
a stranger's pad, a stranger's pen

but not a stranger's history  
for somehow there are memories  
that feel too real for wish or dream  
as if the dream has built a past  
to lend it credibility

against the crumbling of the real  
or was it false, from end to end  
all through a life that never was  
the architect so devious  
I feared I might be someone else

a total stranger to myself  
a simulation of a trial  
a nameless creature fading out  
or Yashin on the halfway line  
when all the game has passed me by

messiah sent to save the Earth  
with just a letter and a smile  
or idiot besieged by thorns  
in that old wood around the Cults  
to keep some weird guy's kids amused

by shrieks of pain and clumsiness  
and far too many streaks of blood  
or actor on a haunted stage  
pursued by truths that can't be faced  
but neither can they be erased

the future cannot be undone  
she's nowhere to be seen in mine  
except as sung by Patsy Cline  
down endless trails between the lines  
another place, another time

unseparated in the flow

though in this plangent place that's now  
I'm on a peak within a pit  
and standing still, but feel as if  
I'm searching for the kind of life

I aimed to live but didn't quite  
but didn't quite? A miss, a mile  
a step away, a step towards  
a giant flake of falling snow  
a splodge of mud, a broken chord

that haunts the nations of a mind  
I am my own vain multitude  
a feather on a private storm  
that yearns to edge the side of good  
but didn't quite? No, that's quite right

it's in the ledger on the shelf  
it's in that narrow love we shared  
though hidden then on Holland Street  
no compromise that's free of wrong  
can square the balance, clear the debt

there's tragedy in everything  
I'm stricken by the sadness in  
the sunlight on my arms and face  
the birdsong drifting from the trees  
more deeply than I've ever been

I see you then in Spanish heat  
too distant in your husband's snap,  
you're tanned as always, wearing shorts  
a siren song; I now know why  
we never danced in all those years

like lovers in a movie where  
the ending never was in doubt  
as vividly you start to fade  
a rainbow bound for monochrome  
amongst the names I've scribbled down

on windows, walls, and long felled trees

to free myself I used to think  
but doubt that trick'll work this time  
aloud, I read them all bar one  
to stem the rising tide of sight

that's focusing on her's alone  
her very name, her breath, her sigh  
escape into the atmosphere  
and capture every molecule  
of nearliness and cowardice

of wildest night and wilderness  
where she might read and might be read  
atonement's not an option now  
and there's no choice, no easy out  
I'm on a cliff edge looking down

I should be scared to slacken, shrug  
but I don't care, and this time: her  
I'm lifted by the lift of her  
and cries of Sugar Baby Love  
a gravel track, a sixties car

a winding through, a turning back  
a wooden shack, an empty floor  
and just for once I'm brave enough  
it's really her and when we touch  
it feels so natural and pure

I'm dancing with her at the Port  
we're dancing always, everywhere  
although we never smooched before  
and yet it seems too hard to shed  
this sense of leaving without end

this fevered longing I've unlaired  
so much of me that went unshared  
the longest slowest burning fuse  
the eager words that fell so short  
the falling walls, the roof that's gone

this overturning life of mine

until I can remember why  
I didn't mean to trouble you  
my dog's been busy on your lawn  
both mining for and hiding words

a geographical misstep  
a withering of promises  
some overdue apologies  
but I don't own a labrador  
and can't believe you live next door

I'll check my files though, just in case  
and no, there's only reams of guilt  
in teeline shapes, and pages torn  
a gale of quotes, some scribbled notes  
and crossword puzzle pointing out

I'm playing scrabble by myself  
inside a mind that's not my own  
and can't afford to win or ask  
just who am I beneath my name  
my only weapons are the rules

restrictive form the guiding force  
and if I'm broken out of this  
I'll miss a life I never knew  
but that's exactly how it was  
and not the view I had in mind

the wildness of the breaking wave  
not chained, not tamed, not framed within  
this dance that's me, this dance that's her  
in some vast snoring parallel  
not anymore, not anymore

'that's what I'll write', I shout out loud  
'and hurl it back, if time allows'  
and maybe in some other past  
the finch won't fall until it must  
and I won't be afraid to ask

to raise my hand a thousand times

to master ways, to enter worlds  
to shape an ending of my own  
to love her as I should have done  
or never leave this dance I'm in

where I can kiss the girl at will  
until this dream runs out of steam  
though this would be the queerest dream  
if I had any choice at all  
where mind outruns the stubborn truth

of all that wears our wishing out  
and all that's left of dreaming is  
addiction to catharsis now  
or just a clearing of the decks  
or some exotic other-world

where real's as real as what we feel  
the monologue goes on and on  
as ordered by the universe  
for all that happens must, of course  
but gratefully, it also stops

the dog needs walking I've been told  
he's looking at me from the door  
it's tiny legs are keen to go  
outside the light is blinding bright  
I have to feel for every step

more sightless than on any night  
and every sinner, every saint  
like clumsy puppets make their way  
quotidian and meaningless  
or less, so far as I can tell

I think this must be aftermath  
the realm of when, where action rules  
though fiction vies and underpins  
and where, however hard I tried  
I couldn't choose the scents and hues

I've cherished all this stumbling life

this odd array of blended faults  
of reaching mind and scanty chops  
and old obsessions that persist  
the rats are in the walls I hear

now all the water's boiled away  
I'm whistling and I'm whistled on  
I walk the dog, the dog walks me  
within this finely jazzed up fog  
I faded out of gradually

in to some kind of calling from  
the crumbling edge of everything  
wild apples in old unwalked woods  
the wheel that used to mill the grain  
the flooding tide in shapely bays

or something on the bridge that links  
the many shifting things we missed  
between the brinks and sheltered lanes  
the hints unseen within the dream  
a telling smile, a broken fence

the merest touch, a certain stance  
a moment's thrill, some thirst unquenched  
or urge to crash the dusty past  
or fabricate the perfect hat  
to catch and sail the ardent winds

that squall across the oceans of  
a vast expanding consciousness  
that's waited fourteen billion years  
to dream this thing we seem to be  
this tyranny of quark and mesh

this battering by egg and urge  
of all these figments we've become  
vain phantoms of our inner gods  
all hollowed, numbed, yet not quite dead  
oh what a thing it is to love

'How could we let it slip away'?



23 03 21 (1535)

Refs

Ron Dragano (nag a mar) - 'the lift of her'

Joseph Conrad, Heart of Darkness

Stewart, Price and King, You Belong To Me

Isaac Asimov, The Rocks of Damocles (Essay)

Peter Cetera, If You Leave Me Now

Joni Mitchell, A Case of You

Gene Raskin, Those Were The Days

Ecclesiastes

Daniel Dennett, Darwin's Dangerous Idea

Wayne Bickerton, Sugar Baby Love

jim hogg

# On Steps Of Sand

Cutting over Lewis Street  
I had just one thing in mind  
A certain blue eyed doozie  
Who'd be dancing just inside  
When Buff came bristling out  
Hardly bigger than a nipper  
And said I'd better watch myself  
Or he'd split me like a kipper

And Arkless on the sandstone steps,  
Like Achilles in a suit  
His mane a mass of darkness  
As he supervised the queue  
Of cheesecloth shirts and scary hair  
Outside the old Town Hall  
We'd straggled in from everywhere  
For glory or to fall

The Rollers weren't famous then  
But neither was Stranraer  
Their tunes all sounded suitable  
For either love or war  
When combs of steel with sharpened teeth  
Were the instrument of choice  
For guys with hair too tough to brush  
Or to impress the other boys

A flounce of flapping bellbottoms  
Bounced up the ancient stairs  
Straight into strains of old White Plains  
And suddenly: her coal black hair  
In 4/4 time I clumsied through  
As she turned her eyes to mine  
And on her face the answer to:  
Do six and three make nine? ";

And so we danced, and we were love,  
And we were everything  
The music touched the heart of us

Or maybe that was drink  
As fifty guys lapped round the floor  
Where the girls played hard to get  
The half time break arrived before  
The sun had even set

I waited on the balcony  
For the minutes she was gone  
When Robbie C came up and said  
&quot;I'd like to shake yer haun&quot;.  
The mediators stood around,  
All smiling, and in tune  
Mystified I shook it, smiled,  
And blamed it on the moon

We jived and jooked, and twisted on,  
And we moved in close and slow  
Away beyond the tropical,  
Beyond the memory of snow  
And though flux is all that's constant,  
All the pieces were in place  
Including Buff and Banty  
Who were staring into space

Soon Achilles said &quot;goodnight folks&quot;  
And the Rollers killed the beat  
We taxied from beneath the moon  
Hung over St John Street  
And stood for hours at her back door  
Before I turned away  
Onto endless steps of sand,  
Out of Castle Kennedy

2007(song)

jim hogg

# Quarantine

I saw you at a dinner dance  
In nineteen fifty eight  
A colour shot of you alone,  
You looked quite self contained

And fifteen years or more would pass  
Before some snapper caught  
You sitting in the sunshine once,  
Down by the boatshed wall

An older woman and yourself  
Both carefree for the lens  
Except a trace of wariness  
Of truths that pictures tell

I have no knowledge of your heart  
Or how you would evade  
The expectations of your time  
But hope you found a way

To simply be just who you were  
From time to time behind  
The subtle walls you must have built  
To live some kind of life.

03 03 20

jim hogg

# Mister Feynman Cuts His Hand

A sudden surge by nanotech was bound to wake the Starks  
Thus Feynman's finger copped a slice between the awkward quarks  
A daring dash at proofing proofs had prompted this affright  
An unexpected thrust of paper plane in flight swerved right  
And fooled the man who'd otherwise remained unfooled by self  
So struck was he, so stuck was he, so stuffed was he, he bled  
On Dune this would be criminal, on Geidi Prime sublime  
but here, within the multiverse, there's time enough for time

For quantum origami games there will be even more  
Enough for pounding Eliot's effusions and his door  
For ligature, or stricturing, or scriptural to staunch  
Machinery of blood aboard the offshored rescue launch  
Be quick, a drip, the dog, a lick, will super coldly clot  
Let Inspiration suck it up, his particles, the lot.

19 02 20

jim hogg

# Napoleon And His Cat Came Round

"Oh, Mister Bonaparte old friend, a cup of coffee, black?  
We wondered if you'd walk the dog or have a heart attack  
We have a clutch of pigeons here, they're Polish I believe  
Incipience has made them start, an ending to conceive  
A flight should take them further though - you'll take another clump?  
Or maybe something sharper, whittled from a stump?  
Oh no, he never flies at all, a clatter made him lame  
Irreverence, you know, Putt Putter snuffed his flame...

A clever sort, he cloned a cop, and poured him full of guilt  
He set him up in luxury and boiled him in a quilt  
A pot of rum lay by the bed, a rooster clawed the air  
Alsations queued up round the block, their hackles full of hair  
A shot was heard by all the dogs, I saw it in their eyes  
You've blabbed your coffee, Bonaparte, I hope you realise."

jim hogg

## Snow On The River Viii

And now the journey's almost done a balance must be struck  
Between forgetting on the rise and wisdom yet to come  
Or maybe thought's irrelevant to matters of the heart  
Sensation, thrill, enchantment all combine in cupid's dart

And leave so very little room for anything but love  
And all of its commands until, its spellbound course is run  
Yes, I suppose that's where I am: on mountain top or stool  
and looking back in wonder at each frame on every spool

A bashful kid, I stayed that way through every winding turn  
And every ruse to free myself just made the problem worse.  
It's who I am and much too late I've almost come to terms,  
But might have beens that never were can still provoke regret.

There is so little certainty in all that living brings  
At least from here that's how it looks, and youth is short of wits  
It sees just what it wants to see, and at its beck and call:  
a future where it all works out, where only sunlight falls

Except of course we learn in time that life has other plans -  
The reasons why I've washed up here are numerous and bland.  
The changing tides, the wind and waves, a million little things  
Contrive to steer us where they must, in league with time's fleet wings

We also learn, if given time, that much of what seemed real  
Was merely nature's sleight of hand, its cunning masterpiece  
It shapes the lives we think we lead until the penny drops  
So much of living is mirage and endless Russian dolls

The guy behind the curtain plays the longest game of all  
He's algorithmic, merciless, he's juggling every ball  
And unaware of everything, the tenderness and tears  
Exquisite moments binding hearts, and all our deepest fears

But here we are, in happiness, in struggle, and in doubt  
and all of that is real enough to see us through somehow  
I'm old now, but don't feel the years, and fancy several more  
That's optimistic but I'll try, to sail beyond the shore.

jim hogg



# Lexi's Gone

The satellites are searching high and low  
Detectives stake out places you might go  
For fifteen years you haven't left a trace  
There's only these old photos of your face

An old friend said she'd heard someone had read  
You're singing on a cruise ship in the Med  
She said you'd changed your name and dyed your hair  
You'd said your mobile phone was just a snare

But someone else in Glasgow had denied -  
So casually it looked as if she'd lied -  
That you worked incognito in a bar  
And lived alone above the Lucky Star

Another said you'd married your first love  
In Canada somewhere, without a word  
You'd honeymooned on back-roads coast to coast  
Then moved to Valparaiso years ago

And rumours of a comeback still persist  
Though no-one's really sure you still exist  
The house you owned sits empty by the road  
As if it's hoping someday you'll come home

A neighbour claimed she saw you just by chance  
And told the press it happened more than once  
You'd stood outside your windows looking in  
The headlines lied that you looked sad and thin

The small print said you'd fled the beaten track  
A broken-hearted star who turned her back  
With not a single clue amongst it all  
A shooting star that flared and then was gone

The satellites still search the hills and bays  
Detectives still haunt places where you played  
They're armed with all the songs that brought you fame  
And photos of a girl who got away.

17 02 20

jim hogg

# Waiting For The Wave

I'm riding in the shallows here  
Waiting for the wave  
I'm dancing on the gallows tree  
Just waiting for the day

I saw you in the distance once  
Bound for higher ground  
I held out for a better chance  
When every course led down

You had wings and simple dreams  
As I was stumbling for the stars  
And you found happiness it seems  
While I'm still crashing this old car  
still pretending that I'm brave  
waiting for the perfect wave

I ride a dark horse through the night  
Looking for a sign  
The stars are falling out of sight  
The moon won't even shine

I dreamt that I was glory bound  
In some modest way  
But now that all the chips are down  
I'm still here in the bay

You had wings and humble dreams  
As I was stumbling for the stars  
And you found happiness it seems  
While I'm still building my own bars  
still pretending I'm no slave  
waiting for the perfect wave

I'm still here waiting for the wave  
Looking out to sea  
If I was humble I would pray  
But nothing comes for free

You had wings and simple dreams  
As I was stumbling for the stars  
And you found happiness it seems  
While I'm still safe in this old car  
still pretending that I'm brave  
waiting for the perfect wave

2008 (song)

jim hogg

# A Turning On The Road

There was a light across the bridge  
I should have crossed but never did  
I missed the turning on the road  
And drove until my chance was blown

The script was written, and the score  
It would have been box office gold  
We would have been the breakthrough stars  
If only I had played my part

The compass needle pointing true  
The Tigh Na Mara, early June  
The dress rehearsal in the park  
Blew all the fuses in the car

A single chance, a single life  
No shred of doubt, no thinking twice  
And suddenly the dream was real:  
I ran 'til you were out of reach

So many things that went unsaid  
Beyond the power of tongues to tell  
The years I'd worshipped from afar  
The fate of worlds ordained to clash

There was a light across the bridge  
A silhouette of moments stripped  
Your perfect thighs around the years  
The perfect folly of my fears

(chorus)

There is no cure, no real goodbye  
And it's too late to even try  
And all the miles and countless days  
Were, in the end, to no avail  
No magic spell, nor artful rhyme  
Can witch the stone cold ear of time  
The say confession soothes the soul

I missed a turning on the road

14 02 20

(song)

jim hogg

# Spinning On His Spool

Of course he'll lie and never pay; the mirror's in the way  
He's dished the token gestures out; he's mesmerised the bay  
The waves rise up, the currents flow, the very shore is cowed  
It's scripture meets the mafia; it's everything's allowed  
It's toddler Johnny on a roll; it's temper tantrum day  
But, cock your lugs and open wide, there's heckling in the crowd

'Impeach me then with ricicles, Ticonderogan wedge  
I'm tyranny, I'm tarragon, I'm greasing up this ledge'  
Miraculous as cowardice, Vesuvius you must  
Or wall of water wash away, or plague of rapid rust  
A wintering of wills would do, instead of rabbit hedge  
Come battered beans and buttered boasts, in cabbages we trust

Inflammatory matters must, by all that's good and rare,  
Provoke in us a real response, an ounce of stand and stare  
Imagine Henry Cabot Lodge imagining four dogs  
Or serenade of galaxies, the tunefulness of cogs  
The mouth of youth, the steel of truth: the helicopter's there  
I'm burning up, I'm turning down, devoid of fresh agogs

Please kindly raise the music up, I'm bantering with bones  
And puddle me, my aspects dear, all poldered, poldered moans  
I think the wind will win this thing; the Company's a breeze  
Some complimentary gulls on hand, a rouse of lambs on trees  
For lone wolves walk a wilderness, a whispering of stones  
Thus, crushing feints, a snow of rains, a requiem of knees.

Fair runners ran at Bladensburg with flair in undressed files  
Contagion's pints have spilled again, a silence spread for miles  
No Chicxulub, nor Deccan Trap, just hoodless riding red  
Invisible except to squints, though hints from fingers fled  
Let loose the lovely locusts, then, they're desperate in the aisles,  
Or reason, if you've lost your wits, at padlocks on the shed

As houses fall, as wisdom flies, and honour flees the field  
Sometimes a little tickling helps an avalanche to yield  
A softer tongue may better sway than cockerels at the dawn  
But time, that unkempt tearaway, it leaps to kill or spawn

Now Vinny's gone, and Sonny's gone, their rule-bound rods unreeled  
The little fish that ate them both is coming for your scone.

jim hogg



# Biden Makes A Run For It

So, once again we're in the booth  
And all the weight of history  
Amounts to next to nothing now.  
We organise a past that suits,  
To lend our choice some kind of sense.  
And all the while the old men rake  
Amongst regrets, the slips of tongue,  
The failures that blight every life.  
Dissatisfied with destiny,  
They feel obliged instead to force  
Themselves upon the meek and blind,  
To steal the future if they can  
Or somehow modify the past.  
And I'm no different as I watch:  
My thoughts are bent on yesterday;  
The errors made, the unmade moves...  
My mind a crowd of moments gone,  
So full of fate yet unfulfilled.

That Tuesday night in Cairngaan Glen:  
When all the roads were open wide  
But I was trapped inside myself,  
And so I turned my focus then  
To all the things that I might build:  
A different life - with falling walls -  
Escape to bondage of my own;  
A rising fence built day on day.  
With proud and powerful swings I struck  
My destiny deep underground  
As if to leave behind for good,  
Another world, another time  
Where I took fright, when face to face,  
With everything I craved back then,  
And turned my ears against the toll:  
"Commit and I will cherish you  
Through all the days we live my love";,  
As endless fears drove endless posts  
Along the burn down through the glen,  
'Til I was safe, 'til she was gone,

But not from memory, even yet.  
So deeply etched her voice, her face,  
And almost every particle,  
I couldn't misremember her.

The other night in vivid dreams,  
Across the burn and rusting fence  
I made the pledge I never could  
To fearsome beauty and the path  
I wasn't brave enough to take  
When it was more than just mirage.

But all our learning rusts away.  
Old egos muster might-have-beens  
In glorious imaginings;  
They'll show the doubting masses now;  
They'll tramp the young turks down somehow,  
And silence all their tuneful songs,  
Or simply dream redemption dreams  
Of presidential legacy;  
While over here I'm looking for  
A passageway or phrase that leads  
Up through the bushes by the burn  
In to that unforgotten world,  
Or maybe just another chance...  
Though once I would have laughed to think  
That someday it might come to this:  
This swimming after ships long sailed,  
This everlasting selfishness.

12 12 19

jim hogg

# The Stone From The Tomb

There's no parallel universe in Denver  
No cats are dressed up like birds on the lawn  
Three sheets to the moon I'm glued there forever  
Forgetting to let all my bygones be gone

The old gravel road still leads off to nowhere  
And love has its foot down, down the wrong lane  
And time has us covered with aeons to spare  
Just specks in the cross hairs of waiting in vain

(chorus)

No, don't ask me, because I don't get it  
Just how could there be so many of you  
And too many moons out to give them all credit  
I always thought four dimensions would do  
Now telescopes hunt through the dark heart of science  
For clones of Jesus and cures for defiance  
For the shop on the corner and smiling thank yous  
For warp factor nine and some very bad news  
It's a ghost queued from here to the cracking of doom  
It's the seed of the stars, and the stone from the tomb

They're scaling down space with hadron colliders  
While gravity silently pulls us apart  
The chosen ones feed us lies that divide us  
The end's on a mission to cancel the start

Though none of it's true, he's still up there winging  
He's flying a cross but refusing to land  
He's singing the song, he's the song that's singing  
Our sand into sea and our sea into sand

(chorus)

No, don't ask me, because I don't get it  
Just how could there be so many of you  
And too many moons out to give them all credit  
I always thought four dimensions would do  
Now telescopes hunt through the dark heart of science  
For clones of Jesus and total compliance

For the shop on the corner and heartfelt thank yous  
For warp factor nine and some very bad news  
It's a ghost queued from here to the cracking of doom  
It's the blood on our hands, and the price of the moon  
It's the seed of the stars, and the stone from the tomb

31 05 09

jim hogg

# Now The Night

And even now tomorrow looks  
As tempting as it ever did  
I never really took the tour  
Just found my way here bit by bit

There was a time without much threat  
When all the colours turned to grey  
'Til suddenly I saw the edge  
And once or twice I was afraid

It changes almost everything  
The seagulls calling on the cliffs  
The songs we always meant to sing  
The wasted days, the only ifs:

A girl with dark eyes in the crowd  
We never made the time to try  
We weren't brave, we weren't loud  
But I still think of her sometimes

As mystery weaves all the roads  
So all the rivers merge some day  
And all our mazes, all our loads  
They lead us back the way we came

And suddenly in no man's land  
You realise the game is lost  
And yet there's beauty right at hand  
But only if we know the cost

The future brings the here and now  
But I could never make it last  
Obsessed with what was coming down  
The next instalment of the past

The more we learn about this life

The less it seems we really know  
And when we turn the lights up bright  
The more the shadows seem to grow

(chorus)

and now the night comes circling round  
A bullet at its dreaming heart  
There's no room left on hallowed ground  
There's just the shelter of your arms

2009 (song)

jim hogg

# Surrender

I think of you and memories  
come flooding like the tide  
the times we walked,  
the times we talked,  
those glistening starlit nights;  
your lemon coloured cardigan,  
your gentle blue-blue eyes,  
the first time that we ever spoke,  
the night we kissed goodbye.

The years between like rivers ran  
to sweep us far apart  
the lives we lived  
the lives we missed  
and now, no turning back:  
our children's children, full of glee,  
may soon be full of dreams  
or, swept by love as sweet as ours  
be strong enough to yield.

jim hogg

# Belief Tectonics

Pangeometry was never going to be big  
not on this planet anyway  
stuff about random curved shapes  
moving in miniscule  
over time out of time  
means even less to us than the drip  
of the time of our lives  
in the factory of endless minutes.  
Energetic and very hot spinning rocks  
- why would that ever matter?

Some creature from somewhere  
-obviously way out of here -  
so the fighting tribes keep saying  
snips the moments into the bits  
we've been we're massive in  
and boils us in our dreams

Some hope. What if there was?  
He made a ball and covered it  
with puddles and stones  
hooked it up to a heater  
forgot to set the timer  
and snoozed big time.

And is he maybe watching now  
in fast forward for blood  
- or moral "growth";-  
or a single satisfying surprise  
on a billion random balls,  
or dancing, high on forgetfulness,  
in some timeless zone  
between Andromeda  
and anywhere  
while nomads here  
in love with their own  
vain jigsaws and impatience,  
imagine wonder to come  
in some tantalising tomorrow,



and his many peoples competing for grace,  
beat the future and their fears  
enthusiastically  
into their little replacements.

jim hogg

# Abiding Rarity Of Hair

It's not that I'm not envious,  
of older guys with bushy manes.  
It couldn't be more obvious:  
my hair grows rare and I'm still vain.

This niggling hint of envy comes  
nostalgically with memories,  
of plumes of hair too thick to brush,  
and fond mirage of yesterdays.

Those yesterdays when I last rowed  
a rowing boat around the Mull  
from Portankil along the shore  
beneath the cliff, beneath the gulls;

and hauled the creels from end to end  
when I was less than seventeen.

It's maybe time to start again  
with just a rowing boat and sweeps

without regrets and worldly cares  
in this new world that's forming now  
- this everlasting present where  
the past and future take a bow,

and, sans ambition, leave the stage,  
to maybe kindness, maybe love;  
a gradual turning of the page;  
as if I think I've said enough!

jim hogg

# Gene Power

Sometimes I get the urge to ask:  
what if we chose to quit the wheel?  
Imagine our lot was the last  
to laugh, to cry, to think, to feel,

behold the stars, the breaking waves  
the falling leaves, or feel the breeze;  
to fall in love and meet the gaze  
of love returned, or bittersweet;

the childhood taken by disease,  
the mind that's gone, the drawn out death?  
Or broken bodies on the field  
of war that never seems to end?

jim hogg

# Awkward Guy And Ann

Between the work and vain ideals  
there was a little envy too.  
Those guys who seemed to know no fear  
of girls: I envied what they knew,

and envied most their confidence.  
Their snogging skills and chat up lines  
were mysteries beyond my ken.  
A mutual crush in sixty nine

resulted in a crushing thrill;  
we must have eyed each other up  
a thousand times to no avail.  
I never could get close enough

to say a single loving word  
because I made a run for it,  
each time our longing eyes were locked  
in pointless, gorgeous agony.

That storm of ecstasy and hell  
blew over by the spring, and took  
the pressure off for quite a spell,  
and so I took up reading books

until the spring of seventy one,  
when all at once a pencilled note  
quite stopped me in my bookish tracks.  
It seems I floated some girl's boat.

And so I did what I was told,  
and met her face to face next day,  
when she adroitly used a hold  
that drove my lips towards her face,

and less adroitly did we kiss,  
for I was inexperienced.  
I might have blown it, might have missed,  
but still remember where and when

my lips first kissed a young girl's lips.  
Yet after merely four short weeks  
it seems she thought it fit to quit,  
a guy so shy he couldn't speak!

Or, not with verve enough to spark  
the kind of thrill she wanted then.  
But in the Kinema we danced  
and many times we seemed to spend

the sweetest moments arm in arm  
and underneath the late May sun  
we lay stretched out on new mown grass,  
although I wasn't up to snuff! .

Yes, I was disappointed, but  
the offers started coming through,  
and bit by bit I made the cut,  
though even yet, amongst the few

I think of fondly from the past,  
that certain girl who kissed me first,  
and held me tight, and took my hand,  
still holds a place where flames still burn.

jim hogg

# Boomers And Believers

No, youth is really no excuse!  
For youth is sunlight, youth is verve.  
Life's obstacles were only tools  
for demonstrating endless strength.

Or so it seemed for quite a while,  
as I was hunting whale like dreams,  
and even then that harpoon line  
was whizzing through the air for me.

There was no glory crouched in wait,  
nor any I'd have valued then.  
The simplest learning comes so late.  
Those dreams were nebulous at best.

And hopes, I must have had a few.  
But not for wealth or privilege,  
or even means to raise the view.  
I think I lacked a cutting edge.

My elbows weren't hard enough  
to put myself before the crowd -  
the boomers who went hustling up,  
in tune with all they'd disavowed,

and found out who they really were.  
But being poor was no defeat,  
until my children needed help.  
The game had changed and my ideals

were suddenly a handicap.  
Though all the same I should have known.  
The sixties were a false alarm.  
The right was always headed home:

the signs were ominous for years;  
since Wilson couldn't hold the line.  
Divide and rule still wins the field.  
The centre keeps on drifting right.

And yes I should have been prepared,  
no matter how the runes are read.  
Instead of making do today.  
I should have planned ahead instead.

And now it's done. I got it wrong,  
and welcome guilt won't pay the bills.  
Nor are there answers in remorse,  
or crying over milk that's spilled.

The rains and reins of poverty  
teach many lessons as they lash.  
The old discover empathy;  
the young the kind of shame that lasts.

jim hogg

# A Word Unsaid

Incurable romantics fish  
in ponds and streams they thought they knew  
and soon get swallowed whole by things  
they hadn't really understood

Emotions that we lock away  
at seventeen or twenty five  
shake off their chains and suddenly  
they'll strut the stage; make old men cry

and drown the present in the past  
until the aching floods recede  
and leave behind the kind of calm  
that kills the urge to scratch and bleed,

to live again the myths we spin  
that took us captive for a spell:  
that's just a theory I admit,  
but I remember being swept

clean off my feet so many times  
and flattened when it all went south -  
the spark for endless trials of rhymes!  
A hungering for love abounds

in spite of the approaching edge.  
No, I'm no ripe and juicy peach,  
awash in fleeting innocence;  
and don't expect to sweetly grieve

for infinitely tender love,  
again; the kind that frees and lets  
the galaxies within us, flood  
with light, and all that's dark, relent

- you know that kind of passing flame,  
the swallow's flight, the gemstone glint,  
the memory that calls your name,  
the glance, the touch, the merest hint,



when almost every vivid thing  
seems preordained to thrill just us:  
that cheesy song, the golden ring;  
no words that can express enough.

But, out the other side of that,  
eventually, it might seem right  
to write the whole thing off at last,  
when all I'm packing is decline.

And so this exile, here and now.  
I spend my time just making do  
with movie lives, and playing out  
the options that I didn't choose:

to marry young or not at all  
to join the ranks or drown at sea,  
to find out who I really was,  
and if not me, then who I'd be?

Or, of the faces that come back,  
what other steps were mine to take:  
a word unsaid, a different path,  
or would the end have been the same?

jim hogg

# The Ebbing Tide

It's time to mention how time flew,  
so fast, and yet it seems a while  
since I once stood where others stood,  
and gazed beyond the ebbing tide;

since I remember picking up,  
that tartan knife beside the road,  
when I was very, very young  
- when I was only three years old,

and never thought to look beyond  
the very moment I was in;  
though sixty years have come and gone  
a living thread binds all of it,

connected to a web of threads  
that weave together all of us,  
across this frantic sea of ends,  
this teeming edge of what's to come:

too many things to comprehend,  
but some will rise and some will fall,  
and some will build and some will rend,  
and some forget and some recall.

But soon or late we all will stand  
and think of all the boats we've burned,  
and cast a rueful glance at last,  
beyond the tide that never turns.

jim hogg

# Stars In Our Faults

The crop that follows us won't see  
what we ourselves so vaguely saw,  
for they've had hardships we bequeathed,  
to add to those their lives have brought;

plus lessons from new challenges  
that rise up just ahead of us.  
But knowledge and intelligence  
don't seem to help us very much.

Humility might guide us through -  
though that would cost the experts dear.  
Cause and effect are far from new,  
but all the interlinking feeds

that weave the future from our past,  
are too involved for us to trace..  
It's mainly groping in the dark;  
the here and now and yesterday

make Joyce's epic trivial.  
And all our kids must somehow forge  
from almost naught some kind of path  
from mystery and inner urge,

plus apparatus of the age,  
and extricate themselves from all  
the daft ideas and mistakes,  
with which we flawed our own new dawn.

And yet, we gained experience,  
we learned some lessons here and there,  
those costly little sparks of sense  
that help sometimes to light the way.

But that far river where we learn,  
is one that only they can reach.  
We dare not help by carrying;  
some lessons only life can teach.

jim hogg

# Etta

Like many of that era gone,  
she didn't have a lot of say,  
and mainly she was swept along:  
to Innermessan's moonlit bay

to gather whelks on frosty nights,  
to tattie picking at Kirr'nrae,  
in conversations ranging wide,  
through politics to setting snares,

from shooting tins nailed to a tree,  
from cooking meals and washing clothes,  
to struggling just to make ends meet,  
to darning socks and scrubbing floors,

to raising half a dozen kids.  
She worked a miracle for years.  
I stand in awe of all she did,  
and very rarely saw the tears

she must have had the urge to shed,  
a thousand times or maybe more,  
and all that gratitude we felt,  
when we'd grown old enough to know,

was felt too late, and left unshown.  
The trivia of life betrays.  
Of course we thanked her now and then,  
but didn't really turn and face

in depth, the hardships she endured.  
But never did she say a word  
about her kids' ingratitude  
- regret's not punishment enough.

I'm grateful most of all for friends  
who made her struggle bearable;  
when they had time alone to spend,  
freed from the stress her life entailed,

when she could laugh and shed the load,  
that never-ending duty brings.  
If there had been some way to know  
would she have swerved the vows and rings?

Her end, at best, was merciless,  
like penance for her suffering;  
week after week of living hell,  
relieved by killing sedatives.

A life so harsh just thrown aside.  
What kind of deity would ask  
beloved subjects to abide,  
such misery before they pass?

The very notion is absurd,  
and yet that madness stalks the earth,  
as if some greatness is at work,  
to sift and steer to "worthiness";,

to trade redemption for our sin,  
to loose the righteous on the world;  
and billions have been taken in  
by myths that flood their lives like blood.

And so it's over and she's gone.  
She had so little of her own,  
except for chores and some sad songs  
until she found herself alone.

Unable to begin again  
she lived her life through all of us,  
and though we'd visit now and then,  
we simply didn't give enough.

And now she's scattered far and wide,  
a meagre tribute meant to link  
the lonely furrow of her life,  
to hard earned meaning that persists,

though only just, while some can catch

a glimpse of who their mother was.  
But even that fades all too fast:  
the ground she tilled will soon be lost.

jim hogg

# Robbie

My father was a complex man,  
a stranger mostly to his kids;  
though those who knew him least, expand  
the most on what he was and did;

and I was there through most of it,  
and some was bad, and some was good.  
I heard the words, I saw the slips;  
I saw him age, and leave too soon.

Like most of us he tried his best,  
and slowly left the worst behind.  
But honesty and ruthlessness,  
ensured he paid a living price

for all the failings he embraced;  
a stoic strength I loved him for,  
a strength I've tried to emulate,  
although free will is still at war.

I have a million memories,  
so many stills and movie clips,  
but all those long dead witnesses  
to scenes they shared, and played, or snipped,

could once have filled the picture out,  
for no-one ever really knows  
the inner life, its deeps and doubt,  
of even those we think are close.

And, as I said a few lines back,  
we see the same things differently.  
Though half a lifetime has elapsed,  
I still don't see him distantly:

I carry both the best and worst  
of all he was within me yet,  
and age and life have slowly burned  
the phasic anger I once felt.



His compliments were very rare  
- although I always gave my best.  
I still remember what and where:  
the rock beneath the Raven's nest

for boatmanship that got us through,  
the bottom of the Stair Street stairs:  
&quot;they couldnae harrow where you've ploo'ed&quot;;,  
and this, &quot;you could go all the way&quot;;

when ringside back at number four,  
he stood and watched me sparring with  
the sturdy guy who lived next door.  
Aird Crescent brings back many things.

Besides first love and childhood spills,  
there was that massive pot of soup  
he made from Hare just freshly killed,  
and no, you've guessed: it wasn't good!

And lifted hands, and thund'rous moods,  
the work that never seemed to end,  
the orders I could not refuse,  
but there were good times even then.

There was a warmth that spread at times  
through everything we did as one,  
out working in the freezing tide,  
or at the table, having fun

to stories from another world;  
his memories of friends he'd lost,  
or buttered toast he'd lightly burned  
when wielding yon long handled fork.

And later, when they'd settled in  
that house amongst the trees and stars  
I came to see how sensitive  
he was, behind that calmed facade.

I'm thankful I still have him near,

in all I am and all he was;  
and hold my mother just as dear  
as much in mem'ry as in loss.

jim hogg

# The Wheel That Steers

This world we've made comes harvesting  
its yearly crop of flesh and blood:  
our briefest age of ripened thrill,  
cut down for dreams that raise or crush.

Though most of us, it seems, believe  
we make those "choices" by ourselves,  
and all the plaudits we receive,  
are conscientiously deserved.

A pretty myth it seems to me,  
but I'll concede that all's not lost,  
for deep belief can make it real,  
by fuelling dreams that drive us on.

And some of that was lodged below  
the conscious mind that sometimes thinks  
he shapes these lines, although he knows  
that notion doesn't quite convince.

The surface isn't all we are.  
But all the rest is out of sight:  
we hold the wheel that steers the car  
while hidden loadings steer the mind.

The arguments will never end,  
and evidence will not persuade  
the many who believe their strength  
is all that's ever shaped their way.

We share the senses of our kind,  
but shown a range of clear cut facts,  
a few will learn and some will fight,  
and that alone should make us ask

the questions that might lead us to,  
an answer that may show us how,  
our warring tribes can make a move,  
towards some kind of truce for now.

But more than sixty years of strife  
have left me less than confident.  
The coward's kiss, the brother's knife,  
the promises of governments,

are likely to persist I'd guess.  
Against that background life goes on.  
The chemistries of love and sex,  
and laughing children, are not gone

jim hogg

# Sleight Of Mind

And in the shadows, many worlds  
that might have been, or still might be  
each moment ripe with stones to turn  
and options that remain unseen.

With hints of chaos threatening,  
unknowns surround our every move,  
and so we've fashioned shapely things  
to keep the night from breaking through

from elsewhere in this universe.  
but maybe most of all from deep  
within the loaded mind that tends  
to keep its secrets out of reach.

No comet lights that alien night,  
no streaking solitary dance,  
of silver sparks and blazing ice.  
On mescaline I might advance

deep into cavernous concerns  
through unseen furniture of mind  
and exit stuffed with things I've learned:  
of light that hints at signs of light!

But there's no mirror that reveals  
beyond the mocking work of age  
and even madness cannot see  
the sleight of mind behind the veil.

The architecture of the self  
lies crouched within the laws of chance  
and out we spring, both code and flesh.  
I guess I must have wanted once

to be much more than fate would grant  
but not for long I'd argue now.  
Ecclesiastes ended that,  
and pledges that endured somehow;

(or so my vanity suggests.  
Temptation preys on history  
I constantly remind myself,  
but still I'm taking liberties)

and questions I can't answer here  
- unravelling takes a lot of lines -  
but if I could I'd start with me:  
the trickiest of all the mines

I'd have to make my way back down,  
through bottles smashed against the bricks,  
across from Maggie Gibson's house  
to test my moral reasoning;

and through a neighbour's weekly rounds:  
the Finlay girl who crossed the street  
to bring me all the current sounds  
and latest issue magazines,

that opened up a wealth of worlds,  
although I hadn't looks to suit,  
or tendency to overturn  
the rock hard rules I couldn't brook:

the expectations of the time.  
Plus, there was always work to do.  
It kept me from the uncrossed line,  
and shaping forces that shape who

or even what, or still more, why,  
though many paths seemed mine to take;  
the world invades us on the fly,  
and genes parade us if they dare

against the trends that rule the age.  
I shaped myself to fit the grooves,  
as if those moves were mine to make,  
and slayed the lives I couldn't choose.

The quandaries of who we are,

remain for millions everywhere.  
The bravest step across the bar;  
while legions never make the break.

jim hogg

# Of Aging Faces

I pictured vast arrangements in  
the depths beyond this planet's sky  
I saw the multitude of things  
that hurtle, spin, begin and die;

an infinite parade of flames,  
and frozen oceans without end,  
that break imagination's frames,  
and more than just one universe.

"There's no such thing as time" I said  
Things happen and we play our part  
upon the ever flowing edge,  
this present where we always are.

I'm waiting there as if I know  
exactly why I watch the sky.  
A glimpse of something long ago,  
a pointless truth, or crucial lie?

Or moistened lips, or ancient ship  
adrift across a sea of stars;  
a single ghost or well worn clip  
of footage from the way things are?

A surfer on that moving wave  
I might have scribbled on some wall  
or, flickering vague within some cave,  
I might have heard a seabird call:

tomorrow's song, or yesterday's?  
I find I can't quite work out which,  
within this stream of changing shapes -  
the things I used to fear were fixed.

The future and the past, at last,  
begin suspiciously to look  
too much alike; too ruined, dark  
and worlds away from every book



I ever read when I was keen  
to master all the arts of life.  
Like vague and inconclusive scenes  
in photos shot on moonless nights

there's nothing to be seen except  
the very things we choose to see  
beyond the outlines starlight left  
of aging faces and the sea.

jim hogg

# From What Remains

There have been moments I admit,  
when might have been meant more to me  
than all that destiny might bring,  
and comfort in that fantasy

immobilised me for a while;  
then out of morketiden came  
a forward focussed appetite:  
the strangest thing, in middle age.

And after several years of that  
the past was gone enough to seem  
a safer, less bewitching ark  
of stuff that once was all too real:

so thickly strewn with hopes and dreams,  
and flaws and biases that blind,  
and arrogance, I barely gleaned  
the basics of this fleeting life

that led to all those words I've wrung  
from what remains. I tried to hold  
to things I've seen and things I've done,  
to what I've been and what I've sold,

although the truth's much bigger than  
the stories that our senses tell,  
and more peculiar than I'd grant  
if I was younger, I suspect.

jim hogg

# Whispers In The Summer Wind

Whispers in the summer wind  
Spoke of someone new  
Your step so light and free  
Told me we were through

I tiptoed round your secret life  
As clumsy as a child  
So much left unspoken  
Gone to seed and growing wild

The fault was always mine  
Somehow you couldn't speak  
Some things never change  
I made you feel too weak

I'm standing in your shadow now  
Invisible and small  
While Lies and alibis  
They keep you standing tall

Tail lights in the distance  
You hide behind the night  
I wonder where you are  
With your new love tonight

Is this the way love ends then  
In this dark cul de sac  
You driving off to him  
And me here looking back

It's the agony of losing  
It's all that might have been  
It's what I might have done  
To keep you here with me

For all those years together  
We strained the bonds that tied  
But someday we'll remember  
When we walked side by side

17 11 06

jim hogg

# Where The Pines

The deer leap over the broken down wall  
And a crazy dog bolts off in chase  
Through the sycamores, by the distant loch  
Into a gradual canvas of your face

We stood amongst those old broken down stones  
And called out after the past in vain  
Through the shopping malls and the midnight shores  
By riverbanks and into my suitcase

I saw two rivers merge into the sea  
And the sky-high pines in Shinnelwood  
And all my reaching for dreams that might be  
And the answer I used to think was you

We chased and chased 'til our nights all grew cold  
Up and down the old tracks through The Inch  
Until all we'd reaped could not be re-sowed  
And our love was a sore too worn to itch

The rustling leaves were just more false alarms  
And the strangers said there was no trace  
on the Seven Five among speeding cars  
or round the honeysuckle scented lanes

I leapt up over a broken down wall  
And a crazy love burst into flames  
Where the chestnuts fall, where the pines grow tall  
Where the rivers meet the breaking waves

And that crazy dog just keeps on running  
And the leaping deer leaps out of sight

04 06 09

jim hogg

# When All The Stars

No poet's words or angel's harp in heaven  
No rising sun or autumn's scene by Rembrandt  
Will ever match the lasting thrill  
Or precious ache that I feel still

No falling star no rainbow's hue or rapture  
No fields of gold or blues guitar by Clapton  
Could ever match the lasting bliss  
Or ecstasy when we first kissed

And I would make you daisy chains each summer  
And if you fell I'd carry you forever  
And when the storms of winter blow  
I'd bethere to hold you close  
With sweetly haunting thoughts of you  
when the night sky's deepest blue  
when all the stars fade out of view  
and only you come shining through

But you and I were fated to be parted  
Though life goes on for all the broken-hearted  
I can't forget your tenderness  
I can't forget your sweet caress

You're all the songs I ever wrote from love dear  
You're in each word and in each note my lover  
And I will take this memory  
Intact into eternity

And in the village where you grew to beauty  
I stop from time to time to look for you dear  
And when you smile and say hello  
I wish I could let you know  
These sweetly haunting thoughts of you  
when the night sky's darkest blue  
and only you come shining through  
for all the stars make way for you

I won't forget your tenderness

Your gentle kiss and sweet caress  
And I have missed you all my life  
It's so long since I held you tight  
Your lips so soft, your sweet caress  
I won't forget your sweet caress.

jim hogg

# The Wonder That You Were

I've mined and drilled for years now  
And was so surprised to find  
Someone I'd rarely thought of  
At the centre of my life

And I found you on the journey  
Through the battles won and lost  
All the wonders, and the beauty  
All the best that this world brought

I could have kept on singing  
That old song I've always sung  
For good or ill they tell us  
That we've only got the one

But some moments fall upon us  
Just like snowflakes on the shore  
And there in those fleeting instants  
Change the shape of all we know

It happened when I saw you  
And in seconds flown too soon  
I trembled at the memory  
Of the wonder that was you

On those nights beneath the streetlights  
In a town so far from here  
And could barely hold together  
All I thought worth holding dear

Regrets and smiles came crowding  
But what matters most of all  
In our losing war with time  
Is that I can still recall

All those certain things about you



I'd been running from since then  
Though I'll never find the words to  
Match the wonder that you were

200908

jim hogg

# September In The Rain

You sailed away one wet September day  
Holding the railing you stood in the rain  
The wind was howling and the clouds sped by  
With your red scarf waving a final goodbye

You slipped your ropes, and sailed your ship away  
Leaves of gold soon fell, and then snowdrops came  
The distance grew and too soon you were gone  
With never a letter, and never a call

And now you're standing at The Golden Cross  
Grey in our hair, dear, and ghosts looking on  
It's summertime here and I'm by your side  
At the other end of the tunnel of time

We speak in whispered tones to tame the flames  
And the hardest part is saying your name  
I feel the touch of your hand on my face  
And the restless wind that still strains at your sails

(chorus)

The snowdrops came and the leaves fell again  
Now the hardest part is saying your name  
You stood on the top deck holding the rail  
And sailed away in September in the rain

070409

jim hogg

# She Came From Tiree

She came from Tiree,  
A young dark haired stranger  
But somehow it seemed that  
I'd known her forever  
It's like some kind of power  
That hearts can't defy  
It burned in the air  
Between her heart and mine

Though thousands may touch us  
In this passing through  
Amongst all of those  
Just the odd one or two  
Stay with us for life  
Like a "lingering star"  
She came from Tiree  
And she left this sweet scar

And Glasgow was frozen  
In early December  
Colder than old folks  
In coats could remember  
When she came from Tiree  
With the sea in her eyes  
The girl of a good friend,  
She would never be mine

010308

jim hogg

# Now And Then

Elon Musk and a minotaur  
will make their way on motorbikes  
to Bandersnatch by way of Mars  
if I can hold on long enough,  
but I'm on the slippery cobbles here,  
almost disconnected, barely balanced.

Above endless other stories to come  
I see no end to blue and white skies  
that hold the steeped churches,  
the town hall and off road powered people  
fixed to the slashes of charcoal and light  
- we barely seem to live in now -  
of a world that's tilting away again  
towards a certain Roukenglen;  
to eighty three and your lemon skirt,  
our temporary secrets still intact,  
in the shadow of ancient Sycamores  
and all around us vague abscondees  
from superstores and offices  
strolling in their temporary ease  
through your tenderness in everything:  
the broken law of the land, exuberant kids,  
the smiles and knowing words, the silences  
of other lovers, and the healing hands  
that took you to England and further afield  
after risking your heart without stint.

You climbed from the wreckage of Teucharhill  
into the heights above Drumoyne  
and leapt down into the old hospital.  
A Catholic girl with a gifted tongue  
you knew exactly who you were  
mile after many a windless mile  
beneath Dalmally's winter sun  
on foot, before we danced all night  
without a moment's doubt it seems  
back down to Langlands Road  
and over the Clyde to all the bars

on Byers Road where we ran full tilt,  
hand in hand on a summer's night,  
like children wild under warm sunlight.  
The crazy charts said of our love  
that it was "hot as the hottest sun  
and deep as the deepest sea". It was,  
yet other stars squeezed in between,  
our futures colliding like galaxies,  
volumes of us from that solid world  
unravelling image by image at last,  
where misty sea meets misty sky  
down the corridors of days  
between Loch Lomond and Atlanta..

jim hogg

# Green Dot Amore

Oh I think I'm falling in like again  
With that little green dot beside your name  
For my life's a mess when it isn't there  
And I start to fear that it doesn't care  
Now I'm all alone in my dotless room  
Where the minutes mount in deepening gloom  
As my thoughts fixate on greenliness  
And your very fetching virtualness  
That I dream will keep streaming bit by bit  
Like lightning in between us where we sit  
So let us not to this bonding of dots  
Via lots of molecules with the hots  
Admit cold binary impediment  
In place of fully plugged in sentiment

070217

(With sincerest apologies to Mr Shakespeare)

jim hogg

# Icarus Wings

The millions march on the archway of dreams,  
with rainbows and snowflakes and stars in our bones,

straight out of our teens and into the world,  
all chipping away at our sculptures of hope.

Remember when we stood upon the old bridge:  
blue skies above us, the river below?

What would we trade now, oh what would we give,  
of all that we've done, of all that we know

for rainbows and snowflakes and stars in our bones?

2009/19

jim hogg

# Sea Without Shores

It's a sea without shores  
And it weaves like a river  
No-one knows where it goes  
It's been flowing forever

It's the fast lane to nowhere  
The love of your dreams  
Your worst ever nightmare  
Not quite as it seems

And the devils will rescue  
And the angels condemn.  
And it's me and it's you  
And it's us or it's them

It's as deep as your soul  
It's as wide as your mind  
It's as bright as your hope  
It's as dark as the night

And there's tenderness flowing  
From hearts that are broken  
From the dagger that's thrown  
When fond words are spoken

And it's one against all  
And it's all against one  
And it's all that we've lost  
And it's all that we've won

It's the highest of mountains  
It's the wave that is breaking  
It's the driest of fountains  
it's hell in the making

And we're all of us strangers  
The light of all knowing



The child in the manger  
All mystery flowing

We're the bud that is blooming  
The train that's just leaving  
The promise that's looming  
The heart that's deceiving

And you and I live here  
As holy as sorrow  
In a blasphemous dream  
In this dance with tomorrow

Where there's steps without end  
Down the razor's edge trail  
Round the burning bush bend  
To the tower of veils

And it's christmas on earth  
There are signs everywhere  
There are stars giving birth  
In the ocean of flames

25 12 08

jim hogg

# Roses In The Sna'

T'was in the country dancing class  
When I first laid my eyes on you  
Bewitchin' fair an' temptin' lass  
I grew addicted tae the view

For innocence deceives so neatly,  
On love's thorn so bittersweetly  
You and I so fondly thirled;  
We would have traded a' the world

But never did oor lips reveal  
The passion we could ne'er conceal  
An' precious wounds we did endure  
When we were young an' oh so pure

When you and I would never fa',  
Like moments that would never pass  
But such a thrill could never last  
Like roses in the sna'

I weel remember how we gazed  
Intae each ither's captured een  
When pointlessly oor ecstasy  
Meant everything that life could mean

But time was rushin' on so fleetly  
Such a crush left me completely  
High and dry above the tide  
In dreams o' us lass, side by side

An' so a spark between us flared  
Tae fade because I never dared  
Your hand tae squeeze, your lips tae kiss,  
When just tae think o' you was bliss

When you and I would never fa',  
Like moments that would never pass  
But such a thrill could never last  
Like roses in the sna'

25 9 12

jim hogg

# By Rathlin Isle

The wind blows o'er the Money head  
There's Rathlin o'er the deep blue dance  
Don't ask me now why I don't care  
For all the things I lived for once.

The mainsail's full of memories  
The forecast is a hurricane  
For Malin, Rockall, Hebrides  
To test this spirit in the waves

Don't tell me there's another way  
A harbour where there's romance moored  
And herring glistening in the spray  
Before we shake the silver hook

The mainsail's filled with hurricane  
The forecast is more memories  
There's black clouds over Galloway  
And all the leaves are off the trees

The great Atlantic furrows call  
A thousand fathoms deep or more  
Where lie the bones of oarsmen lost  
Free men who sailed beyond the shore

By Rathlin Isle where Bruce once bled  
Beyond the stone, beyond the caves  
The modern world's great spider's web  
You take the chains, I'll take the waves

Don't tell me all about the past  
It's on the chart here in my hand  
We sailed out from High Ardwell Bay  
And that spring day the die was cast

The sea was still, the sun was high  
We worked the creels to Money Head

But Lady Fortune spun the wheel  
The dogstar shone; the moon turned red

And set me on the rule bound road  
Where men are smothered by their dreams  
I shaped myself to match the load  
Where even sunlight disappears

The mainsail's full of memories  
The forecast is a hurricane  
For Malin, Rockall, Hebrides  
That spell has taken hold again

The great Atlantic furrows call  
A thousand fathoms deep or more  
Where lie the bones of oarsmen lost  
Free men who sailed beyond the shore

The deep blue invitation rides  
To Rockall from Bluebonnet cliff  
In heart that slowly bleeds away  
Upon the wheel, upon the wind

14 06 09

jim hogg

# By Barsolus Burn

Shades of evening sunshine  
lay on the harvest yield,  
and laughter light and free,  
floated o'er the golden field.

A dozen men and women  
made sheaves and stooks by hand,  
beneath an August skyline when  
our families worked the land.

In nineteen fifty nine,  
I saw through an open gate,  
a scene spread there before me  
like an image on a plate;

a work of art from another age,  
all framed by wooden posts;  
a world so lost, those well known folk,  
seem flimsier than ghosts.

Much too young to comprehend  
the harmony of things  
I can't recall a single thought  
beyond a sense of awe

like that induced by solemn blend  
of river, trees and hills,  
or giant flakes of falling snow  
freed by some greater law,

the placid face in full accord  
with the balance found within,  
or the painting, or the word,  
that strikes some unknown chord

Shades of evening sunshine  
lay on the harvest yield,  
and laughter light and free,  
floated o'er the golden field.

A dozen men and women  
made sheaves and stooks by hand,  
beneath an August skyline when  
our folks still worked the land.

12 06 07

jim hogg

# Marczinkowski's Ghost

Come meet me on the Clanyard cliffs,  
On the rock ca'ed sonsieneb  
Bring a bamboo cane and rubber eels,  
On the flood or on the ebb  
I'll meet you some September nicht  
Whun the gloamin hugs the coast  
And we'll fish for Lide and Blochan there  
Wi' Marczinkowski's ghost

We'll view the flamin' sun go down\_  
Beyond the Ulster Hills  
We'll mebbe catch a glimpse o' Hutton  
Haulin' up his creels  
An' there'll be gannets in the sky,  
And a kestrel hoverin' close  
Whun we fish for Lide and Blochan there  
Wi' Marczinkowski's ghost

So let's gan doon tae Sonsieneb  
Tae fish the flood or fish the ebb  
Tae catch the Glesson or the Lide  
An' watch the turnin' o' the tide

The lichthoose beam at Donaghadee  
Will soon be turnin' roon  
An' across the shimm'rin' Irish Sea\_  
The majestic Mourne sweeps doon  
The simmer's a' but left us  
An' there's very few can boast  
That they fished for Lide and Blochan here  
Wi' Marczinkowski's ghost

I'll see you some September nicht  
When the gloamin hugs the coast  
Doon at Sonsieneb on the Clanyard cliffs  
Beside oul Henry's ghost

If yer efter Lide and Blochan  
And yer share ye'll no get loast



The richt place tae be is Sonsieneb  
Beside oul Henry's ghost

So, let's gan doon tae Sonsieneb  
Tae fish the flood or fish the ebb  
tae sit a while by Henry's side  
An' watch the turnin' o' the tide

26 02 09

jim hogg

# Maggie's Gate

One long and tender kiss, love,  
Before I watched you go  
And closed the door behind you then,  
A thousand years ago  
But some times I taste your lips on mine,  
As clear as yesterday  
Your jet hair blowing in the wind,  
With all that slipped away

There's no undoing choices made  
Or time that's too soon gone  
I can't restore the old swing tree  
Our love was carved upon  
Were we lost in hopeless fantasy  
Or just two star-crossed fools  
The table tennis king and queen  
Of our new village school

I stop outside your old house  
And first love comes to mind  
A beautiful deception meant  
To further humankind  
But whatever lies behind love,  
It hardly matters now  
You're out of reach forever  
Behind a sacred vow

No moon is out tonight, love,  
The stars are glowing white  
A lifetime on from Maggie's Gate,  
I'm there alone tonight  
To say goodbye to you  
And all the things that might have been:  
That crazy dream that someday  
It might all be real again.

Oh the winding lanes of Inch  
And the things that haven't changed  
Awaken every memory

And remind me once again  
Of gentler times and innocence  
And all the promise of our youth  
And how much I would trade  
For just one moment of that truth

2006

jim hogg

# Summer In Portpatrick

Oh it's summer in portpatrick  
And I wish that you were here  
It's been so long since you and I  
parked down the old stone pier

The birds are singing overhead,  
The sun is shining down  
If you were here this place would be  
A picture perfect town

But I know that was yesterday  
When you and I went separate ways  
And now beneath this summer sun  
The old folk smile, the children run

And the answers we were searching for  
Don't seem to matter now  
But I remember clearly how  
You made me feel so proud  
To hold you closely by my side  
For all the world to see  
When you and I were something else;  
The world was at our feet

A fishing boat just off the shore  
Is heading south towards drummore  
While on the rock they're tuning up  
And thinking back I think of us:

When it was summer in portpatrick  
And both you and I were here  
It's been so long since you and I  
Kissed on the old stone pier  
The birds are singing overhead,  
The sun is shining down  
If you were here this place would be  
A picture perfect town

Feb 2010

jim hogg

# Valentine

She sat behind me to the right  
I knew her name, I knew her height  
She seemed to think that I was nice  
The card she sent gave me a fright

In all the shire I was her peach  
She made it rhyme with words like teach  
I blushed and headed for the beach  
Wherever seemed most out of reach

But Tommy helped me get it straight  
He said "Her legs are perfect mate  
It's time you took her on a date"  
And, yes of course, her mum looked great

So anyway the date was set  
By two half crowns I was in debt  
My folks made sure my needs were met  
And to the Regal on we pressed

And kept on pressing head to head  
We must have looked completely dead  
We never moved 'til someone said  
"We're closed you two", then off we sped

We had to pull our heads apart  
Before I left her at the farm  
It left us marked but did no harm  
And there it ended at the start

So scared was I of lips on lips  
- I learned too late that it was bliss -  
I couldn't bring myself to kiss  
the peachy loving, smooth legged miss

Until the day that I turned twelve  
I'd practise kissing on myself  
Then into deeper things I'd delve  
or find myself left on the shelf.

2007

jim hogg

# Twenty Seventeen

The drawbridge raised, the curfew sounds  
And cops with tasers do the rounds  
Those nineteen sixties dreams of peace  
So quickly turned to disbelief

And automation, we supposed,  
Bring leisure like we'd never known  
it's what the teachers told us when  
Both you and I were only ten

And there's no hope, no justice here,  
Just insecurity and fear  
It helps to keep us cheap and weak  
If we're just one week from the street

Your letters say you miss me dear  
You haven't seen me for a year  
And I would hold you if I could  
But now it's down to love or food

It's back to basics as advised  
To keep the rich quite satisfied  
So there's no telly in this room  
And no hot water coming soon

And there's no phone, no internet  
On Universal Benefit  
the great and good have everything  
But who knows what tomorrow brings

I'm learning how to know my place  
I'll soon have my certificate  
To show that I'm a minion in  
The parroting of rich folk's myths

The drawbridge raised, the curfew sounds  
And cops with tasers do the rounds  
I think of all we once believed  
When you and I were seventeen



For there's no hope, no justice here,  
Just insecurity and fear  
It helps to keep us cheap and meek  
If we're just one week from the street

September 2012

jim hogg

# Time And Tide

It was never my intention  
that our lives should be like this.  
It was always my ambition  
that somehow it would be fixed.  
Now your bags are packed for leaving,  
and the dreams I had for us,  
just more snowflakes on the seashore,  
as you take the road you must

It's the price I pay for choosing  
to walk away from you that day,  
when I left a young girl crying,  
with a lifetime left to pay.  
Now it's so sad to know that soon  
you'll be flying to be free.  
But I'm so glad you've got the strength  
to go chasing your own dreams.

So I'll miss you when I'm walking,  
alone along the Creechan Shore.  
On the sands of Ardwell Bay, dear,  
I'll miss you even more.  
We've spent so little time together,  
and our future may be gone.  
But your life is waiting for you  
and that is no cause to mourn.

It's so easy to make promises,  
to say we'll always be in touch,  
but the needs of youth and age  
are divided by so much.  
So I'll be thinking of you always,  
as you strive to build a life,  
hoping desperately that fortune,  
helps you make your life worthwhile.

So when you're strolling down the avenues,  
of Vancouver or Quebec,  
take a moment to remember

aging folks who won't forget,  
across the cold and grey Atlantic,  
standing on some Scottish shore,  
staring out across the sea,  
and wondering where you'll make your home.

Yes, I will miss you when I'm walking,  
alone along the Creechan shore.  
On the sands of Ardwell Bay, dear,  
I'll miss you even more.  
We've spent so little time together,  
but your future lies elsewhere,  
and wherever your life takes you,  
be sure my love is with you there

2007

jim hogg

# The Sweetest Fruit

Take me where the bluebells grow  
In shade of beech and sycamore  
And let the sunlight carry through  
In beams of golden on to blue

And leave the hustle at the gate  
With all the things that just can't wait  
And show me truths that hearts conceal  
Where the sweetest fruit is buried still

Some will say that youth can't know  
And some will say "so long ago"  
So hide it safe behind the walls  
Until the time when all walls fall

But life is like an arrow's course  
It's path an ever dying force  
Or like the rose whose blush is brief  
Or the fleeting season of the leaf

Soon to dirt the tender green  
Is sent by minds the world makes keen  
To crush the hearts that dare to place  
The rose above life's petty cares

And in that soil the bluebell grows  
In shade of beech and sycamore  
The secret past too hard to share  
For the sweetest fruit is buried there

02 02 08

jim hogg

# That Night

That April night we went walking  
Alone for the very first time  
The moon and stars all came flocking  
We stumbled towards the sublime

The usual suspects were present  
The delicate veils of ardour  
The crescent over the crescent  
Reflections of night on the harbour

We gazed at the white sweeping beams  
searching from Donaghadee  
for lovers marooned on the sea of dreams  
the only sea we could then see

That summer night we went dancing  
Too deeply in love to express  
like part of some perfect pattern  
a fortress we'd always defend

Your chestnut hair in the night's light  
the glistening sea in your eyes  
the touch of your lips and your smile  
as sweet as the sweetest sunrise

We stared out into the moonlight  
Its beam rippling pale and forlorn  
Over the channel, into the night  
Straight to the mountains of Mourne

That winter night we went strolling  
Thinking of all that might be  
Fishermen stood in the shadows below  
casting their dreams in the sea

We stood on the edge of forever  
Entranced by the shimmering tide  
So close to our own twelfth of never  
or moment our paths would divide

Down that tempting and fleeting lane  
We wondered if we should wander  
Across the ocean and back again  
Before the dawn drove us under

That winter's end we went walking  
Apart and alone by the sea  
where only seagulls were calling  
their cries like the end of all dreams

2007

jim hogg

# Goodbye To Shackleton

And so you set off travelling  
in search of unknown things  
You took your gun and bible  
and the luck that courage brings  
You dived into the river  
and went swimming in the night  
And when the moon rose over you,  
you swallowed up its light

You traced the trail of Shackleton,  
and sailed the clipper way  
You smiled the smile of sunlight,  
even when your hair turned grey  
You posed for shots in Vegas,  
and went shaking hands with fame  
You drank the poison of reward,  
a victim of your name

And so you climbed down from the plane,  
in search of all you'd sold  
You sheltered in the moonlight,  
where the nights grew long and cold  
And trekking through your inner world  
awaiting sorrow's ease  
You heard the tempting trigger call  
and with a smile you squeezed

You said goodbye to the river deep  
You said goodbye to the fountain sweet  
You said goodbye to life and love  
To raving winds around Cape Horn  
To the silence and the albatross  
To all that your adventure was  
And you said goodbye to Shackleton

And so I set off travelling  
in search of all you'd known  
I took your bow and arrows  
and of course my mobile phone

I walked across the river bridge  
and sheltered from the night  
And when the moon came wooing me,  
I stayed well out of sight

I traced the trail of Shackleton  
in words you'd left behind  
The clipper way shone brightly from  
those photos left unsigned  
I posed for shots with anyone  
as keen as me on fame  
I craved the poison of reward  
but no-one knows my name

And so I climbed down from my chair  
and wondered what you'd been  
I smiled the smile of sunlight  
at the thought of all you'd seen  
I dived into your diary  
where I read that I'd been wrong  
And one eye on the moonlight  
pulled the trigger on this song

You said goodbye to the river deep  
You said goodbye to the mountain steep  
You said goodbye to life and love  
To raving winds around Cape Horn  
To the silence and the albatross  
To all that your adventure was  
And you said goodbye to Shackleton

07 05 09

jim hogg



# Hard Times

Tomorrow's only minutes down the road  
Across this land a storm's about to blow  
In every corner of the globe  
there's trouble coming through  
and the truth is that there's nothing we can do

And looking backwards doesn't make it clear.  
The experts sit and write their histories;  
but strangely none of them agree  
'bout what will happen next,  
and the best they've got to offer is a guess.

But rest assured that someone's getting rich,  
and someone else is thrilling at the kill.  
The knights and dames will have their fill,  
their sons and daughters too,  
while the rest will end up fighting for their due.

So while we can let's make the best  
of all the time that we've got left.  
This life is short and precious love;  
it's time to value what we've got.

And when the hard times get us down  
let you and I go dancing love.  
And when tomorrow brings us doubt  
let you and I keep laughing love.  
For somewhere up ahead of us  
there'll be good times once again, my love;  
there'll be sunshine once again, for us.

2009

jim hogg

# Song For Someone

A sudden lurch and sudden touch  
A quiet street, a nowhere town  
A surge of lust, the taste of blood  
The summer sun had just gone down

I saw your picture on the net  
You signed your name away that day  
Your eyes were flames, your lips were wet  
Your husky whisper far away

I thought about the day I saw  
A flower unfold before my gaze  
But he was first to make the call  
And stood beside you in the frame

But eighteen months before you swore.  
We lay beneath the moon's pale shield  
We lay beside the starlit shore  
And lay down in yon barley field

Then you went back and I moved on  
I rarely thought about those nights  
Except about the friend I'd lost  
And even less: the depths, the heights

And now I'll risk one final glimpse  
And lose myself down that far lane  
Where somehow I was free of guilt  
Where something of us still remains

And all the years that fell between  
Like wind and rain, they wore away  
The precious things that we'd once been  
But not the love that we betrayed

jim hogg

# That Big Hill

With a wide eyed sausage dog  
and an elderberry gun  
I felt the lure of Hollywood  
and set off at a run.  
We lived on porridge oats mixed in  
with dolly mixture sweets.  
We drank the dew from fir tree cones  
and slept beneath tin sheets

And all the would be poets rhymed  
as we passed them in the night.  
Their hats were thirty inches high;  
their eyes were full of sight.  
They murmured incantations like  
&quot;they're off to that big hill&quot;;  
And though the dog was dragging me  
we both were standing still.

But soon we left old scotland's shore  
to a forty gun salute.  
I rowed our row boat backwards  
and the dog smoked a cheroot.  
Lets take the long way round I said  
and take them by surprise.  
I'm sure that dog was smiling  
as he smoked me in the eyes.

In the Bay of Biscay Ed -  
as that sausage dog was called-  
aligned his ears with Africa  
and gradually grew bald.  
The sun was going up and down;  
the sky kept spinning round.  
We sat there playing dominoes  
and couldn't hear a sound.

'til the wind blew cold and fierce  
as we sailed around Cape Horn.  
In waves as high as chestnut trees

Ed's thirteen pups were born.  
We fed them albatross and oats,  
encased in salt and ice.  
And all they had to drink was rain,  
so pure it sure was nice.

With a northwards glance I caught a glimpse  
of something to the west.  
A multi-coloured flying fish  
which hit me on the chest.  
The food was growing scarcer  
with no water left to sup.  
Big scary birds were looking down  
and sharks were looking up,

but the boat was skimming swiftly  
as that baldy dog rowed hard.  
The scenery was picturesque;  
the pups sent off a card.  
But Ed was running out of steam  
and soon began to snore.  
We headed for Galapagos  
to spend a night ashore.

And there on those peculiar isles  
we chose to set up home,  
for I was sick of rowing,  
and the pups were keen to roam.  
And soon that dream of Hollywood  
was something we forgot.  
The pups all grew up happy  
on the far Galapagos.

And the never ending story  
of thirteen pups and Ed,  
it never ended there because  
those pups all bred and bred.  
An ice age came and went before  
they managed to break free.  
Their beagle expedition  
soon was sailing o'er the sea.

(chorus)

Oh they're off to that big hill, big hill,  
all the poets said.

Where all the famous people live  
inside a giant head.

The hill where all the letters stand  
for anything but good.

That wide eyed sausage dog and him  
to look for Hollywood.

2011

jim hogg

# Saturday Night

There was a light in your eyes that night  
Outside the sun slipped out of sight  
And your suitors were circling on the stairs  
To the strains of the Bay City Rollers

You nodded to me and I crossed the floor  
While they stopped to watch us from the door  
As you looked me straight in the eye  
With no façade, and no disguise

And we danced on into the night  
With the full moon on the rise outside  
It was nineteen seventy one  
And Saturday night would soon be gone

And hand in hand we walked to your door  
Where we stood 'til it was almost four  
And I held you close and you held me so tight  
'Til the sun brought the first rays of morning

We met once more down on Hamilton Road  
Where I kissed your lips and let you go  
As you looked me straight in the eye  
With no facade and no goodbye

And we danced on into our lives  
With the full moon on the rise outside  
Far from nineteen seventy one  
when Saturday night was too soon gone

And now when I pass the old Town Hall  
I wonder if you can still recall  
The full moon high in that summer sky  
And the light of love in my eyes

Now we dance on into our lives  
With the full moon on the rise outside  
And we dream of days too long gone  
When Saturday night went on and on

2006

jim hogg



# The Way It Is

The stream winds slow between the fields  
The journey's long but soon the day  
Takes all we sow; all time reveals  
And the birds all sing, the old men say  
That's just the way it is

One sunny day when we were young  
We named the dream, we jumped right in  
We ploughed the sea, the race was run  
And the birds still sing, and old men grin  
That's just the way it is

He waits and waits but things don't change  
Sometimes you win, sometimes you lose  
The poor man's dream was born in chains  
And the old men laugh to hide the truth  
That's just the way it is

Come veil and lace and pin striped suit  
The alter binds but vows still break  
The children pay, they split the loot  
And the cycle just begins again  
That's just the way it is

She's never known another life  
Where drugs and fists were not her fate  
She's doing tricks, she's doing time  
while the caged bird cries we turn away  
That's just the way it is.

The stream winds slow between the fields  
The journey's long but soon the day  
Takes all we sow; all time conceals  
And the birds all sing, the old men say  
That's just the way it is

And that's the way it's always been  
We're born to promises and dreams  
The stars and far horizons call

'Til we hit the ice, or hit the wall  
'Til the river comes and takes it all

21 06 09

jim hogg

# Sudden Words

Sudden words that broke the news,  
Like gunshots in the night  
Still echo from this granite here  
across the silencing of time  
No more we'll chase the wily fox  
Or yon accursed mako shark,  
Shoot chestnuts off the trees  
Or break the ebb while it's still dark;

No more we'll raise our voices  
'Gainst the clamour of the sea  
Watch puffins dive or seagulls wheel,  
Or struggle to be free  
Or frozen dawns on Creechan's stones  
With uncle Paddy Doyle  
Or unforgotten friendships  
Forged in satisfying toil

On through the froth of words we sailed  
Over raging seas beneath  
Yet in the light of all our dreams,  
How little we bequeathed  
Of wisdom and of love, dad,  
And how much did we betray?  
"But if we care and if we try,  
That's what matters" you once said

The bitter mists of selfishness,  
The blindness of ambition  
Both taint this transitory stay  
And haunt our puny vision  
But now the trail is vanishing  
The view is growing clear  
Though trapped, like me, by time and place,  
Your intentions were sincere.

From poaching through Ringuinea,

To the pride of the Green Beret  
From the Rock beneath the Ravens,  
To dreams come true some day  
From this gentle hill you're lying in,  
To the crags where eagles soar  
Although my eyes are open wide,  
Your like I'll see no more.

(chorus)

Images that still shake us,  
Memories that still bind us  
Stories that still take us  
Where only blood can find us  
Though the world you knew is fading fast  
And nothing stays the same  
Old friends fall but our sons and daughters'  
Hopes and dreams remain.

2006

jim hogg

# Renegade

We sealed it blood on blood  
A thousand years ago  
And swore allegiance to a code  
When we were only eight years old

We fought side by side  
Under golden suns  
For the honour of the tribe  
With home-made wooden guns

We learned the rules of life  
With slings and bows and stones  
We skated on the thinnest ice  
And never thought of keeping scores

And so we started on our song  
And sailed the ocean wide  
The game was lost before too long  
I was first to choose the lie

And yes the choice was mine  
For somehow I mislaid  
The bonds I swore I'd always prize  
And all those vows betrayed

Now we nod and just say "hi";  
For all we had now ends there  
And time, it just keeps passing by  
With no prospect of surrender

But we were young and free back then  
I vowed to play it straight  
I thought we'd live and die as friends  
It all looks simple when you're eight

jim hogg

# Autumn In Glasgow

The chestnuts are changing colour at last  
on that astonishing tree down the street,  
and if I sound glad then maybe I am,  
but some of that gladness is bittersweet

For that was the only summer I've missed;  
foretelling the flattening of seasons to come,  
when light through the glass and utility bills  
conjure up bluebells and songs we once sung.

But my particular summer's long past.  
Crepuscular shades and dry rusted leaves  
and intimations of winter's cold blast,  
combine with decline that's gathering speed;

and caught by surprise by this sudden decay,  
I'd like to be fixed; I'd like some more time,  
and grope for the slippery reins that might change  
this constantly forming jigsaw of life,

here at the edge of my falling away,  
here where I managed to get so much wrong:  
this life, where beauty and wonder assail  
so sweetly, so close to the end of the song.

220819

jim hogg

# The Day We Talk

Some kind of lightning will occur  
in several places all at once;  
the seas will stir, and fish will surge,  
so raptly from the deeps of us.

Old enemies will make their peace,  
in towns awash with sudden light,  
and aging couples in the street  
will fondly hold each other tight.

A little blaze will dance and swoon,  
and colours charge the atmosphere.  
Our worlds will split like ripened fruit,  
and thrill will peel away the years.

Or maybe only worldly things,  
quite deaf to all we have to say -  
like soft, determined leaves of spring,  
or crystal webs of falling flakes -

will populate the common day.  
While little birds of meaning pierce  
the weavings of sly vanity,  
the brittle shells of years and fears,

and armed with only sparks of light,  
connect the world, ignite the strands,  
and sill to sill, make daring flights,  
into each other's hinterlands.

jim hogg



# Valmara

The mice, the mice, the mice,  
are coming through the walls.  
The dogs, the well trained dogs,  
are bursting all the balls.

The pawns, the pawns, the pawns  
were joining all the dots.  
But news, bewitching news,  
has tied them all in knots.

The flood, the flood, the flood  
is filling every head.  
The truth, the boring truth,  
was cast aside instead.

The bulls, the bulls, the bulls,  
have turned each other loose.  
The brave, the noble brave,  
are heading for the noose.

The days, the days, the days,  
swept up and down and round.  
They rushed, they always rushed,  
but never made a sound.

The dreams, the dreams, the dreams,  
mistaken for the view.  
The poor, the endless poor,  
Valmara waits for you.

We wait, we wait, we wait,  
like seagulls on a rock.  
The chance, the clear cut chance,  
we never took, is gone.

jim hogg

# All That We Stood On

The lever was pulled and an absence came up  
I missed you that evening for all of my life  
Machinery was whirling and tumbling, and time,  
adapted the future and emptied the cup

We motored our ways away from each other  
and must have affected everyone else  
with ramifications that none of us felt  
I never again saw your brothers or mother

We tried to unripple the ripples of change  
but all that we stood on no longer was fast  
as everything fell to the butterfly's blast  
And not even love was out of its range

jim hogg

# Converge

I

A hungering for life remains  
but I'm no ripe and juicy peach,  
awash in fleeting innocence;  
and don't expect to sweetly grieve

for infinitely tender love,  
again; the kind that frees and lets  
the galaxies within us, flood  
with light, and all that's dark, relent

- you know that kind of passing flame,  
the swallow's flight, the gemstone glint,  
the memory that calls your name,  
the glance, the touch, the merest hint,

when almost every vivid thing  
seems preordained to thrill just us:  
that cheesy song, the golden ring;  
no words that can express enough.

But, out the other side of that,  
eventually, it might seem right  
to write the whole thing off at last,  
when all I'm packing is decline.

And so this exile, here and now.  
I spend my time just making do  
with movie lives, and playing out  
the options that I didn't choose:

to marry young or not at all  
to join the ranks or drown at sea,  
to find out who I really was,  
and if not me, then who I'd be?

Or, of the faces that come back,  
what other steps were mine to take:

a word unsaid, a different path,  
or would the end have been the same?

## II

There have been moments I admit,  
when might have been meant more to me  
than all that destiny might bring,  
and comfort in that fantasy

immobilised me for a while;  
then out of morketiden came  
a forward focused appetite:  
the strangest thing, in middle age.

And after several years of that  
the past was gone enough to seem  
a safer, less bewitching ark  
of stuff that once seemed all too real:

so thickly strewn with hopes and dreams,  
and flaws and biases that blind,  
and arrogance, I barely gleaned  
the basics of this fleeting life

that led me to these words I've wrung  
from what remains. I've tried to hold  
to things I've seen and things I've done,  
to what I've kept and what I've sold,

although the truth is bigger than  
the stories that our senses tell,  
and more peculiar than I'd grant  
if I was younger, I suspect.

## III

So many triggers call the past,  
that sanctuary of lessons learned  
or things I didn't understand  
back where the future first was penned,

and built upon the past that's gone,  
those times I've striven to explore  
by means of lines I've scattered on  
the sea that washed away the shore;

the sea that dreams away my nights  
that swells and sways around the bays  
and ragged cliffs I left behind:  
that faithful lover's harsh embrace.

Betrayal's been a part of it.  
In many little ways or worse,  
I failed to keep some promises.  
And some things can't be reimbursed.

Yet all the while, the days click by.  
The guilt accrues and weighs against  
the good we've done and times we've tried;  
but life is more than moral sense.

It's mountains and it's seas of thrill,  
whole continents of joy and pain.  
It's countries and it's wines of wit;  
it's streams of art and works of rain.

It's rare and cataclysmic love  
and all the failure that we need;  
it's all that's gentle, all that's tough,  
it's every wonder, every seed,

the light that's in a baby's eyes,  
the death and torture of disease,  
the precious moment of surprise,  
that cute mirage that seems so real.

Too much to hold it all at once  
we're winnowing unknowingly.  
We learn our steps and then we dance,  
the dance that solves the mystery

of who, and what, and why we are,  
if only we could break the code,

that cracks the present and the past -  
the key to every future road.

Yet if we could, who'd say we should  
make road-kill out of wondering?  
Imagine life without pursuit;  
omniscience ends everything.

But here and now, we're pretty safe.  
We know much less than most believe.  
Between arrival and escape  
we barely learn enough to see.

Life's what it is then, as it slips,  
unnoticed into each new phase,  
experiences where we drift,  
and age, but never really change:

we gradually become ourselves;  
our engines wing us to our dreams  
or into shame; so much depends  
on factors scattered out of reach

- and some of those are deep within,  
including gods we forged to serve  
as clever explanations, which,  
once birthed, soon seized the reins and kept

and keep, surprisingly, great swathes  
of helpless people on their knees,  
though some ascend to higher states:  
illusion's power can release

the very best we have to give.  
And who can calculate the cost,  
the balance sheet of good and ill  
the breach between the real and false?

And somewhere in that mess of things  
where chemicals and wishes merge  
reality both breaks and builds:  
sensation's where they all converge,

where love erupts, abides or falls  
and gloriously shades awhile  
deep into every kind of cause  
and all the mysteries of life

Like loaded dice we hit the wheel  
It spins a while and loads some more  
until it's time to play for real  
and up, or down, we hit the floor.

IV

I pictured vast arrangements in  
the depths beyond this planet's sky  
I saw the multitude of things  
that hurtle, spin, begin and die;

an infinite parade of flames,  
and frozen oceans without end,  
that break imagination's frames,  
and more than just one universe.

"There's no such thing as time" I said  
Things happen and we play our part  
upon the ever flowing edge,  
this present where we always are.

I'm waiting there as if I know  
exactly why I watch the sky.  
A glimpse of something long ago,  
a pointless truth, or crucial lie?

Or moistened lips, or ancient ship  
adrift across a sea of stars;  
a single ghost or well worn clip  
of footage from the way things are?

A surfer on that moving wave  
I might have scribbled on some wall  
or, flickering vague within some cave,  
I might have heard a seabird call:

tomorrow's song, or yesterday's?  
I find I can't quite work out which,  
within this stream of changing shapes:  
the things I used to fear were fixed.

The future and the past, at last,  
begin suspiciously to look  
too much alike; too ruined, dark  
and worlds away from every book

I ever read when I was keen  
to master all the arts of life.  
Like vague and inconclusive scenes  
in photos shot on moonless nights

there's nothing to be seen except  
the very things we choose to see  
beyond the outlines starlight left  
of aging faces and the sea.

V

And in the shadows, many worlds  
that might have been, or still might be  
each moment ripe with stones to turn  
and options that remain unseen.

With hints of chaos threatening,  
unknowns surround our every move,  
and so we've fashioned shapely things  
to keep the night from breaking through

from elsewhere in this universe.  
but maybe most of all from deep  
within the loaded mind that tends  
to keep its secrets out of reach.

No comet lights that alien night,  
no streaking solitary dance,  
of silver sparks and blazing ice.  
On mescaline I might advance



deep into cavernous concerns  
through unseen furniture of mind  
and exit stuffed with things I've learned:  
of light that hints at signs of sight!

But there's no mirror that reveals  
beyond the mocking work of age  
and even madness cannot see  
the sleight of mind behind the veil.

The architecture of the self  
lies crouched within the laws of chance  
and out we spring, both code and flesh.  
I guess I must have wanted once

to be much more than fate would grant,  
but not for long I'd argue now.  
Ecclesiastes ended that,  
and pledges that endured somehow

(or so my vanity suggests.  
Temptation preys on history  
I constantly remind myself,  
but still I'm taking liberties)

and questions I should answer here.  
Unravelling takes a lot of lines,  
and maybe I should start with me:  
the trickiest of all the mines

I'll have to make my way back down,  
through bottles smashed against the bricks,  
across from Maggie Gibson's house,  
to test my moral reasoning;

and through a neighbour's weekly rounds;  
the Finlay girl who crossed the street  
to bring me all the comic books  
and latest issue' magazines

that opened up a wealth of worlds,

although I hadn't looks to suit,  
or tendency to overturn  
the rock hard rules I couldn't brook:

the expectations of the time.  
Plus, there was always work to do.  
It kept me from the uncrossed line,  
or shaping forces that shape who

or even what, or still more, why,  
though many paths seemed mine to take;  
the world invades us on the fly,  
and genes parade us if they dare,

against the trends that rule the age.  
I shaped myself to fit the grooves,  
as if those moves were mine to make,  
and slayed the lives I couldn't choose.

The quandaries of who we are,  
remain for millions everywhere.  
The bravest step across the bar;  
while legions never make the break.

VI

My father was a complex man,  
a stranger mostly to his kids;  
though those who knew him least, expand  
the most on what he was and did;

and I was there through most of it,  
and some was bad, and some was good  
I heard the words, I saw the slips;  
I saw him age, and leave too soon.

Like most of us he tried his best,  
and slowly left the worst behind.  
But honesty and ruthlessness,  
ensured he paid a living price

for all the failings he embraced;

a stoic strength I loved him for,  
a strength I've tried to emulate,  
although free will is still at war.

I have a million memories,  
so many stills and movie clips,  
but all those long dead witnesses  
to scenes they shared, and played, or snipped,

could once have filled the picture out,  
for no-one ever really knows  
the inner life, its deeps and doubt,  
of even those we think as close.

There are no formulas, nor maps  
to guide us through life's challenges.  
Though half a lifetime has elapsed,  
I still don't see him distantly:

I carry both the best and worst  
of all he was within me yet,  
and age and life have slowly burned  
the phasic anger I once felt.

His compliments were very rare  
- although I always gave my best.  
I still remember what and where:  
the rock beneath the Raven's nest

for boatmanship that got us through,  
the bottom of the Stair Street stairs:  
&quot;they couldnae harrow where you've ploored&quot;;,  
and this, &quot;you could go all the way&quot;;

when ringside back at number four,  
he stood and watched me sparring with  
the sturdy guy who lived next door.  
Aird Crescent brings back many things.

Besides first love and childhood spills,  
there was that massive pot of soup  
he made from hare just freshly killed,

and no, you've guessed: it wasn't good!

And lifted hands, and thund'rous moods,  
the work that never seemed to end,  
the orders I could not refuse,  
but there were good times even then.

There was a warmth that spread at times  
through everything we did as one,  
out working in the freezing tide,  
or at the table, having fun

to stories from another world;  
his memories of friends he'd lost,  
or buttered toast he'd lightly burned  
when wielding yon long handled fork.

And later, when they'd settled in  
that house amongst the trees and stars  
I came to see how sensitive  
he was, behind that calmed facade.

I'm thankful I still have him near,  
in all I am and all he was;  
and hold my mother just as dear  
as much in mem'ry as in loss.

## VII

Like many of that era gone,  
she didn't have a lot of say,  
and mainly she was swept along:  
to Innermessan's moonlit bay

to gather whelks on frosty nights,  
to tattie picking at Kirr'nrae,  
in conversations ranging wide,  
through politics to setting snares,

from shooting tins nailed to a tree,  
from cooking meals and washing clothes,  
to struggling just to make ends meet,

to darning socks and scrubbing floors,

to raising half a dozen kids.

She worked a miracle for years.

I stand in awe of all she did,  
and very rarely saw the tears

she must have had the urge to shed,  
a thousand times or maybe more,  
and all that gratitude we felt,  
when we'd grown old enough to know,

was felt too late, and left unshown.

The trivia of life betrays.

Of course we thanked her now and then,  
but didn't really turn and face

in depth, the hardships she endured.

But never did she say a word

about her kids' ingratitude

- regret's not punishment enough.

I'm grateful most of all for friends

who made her struggle bearable;

when they had time alone to spend,

freed from the stress her life entailed,

when she could laugh and shed the load,  
that never-ending duty brings.

If there had been some way to know

would she have swerved the vows and rings?

Her end, at best, was merciless,

like penance for her suffering;

week after week of living hell,

relieved by killing sedatives.

A life so harsh just thrown aside.

What kind of deity would ask

beloved subjects to abide,

such misery before they pass?

The very notion is absurd,  
and yet that madness stalks the earth,  
as if some greatness is at work,  
to sift and steer to "worthiness";

to trade redemption for our sin,  
to loose the righteous on the world;  
and billions have been taken in  
by myths that flood their lives like blood.

And so it's over and she's gone.  
She had so little of her own,  
except for chores and some sad songs  
until she found herself alone.

Unable to begin again  
she lived her life through all of us,  
and though we'd visit now and then,  
we simply didn't give enough.

And now she's scattered far and wide,  
a meagre tribute meant to link  
the lonely furrow of her life,  
to hard earned meaning that persists,

though only just, while some can catch  
a glimpse of who their mother was.  
But even that fades all too fast:  
the ground she tilled will soon be lost.

## VIII

There's no such thing as randomness  
amongst the universe's deeds.  
We can't escape cause and effect,  
but all the interlinking feeds

that weave the future from our past,  
are too involved for us to trace..  
It's mainly groping in the dark;  
the here and now and yesterday

make Joyce's epic trivial.  
And all our kids must somehow forge  
from almost naught some kind of path  
from mystery and inner urge,

the apparatus of the age,  
and extricate themselves from all  
the daft ideas and mistakes,  
with which we flawed our own new dawn.

And yet, we gained experience,  
we learned some lessons here and there,  
those costly little sparks of sense  
that help sometimes to light the way.

But that far river where we learn,  
is one that only they can reach.  
We dare not help by carrying;  
some lessons only life can teach.

## IX

It makes a fine excuse for sure,  
but youth is sunlight, youth is verve.  
Life's obstacles were only tools  
for demonstrating endless strength.

Or so it seemed for quite a while,  
as I was hunting whale like dreams,  
though even then that harpoon line  
was whizzing through the air for me.

There was no glory crouched in wait,  
nor any I'd have valued then.  
The simplest learning comes so late.  
Those dreams were nebulous at best.

And hopes, I must have had a few.  
But not for wealth or privilege,  
or even means to raise the view.  
I think I lacked a cutting edge.

My elbows weren't hard enough  
to put myself before the crowd -  
the boomers who went hustling up,  
in tune with all they'd disavowed,

and found out who they really were.  
But being poor was no defeat,  
until my children needed help.  
The game had changed and my ideals

were suddenly a handicap.  
Though all the same I should have known.  
The sixties were a false alarm.  
The right was always headed home:

the signs were ominous for years;  
since Wilson couldn't hold the line.  
Divide and rule still wins the field.  
The centre keeps on drifting right.

And yes, I should have been prepared,  
no matter how the runes are read.  
Instead of making do today.  
I should have planned ahead instead.

And now it's done. I got it wrong,  
and welcome guilt won't pay the bills.  
Nor are there answers in remorse,  
or crying over milk that's spilled.

The rains and reins of poverty  
teach many lessons as they lash.  
The old discover empathy;  
the young the kind of shame that lasts.

X

Between the work and vain ideals  
there was a little envy too.  
Those guys who seemed to know no fear  
of girls: I envied what they knew,



and envied most their confidence.  
Their snogging skills and chat up lines  
were mysteries beyond my ken.  
A mutual crush in sixty nine

resulted in a crushing thrill;  
we must have eyed each other up  
a thousand times to no avail.  
I never could get close enough

to say a single loving word  
because I made a run for it,  
each time our longing eyes were locked  
in pointless, gorgeous agony.

That storm of ecstasy and hell  
blew over all too soon, and took  
the pressure off for quite a spell,  
and so I turned to reading books

until the spring of seventy one,  
when all at once a pencilled note  
quite stopped me in my bookish tracks.  
It seems I floated some girl's boat.

And so I did what I was told,  
and met her face to face next day,  
when she adroitly used a hold  
that drove my lips towards her face,

and less adroitly did we kiss,  
for I was inexperienced.  
I might have blown it, might have missed,  
but still remember where and when

my lips first kissed a young girl's lips.  
Yet after merely four short weeks  
it seems she thought it fit to quit,  
a guy so shy he couldn't speak!

Or, not with verve enough to spark  
the kind of thrill she wanted then.

But in the Kinema we danced  
and many times we seemed to spend

the sweetest moments arm in arm  
and underneath the late May sun  
we lay stretched out on new mown grass  
although I wasn't up to snuff!

Yes, I was disappointed, but  
the offers started coming through,  
and bit by bit I made the cut,  
though even yet, amongst the few

I think of fondly from the past,  
that certain girl who kissed me first,  
and held me tight, and took my hand,  
still holds a place where flames still burn.

XI

And life was good those next few years.  
We cut down trees and chopped up logs,  
we went to sea and hauled up creels,  
and several girls had come and gone.

I did the things that young men do,  
but for the most part stayed too shy  
to ever make a daring move,  
thus many chances passed me by.

Though shyness breeds regret, I'd guess,  
it sometimes over compensates,  
and makes the odd expensive mess.  
And though there's more I'd like to say

about that complicated time,  
I've covered most of it elsewhere.  
The next big thing I left behind  
was home, a kind of great escape.

I didn't plan it by myself.  
Though there were many reasons why

I should have made that crucial step,  
the shifting sands of life contrived

to set me off towards career,  
towards the building of a home,  
and from the sea I loved so dear,  
until I shrugged and hit the road.

Yet once again it looks as if  
events were more in charge than me,  
though in those moments, I admit,  
I thought that I was really free.

And that was quite a backward move.  
I'd let myself be taken in  
by arguments quite far from proved,  
and blindness that emotion brings.

For ideology invades  
and occupies the mind by stealth.  
It binds emotion to its frames,  
and makes of us a partial lens.

We turn our eyes from all that jars  
with our new prism on this life,  
and go to war with those who can't  
see why they're wrong, and why we're right!

And out there in the world we've made,  
there seems to be some kind of slide,  
towards intolerance that hates,  
because we're loath to see both sides.

We're loath to think we might be wrong,  
because emotion holds us to  
that creed to which our mind belongs,  
that's colonised us through and through.

Subconsciously we're in its thrall.  
We need to find ourselves a fix:  
inoculation that explains  
just how it works, to save our kids

from all the pain division brews.  
But now I'm running out of lines,  
it's time to mention how time flew:  
so fast, and yet it seems a while

## XII

since I remember picking up,  
that tartan knife beside the road,  
when I was very, very young  
- when I was only three years old,

and never thought to look beyond  
the very moment I was in.  
Though sixty years have come and gone  
a living thread binds all of it,

connected to a web of threads  
that weave together all of us,  
across this frantic sea of ends,  
this teeming edge of what's to come:

too many things to comprehend,  
but some will rise and some will fall,  
and some will build and some will rend  
and some forget and some recall.

Though soon or late we all will stand  
and think of all the boats we've burned  
and cast a rueful glance at last  
beyond the tide that never turns

Yet all of it is aftermath;  
to choice of sorts or accident.  
As parents seed new parents and  
we rarely think about consent

But all the same I have to ask:  
what if we chose to quit the wheel?  
Imagine our lot was the last  
to laugh, to cry, to think, to feel,

behold the stars, the breaking waves  
the falling leaves, or feel the breeze;  
to fall in love and meet the gaze  
of love returned, or bittersweet?

The childhood taken by disease  
The mind that's gone, the drawn out death?  
Or broken bodies on the fields  
of war that never seems to end

Yet even venting such a view  
is asking for an avalanche  
of outrage, pity and abuse  
across the instinct strengthened fence.

### XIII

I still have hopes for happiness,  
for both my kids and those they love  
- though that's not something I expect  
I haven't fully given up.

She's out there somewhere, and she's free,  
and I'll be walking by the sea.  
The sun will set behind the hill,  
and once, she would have said "I will",

but now it's likely that she'll say  
"I'm sorry but I'd like to know  
whatever happened to your hair?  
It's vanishing like melting snow!"

It's not that I'm not envious,  
of older guys with bushy manes.  
It couldn't be more obvious:  
my hair grows rare and I'm still vain.

This second dose of envy comes  
nostalgically with memories,  
of plumes of hair too thick to brush,  
and fond mirage of yesterdays.

Those yesterdays when I last rowed  
a rowing boat around the Mull  
from Portankil along the shore  
beneath the cliff, beneath the gulls.

And hauled the creels from end to end  
when I was less than seventeen.  
It's maybe time to start again  
with just a rowing boat and sweeps

without regrets and worldly cares  
in this new world that's forming now  
- this everlasting present where  
the past and future take a bow -

and, sans ambition, leave the stage,  
to maybe kindness, maybe love;  
a gradual turning of the page;  
at last I might have said enough.

090518 (revised version - 080320)

jim hogg

# The Rose Of Inch

Tonight I went walking in the moonlight  
Amongst the leaves still falling from the trees  
Through echoes coming from another lifetime  
To spend a little time just missing you

The scented lanes that wind around the loch side  
Ablaze in spring with shades of every hue  
They've never felt so lonely in the moonlight  
As if the lanes of Inch still miss you too

The haunted pond down by the ruined Castle  
Now holds a vague reflection of the moon  
And shimmers in the mist as if recalling  
The last time I came strolling here with you

I'll always remember what it felt like  
To taste the lips that once so softly kissed  
As moonlight slowly shades into the dawning  
I lose myself in love so sweetly missed

I spoke to some old friends yesterday, here  
We touched on all the changes that we've seen  
And just like me they wonder how you are, dear,  
And wonder if you miss our fields of green

(chorus)

Our village lights were shining in the distance  
I couldn't bear to walk there without you  
It's been so long since we were there together  
I'm guessing that the folks there miss you too

jim hogg

# We Are The Bbc

We are the cherished BBC, a weel regarded company  
We're known across the whole wide world for oor impartiality  
For we've got ears and eyes ye ken, weel tuned to tell what's true  
An' on Buchanan street that day there was nae trace of 'yes' or blue  
An' you might hae some pictures o' the overflowin' street  
An' maybe friends o' yours will swear, that they were there, in the heat  
All waving flags and singing sangs, but we've been telt tae say  
Buchanan street was empty, folks, 'twas jist anither saturday  
Yon flags you didnae see, and a' yon folks who wer'nae there  
You must have been imaginin, for they were a' elsewhere  
Yer Scottish Spring, yer Scottish dreams, we cannae let them be  
But a' the same we're grateful for yer tv licence fee  
In rags our reputation's blawin' doon Buchanan Street  
But a' the same we'll hound ye for yer tv licence fee

2014

jim hogg



# A Vivid Rainbow

It came upon me gradually,  
a long delayed reaction to  
what seemed like minor slips that night -  
in winter many years ago.

My ego and my ignorance,

were glory bound or so they thought,  
on notions that made little sense,  
derived from all I knew of love:  
much less than I felt for myself,  
but didn't realise it then.

Her hair was black, her eyes were blue  
she lived just yards across the street.  
we sat together back in school,  
when we were only ten years old:  
the classic childhood sweetheart trope.

It never quite got off the ground  
'til late in nineteen seventy.  
Through ups and downs we somehow wound  
our way to something pivotal,  
a make or break appointment in

a Morris Oxford motor car,  
before the end of seventy three,  
a street away from where we'd met.

It didn't really go to plan:  
a single kiss, some civil words

some witless words, and then goodbye.  
She exited the car and walked,  
and that was all 'til Janet's Lounge,  
where she was shaping up to wed  
a guy I knew, and I was with

the butcher's daughter and a friend.  
We swapped fond glances all night long,  
more sweet than bitter I recall,

and then at closing time, an end  
to what I'd seen as destiny,

a love no severing could thwart.  
Without a touch, without a word  
we parted, and the dream was gone.  
And so the other dreams began,  
the kind that seemed so real they kept

their vice-like grip for days on end  
- a stunning aftermath I hid,  
for speaking up just didn't fit.  
In time the gap between them grew.  
The flame burns up, the flame burns down:

a very inconvenient truth  
when love is young and hopes are high,  
when beauty peaks and wilting looms.  
We make our choices and endure  
the challenges the future springs,

but underneath the fronts we see  
flow deeper currents, secret things,  
that lie in wait, or drive us on.  
I wasn't blind enough to miss,  
the urge to leave my second thoughts

and reconstructions of the past,  
as far behind me as I could.  
And there were other matters too:  
my urge to match my father's heart,  
as I'd misread it in my youth.

And so I sprinted off towards -  
although I didn't know it then -  
concerns I meant to leave behind.  
To bolster my escape I built  
defences that would serve me well,

for more than thirty years in which  
I lived an ordinary life.  
I trialled myself against the sea:

between the peaks beneath the nest,  
where Ravens soar above the cliff;

in twenty feet of breaking wave  
off Portavaddie's stony bay;  
or wholly in the hands of fate,  
I hurtled headlong at the rocks  
on Laggantulloch 'til my luck,

again saw fit to thread me through,  
just as it did through all those years,  
as life pitched all the normal stuff  
that ordinary people face:  
a broken marriage, broken plans,

two kids with broken dreams and hearts,  
and somewhere in the midst of that  
a new beginning that survived,  
despite the branchings of the past,  
'til middle age and selfishness

(like vanity, it never quits)  
just squandered everything we had.  
But after that, a reckoning:  
the unexpected yesterday  
came lapping all around my mind.

That black haired, blue eyed girl I'd known,  
full forty years or more before,  
erupted from old memories  
with energy to spare it seems,  
compelling me to write myself

straight into on-line infamy.  
A castle of commitment raised  
in sentimental tunes and words,  
I cleared my head and swept the view  
across the past, with different eyes.

I saw a walking mystery,  
not just to folks who knew me well  
(that's never true, I'm fairly sure

of anyone by anyone) ,  
but more especially to me.

So many things I thought were real  
were more mirage than certainty,  
and so I had to travel back,  
to take another look around  
that shifting geography of mine;

which led me to this fluxing spot,  
this therapeutic vantage point,  
which might itself conceal much more  
than all it deigns to demonstrate,  
beyond my blindness, and the pride

I'd duelled with almost all my days;  
and questions that need answering  
if understanding's not a vice,  
and meaning has a role to play  
in this "poking at things with sticks";

interrogation of the past,  
in search of atonement at best,  
or form of words I can live with,  
for sacred things we violate.  
I fled to every battle once:

ambition led, I led the charge,  
and proved the wholly worthless case  
that I was only who I was;  
too driven to be really free.  
In courage and in truth I matched

the expectations of the time,  
and, maybe his, I'd like to think,  
but just how much of that was mine?  
The choices that we're moved to make,  
have roots too deep and wide to claim,

exclusively for what we are,  
more than a superficial role.  
A creature partly acting out

the consequential actions of  
a thousand generations of,

free will that's anything but free.  
And yet each choice is ours alone,  
in that vague instant when we leave  
our temporary stain upon  
the traces that are all but gone.

And now there's no-one left to blame  
- if any kind of blame is fair?  
He's gone beneath the sod and myth,  
and looking better by the day,  
as I fall ever deeper down,

into this fraught unravelling.  
This mess of criss-crossed chaos where  
the only life that's truly real,  
now seems to matter least of all.  
But anyway, somewhere too far

down one too many dead end streets,  
I found my feet and turned to chase,  
the falling leaves I didn't rate,  
the ghostly shapes I once outran;  
to resurrect the evergreens,

forget-me-nots and secret notes,  
I'd struggled vainly to cremate;  
as revelation seemed to loom.  
That shadow of the cliff still falls  
across McTaggart's steadfast rock,

and Razor Bills in flight still skim  
the ribboned surface of the tide.  
And It's no effortless affair.  
There's desperation in the air,  
at least until they pass us by,

and in the beating wings that strain,  
an era echoes strangely on:  
a symphony of symmetry

imagined by a youthful me,  
a moonlit flight o'er paradise

- a fantasy of breaking through -  
the lonely haunting melody  
of far off Castle Kennedy,  
where cackling geese in ragged lines  
sweep in, and come cascading down

upon the cool and moonlit waves  
that lap against those winding ways,  
the honeysuckle lanes of Inch.  
It's not by chance I'm there again.  
For every choice I ever made,

soon led me back down that same road,  
towards the many things that sprung  
from our short sheltering between  
the railway line and song of lochs,  
to Maggie Gibson's missing gate,

where we would meet beneath the light,  
to lagan from abandoned dreams,  
betrayal of a blood sealed bond,  
some promises I should have kept,  
and love, the most betrayed of all,

and all at once the crashing of  
tin cans behind a limousine;  
to grains of sand through helpless hands;  
and worst of all - for quite a while -  
the headline news of her regret.

For that place was, I can't deny,  
the troubling flames that youth ignites,  
a gathering of lovely ghosts,  
an Armageddon, and a place  
of sanctuary for souls that crave

the clumsy dance of memory -  
like all those winter nights with you,  
the leaves that left the trees unbid

and all their promise for decay,  
that chain of moments passing through,

and marking out the ways we passed  
so gently from each others' arms,  
into the arms that hold us now.  
But time, it ripples on of course,  
and all the calm that came at last,

came much too late to steer me from  
temptations coming from within:  
that rock beneath the ravens nest,  
that wall of water waiting still,  
beneath those wary midnight wings;

that sinless savage splendour which  
still calls me back there, now and then,  
to test those reckless odds again -  
a lust for judgement maybe, or,  
some personal imperative

that steers us to the harvest sown,  
so recklessly, so guiltlessly,  
along the fragile way we've shaped  
along the way that shapes in turn.  
And shaped, and shaping, I moved on,

attrition building, running down,  
'til, in the end, it came to pass:  
platoons of memories marched through  
those worn out pointless palisades,  
to leave me tattered for a while,

then almost free, it seemed, at last,  
amongst the crumbling windswept wastes  
of castles built on shifting sands  
That kind of desolation scares,  
or maybe not when blithely scanned

with hindsight from a cooler height.  
But though I'm safely distant now,  
from all that turmoil and regret,

I've no contempt for sentiments  
that soared with tenderness, or burned

with grief and passion unassuaged.  
The wild and ragged bush of youth  
is brief and glorious and fraught  
and often blinded by itself,  
until fell time obliges us

to turn and look at all it was,  
with all the honesty we can:  
not through the rosy tinted glass  
we gazed upon the future with.  
Regrets are guaranteed it seems;

redemption's not so easy though;  
nor any kind of certainty  
that clarity is what it is,  
or wisdom's years have more to say  
than kindness is the finest thing,

and next to that, well, maybe love.  
A vivid rainbow arcs above  
an afternoon of rain and shine;  
there's plans afoot to build a bridge,  
just half a mile or so from here,

across the cold, uncaring Clyde,  
where ferry boats have plied their trade  
since humankind first learned to dream.

2007 (revised Dec 2018)

jim hogg



# Against The Chill

Oh fragile bird your feathers seem  
to bind us to the lifting air  
they sift the simplest light, and weave  
a thousand rich and shifting shades  
and summon spring.

You flit between the hawthorn trees  
that stood alone upon the hill  
an ambush crouched within the breeze  
a wall of warmth against the chill  
of solitude

Oh fragile thing, your fragile song  
compels the stars to flood the night  
and all the world to dance along  
through all the moments of the lives  
you've set aflame.

jim hogg

# Roll Of The Dice

A pencilled note, a photograph.  
A bloom you seeded long ago  
still sprouts most years on this old path,

but probably you'll never know.  
You made your move a few days late  
or willingly I would have walked,

my hand in yours, out through the gate  
and down the road towards the Loch,  
where cold waves kissed the Cockle shore.

We could have stood against the wall,  
we could have held each other close,  
and maybe more, or maybe not.

But looking at this print of you  
I wish somehow we could have tried.  
Those moments in the Fine Fare queue

when twenty years had passed us by  
were like a raw electric shock.  
I saw your hands shake, and your voice

went missing when you tried to talk,  
as I passed panic off as poise.  
And all my life I've loved your hair.

I watched it bouncing as you crossed  
the sports field at the Glenluce Fair,  
a further fifteen years beyond

that little rolling of the dice.  
And that was long before these thoughts  
of different tracks, of different lives

of different ways of getting lost  
where cold waves kiss the Cockle shore,  
where warmly up against the wall,

we might have held each other close,  
my fingers through your flame red locks.

091018

jim hogg

# Taylor Street

The window looks the same still  
And the frontage hasn't changed.  
From end to end the street belongs  
To nineteen eighty one.  
The Forty Seven on the wall  
Was there when eagerly we walked,  
That garden path to turn the key  
Of the door to our first home.  
And not a single car went past  
As I stood silently between  
The played out possibilities  
And more enticing might have been  
That somehow slipped just out of reach.

And down towards the railway line  
I strolled through faded images  
Into the lane to Cochno St  
And the tennis courts where I once played  
With my old man in eighty two,  
My back to Aberconway Street  
As he served with the sun  
And my mother sat with you.

I stepped out into Barns Street then  
And drove off slowly past the pitches  
Where you almost crashed the car.  
I could hear your fits of laughter  
As I turned towards the Clyde

Now, I'm in tears behind the wheel  
through Yoker on Dumbarton Road,  
trying to find my way again  
back into my way out.

jim hogg

# Your Red Coat

I dreamed of you again last night,  
back when we both lived where the boats  
once ferried restless people's lives,  
between the lashed and broken coasts  
of countries that were never quite  
their own. You wore a summer coat

that covered only perfect skin  
and perfect curves on four inch heels,  
a little twist of daring thrill,  
and just a trace of eager fear.  
I always knew that was your thing,  
but selfishly would only heed

my own. The sun was down behind  
the old town hall, where you and I  
were wet, and swept off in the tide  
that ferried us beyond the shy  
and broken borders of the lives  
we'd known, until the cops arrived.

You buttoned up your coat and stood  
defiant as they questioned us,  
as if we'd trashed some sacred rule,  
'til finally they'd seen enough.  
We walked back home past your old school,  
our tongues too fast, our faces flushed.

jim hogg

# Skeeter Davis In Drummore

You could have been my Patsy Cline.  
You had your hair done in her style.  
The same dark eyes and there you stood,  
all dressed in grey and singing lines  
from 50s songs that still were cool,  
way back in nineteen seventy four,  
in the upstairs lounge in Drummore.

The place was packed and I was sat  
beside your mother and your dad.  
You only sang three songs that night -  
enough to keep them coming back -  
then took your seat tight by my side.  
It's strange to watch it all from here,  
so far away but yet so clear.

For fifteen months I held your hand,  
and find it hard to understand,  
the choices that I made back then.  
I never really had a plan.  
Life came along and I was swept,  
so far away I lost all sight  
of what most mattered in my life.

And drifted on 'til eighty six,  
until I saw you drinking with  
your husband in the long closed Club;  
complete with silver threads and rings,  
and saw it all then, clear enough,  
as if I'd been transported back  
with every memory intact.

It took a while to work it through:  
I once tried dancing next to you,  
then drove along Mount Vernon hill,  
but there was nothing I could do:  
you'd moved on and your life was filled  
with all the things that you'd once sought,  
and would have had, 'til I forgot.

120518

jim hogg

# Snow On The River

It was back when skies were bluer and hearts were worn on sleeves  
I'd fallen for the first time, into love, head over heels  
Then chased its shadow, traced its trail, and held it here and there:  
This dream that sparks such blinding flames and haunts us everywhere

You were dancing at a discotheque behind old Eldon Street  
The wars of love were almost done but kept us on our feet  
I wore McKechnie's tartan to the drumming of retreat  
I knew too well that one more touch would lead me to defeat

You were there at this beginning when we sat side by side.  
We walked the endless circle but slipped through the ties that bind.  
We both had dreams and love enough though that's no guarantee;  
Not every river flows until it flows into the sea

It was long ago on Gibson Street and you were on my arm  
In snowflakes falling on your hair outside the Shishmahal  
I saw forever in your eyes to music in your voice  
Before I realised that I would have to make a choice

In winter now I hear the wind so softly call your name  
And through the Kirk of Inch I've chased your shadow to the gate  
I dream a face in photofit before me where I sit  
At last I think I recognise just who the photo fits

We lay in April sunshine as the winding Dee flowed on  
(A rebel blonde in Levis she was Lady Eleanor)  
The heat-wave came and never broke until we said goodbye  
But you were right and I was wrong: we really should have tried

From the Ice Rink bar down town once we watched the curlers play  
They played just through the glass but might have been a world away  
Your lips and thighs in passion's rush soon torched that winter's nights  
For years I thought you were the one but hindsight's not as blind.

But like a river under all sometimes you still burst through  
The locks and walls I'd raised against those moments lost in you  
And sweep me through The Bridge of Sighs, through flames by Fairhurst Road  
As all my words fall short again..... in this humble ode



I saw your eyes in pale blue lines you'd posted out of Oban  
And breathlessly I kissed your words: all that I could hold then  
But if I listen to the night I sometimes hear the chords  
In the smoke that bends away from the fire of your words

In the Gallery at Kelvingrove one thursday I recall  
Your face in every picture-frame on both sides of the hall  
And in your eyes wild holiness; the kind I could believe  
Like waves that break so free upon the west coast of Tiree

I stopped a while at Flannan Isle for Christmas, eighty four  
And found the dreams that dreamers weave unravelled on the floor  
The food was on the table still, but all the birds had flown  
You never felt so real as when I stood there on my own

And once by Chapelrossan house beneath a sky so clear  
Across the white lines of our lives, your eyes became the sea  
The moon was full above Lang Rigg, the trees were silver white  
I played your chaperone, and you, my weakness for the night.

It's so long since I held you close it might have been a dream  
Though all the moments we once shared still seem so real to me  
I spent an evening in your house long after you were gone  
But part of you still lingers there between the painted walls

Sometimes I see you strolling down the lanes beside the lochs  
Where often ghosts of you and I must take themselves to walk  
You're always in the distance though I wait for you to close  
'Til geese curve down in darkness there where water grasses grow

T'was on the isle of Islay once from Bridgend heading west  
The sun reflecting from the sea, Kilmeny filled my head  
I heard your voice by Loch Gorm's banks break through the veil of time  
It took me back to Glasgow when we still walked side by side

On Nessock Terrace one spring day a fond and fleeting glance  
Unleashed a swirl of memories of where so much began  
A disco in Drummore Church hall, where dreaming filled the air  
We kissed and held each other tight and now that's all we share

I saw you once in Janet's Lounge in how you flicked your hair  
And for a moment we were on the Town Hall's sandstone stairs  
Back when it looked like we were bound to join the chosen few  
I touched your arm and spoke and when she turned it wasn't you

I scrawled our names in stone upon the seawall at MacDuff  
I thought the end would never come, but stone's not tough enough  
To stand the blast of wind and wave, that took the love we had  
Somewhere between the Sandhead shore and fading photographs

I watched your plane come gliding down from north of Anniesland  
Your name was in the vapour trails as if by your own hand  
You threw your arms around me there as everyone looked on  
But I was just a refugee from someone else's song

An Islay piper stopped and played Loch Rannoch just for me  
I saw your eyes in shadow as I stood there on my knees  
We crossed the line of madness once when whisky set us free  
Forbidden fruit that called so sweet, we knew could never be

The notion we've lived other lives makes little sense to me  
Yet somehow we connected then as if we'd always been  
We hardly spoke, we hardly touched, we often turned our backs  
On something deep that seemed to break the laws of time and chance

I heard you once in springtime babe, down where the bluebells spread  
Between the White Loch and the road, in words we left unsaid  
In purple perfumed haze down there, I traced the scent of grief  
It wasn't you; just thoughts of you, upon a trembling leaf

But sometimes you're there everywhere, I'm sure you know it still  
We could have been, as we'd been seen, but not for lack of will  
Our good friends tried to keep us tied; for that I'm grateful too  
But there were walls that wouldn't fall, and so I ran from you

And memory's too swift it seems to fall behind for good.  
Portpatrick isn't quite the same but still stands where it stood.  
For years I thought you'd crossed the sea and checked the stars each night  
Though not a sign was ever seen, the flame kept burning bright.

To Arthur's Seat we climbed equipped with love and cheese and wine  
We had a party in the sky until I saw the sign  
A shadow ranged against the clouds politely asking why  
I took my pen and wrongly answered X instead of Y

The ancient bridge across the Forth had criss-crossed all my dreams  
In yon Dalbeattie hotel beside the little stream  
And like a fish trapped in a net, once desperate to escape  
I gazed back through the tempting mesh when freedom came my way

Not quite as brash as Lochinvar I stayed outside the kirk  
I didn't bring my broadsword and forgot to bring my dirk  
I built my armour round my heart and traded love for song  
But plainly Lochinvar was right and I again was wrong

And Stirling seemed so far from your Balgowan in the spring  
I dreamt you homewards everyday; you gave me songs to sing  
Though you were Yarrow bound my love through Ettrick into Tales  
By trails too complex to foresee, beyond where reason fails

In Ali's words I caught a glimpse of you so long ago  
The surf from Islay's shores washed me right back to Woodlands Road  
As time came rushing all around, a kid 'Who Sold the World'  
It's what fools do when we think we've got time and love to burn

So where were all my wits back when the blossom was in bloom  
Too busy with the harvesting, or blinded by the view  
I'd love to say I've no regrets - if only that was true  
But new dawns call while snow still falls, and while there's thoughts of you

I look down all the highways now and see you in disguise  
You're all the girls I'd fallen for but didn't realise  
Yet when the time arrived to choose, I chose to hit the road  
Amongst the special few love, you're the only one I'd know

□

And all the songs I've scribbled down I wrote for you alone  
but you're out there somewhere between the farthest stars and home  
I've chased your shadow, traced your trail, I've held you here and there:  
A dream that sparks such blinding flames it haunts me everywhere.

I saw you only one more time in all those years between.

We stared into each other's eyes across a Glasgow street.  
We stood awhile without a word then went our separate ways.  
And now, at last, the snow has stopped; this river's full of rain

- This river that's been running underneath this winding life  
Beneath the falling flakes of snow that melted into mine.  
Confession soothes the soul they say, and I've been truly blessed  
Yes, I have loved and I've been loved far more than I deserved;

And I had luck beyond belief and found a creature who  
Exactly matched all my ideals: a girl I barely knew.  
I worshipped at a distance: you and I were in our teens  
The girlfriend of a good friend; it stayed that way for years.

I built myself a wall of ways to keep you out of bounds;  
A wall so high my love for you could never quite break out.  
But bitter-sweetly day by day while you loved someone else,  
We gradually began to know each other pretty well:

In sober times or drunken times, on land or out at sea  
And never crossed the line that separated you from me.  
Then changes came. They always do. Our lives were thrust apart.  
And both of us soon settled down to make another start.

Until we met in Miller's bar, and all our hinterland  
Crashed thrillingly around us, though I didn't understand.  
But you were tied and I was tied, and that was my excuse,  
Though both of us came just an inch away from breaking loose.

That night outside the Old Mill lounge I left it all unsaid,  
But no-one ever loved me quite the way you loved me then.  
And later by the golf course lane I couldn't say what's true;  
I never wanted anyone more than I wanted you.

And so, of course, I walked away and lived some kind of life.  
I heard about you now and then, but never took the time  
To sort amongst the crumbling past, and get the story straight.  
Now here you are, still woven through, these pieces that remain

It only takes a little step to alter everything.  
A song we might have made our own, a song we'll never sing;

Or worse perhaps, through simple fear, a step I wouldn't take,  
And didn't realise that I would ever have to pay.

Repression seems to be my thing; I've done it all my life.  
The reasons why don't matter now (they'd take too many lines!)  
Suffice to say the more I've felt, the more I've locked away,  
But all of it escapes in time and heads straight for the page.

And this specific storyline's a classic of its sort.  
The first time I caught sight of you I knew that I was lost  
I knew that I would lose myself, or you'd be out of reach,  
And riding to the rescue came my inhibitions team.

They kept my thoughts and all my urges strictly above board,  
But not quite strict enough to stop the feelings I ignored.  
I wasn't brave enough to ask, and then the chance was gone.  
My very close acquaintance took your arm and then moved on.

And while I dilly-dallied some, it happened once again;  
Another close associate came swooping swiftly in;  
Which meant of course that we'd have time to test those walls I'd raised.  
Instead of falling deeper in, I should have stayed away.

And thus to these incessant words, this frenzied full court press.  
So far I've underdone the praise, for mostly, more is less:  
Your body made me tremble and your beauty left me weak,  
So weak it seems I found it hard to simply just be me.

In all of that the fault was mine; I should have made that clear.  
I chose a path that made no sense unless there's sense in fear.  
And truth to tell, the act of choice is hardly choice at all:  
we build and burrow, count and care, convinced we call the shots,

But ants, if given speech would crow, like us, they're got it down.  
The only difference they'd concede is we've got bigger towns.  
Now maybe I should mention next how this all came to pass,  
By which I mean repression chose to bite me on the ass.

It seems I might have said enough, but still I must say more:  
I have this urge to speak again, to knock on your front door,  
As if I'd set in motion wrongs I feel compelled to right:

A wrinkle in your distant life, or something lost in mine.

I'd never dreamed of you before, which in itself is weird,  
Yet never thought to wonder why, and that is just as queer  
Until a day or two ago, when all this stuff began,  
And in that dream the strangest thing: you and another man

(Yes, one more eager friend of mine!) were at it on the lawn.  
And I, in full repression mode, ignored the goings on.  
So well repressed was I that even dreams of you were numb.  
Your vintage was my main concern, so I was doing sums.

(And that scene sums this story up; it's not a pretty sight:  
The left side of this fevered brain, at war against the right!)  
Eventually I worked it out, but you had slipped away;  
The morning came, with things to do, and words to write and say.

But in my head, throughout the day, a dam began to burst,  
And waves of feelings, long contained, soon flooded my whole world.  
Now five days later, in this ark, catharsis is the game;  
Dear sunburned girl dressed all in white, there's only me to blame,

And nothing here of yours, or song of ours to listen to,  
Nor scheme to fool the laws of time; there's only what was true:  
An extra-ordinary girl, an ordinary boy;  
A river-full of hope and fear, a blizzard-full of joy

And altogether not enough of courage and belief  
I lived my life without her though and found some kind of peace  
And more than shreds of happiness through almost all my years  
While hers, I hope, were filled with thrill and all that she held dear

The fireworks of passion have a "best by" date of course  
However deep, however true, regardless of its force  
Yet hearts still break, the skies still fall, and nothing will prevail;  
No armoured walls or will against love's sweet and tender gale.

And now the journey's almost done a balance must be struck  
Between forgetting on the rise and wisdom yet to come  
Or maybe thought's irrelevant to matters of the heart  
Sensation, thrill, enchantment all combine in cupid's dart

And leave so very little room for anything but love  
And all of its commands until, its spellbound course is run  
Yes, I suppose that's where I am: on mountain top or stool  
and looking back in wonder at each frame on every spool

A bashful kid, I stayed that way through every winding turn  
And every ruse to free myself just made the problem worse.  
It's who I am and much too late I've almost come to terms,  
But might have beens that never were can still provoke regret.

There is so little certainty in all that living brings  
At least from here that's how it looks, and youth is short of wits  
It sees just what it wants to see, and at its beck and call  
A future where it all works out, where only sunlight falls

Except of course we learn in time that life has other plans -  
The reasons why I've washed up here are numerous and bland.  
The changing tides, the wind and waves, a million little things  
Contrive to steer us where they must, in league with time's fleet wings

We also learn, if given time, that much of what seemed real  
Was merely nature's sleight of hand, its cunning masterpiece  
It shapes the lives we think we lead until the penny drops  
So much of living is mirage and endless Russian dolls

The guy behind the curtain plays the longest game of all  
He's algorithmic, merciless and juggling every ball  
And unaware of everything, the tenderness and tears  
Exquisite moments binding hearts, and all our deepest fears

But here we are, in happiness, in struggle, and in doubt  
and all of that is real enough to see us through somehow  
I'm old now, but don't feel the years, and fancy several more  
That's optimistic but I'll try, to sail beyond the shore.

jim hogg

# Beyond The Dee

Hair was all I saw at first  
each morning as I passed.  
You stood outside the shop  
'til I was brave enough to ask.

A rebel blonde in levis  
with a fearless attitude,  
we met beside a bunker  
on the golf course by the wood.

Below us lay Kirkcudbright,  
beyond it flowed the Dee.  
The Dhoon was sealed in shadow,  
further down towards the sea.

And you were quite the vision  
my lady Eleanor,  
afame in seventy six, love  
when the sunshine never stopped

Love came without a fanfare,  
too stealthily to see.  
I didn't even feel it;  
we were busy being free,

as Ziggy serenaded  
almost every move we made,  
from Brighthouse to Stranraer,  
from the Dhoon to your front gate.

Those months we spent together  
keep on climbing up the charts  
I don't remember trying -  
it was easy from the start.

And you were first to grasp it  
when the order came to move,  
you saw some kind of future  
but I saw no way through.



You wed another uniform;  
I hope your life's been sweet,  
but think about you every time  
I walk St Cuthbert's Street.

jim hogg

# Lines To A Sunburned Girl In A White Dress

I worshipped at a distance:  
you and I were in our teens.  
The girlfriend of a good friend;  
it stayed that way for years.

I built myself a wall of ways  
to keep you out of bounds.  
A wall so high my love for you  
could never quite break out.

But bittersweetly day by day  
while you loved someone else  
we gradually began to know  
each other pretty well.

In sober times or drunken times,  
on land or out at sea,  
we never crossed the line  
that separated you from me.

By then we'd quit the school,  
and you'd come up to Eldon Street.  
His bed was just across the room:  
that made it hard to sleep!

Then changes came. They always do.  
Our lives were thrust apart.  
And both of us soon settled down,  
to make another start -

until we met in Miller's bar  
and all that hinterland  
crashed thrillingly around us,  
though I didn't understand.

But you were tied and I was tied  
and that was my excuse  
though both of us were just an inch  
away from breaking loose.

That night outside the Old Mill lounge  
I left it all unsaid,  
but no-one ever loved me quite  
the way you loved me then.

And later by the golf course lane  
I couldn't say what's true:  
I've never wanted anyone  
more than I wanted you;

And so, of course, I walked away,  
and lived some kind of life.  
I heard about you now and then,  
but never took the time

to sort amongst the crumbling past,  
and get the story straight.  
Now here you are, still woven through,  
the pieces that remain

I saw you only one more time  
in all those years between.  
We gazed into each other's eyes  
across a Glasgow street.

and then we turned, without a word,  
and went our separate ways.

jim hogg

## Snow On The River (Vii)

It seems I might have said enough,  
but still I must say more:  
I have this urge to speak again,  
to knock on your front door,

as if I'd set in motion wrongs  
I feel compelled to right:  
a wrinkle in your distant life,  
or something lost in mine.

I'd never dreamed of you before,  
which in itself is weird,  
yet never thought to wonder why,  
and that is just as queer

- until a day or two ago,  
when all this stuff began,  
and in that dream the strangest thing:  
you and another man

(yes, one more eager friend of mine!)  
were at it on the lawn.  
And I, in full repression mode,  
ignored the goings on.

So well repressed was I  
that even dreams of you were numb.  
Your vintage was my main concern,  
so I was doing sums.

(And that scene sums this story up;  
it's not a pretty sight:  
the left side of this fevered brain,  
at war against the right!)

Eventually I worked it out,  
but you had slipped away;  
the morning came, with things to do,  
and words to write and say.

But in my head, throughout the day,  
a dam began to burst,  
and waves of feelings, long contained,  
soon flooded my whole world.

Now five days later, in this ark,  
catharsis is the game;  
dear sunburned girl dressed all in white,  
there's only me to blame,

and nothing here of yours,  
or song of ours to listen to,  
nor scheme to fool the laws of time;  
there's only what was true:

an extra-ordinary girl,  
an ordinary boy;  
a river-full of hope and fear,  
a blizzard-full of joy.

And altogether not enough  
of courage and belief.  
I lived my life without her though,  
and found some kind of peace,

And more than shreds of happiness  
through almost all my years;  
While hers, I hope, were filled with thrill  
and all that she held dear.

The fireworks of passion  
have a "best by" date of course  
However deep, however true,  
regardless of its force

Yet hearts still break, the skies still fall,  
and nothing will prevail;  
No armoured walls or will against  
love's tender hurricane.

jim hogg

# Snow On The River (Vi)

It only takes a little step  
to alter everything.  
A song we might have made our own,  
a song we'll never sing;

or worse perhaps, through simple fear,  
a step I wouldn't take,  
and didn't realise  
that I would ever have to pay.

Repression seems to be my thing;  
I've done it all my life.  
The reasons why don't matter here  
(they'd take too many lines!)

Suffice to say the more I've felt,  
the more I've locked away,  
but all of it escapes in time  
and heads straight for the page.

And this specific storyline's  
a classic of its sort.  
The first time I caught sight of you  
I knew that I was lost

I knew that I would lose myself  
or you'd be out of reach,  
and riding to the rescue  
came my inhibitions team.

They kept my thoughts and all my urges  
strictly above board,  
but not quite strict enough to stop  
the feelings I ignored.

I wasn't brave enough to ask,  
and then the chance was gone.  
My very close acquaintance  
took your arm and then moved on.

And while I dilly-dallied some,  
it happened once again;  
another close associate  
came swooping swiftly in;

which meant of course that we'd have time  
to test those walls I'd raised.  
Instead of falling deeper in,  
I should have stayed away.

And thus to these incessant words,  
this frenzied full court press.  
So far I've underdone the praise,  
for mostly, more is less:

your body made me tremble  
and your beauty left me weak,  
so weak it seems I found it hard  
to simply just be me.

In all of that the fault was mine;  
I should have made that clear.  
I chose a path that made no sense  
unless there's sense in fear.

And truth to tell, the act of choice  
is hardly choice at all:  
we build and burrow, count and care,  
convinced we call the shots,

but ants, if given speech would crow,  
like us, they're got it down.  
The only difference they'd concede  
is we've got bigger towns.

Now maybe I should mention next  
how this all came to pass,  
by which I mean repression  
chose to bite me on the ass.



jim hogg

# Snow On The River (V)

I saw you only one more time  
in all those years between.  
We stared into each other's eyes  
across a Glasgow street.

We stood awhile without a word  
then went our separate ways.  
And now, at last, the snow has stopped;  
this river's full of rain

- this river that's been running  
underneath this winding life  
beneath the falling flakes of snow  
that melted into mine.

Confession soothes the soul they say,  
and I've been truly blessed  
yes, I have loved and I've been loved  
far more than I deserved;

and I had luck beyond belief  
and found a creature who  
exactly matched all my ideals:  
a girl I barely knew.

I worshipped at a distance:  
you and I were in our teens  
The girlfriend of a good friend;  
it stayed that way for years.

I built myself a wall of ways  
to keep you out of bounds;  
a wall so high my love for you  
could never quite break out.

But bitter-sweetly day by day  
while you loved someone else,  
we gradually began to know  
each other pretty well:

in sober times or drunken times,  
on land or out at sea  
and never crossed the line  
that separated you from me.

Then changes came. They always do.  
Our lives were thrust apart.  
And both of us soon settled down  
to make another start.

Until we met in Miller's bar,  
and all our hinterland  
crashed thrillingly around us,  
though I didn't understand.

But you were tied and I was tied,  
and that was my excuse,  
though both of us came just an inch  
away from breaking loose.

That night outside the Old Mill lounge  
I left it all unsaid,  
but no-one ever loved me quite  
the way you loved me then.

And later by the golf course lane  
I couldn't say what's true;  
I never wanted anyone  
more than I wanted you.

And so, of course, I walked away  
and lived some kind of life.  
I heard about you now and then,  
but never took the time

to sort amongst the crumbling past,  
and get the story straight.  
Now here you are, still woven through,  
these pieces that remain

jim hogg

# Silver Darlings

Yin calm summer night a lang time ago  
three Scots and a Pole skimmed out of the bay,  
over a fast fading silvery sheen  
intae the last o' the languid day.

Amid scraiching gulls, and echoes that whispered  
from heughs that were thick with bracken and whuns,  
they started tae jig on the likeliest mark:  
the inside edge o' the main tidal runs.

And out o' the briny from deep underneath,  
all four o' them started to haul,  
string after stringful o' glittering fish  
unhooked with a flick before their long fall -

herring that twisted and mackerel that flashed -  
their last sacrifice for their mother shoal.  
Unlamented, they danced on demented,  
down to the floor o' the motionless boat.

The sun looming red then, suddenly fell,  
full intae the void beyond the green sweep  
o' Ireland's fields and Ireland's hills,  
whose shadows stole up in a single leap.

And over the skin o' the fish teeming tide  
a scattered armada came sliding,  
southwards from Logan, some young and some old,  
who knew where the herring were hiding.

The darkening sea seemed to merge with the sky,  
as they cut through the thickening dusk,  
all ready with rods, or handlines and hooks,  
they'd dressed in the feathers o' fish maddened gulls.

And the blood o' herring spattered and spilled  
amongst the ghosts o' fishermen gone,  
and mingled then with the blood of men,  
whose faces were splashed and fingers were torn -

and each for a moment was moved to recall  
the loved ones of old who'd never returned,  
to wives and children in much harder times -  
as southwards they drifted away on the flood.

The silent sea cunningly funnelled them south,  
down under Crammag's pulsing white eye,  
where shadows swept soundlessly round and round,  
as the last o' the vanishing daylight died.

While over the channel soon could be seen,  
several miniature fans of white.  
One by one they appeared here and there,  
all flashing their warnings intae the night.

So, showered in constellations o' scales  
they hauled in their lines and boxed up their fish,  
and skippers at last directed their craft,  
northwards beneath the black and gold cliffs,

by dark Laggantulloch's perilous point,  
northwards against the currents that curved,  
driving deep furrows and weaving bright stars  
intae their trail o' vague churning surf.

And round by the Gounies' old sunken ship,  
northwards across the wide Clanyard bay  
they steered by mere starlight, they steered for home,  
and landed in darkness in Port Logan bay.

Where under the tower - bereft of its bell -  
perched on its bank o' weel battered stanes,  
they anchored or swiftly trailered their boats,  
while locals stood waiting with bags and plates.

A few dozen here and a few dozen there;  
some went for barter and some went for pence,  
as boxes of herring and mackerel were sold  
'til villages nearby and far were fed.

jim hogg

# Letter To Veronica

These seasons keep on turning round.  
Again, the birds are flying south.  
This morning everything was white -

I hope you're keeping warm at night.  
For days the frost's been taking hold;  
It seems that all the world's grown cold

while I've been sitting by this flame  
determined not to write your name,  
but last night after listening to

a certain song, I dreamed of you.  
So, I went back to where we met,  
(afraid that I might soon forget!)

that night we sat beneath the clock,  
in yon posh pub beside the Cross.  
Sometimes it seems a world away

but now and then I feel you there,  
beside me on the leather seat,  
when nervously our eyes would meet,

and tremulous, our voices broke  
the silence that would later cloak,  
this exile I can never quit

(though all these reasons I insist  
are justified, don't cut much ice  
with this contrary heart of mine) .

I wish I could remember more:  
a touch, a word, at your front door,  
but like a seed sown in the wind

it must have seemed a little thing:  
no witnesses or angels wept.  
No promise made, no promise kept,



we hardly left a trace behind  
for history's vain sleuths to find,  
nor version of the past in which

we dreamed a dream, still unfulfilled,  
where destiny might once have locked  
together, paths that barely crossed.

And yet, there was a swirl in time  
when possibilities were ripe;  
when many futures lay in wait,

as you and I approached the gate.  
But from that flux we chose to pluck  
the one that left us out of luck.

Had older folks just looked ahead,  
or local Nostradamus said  
that you and I would one day meet,

in your backyard or on the street,  
they might have taken steps to shape  
the steps that you and I might take,

or nudged us not to where we are,  
but on towards a brighter star;  
away from this peculiar "place",

where we can't venture face to face,  
but still contrive to catch a glimpse,  
or sometimes just a fleeting sense,

of all the love we didn't share,  
of all the love that might be where  
we left it latent one spring night,

between the Cross and Penpont's light.  
But none of them, nor you and I,  
foresaw just how the land would lie,

or moment when I failed to see

the way that led from you to me.  
Or maybe not; we'll never know.

But I remember letting go,  
one afternoon down by the Nith,  
as you walked over Auldgirth Bridge.

I watched you all the way across  
and knew full well what I had lost.  
But still, I couldn't bring myself

to let you know, to break the spell.  
And though these lines dwell on the past  
I know the present's where you are:

not looking back, not broken down,  
still confident, still looking round  
the endless corner of this life.

And aye, our need for love abides  
and you'll embrace it without fear  
while I hide here behind a shield

of arguments that don't disclose:  
it's easier to be alone.  
I wonder if that's really why

I've scribbled this unsent reply?  
Despite this longing for your lips  
and thoughts of taking that short trip!

It's maybe time then for an end  
to matters we can never mend:  
the breeze that touched us, then moved on

the birds that sang and then were gone  
the memories we never made  
the little details life mislaid

- before the frost had taken hold,  
before the world had all grown cold,  
long after we had crossed the Nith,

towards Penpont one long gone spring;  
when promise filled "the night we met";  
when there was nothing to regret.

The ties that bind were never tied,  
and it's too late now for goodbye,  
but I suppose that's what this is;

and I won't patronise you with  
a slew of hopes - you'll have your own -  
or mention love, whose sting you've known.

But if you'll let me make one wish:  
a simple thing; it's only this,  
that now and then, and here and there,

some sparks of joy will light your way.  
And I'll remember while I can  
those gentle eyes so deep and dark,

your heart, your curves, your beauty too  
and this old scar I got from you!  
Soon, all these frozen leaves will clear,

and you'll be in your garden, dear.  
The sun will climb above the trees,  
and all your blooms will dazzle bees.

Those roving birds will soon return,  
and ice will thaw on Glentress Burn.

jim

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jim hogg

# Bridge Of Dreams

Beneath this stone bridge that we stood upon once  
the waters of two lochs mingle and glide  
weaving a flowing concerto of life  
out of the world it reflects from above:

wild geese in flight and the leaves blowing free,  
the falling of chestnuts through red and through green,  
a fox at the edge there unsettling the scene  
pink streaks of sunset that flare and soon fade  
as they strive to gird the sky in vain -  
to bind together the near and the far  
upon this stone bridge that we stood upon once

And away from the arch, away from this dream  
two lovers, though parted, still reflect,  
on the bridge over what might have been.

19 10 08

jim hogg

# Autumn Leaves

The subtle hook of our self love  
bewitched us once with wondrous schemes,  
and drew us into dead end streets;  
we danced, we loved, we dared to dream.

We took the train or long haul flights.  
We left a lot of stuff behind,  
but did some things along the way,  
the best of which we left unsigned.

And now it's time to turn, my love,  
towards the creatures we once were:  
a driven force, a quenchless thirst  
to which we truthfully refer

as glory days, the prime of life;  
we really didn't have a clue.  
How could we all have been so blind?  
Yes, that was me, and that was you.

The future was our promised land.  
Our castles high, our greatest hits,  
we'd shape them all by our own hand,  
and we would never call it quits!

It doesn't matter I suppose  
that most of what we understood  
was myth we wantonly embraced:  
our hearts were set on doing good.

For love seemed real enough, it's true-  
and every thrill connected us  
to something greater than ourselves,  
or maybe just the moment's rush.

And that was meaningful enough;

though who knows what those moments meant!  
We harvest pleasure where we can  
and later rue each chance unspent,

And yet, I fall for those old heights,  
though wary, now, of everything.  
And all the style I emulate  
is almost all that would-be king

of what I never knew, retains:  
a brittle skin - that's on the slide -  
that hides a fading hungering:  
vague echoes of a throbbing tide...

But still, there's humour bursting through  
from time to time in dreams, you know,  
when dead end streets come romping in  
and suddenly we're toe to toe

and clinching naked, in the snow,  
surrendering to how we looked.  
But autumn's leaves are beautiful;  
how gracefully they slip the hook.

09 07 17

jim hogg

# Hooded Crow (Revis)

I

I thought sometimes that he was gone,  
and lost for good beneath the sod,  
but yesterday I saw him stop  
beside the border fence we built,

above Cairngaan, on Slewmag hill.  
His hazel eyes flashed in the sun,  
and on his arm, his twelve-bore gun.  
'I'm heading for the glen' he said,

where many times I used to think  
he planned someday to shoot himself  
because of sorrow or of guilt  
for all the myths he spun for us

and one by one shot down for us.  
And later, from the Berrick's Brig  
we stalked thon famous hooded crow,  
so sly and swift out of the nest

that all around it light would bend  
and time itself would almost stall  
for that dark bird that knew him well  
(at least as well as I did then)

until a dry and dusty cloud  
soon rose around its sudden end.  
And sepia blood went trickling down  
the sepia burn to Portankil

where he was in his little ship  
and hauling creels there on his own-  
as I would too, much later on -  
upon yon narrow strip of ground

that leads towards the Creechan shore,  
where proudly, I first earned a wage  
well over fifty years ago  
amongst the hallowed wrack and stones

that hold a thousand ghosts or more,  
and multitude of scents and sounds,  
all joined within the stack of time.  
And up and down all day they crowd

the sun-bleached strands that lead  
down from the edge of Creechan's fields  
towards the isles and underneath  
the broken days and broken waves.

My father's there amongst them now,  
not bound by turf on some cold hill,  
his work-worn hands still reaching for  
the lost of old, the lost to come.

And I will dive, and I will swoop  
both low and high and glorious:  
I once had dreams of such, I know,  
but when the silence deigns to choose

imagine me on Cairngaan's crest  
still driving posts with yon big mel  
or in the swell at Crammag Head  
and working creels by hand alone;

then down the glen from Berrick's brig  
by gloamin's light or at the dawn;  
don't look for me too soon I ask  
but when you must, just take it slow

and see me down off Portankil  
with my first brother long ago,  
when Robbie's hair was black as coal  
and we were bound for Creechan's shore.



## II

Or better still, remember this  
that I'd prefer to go unknown  
down any glen, to any sea  
defined for good by all my flaws -

if life must be defined at all -  
or must we bow to vanity  
and always find an angle which  
rewards us with our own applause

Or misbegotten urge to judge?  
As if there ever was a choice!  
The nest, the rise, the flight, the night,  
and all we crave, just vanishes;

And all the wings that carry us,  
the ancient and the everyday,  
weave stealthily the myths we need,  
concealed within the longest game

We know the play, but can't concede  
the nature of the beast we are -  
the ghost within our own machine -  
the wasp, the dove, the razor's scar

The flame that saves, the ash delayed  
the hooded crow, the little ship  
the egg that dreams, the night that waits,  
the semblance of a thinking thing,

seduced by pride at every turn  
and somehow yet, these memories,  
these cherished moments lifted by  
the whispered breeze of harmony

Or near enough relation that

it strikes a chord, but can't undo  
the bloody end, the flight unflown,  
ironic smiles, the time that flew

'so sly and swift' it slipped away  
and left us aching images  
of wonder turned from will to was  
and darkest black to sudden grey

This version 030317

jim hogg

# A Fairytale Of Paisley

The road of destiny is long  
and on that road a noisy throng  
determined me to make a move,  
to up my sticks and choose a groove

That wasn't quite a frying pan  
or too festooned with flames to fan,  
and so to Paisley toon I sped,  
bereft of romance, short of bread,

And soon ensconced myself within,  
a one bed flat with bed and bin,  
from where I found my way about,  
amongst the talent, dodging lout

Until I chose a comfy seat,  
in the Centre, and in the heat;  
armed with pad and idle pen,  
watching eyes, and wondering when

I'd spot that girl with matchless class,  
when all at once that certain lass,  
just sashayed up and flicked her hair  
and almost knocked me aff my chair.

Had I no been so witless then  
I would have said 'Hello there hen'  
and you'd have said 'Get off my back,  
ya pompous grey haired rhymin' hack.'

But witless was I then and when,  
we met at Etams on the bend.  
I watched you as you dannered on,  
an' sans a backward glance were gone.

I'm sorry I was lacking sense;  
'twas due tae lack o' confidence.  
I didnae quite appreciate  
that you'd be looking just so great.

But moments pass and chances fade,  
and hearts may break and hopes cascade  
into Paisley's swollen river,  
should this parting be forever;

Or so it seemed at least a while,  
'til memories evoked a smile,  
but, never let it be denied:  
I dithered when I should have tried.

An' melodrama's no my art;  
I might have overplayed my part,  
For time soon fixed this blind fool's ass,  
as surely as all things must pass.

So let us tae our tale return;  
forget the heart dumped in the burn.  
The gleaming square in Paisley toon  
has famous folk as weel as loon

To spread the word both far and wide,  
tae justify her native pride.  
Yon Sannie Wilson on the block,  
dished oot monie a hefty knock

Wi a his weel turned rhymin' words,  
until he took to breeding birds  
in far flung Philadelphia,  
and both the Coats did help ye's a'

The neatly chiselled words declare,  
when times were hard and folks were pair,  
to such a bounteous extent  
that toon folk built a monument

To show their heartfelt gratitude  
that wi their cash they'd been sae good.  
And, speaking o' the best o' men,  
wi rhyme sae blessed and razor pen:

The multi-sided Rabbie Burns

in Fountain Gardens stands and spurns  
the tacky turns that waste his name,  
as if his flaws should earn him fame.

'Twere better he had stilled his hand,  
than fuel the fools who should be tanned  
for dragging Scotland through the mire,  
for spitting on her finest fire.

But nobler hearts remember still,  
true freedom's notes, our burning will,  
tae hear that wistful tune ring out,  
in streets and halls tae banish doubt,

To wake yon clique in Holyrood,  
the 'kind' who think that doin' good  
means filching from the likes o' us,  
and freedom means abuse o' trust.

Aye, matters serious pressed in:  
your Hospital was for the bin,  
had pressure no' been brought to bear  
upon the suits who dinnae care.

Their latest trick was cutting beds;  
perhaps you should be banging heads,  
and thon new brig we cannae cross  
is surely working at a loss.

It's thick wi' gaps instead o' parts,  
for ease o' steppin' in the Cart.  
they'll need tae start the thing fae scratch,  
or fake a massive patterned patch.

And just across the street a sign  
that legal change can be benign:  
a hunner smokers blockin' drains  
wi' butts enough to boil the rain.

That Mecca crowd have sorely whinged,  
since a' their carpet's no' been singed.  
I hear they're bussing up fae Ayr,

tae breathe clean air that's goin' spare,

And further doon, outside Phat Sam's,  
a wonbag there wi massive hams  
is sucking fag-ends off the street  
tae keep the smokers' footwear neat

by bla'n' them up amongst the stars,  
an' launchin' nicotine tae Mars,  
as, from the east the nicht rolls roon,  
and folds across al Paisley toon,

Her freight o' gifts for dawn tae bring,  
oor wee bit joy, a sang tae sing...  
... for onward flows the River Cart,  
and forward flees time's silent dart

The loves and hopes o' men abide,  
as constant as the throbbing tide  
oor tenure here is fleeting tho':  
as brief as swirlin' flakes o' snow

An' dreams, oh dreams, they carry us,  
beyond the stars then bury us;  
the future's sweet talk turns tae snash,  
a moment precious, then we're ash

We walk a tightrope through this life,  
between the primrose and the knife  
between the eagle and the louse,  
between the vixen and the yowes

We're in the wind, we're in the waves,  
we're sunlight bright, and dark as caves,  
an' from the dust and from the sky,  
we carve our truth, we shape the lie

An' weave ourselves some kind o' sense,  
beyond the gates o' innocence  
but noo, I'm neither bold nor blind;  
I'm stuck here on the path that's lined

We dared the music way back when,  
and I jigged all the wrong steps then.  
I left you standing on the shore,  
but now it's clear, the ceilidh's o'er

Yet there's a certain sweetness in,  
the thought that we might meet again  
tae sit an smile at might have beens,  
when we were special, in oor teens

Or maybe yince I'll catch your eye,  
an' yin o' us will chance a 'hi'.  
but mair than likely, if we meet,  
we'll pass like strangers on the street.

10 05 07 Paisley

jim hogg

# No Defeat

Stillness called me  
to this lochside  
here where bitter stars are few  
senses sharpen  
night draws closer  
as the Castle lights fall dim  
unseen wings  
beat high above me  
across this dark'ning loch  
mem'ries fell  
the walls of time dear  
and give us this stage again  
where innocence is blind  
and cannot find us now  
but here within your night  
there's no defeat somehow

(Chorus)

And if I should forget  
or if we'd never met  
my life would not have  
been as rich without you there,  
somewhere

Every love turns  
on the moment  
it's not written anywhere  
not by fortune  
nor by choices,  
but for us to win or lose.  
everything  
remains unknown dear  
until it flies or falls.  
and this journey  
brought me back here  
where there's no defeat on love.  
beneath the beating wings  
where something still plays on,



beneath these glist'ning stars  
beside this whisp'ring loch

(Chorus)

and if I didn't say  
and though we lost our way  
my life would not have  
been as rich without you there,  
somewhere

(adapted from poem same name - 09 06 09)

jim hogg

# By London Road

It's been a while since you were seen  
On Sydney High Street, in your jeans  
An old guitar hung round your neck  
Your fingers dancing on the frets

And with your violin you won  
A thousand hearts beneath the sun  
You must have put on quite a show  
In San Francisco long ago

You told me later you were wild  
And at the fair tried every ride  
And I'd been welcome at the source  
If only I had stayed the course

Your Cosmopolitan in hand  
You rode the train across the sand  
One winter's night to Kelvingrove  
When you'd decided to let go

And I was laughing through the storm  
When you were sailing for Cape Horn  
So many boats, so little time  
Then suddenly you'd crossed the line

It takes a lifetime to break free  
And even then it's hard to see  
Who plots the course, who fills the sail  
Why losers win and winners fail

(chorus)

I think of you, and curves contend  
With wisps of smoke where rivers bend  
Your green eyes glinting in the night  
Dubonnet by the old pier light  
When I was mercury and clay  
I wouldn't be so coy today

But you and I were asymptotes  
Though when we'd won each other's votes  
And stretched full out by London Road,  
We could have reaped, we could have sowed -

Behind the hedge the summer heat  
Was just about enough to beat  
Our sense of shame to smithereens  
Back in that cauldron of our teens

Now decades later on your knees  
You're naked in the buzzing breeze  
And I'm imagining I'm there  
And watching as you dry your hair

Or on my back upon your deck  
With you on board and turned to check  
The rising waves around the stern  
Like witnesses who've come to learn:

The very little things that steer  
The fledgling bird so far, so near;  
That any wind can bring us snow  
And just how little we still know

And even that's not what it seems  
You were Diana in my dreams  
And for your body I'd have fought  
But couldn't let myself be caught

(chorus)

I think of you and curves contend  
With wisps of smoke where rivers bend  
Your green eyes glinting in the night  
Dubonnet by the old pier light  
When I was mercury and clay  
I wouldn't be so coy today

25 12 12

(For the minister's daughter who was much more special than we allowed her to know...)

jim hogg

# The Waves Of Islay

I saw the blue in good times gone  
With friends inside the Three in One  
As snow lay white on Kelvin Grove  
As glasses clashed and liquor flowed  
And fate would have us meeting when  
All my wits were missing then

I saw the blue of Islay's skies  
Reflected in your island eyes  
And in the blonde that tumbled down  
The waves of Islay broke around  
A girl who came to Glasgow town  
In the winter long ago

(Chorus)

The waves of Islay's windswept shores  
The ghosts that wander Woodlands Road  
Remember two kids in the snow  
In Glasgow long ago

The foaming surge of Islay's waves  
Broke full upon me as we swayed  
Through virgin flakes on Eldon Street  
The River Kelvin Xmas scene  
To echoes lilting from Bowmore  
From the sands on Islay's shores

Your Island heart had captured me  
But when you went home o'er the sea  
I folded up the lines you sent  
Forgot the tender words you penned  
Now snow brings you and Glasgow home  
And that winter long ago

(Chorus)

The waves of Islay's windswept shores  
The ghosts that wander Woodlands Road  
Remember two kids in the snow  
In Glasgow long ago

Just two kids in the snow  
In Glasgow long ago

(03 11 07)

jim hogg

# St John Street

It isn't quite as clear now  
And the light is playing tricks  
There's shadows on St John Street  
And I just caught a glimpse

There is no moon above me  
And I'm sober as a judge  
But I could swear I stumbled  
Into some other world

Your hair flowed black and glist'ning  
And your eyes were like the sea  
In nineteen seventy one  
when we were just sixteen

The moon was full above us  
Down the length of St John Street  
As hand in hand we wandered  
It all seems like a dream

Now it's too late to remember  
And it's too soon to forget  
Though the moon just brings us frostiness  
And the stars care even less  
That I loved you and you loved me  
The last time we were here

The people come and go now  
Knowing nothing of that night  
For life gets trampled under  
The endless rush of time

The future reeled before us  
And we only had to choose  
When time went on forever  
And I just chose to lose

Though you were brave and ready  
After years of saying no

Beneath the moon I faltered  
And started letting go

And now like passing strangers  
Underneath a ghostly moon  
We'll wander down St John Street  
Some twilight afternoon

And it's too late to remember  
But it's too soon to forget  
Though the moon just brings us frostiness  
And the stars care even less  
That I loved you and you loved me  
The last time we were here

041014

jim hogg



# The Winds Of Time

The air was soft upon  
your silken cheeks  
The sky was blue  
The world was turning round  
But so slow we never knew  
If we fell, well that was fine  
We were heroes in our dreams  
And miracles were real

But the winds of time were blowing  
Though not through our world then  
We would all be there forever  
And the fun would never end

The breeze was blowing through  
your gypsy hair  
The clouds were few  
And I'd found paradise  
When I was walking out with you  
And the starlit nights we shared  
I built my dreams upon  
But I wished the days away  
And too soon you were gone

Yes, the winds of time were blowing  
Though not through our love then  
We would always be together  
And our love would never end

The moon skis through the clouds  
that skim the sky  
We drift below  
A band of brothers who  
Never knew what they could do  
We went marching off to war  
With so many years in store  
And the dragons we would slay  
Became dreams of yesterday

Oh the winds of time were blowing  
Though not through our dreams then  
We would all be here forever  
And this life would never end

The barley bends before  
the gale that blows  
The waves are high  
The leaves will soon let go  
And the birds prepare to fly  
And through golden and through blue  
Through the threads of all we knew  
Though we never felt it then  
Blew the ruthless winds of time

Oh the winds of time are blowing  
Through nameless fleeting days  
From tomorrows come too slowly  
To the good times thrown away

The robin's song so pure  
On the air so still and clear  
And memories so sweet  
They circle everywhere  
And now everything we've been  
Slipping gently from our grasp  
As the storm clouds gather round  
To sweep away our humble past

Now the winds of time are howling  
Through nameless fleeting days  
And though we never dreamt of losing  
There's no way we'll win this race

210405

jim hogg

# Maybe By The Tide

I think I saw him on the hill  
A camera in his hand  
Or maybe on the Creechan shore  
Just standing on the sand

Or working at the Foghorn point  
Where seagulls glide and keen  
His mind on walls and no through roads  
In twenty seventeen

I might have heard him in the glen  
That winds down to the bay,  
An echo on the wind perhaps,  
Or whispers from the waves

Primroses dare the steep glensides  
Where he'd have stopped and thought  
Of tender petals on the wind  
Of wars that men have fought

Or maybe in the old churchyard  
Down by the cold White Loch  
You might have seen him writing down  
The name of someone lost

And while he thinks of threads that bind  
And which of these applies:  
'a time to rend, a time to sew',  
A single Heron flies.

It lands beside the water's edge  
By castles old and new  
And all its ruin, all its thrill  
It cannot choose or rue

Or maybe from the cliff you saw

Him working creels below  
Along the Ells to Money Head  
Just fifty years ago

Or, too severe to wander where  
there's only praise or ease,  
you'll maybe find him in his boat  
in search of rougher seas.

At night you'll maybe see him walk  
Along the riverside  
Where others waited, others wept,  
Or maybe by the tide

10 02 17

jim hogg

# Ebb And Flow

Plunge with me through the breaking wave  
Beneath the raven's wing  
Glide silently into the cave  
Below the lighthouse hill  
Or let us stop a while and stare  
Where Fulmars swoop and sing  
And images of glory days  
Merge with the ragged cliff

Walk with me down the sun bleached strand  
Where water wars with stone  
And Etta bent for hours on end  
Down on the Creechan shore  
To find her peace, and keep us fed  
Amongst the ebb and flow  
Of all the tides of life that rent  
So much of all we've known

Look with me if you still can see  
The blazing hearth we knew  
Your brother on your father's knee  
The rain that love shone through  
The falling tree that fell too near  
The house without a view  
Beneath the teeming midnight sea,  
And days that were too few

Stand with me high on Cairngaan hill  
Unweave the tapestry  
Of every fence, of every kill  
Of all our vanity  
And honour all the ghosts that still  
Extend their charity  
And all they'll have of love until  
We walk the endless way

(chorus)

And now that all the lines are down

I hear them loud and clear  
And when there's darkness all around  
Sometimes I see them here  
Between the face where Ravens soar  
And Creechan's stoney shore

25 12 16

jim hogg

# Little Sparks

The ships have gone,  
the tide is out,  
the sky is blue.

The day is done,  
the seagulls cry,  
the breeze is cool.

And I am old,  
and I am cold,  
and still a fool.

But I can smile,  
for bluebells will  
be coming soon.

And all the trees  
by London Road  
will blossom too.

And I recall  
that I had dreams  
and I had time.

And there was love  
and mystery,  
and they were 'mine'.

Though we don't own  
the love we've known;  
we stand in line,

until the flood  
comes sweeping in,  
and then the flight.

For beauty thrilled  
and duty built

some kind of life.

And there were trials:  
the ones I failed,  
the ones I passed.

And I don't know  
which matters most  
or what will last.

A kindness done;  
a little light  
on shadows cast?

The arms I fled,  
the vows betrayed,  
the flames I fanned.

Excuses made;  
the gift of time  
I spent too fast.

And there were friends  
I left behind  
along the way.

And paradise  
I found at sea,  
but wouldn't stay.

So many hills  
I meant to climb,  
but went astray.

The thorns that thirled,  
the blooms that healed,  
the myths that swayed.

The lips I've missed,  
the touch that swept,



the love that slayed.

My folks are gone  
and just like me,  
they tried their best.

Their lives were hard,  
and we were cursed,  
and we were blessed.

Their world flows on  
though houses fall,  
and stories end.

As night arrives,  
the birds have flown,  
the lights glow red.

And in the east  
the brightest star:  
lone Sirius.

(chorus)

And in the end  
it all comes down  
to little things.

The little sparks  
that light the night,  
or waken spring.

A moment's thought,  
the penny dropped,  
and sudden wings.

A gentle touch,  
a falling leaf,  
the summer wind.

The glance that holds,  
the open hand,  
the heart that will.

23 01 17

jim hogg

# And So To This

Her name was Jean,  
Her eyes were green;  
I never noticed her at first;  
And though she's well past seventeen,  
At looking good she's no' the worst.

But love's demands  
and life's commands  
Don't always deign to coincide.  
Our little ship lies on the sands;  
It's lookin' like we've missed the tide.

I aimed to row,  
alas too slow;  
Transfixed, I sat for far too long.  
And so you had to let me go  
To make a start on this wee song -

(chorus)

And if we meet again some day  
There's every chance I'll run away  
I'd rather hold you close of course  
Or walk with you on stormswept shores  
But feet get cold as age takes hold  
Though all the bells of love be tolled

But there were times,  
like perfect rhymes,  
That boded weel, it seemed to me:  
Yon hug when we were past our primes,  
Or when I couldn't stay for tea.

I would have snogged,  
but mainly jogged,  
From fear of ruining my chance.  
To woo you perfectly I slogged  
To stage impossible romance

And so to this,  
no goodbye kiss,  
No heartbreak by the garden gate.  
And yet, there's all that stuff I'll miss,  
Each week day morn at half past eight

(chorus)

And if we meet again some day  
There's every chance I'll run away  
I'd rather hold you close of course  
Or walk with you on stormswept shores  
But feet get cold as age takes hold  
Though all the bells of love be tolled

14 11 15

jim hogg

# The Circle

It's been a while since I took my knife  
And carved our little truth  
On that old beech tree by the railway line  
Before we left the school

The quirks of fate beat us to the gate  
And you wed someone else  
In the church where dreams softly melt away  
I vowed I'd ring the bells

And in and out through the years I swerved  
While nothing stayed the same  
Now the counting shows that I served myself  
and nothing's really changed

I'd loved and left love so many times  
I thought that it had gone  
And the autumn leaves suited me just fine  
With winter coming on

Then suddenly out of nowhere came  
A signal of a kind  
Just a flick'ring spark I mistook for flames  
That flared up in my mind

And as I scan all the damage done  
As autumn starts to fade  
There's a warning there in the falling sun  
A price that must be paid

And so I stopped by yon beech to carve  
Some words I'd never dared  
When I knew that I'd loved enough at last  
And now the circle's squared

230716

jim hogg

# Across From Jack's

We met outside the Alamo  
That quiet pub across from Jack's  
You'd told me I should take it slow  
And so I rushed to make a start

So keen, so bold, so fervently  
To cover up the fear I felt  
I dived right in so recklessly  
And lost all sight of what love meant

While you were tender, you were kind  
And you were all I knew you were  
Though you were just as scared inside  
As out into the street we stepped

The moon fell down behind us when  
We strolled down past that shapely hall  
and spoke of here and now, and then,  
and on where only shadows fall

And you were there when we both held  
Some kind of future in our arms  
Until the very word rebelled  
Somewhere between our fragile hearts

And so we shared I don't know what  
Along that pier where seagulls cried  
Amongst the echoes of our hurt  
It felt like destiny denied

But someday soon I'll walk again  
Down by the boats without your hand  
I'll stand alone and catch my breath  
And try once more to understand

The gentle swells that gently rose  
Then reared into a sudden storm

And raised these waves that pound this shore  
That I still find myself upon

For I don't want to miss you less  
For reasons I just can't define  
And bitter-sweetly I confess  
I must still sip this bitter wine

For all my blunders cling to me  
My thoughtless words, my vanity;  
And every choice we miss or make  
Will shape the road we're bound to take

Where all our fondest wishes are  
Too real it seems, and yet so far  
From anything this life will yield  
As if our fate's already sealed

So here we are beneath the night  
A patchwork quilt of dark and light  
A little flame, a little ice  
A ticking clock, a loaded dice

(Chorus)

And life will lead us where it goes  
The world still turns, the river flows  
And after winter comes the spring  
With love to make and songs to sing

jim hogg

# Summertime Gone

That summer was a brown eyed girl who knew nothing but her heart

We stumbled through the vows we'd made into each other's arms

And both of us were glorious or so we used to think

For forty days and forty nights we danced along the brink

We could have been the wonder love of the lives we never lived

Your curves and looks defied the skill of every brush and quill

Your husky voice like music wove a spell no man could break

And underneath that summer's moon we'd only love to make

The narrow bridge across the tracks still reminds me of the night

We lay down in that barley field beneath the dying light

The world was miles away that night but we were in between

The lasting love you'd left behind and sighs of might have been

No nothing good is ever gone until all the cords are thrown

The river flows, the waves still break, but summertime has flown

The starlings gather on the wind awaiting autumn's spark

The barley field is barren now where once we left our mark



I held you long years after, when we last kissed on moonlit sand

I've raised a glass to times long gone and to a better man

He held you through the wind and rain and when the children cried

I'd flown off with the Starlings then but he stayed by your side

(chorus)

The moonlight shone through your dark hair down by the Sandhead shore

And in your whispers gentle waves broke round us by Drummore

We had our time when passion flashed, and though the guilt plays on

I've no regrets now looking back upon our summertime gone

130509

jim hogg

# Birch And Bracken

This is the way the wind must blow  
The word came up from London town  
And witless minions laid us low  
The mind of London blew us down

The rugged hills and glens were swept  
Where Birch and Bracken swayed and sang  
And rolling fields and river-lands  
Ran red where traitors' muskets rang

And those who paid for standing fast  
Were left like vermin where they fell  
Or drowned off Orkney's stormy shores  
In chains inside the ships of hell

Or on the sands of Wigtown Bay  
When James's army was the law  
The twa Marg'rets fae Galloway  
who died so bravely for their cause

It's in the stem and in the bud  
It falls within the hidden tear  
And from the hands that once spilled blood  
To kill belief in freedom here

And history's not over yet  
In tower blocks and lonely crofts  
The drumming threat can still be heard  
If you try listening close enough

And now we live and die for dreams  
we buy to serve the chosen few  
To keep them gorging at the feast  
To keep us standing in the queue

They say tomorrow's just a flower

We planted only yesterday  
And while we burn this flame that's ours  
It's true that some things can't be changed

This is no cry for vengeance now  
Though blooms of blood still bristle yet  
In winds still blowing from the south  
from minds that freedom still offends

2007 Renfrew

jim hogg

# Smoke On The Rooftops

Our era was chimney smoke  
idly falling onto rooftops  
and gradually into memories  
we never noticed

Not soundtracked by traffic's snarl  
children's whoops were not quite pure  
but echoed no threat,  
nor eras to come

Handsaw cut on cuddies  
old slabs of pine in flames -  
under a shovel of smush -  
were the fragrance of our time, and

out across our open ground  
Bobby Johnstone yelling 'Dio diote',  
melting butter dripping  
from a scone as he ran,

was the leitmotif, until  
they crowded us with houses  
rushed us with lorries and vans,  
wails of urgent passers through,

and I think we might have loved it then.  
But, down in the woods now  
sometimes for long moments  
in the smoke from burning branches

I can go home

jim hogg

# Specks

In the bay where all the bombs fall  
the sea has left the sea  
In a mirrored wall I saw myself  
walk away from me  
where all the men have fallen down  
though women still can dream  
and as for all the wise men,  
all they seem to do is seem

a leaf can break the wheel of fate  
upon a butterfly  
the meek inherit bitter fruit  
and weakness by and by.  
The chemistry of beauty  
is the chemistry of lust  
and like the coriolis wind,  
we must do what we must:  
tinkle vague like tender glass,  
thunder fear like splitting stone  
and down the fell and rainbowed path,  
wonder out of skin and bone

20 04 13

jim hogg

# May

I heard you'd never married  
From a stranger yesterday  
Exactly forty years have passed  
Since I last saw your face

The snow was falling lightly  
As we strolled through Kelvinbridge  
One afternoon in wintertime  
When we were both still kids

She said you took up nursing  
And you've built a house at home  
While I continued nurturing  
The art of letting go

I climbed the pointless mountains  
Of ambition and conceit  
I fell in love and fell back out  
Walked both sides of the street

They say the sea is bluer  
Where the great Atlantic roars  
And out of sight means out of mind  
It isn't true, of course.

That tenement is down now  
Only memories can frame  
That first floor flat in Eldon street  
Where I first spoke your name

The vanity of beauty  
should forbid me to suggest  
you stood alone, without compare  
but, I was prejudiced

With Islay in the distance  
Ringing softly like a bell  
I pretended not to listen  
But couldn't break its spell

Now Kelvingrove is snowbound  
And the QM Halls are gone  
But yesterday keeps coming round  
Though time keeps moving on

They say the sea is bluer  
Where the great Atlantic roars  
And out of sight means out of mind  
It isn't true, of course.

(song)

jim hogg

# Chorus Without A Song

Where will they find us  
when we're gone?  
Beneath the stones  
we're carved upon  
Between the stars  
just hanging on  
Or in the wind like ash  
or appleblossom blown  
Or rolled like dice  
or caught in nets  
Or in the smoke  
of some stranger's cigarette  
Or half remembered summer song  
we never sung  
Or prayer for a promised land  
In a language we could never understand  
Or standing back to back on sand  
Searching time's horizon blind  
For each other's squinting eyes  
Like love's the missing link  
Or just the dried up residue  
Of an over-sweetened drink  
Or overcome by profit dreams  
And baked in ice for centuries  
Until the moment when we see  
That all we've ever loved and done  
Was in the name of greed disguised  
And sowing seed and wars and lies  
Until it hurts to laugh  
Or pleases us to cry

jim hogg



# Sad Penguin

Sad penguin stands and stares at the goats  
Thinks language  
is getting to be a problem  
Somebody, somebody, somebody  
said something like that  
(Would I face the guns of avarice)  
It isn't if you're already limited  
More than language is limiting.  
(There is no bravery in words  
I might be a book, a book I might be)  
Can action precede thought  
thinks sad penguin alone  
To be and to do simultaneously  
Like maybe a phucking goat would  
So bright lights are dimmed  
And the dull have unreined in freedom  
If I were a wave (just imagining here)  
Instead of a wingless bird  
Flightless, flightless, effin flightless  
(remember – got wings, got wings)  
bird would I be more undefined  
though ocean bound, not tied, cleaving  
away from my own I am  
Like a goat is fully into doing  
Utter doingness  
And thus, thinned out thought infinitely  
(and smashed bravery unconsciously..)  
And so joined forces with being.  
But I in my turn, am full penguinness now  
For all cases of penguin always  
followed the eggs that were us to be  
Except where all time happens at once  
(thought leads nowhere some..  
some phucking what)  
Like infinity is everywhere all the time  
(And hatches nothing;  
but what has been always?  
Oh senile God)  
So Bravery simply occurs then?

And washes on.  
A hungry bear approaches.  
By the summer I'll be gone  
I am a book, a book am I

jim hogg

# In John Martin's Bridge Over Chaos

See the juggler on the high street  
(he has wings, had electrons for his lunch)  
without effort, without thought,  
in the patterns practice forged  
from desire, from our need  
The coin toss that holds  
the future in its fall  
(it's on strings,  
has whole galaxies in thrall) .  
The very little things  
that seem to know no rules  
to limit all the links  
that all our knowledge is  
(it's just a game and the game  
Is the naming of things)

as, sneakily without rest,  
mostly beyond our sight  
(I mean the sight we choose) ,  
chaos builds from chaos  
incomparable design,  
terrifying certainty  
the ground on which we stand  
(the gods we fly,  
the myths we drive)  
will suddenly collapse,  
into a quantum madness  
we'll all be trapped inside  
or total understanding  
(fog so sweet and blinding  
like birdsong in a dream?)  
that can never be expressed –  
or utter separation  
perched on swaying principles  
above a foaming world,  
alone,  
within the panic of  
the end of all control...

jim hogg

# A Life

It begins like a spring begins.  
and it flows, runs, cuts and weaves,  
to never end until we do, and we surf,  
we sail, we tumble and we babble,  
creators and created, leading and led  
between uncertain traces and lessons:  
all our banked up moments  
behind the leading edge of us.

Some dribble little compromises,  
some are a storm of contradictions,  
of lost illusions, or cataract  
of deceptions. He began  
without hints, a dandy, and became  
a ferocious torrent damned, while King  
was carving out a canyon and  
"murdered for a dream."

It takes blood and patience and heart  
to burst through walls, to flatten laws  
calmly, to calmly wash away  
the mighty river of many mindless wills,  
to roll on cannily,  
merging countless streams,  
and bind incipient dreams  
not imprisoned by time.

10 12 13

Quote from "Between The Notes"

jim hogg

# The Visit

I must photograph your gums  
I'm sure I heard him say,  
with a hundred million pixels  
of the latest insight into  
the tissue of a universe in decay.  
Remember the selves we used to be -  
he might have said; I might have dreamt -  
white and upright, sharp as purpose,  
I believe they may be clearly seen  
in the stars of your mouth;  
and the selves we hadn't become  
yet - I wonder about them sometimes,  
estranged so far from that unitary  
system we inhabited, in some other time -  
which never knew alien sugar traps,  
nebulae of conspicuous addiction  
or orbiting temptations of various  
galaxies that would swallow our lives,  
or sly, unpoetic mishaps we'd have  
to avoid like cavities! Looking now  
into his images I imagine Higgs  
Boson particulae lurking,  
colliding perhaps with illusion  
in deep darkness at the root  
of a tooth fixed in the jaw of  
a history of crushing matter  
that won't be denied - a future  
that bites back  
but keeps on breaking down  
the elements of Newton's notions,  
under photons from even the moon,  
tiring, but busy at this moment,  
dragging long compulsive slicks  
of saliva into inconclusive entropy  
where "mouth" is an empty concept,  
drilled out bit by infinite bit.

jim hogg

# The Runners

A dirty old wall ran back and forth  
across our little games, but  
thoughts of freedom stirred  
nothing in us then.

For we were free enough.  
Light and fast we flicked about,

(you in that bright yellow cardigan)  
before self consciousness came,  
before our names were called,  
in some kind of order  
by the far world.

We  
seem only to be waiting now,  
here, heavy and slow  
at the edge  
of some great blowing away...

But we used to jump everything:  
over Rhododendron branches and fences  
and under thick bushes into a wasp's nest  
you clattered with a stick,  
so hard a squadron flew out,  
flattened all the old houses  
and left deep wounds in the flesh of the fields  
as we fled less than fast enough  
past jimmy bell just asking why

And later at the station house  
where trains no longer stopped,  
police came out of the shadows once  
and took us away in a book.

I didn't know what to say for years  
but can't stop talking now  
about all the things I couldn't, then.

Everything seemed closer of course.

Even that dark forbidding loch,  
- where suicides consigned  
all their hidden hinterlands -  
down the hill from the railway line  
looked near enough to clocker in  
but edged away  
from almost every arcing stone.

and everlasting leisure -  
some of the seers decreed  
would soon be ours for good,  
and so we dreamed  
- in hardly more than twenty years  
(though nineteen eighty four  
was easily forever away then) .  
Fancy robots and clever cars  
would roam and reshape possibilities,  
channel our gifts and banish stress,  
and why would there even be debt?  
The common good would rule they said.

And none of us laughed at all.  
The master of heads was no fool.  
He taught us all for years  
and fished for herrings out the loch,  
when there still were millions to seethe,  
in a little boat with cans of beer  
and sometimes my father  
with his cunning hooks.

They dreamed the old fox Wilson's dreams,  
and believed the war they carried in them  
would level out erratic mountains  
invisible hands would always shape.

And every one of us kept stumbling on,  
to all the places we cling to now,  
for some kind of safety,  
here in the foothills  
far from the wars we forgot to fight,  
our children in the trenches  
with their arsenal of flattened dreams



and the withered dignity we bequeathed.

And now,  
like sunspots gone astray,  
some of us have fired up,  
and sent out crazy rays,  
shattering the pretty prisms  
that life used to be visible through,  
or set about fixing our broken paths  
with the energy the end endows;  
and the rest of us admittedly,  
still lunge enthusiastically into  
the gushing bomb-hole of ourselves,  
mainly for laughs I'd like to think

You saw our blindness clearly  
as we walked and walked the nights  
around our centre of the world  
and probably saw your own  
on the walls of that back lane bookie's  
or in the clinking ups and downs  
in the lights in the Bridge.  
Sometimes it must have seemed as if  
nothing really mattered.

A bunch of us loved each other then  
and surely we should cry forever  
for the beatings we took unwittingly  
between the nursery rhymes and the useless gods  
all the wise men swore would carry us.

I hear you're building wings now  
down in that valley by the loch,  
waiting alone for the reckless wind  
that blew those ragged squares we threw  
back over our heads and out of sight,  
into another world.

21 11 13

(For some old Castle Kennedy pals)

jim hogg

# The Distribution Of 'Judgement'

This is no day for jumping up and down:  
the skies are in turmoil and the bitches  
have wagged a pungent silence  
out of minds so small their limits  
are beyond them. The first signs

were a wafting of northerly, devoid  
of the slightest imputation, and, obviously,  
intense listening – loud enough that we might hear  
their incoming weather front announce:  
“our global warming is over forever, ”

until, that is, the next autonomous fox  
has them all teeth and technical awards  
and certificates of glossy evidence,  
to smother home truths an old dog  
might take a couple of barrels for,

before they set about sniffing out  
conveniently killing statistics  
from the blizzard they've demanded.  
No rum do could do without them  
and their paper mache morality

some guru they've never read  
cluelessly chewed out of Adam Smith.  
Their roundabout spins on hearts  
of broken wire, sucking suckers in  
to get thrown off for a price

that's supposed to set them free.

jim hogg

# The Lights Of Castle Kennedy

I see the Copper Beech between  
The Plane tree and the Evergreen  
The old stone wall beside the road  
The crescent where the street lights glowed

A bunch of kids outside the shop  
When time was slow but didn't stop  
In photographs of black and white  
Our loads were small, our eyes were bright

Still playing in my memory  
The sights of Castle Kennedy  
I hear a haunting melody  
By the lights of Castle Kennedy

The stone fights in the county yard  
Left some of us a wee bit scarred  
We roamed for miles on sunny days  
The punches flew and then we played

Kaleidoscope of days and nights:  
the splores beneath the village lights  
the hedges and the fences smashed  
the boagies that we built and crashed

Still playing in my memory  
Those nights in Castle Kennedy  
They weave a haunting melody  
By the lights of Castle Kennedy

And there was romance too of course  
That certain girl across the road  
I get the urge to call her yet  
A number I can not forget

I ran my fingers through her hair  
But I was still too shy to dare  
As summer stars gave way to dawn  
The moment came and then was gone

Still playing in my memory  
The sights of Castle Kennedy  
I hear a haunting melody  
By the lights of Castle Kennedy

I look across the fields from here  
So far away and yet so near  
The endless bend, a starlit night  
Some kids beneath old Maggie's light

I see the leaving and the loss  
The waters we set out to cross  
The crazy days and pains of youth  
The endings that came all too soon

271113

jim hogg

## Lines From An Asteroid

I clicked your page again today, and found,  
between the stony beach and your fair meadow,  
a list of broken hearts you'd written for  
(we bowed together before your humour  
before the sorrows that left no shadow) .  
You called in Interpol when I was bound  
for barren rocks beyond the Kuiper belt  
and had me summoned home in fits at the  
pistol point of your wit. I couldn't say  
I knew you well. I never saw your face,  
nor heard you tell of your long agonies;  
but yours were the words that told us how we felt:  
whether alone by the black river's falls  
or, laughing together in these empty halls.

For will barber - RIP

jim hogg

# Castle Kennedy

The wunters were hard but oor simmers were hot  
and braver kids dooked in the chilly white loch  
where temperature gauges fair upwardly shot  
when reports swiftly spread that the ravishing Dot

was loose in a swimsuit that couldnae contain  
every last hint o' her weel mannered mane  
an' talk o' her curves, every shade o' her skin  
kept a' the boys warm whun the wunter came in.

Now that's slightly jumping the gun I suppose  
but memories like that are inclined to impose.  
The truth is that sna' was a regular thing  
an' ice on the lochs was the signal tae spring

yer curlin' stanes clankin' oot intae the licht  
on white Sunday mornin's tae gae them a dicht  
and monie a ring, that rang through the cal' air  
across Paxton's loch and the land owned by Stair:

'The Grounds', that stretched near tae the end o' the world  
-the apples we spewed and the canes that we hurled  
were, in the main borrowed - and never returned -  
from oor London based laird whose branches we burned

tae make a wee blaze when we didnae feel hot  
or the 'keeper decided we shouldnae be shot  
for nickin' their progue or poachin' their fish  
wi gear that could never be fairly ca'd swish

but somehow still managed tae hook oot their troots  
their roach and their perch and odd scaly brutes  
which only were seen -and then oot o' shock -  
when bobby was riding his bike in the loch

as if it was normal and we were jist crass  
for parking our bikes on a dry bit o' grass  
like we did through the simmer o' sixty six  
while some o' the big boys were hatching their tricks:

that big jimmy barrie came gallopin' doon  
an' clattered me flush on the erse wi' his boot  
an opportunistic detail no' forgotten  
when I'd grown bigger and kicked his cotton

clad rump ferociously hard, right in the wedge,  
as he knelt in a gap in al Maggie's hedge  
intendin' to catch some younger boy dosin'  
an' instead found himself tum'lin and rollin'

oot over the grass on al maggie's green  
I've got to admit that he took it quite weel  
and aye picked me first for his fitba team  
tho' Moddy's convinced that was jist a bad dream

but dreamin and darkness were ever weel met  
as Alex and I - when it wasnae wet -  
went strollin' by Grace's tae pull a wee stunt  
when larkin' was slack and needed a shunt.

We'd swing on the wire supporting the pole  
'til all of a sudden, as if doon a hole,  
the village was loast in a thick rush o' nicht  
as if a great blackness had swallowed the licht

an everything else, except ghostly voices  
plus several ither unusual noises:  
the wun through the parachutes stuck on the wires  
the roar o' occasional chimney fires

or rasp of the wud wasps buzzing aroon  
when foraging forth fae that wud tae the sooth  
where yin douglas fir over forty feet high  
sprung clear o' mere lowness, up through the sky

an' stubbornly stood there, its summit so proud  
'til Fee, on a whim, fae flat on the ground  
speeled up through the branches tae look fer the sea  
an' sat like Cochise at the tap o' the tree.

He'd conquered the plant, but love lay in wait



an' some o' us fell, some o' us swayed.  
Pirates played tunes on the radio waves -  
oor hearts strings tae pluck, an' oor souls tae save.

An' here for the moment this tale I must park  
yon music tae savour by street bricht or dark  
oor crescent tae wander in memory's trance  
or crack at the shop or gan tae the dance.

15 01 13

jim hogg

# 'Run Rabbit Run'

Behind the begonias and between the tomes,  
the sinistra wilt before simplicity.  
Crosland, cigar in hand, poses magisterial  
and unbelieving, on some stolid but unseen wall.  
Bevan lies face down in a cellar of dust  
or hangs ignored in some shadowed hall,  
disgusted, and most of the rest  
have arrows through their heads  
for having hearts.

Flabby cheeked child men with pursy eyes  
clogged with little webs of salvation juice,  
or maybe a mouth-watering future goad,  
divide and ruin, with baby jibes that blind.

Cultures of flaccid cells steal votes to oppose  
and first of all concede vast swathes of ground  
to Margaret's boys and girls and their childish  
concerns as they trill at automated tills, and  
wait on automated phones for outsourced  
service we never dreamt of, when, fifty years ago  
we were out of our tiny minds with optimism.

But, cometh the hour, cometh the many:  
the 'reserve army of unemployed', arise.  
Handy for felling the unions, your finest hour  
is now upon you. Be demonised now to save us all!  
Be demonised so the working poor will 'strive',  
for their memories are short.  
Be demonised so the vote of the poor will be split,  
for their memories are false.  
Be demonised so Gideon and Dave can make it,  
for fairness would ruin them.  
Be demonised to dispel any doubt that remains:  
power and democracy are quietly at war.  
The ballot box needs neutering,  
and the left have left for the right, so,  
be demonised also for no good reason  
except your utter weakness.

And maybe from the hammering you take  
we might begin to learn  
a little about 'power'  
that thrashes the weak, and lies;  
to turn our minds from thinking, perhaps,  
about what it means to 'earn',  
a keystone word that opens up -  
with a little work -  
all the myths that serve  
the sociopaths whose bottomless  
and serpentine needs  
are satisfied by castles  
built on the sands  
of your innocent trust.

(Run rabbit run - from Rosettes, The Men They Couldn't Hang)

jim hogg

# There Is A Girl

The stars still colonise my jealous eyes  
And write what never was on fading lines  
We never danced the night away and left  
Together arm in arm with hearts in step

I see you on the street here now and then  
And wonder if you ever think of when  
A country girl was sitting by the wall  
And caught my eye across the old church hall

(chorus)

When we were in our teens and suddenly  
There was no world; there was no history  
For I was in your arms and you were mine  
One night so long ago in summertime

Sometimes it seems to me there's still a bond  
That links us gently through those kisses gone  
Somewhere beyond the veils of folded time  
Your arms and lips still keep their hold on mine

(chorus)

Just as they did when we were young and shy  
And never had the chance to say goodbye  
though years and miles and changes all build walls  
Sometimes I'm back inside the old church hall

The next time that you hear me saying hi  
Or catch a glimpse of fondness in my eyes  
It's just because I'm thankful I held you  
When you were oh so young and beautiful  
Or just because I'm thinking of the night  
And precious moments when you held me tight

(chorus)

When we were in our teens and suddenly  
There was no world; there was no history  
For I was in your arms and you were mine  
One night so long ago in summertime

jim hogg

# Angel On The Shore

Watching the waves in broken wings  
Thinking of all the things you've done  
Blaming yourself for everything  
In all the world, you are the one

Walking the shore before the dawn  
Cheeks wet with tears beneath the moon  
So many chances missed and gone  
Through all the years you were the fool

And now it's all too late  
For life has closed that gate  
The children running in your dreams  
Are running out of mystery  
And all the guilt we're bleeding now  
Can't save us now; there's no way out

Watching the traffic on the roads  
Thinking of all the things we know  
All of the strangers with their loads  
And all the world's just letting go

High on the cliff the seabirds sing  
Watching the future rolling in  
Price matters more than anything  
Than even that of all our sins

And now we'd best forget  
This time we've lost the bet  
The dreamers running for their share  
Are running for hypocrisy  
And all its pleasure can't replace  
What they can't face; they're running scared

Turn to me now and take my hand

It's not your fault; there was no choice  
Veiled behind veils wild horses stand  
In all this life there is no point

Now let us build a garden here  
Turning the soil with humble hearts  
Eating the fruits of modest dreams  
With all our love in this brief span

There's something in the wind  
The vane's about to swing  
The masters of the land and sea  
Are running out of history  
And all the wealth and strength they steal  
Will blow like ash upon the breeze

191212

(song)

jim hogg

# Google Blues

It's Sunday morning here in Glasgow  
And I've just woken from a dream  
Outside I hear the church bells toll  
The leaves are trembling in the breeze

Another August's almost over  
The river keeps on running through  
October's coming, days grow short  
And I've been googling just for you

For memories just keep on flowing  
And only now can I see through  
Illusions I once thought were real  
And only now can I see you

But I can't find the words to capture  
The melting melody that played  
Within my heart when I held you  
When we were endless summer days

And now I'm trying not to write you  
Another corny song of loss  
The ocean's wide, the water's blue  
No, baby, I won't swim across

(chorus)

It must have been those old love songs  
I was trawling through last night  
I've given up on righting wrongs  
Cos I no longer know what's right  
There's only this I know for sure  
The sun shone when I walked with you

310809

jim hogg



# Doubting's A Disease

Let's round up the sceptics and bring them all near  
To whisper corrective words in their ear  
And if they persist in denying they're ill  
We'll have to force-feed them a gullible pill

It's not that we want to; it's just that we must  
They're all pathologically lacking in trust  
The problem is simple: the proof's a bit thin  
But only the sceptics were not taken in

We tried to appease them, we tried to persuade  
We've tried using fear, and some of us prayed  
But now there's no doubting that doubt's a disease  
We'll bring the refuseniks all to their knees

jim hogg

# Us

A thing of endless wants, with falsity to match  
I see us everywhere, our legions on the march

Talking up hypocrisy and brandishing the cross  
Talking meritocracy so long as we're the boss

And beauty we devise within our very eyes  
And measuring ourselves we find the perfect size

Is it any wonder then that we should build a god  
To take our devils on within our inner quad

A high elusive force for casting useful blame  
To minister control, and vouch for name and fame

And when we track the pea, we're never fast enough  
The fraudster with the shells is strangely always us

jim hogg

# When There Was Only

I took your picture long ago  
On the west shore of loch Lomond  
One summer's day beneath a tree  
When you were only twenty three

Our mad march days have come and gone  
we had our moments in the sun  
when I was tied and you were free  
Way back in nineteen eighty three

For love had rushed us like a storm  
To that old Phil Collins love song  
You had me running to the beat  
Down Byers Road past Havelock street  
I held your hand and watched your feet  
And running never felt so sweet

You took me to the Hayburn Vaults  
You had no time for finding fault  
And when this world called out to you  
You did just what you had to do

And you were gone by Christmas time  
On a one way flight o'er Palestine  
You left behind sweet memories  
A tender place and precious dreams

For love had rushed us like a storm  
To that old Phil Collins love song  
You had me running to the beat  
Down Byers Road past Havelock street  
I held your hand and watched your feet  
And running never felt so sweet

Yes I was yours from that first turn  
On the dance floor up in Tyndrum  
The West End still belongs to you  
And Langlands Road's nostalgic too

I took your picture long ago  
On the west shore of loch Lomond  
One summer's day beneath a tree  
When there was only you and me

19 04 09

jim hogg

# Who Do You Think You Are? (Song)

Are you leading off the final bend  
Are you at the front of every trend  
Are you every girl and every boy  
Are you melody or just white noise

Are you on the brink of everest  
Do you ever know what you'll do next  
Is the sand of time at your command  
Have you got the whole world in your hand

Who do you think you are...

Che guevara's dream  
An island in the stream  
Anything but what you seem  
The rising sun, a falling sword  
A minor twitch, a winter storm  
A long forgotten face  
Down a country lane  
A haunted sense of loss  
or blood upon the cross

Are you falling down or standing fast  
Are you moving on or in the past  
Does the summer sun shine down on you  
Would you shoot yourself to make the news

Are you dancing on the golden gate  
Are you thinking that it's getting late  
Has your broken heart broke down again  
Is tomorrow hanging in the rain

Who do you think you are?  
Who do you think you are?  
Who do you think you are?  
Who do you think you are?

Christ's imagined son  
Or Einstein on the run

The man with the golden gun  
The apple of your mother's eye  
A quick hello, a long goodbye  
An arrow flying true  
Through your mind at you  
An itch that can't be fixed  
Or dust upon the wind

Do you tell your stories to the night  
Are you underneath that old street light  
Are you wishing you were back there still  
Every road you take becomes a hill

Are you on a roll or in a jam  
Do your friends all tell you you're the man  
Are you satisfaction guaranteed  
Are you glory bound or history

Who do you think you are...

Judgement coming down  
The next train out of town  
The man with the plastic crown  
An astronaut trapped in the trees  
A burning bush, a swarm of bees  
The truth that ties your tongue  
Robin hood unsung  
this temporary flight  
A shadow in the night

And you're thinking this is all there is  
And that all we cherish vanishes  
You're the only one who's been betrayed  
By the promises that youth once made

So you cut your losses, start again  
And just pick a card, they're all the same  
Walk the extra mile though no one knows  
Or, just turn and say, that's how it goes?

Who do you think you are?  
Who do you think you are?

Who do you think you are?

Who do I think I am...

24 9 2112

jim hogg

# Winter In Portpatrick (Song)

The snowflakes sit like little mountains  
On the branches of the trees  
By the harbour there the fountain  
It must be icebound in this freeze  
I'm not so far from home as you  
New York city's cold at Xmas time  
Though romance warms Fifth Avenue  
The cold Atlantic sways between us

(chorus)

But Portpatrick lies so far from here  
In the glen between the cliffs  
Where breakers lash the lighthouse pier  
And you and I once so gently kissed  
And as I write I realise  
How much is gone, and how much I still  
miss

And from the harbour Irish voices  
Over here in search of peace  
And all through that fleeting summer  
We walked yon far off village streets  
Though time and distance win at last  
here and now you seem to be so close  
I smell your hair, I'm in your arms  
We're almost back home in the Port love

I saw her playing her guitar and  
softly sing of Auld Lang Syne  
Looking so like you I wondered  
She brought your sweet face back to mind  
Sometimes the old songs carry me  
Back across the years to be with you  
Where summer winds blew off the sea  
Where snow falls now on streets we once knew

But Portpatrick lies so far from here  
In the glen between the cliffs  
Where breakers lash the lighthouse pier



And you and I once so gently kissed  
And as I write I realise  
How much is gone, and how much I still  
miss you.

jim hogg

# The Light At Killantringan

The mouth of the harbour here quietly kissed  
blue waves that waltzed from Kilkeel home to us  
The springtime sun faded to 'love's old sweet song'  
and the light at Killantringan came on

But your fingertips on my lips couldn't still  
the secret fears of a working class kid  
That you were too good was my very first thought  
as the light at Killantringan shone on

The beams from the lighthouse turned through the night  
lighting the perils hidden from sight

And we were the summer that never would fade  
our love like the doeskin bound for the blade  
You turned seventeen and I turned from your heart  
with Killantringan light lost in the dark

The autumn was passing, and snow would soon fall  
Time didn't fix us, and it just kept on  
Then, tears on your letter, we fell once again  
as Killantringan light shone through the rain

The beams from the lighthouse turned through the night  
lighting the perils hidden from sight

And now looking back love, it all seems so plain  
but I couldn't find a way to explain  
The simplest of words wouldn't ever fly free  
as Killantringan light searched o'er the sea

And down on his knees in the Queen Marg'ret Hall  
underneath your photograph on the wall  
A guy who still saw what he saw in your eyes  
when Killantringan light scanned the night skies

The beams from the lighthouse turned through the night  
Lighting the pearls there in plain sight

05 10 07

jim hogg

# Rivers And Boats

I don't know what you look like now  
I burned the bridges and the boats  
And this old photograph I've found  
It shows you standing by the road  
Your windblown hair across your face  
Just as I turned and looked away

I always got my timing wrong  
I couldn't wait and you were gone

I heard your voice a year ago  
We talked about so many things  
That maybe you'd be coming home  
But all those words on broken wings  
Fell down the well of endless time  
To echo through some restless night

I never quite caught sight of you  
I never quite knew what to do

I sometimes think of yesterday  
And all the strange things that it brings  
That searching for the holy grail  
The honesty and innocence  
that maybe blindness shielded us  
until we understood this world

For looking back it's clear to me  
It wasn't what it seemed to be

Sometimes I dream that you're still here  
Just doing ordinary things  
You fix your stockings, brush your hair  
Then suddenly, you've sprouted wings  
You were no angel, no white flag  
And I know you're not coming back

I never saw you as you were  
When you were all I wanted then

I don't know if we'll meet again  
So maybe I should say it now  
I always tried to play it straight  
But couldn't free myself somehow  
I saw you as a state of grace  
And built myself a bolted gate

To save me from the love that grew  
The way a hurricane might do

But still, it's safe enough to look  
At this old photograph of you

1 5 12

jim hogg

# Girl At The Window

The many men who want you now  
Who crave your hand and crave your mouth  
Who fear the confidence you've found  
Kneel down before you on the ground

The men who humbly worship you  
Were once so nonchalant, so cool  
With one eye on the fields in bloom  
And all the birds,  
Out in the bush

But now they're breaking stones and bone  
When they're not waiting home alone  
With one hand on the silent phone  
Imagining the perfect clone

And it would look the way you did  
When we were riders on the ridge  
Of all the things this life still hid  
When you were raw,  
And we were kings

We couldn't see you then because  
We thought we knew what beauty was  
But now we stumble through the fog  
Of memory, for glimpses of

A certain young girl by the glass  
Still unrefined and blushing as  
We smiled and spoke and walked straight past  
Like you did when,  
You saw us last

And now there's darkness in the air  
Vague shadows on the window pane  
So many dreams that went astray

A broken heart, a debt unpaid

The rush and wash of time and tide  
Erase the traces that remind  
Except of all the days and nights  
When I was yours,  
And you were mine.

3 May 2012

jim hogg

# Still You

There's a stream through a glen  
Where wild apples grow  
It runs down to old cliffs  
Where foxes and deer  
Watch the wild waters foam  
White upon winter shores

And I know it's still you  
In the waves on the shore  
In the stream through the glen  
Still you in the moonlight  
Where apple blossom glows  
And sweet breezes still blow

On the braes by that stream  
In cool morning dew  
There's a world fresh and free  
and still time to dream  
of the old and the new  
to remember what's true

And I know it's still you  
In the waves on the shore  
In the stream through the glen  
Still you in the moonlight  
Where apple blossom glows  
And sweet breezes still blow

Now the stream calls me home  
And in its wild song  
There's a lost harmony  
And here in this glen  
By the moon's rise and fall  
I know where I belong

And it's with you, still with you  
By the waves on the shore



By the stream through the glen  
With you in the moonlight  
Where apple blossom glows  
And sweet breezes still blow  
where I'm with you, still with you

jim hogg

# Straight On

Straight on, down a dead end street,  
Down the throat of life's sweet dream  
Get swallowed whole by innocence,  
Get eaten by the folks you meet

Straight on like a taser dart,  
Fifty thousand volts of art  
Just like a chip inside your head,  
To tell you when to stop and start

Straight on to the ticking bomb,  
To big ideas, walk the dog  
To myths like our democracy,  
Vote Roland Rat and ditch the lot

Straight on like an open blade,  
An empty house, a rabbit snare  
A window breaking in the night,  
The words you didn't want to hear,  
A moon beam straight into the sun,  
A bullet from a careless gun

Straight on, with no fashion sense,  
No goodbyes and no last dance  
A marble from a catapult,  
A quiverful of simple plans

Straight on into life's great wall,  
Right through into life's great fall  
Then down the chute and up the drain,  
Recycled into something small

Straight on past the next surprise,  
Seeing stars through starry eyes  
And straight into a web of whys  
To find the lie that satisfies

Straight on through the winning tape

And off the cliff into the waves  
The mystery of all we're not,  
A hooded crow, a lonely walk  
The rail beneath the bullet train,  
The fragile sense within a brain

Straight on into history,  
Skidding at you down the street  
Tomorrow's just a yesterday  
We're never quite prepared to meet

Straight on like a butterfly  
Searching for a net of lies  
Across the fields of promises  
Where every kind of vulture flies

Straight on through the great taboo;  
Very soon there's nothing new  
And all you hoped for hunts you down,  
To benefit the chosen few

Straight on through the universe,  
The blood of all our children spent  
And riding on the broken wave  
We never think of what they've lent  
They're in the wind and swinging free,  
As we dance round the gallows tree

Straight on like unbroken glass;  
We know how to fix the crash  
We detonate good will for cash,  
Because we think all things must pass

Straight on to the latest craze  
To empty us of emptiness  
And knock the walls down, welcome in,  
Spectators from the internet

Straight on like we know what's straight,  
Something like the figure eight

We're tumbling dice, we're playing blind,  
Down by the river on a date

Straight on like you've broken through  
And know exactly what to do  
But all at once there's no-one there,  
For in the end there's only you  
A moonbeam straight into the sun,  
A bullet from a careless gun

Straight on into you... straight on,  
.....straight.... on through

Straight on like an ego trip,  
An iceberg, a sinking ship  
Straight on like it's no big deal,  
Just like a performing seal  
Straight on like a falling bird,  
Full of lead to show we're tough  
Straight on like a harpoon-line  
Hooked into the flesh of time  
'Til suddenly you realise  
It's you that's fighting for your life

Straight on into you... straight on,  
.....straight.... on through

10 05 12

jim hogg

# V

I saw you in a dream old friend,  
when we were dead and you were young.  
You circled like an enemy  
and vainly talked of other dead  
and how, amongst them all  
you still were looking good,  
for someone over seventy.

No subterfuge in mind  
I told you of the passing  
of someone you'd never known,  
and you replied as if you had,  
with too much puzzling truth-  
and, your stutter had been cured  
in the afterlife's selective grace-  
as both of us manoeuvred  
alert and tense on dry white sand  
by dunes that stretched away  
to soft white floes of cloud  
-so like a place I used to know,  
where atheists could safely go.

You always were too full  
of self concern,  
and too inclined  
to rate yourself above the rest  
-under shields of modesty -  
I wanted to protest.  
And then, in the shimmering, sluggish heat  
it seemed I saw your features change  
and suddenly resemble for a moment  
someone from a photograph  
that surely was of me.  
You threw a knife and rope,  
and rhymed as if to mock:  
&quot;you knew this day would come, old man.  
Accept this mercy while you can&quot;.  
And I remembered laying blame  
- only yesterday it seemed -

for all this wearing out,  
down to a ragged end,  
on recklessness alone  
instead of Solomon's obsession.

15 05 12

jim hogg

# The Bridge

The dancing had started, the sun had gone down  
The random partners all swayed  
The streets were all empty, the lights of the town  
Shone down where children had played

The starlight was lost in the light of the moon  
and only your voice and mine  
were heard in the night as we danced to a tune  
that's almost as old as time

The angels of mystery come to me here  
Their faces alive with the past  
And they each take their turn at what might have been  
And leave before I can ask  
Which of us knows what is real, what is false  
And who has the right to decide  
Who gets to fly and who falls?

And time has been stealthily warring with flesh  
Since you and I searched for stars  
Through trees by the school with beams of green and red  
A silver torch in my hand

The fishermen stand on the cliff and cast out  
To capture their piece of sky  
And Lucifer's bridge reaches down to the ground  
Down where our lives all rush by

The agents of history come with their dreams  
as if nothing else could be real  
And they each take their turn at what still must be  
And ask before I can leave  
Which of us knows who is found, who is lost  
And who could know better than I  
Who gets to fly and who falls?

The hillsides are bare and there's ice on the burn

There's flakes of snow on the wind  
And nothing is new down here under the sun  
Except the fools on the ship

So arm in arm once more let you and I dance  
across the old railway track  
like wheat in the wind all on time's sudden lance  
before there's no turning back

jim hogg



# Only Human

I guess we didn't make our dreams come true  
And where our flowers bloomed now weeds grow tall  
It's strange to think there is no me and you  
I guess we're only human after all

We rode the waves when love was blowin' free  
We scaled the heights and never once looked down  
We built a world from only you and me  
Then brought the whole thing crashing to the ground

I guess we must have thought goodbye my love  
For somewhere in our long and winding song  
We lost the melody and lost the urge  
I guess we're only human after all

But still I spend so many nights with you  
In dreams that flow as if the past lives on  
I'm in this other life 'til dawn breaks through  
Forgetting isn't easy after all

In cities where they rarely see a star  
The evening falls, young lovers take the street  
And for their love no distance is too far  
While here the autumn falls so bittersweet

But yet this candle lights the thorny way  
Through shadows of tomorrows veiling love  
The flowers on the hillside bloom and fade  
Until the winter ends and spring returns

And if we didn't say goodbye my love  
Because that final word was just too tough  
I guess it's time to let the curtain fall  
Because we're only human after all

□

jim hogg

# Years

It's not the sea of life  
that bridges or divides;  
it's the wave of time that breaks  
circular upon us  
all the flotsam of the age elapsed

With chains for sails  
we never launched on trembling dreams  
never skimmed unleashed across freedom's surf  
never danced out of ourselves  
in the challenging winds

But the stars still colonise  
our jealous eyes  
still try to scribble us  
fearless and undiminished  
into some fading margin

Now ragged moments spin us out  
modestly, from rain that refreshed  
from the hurdled fence  
the high hill view  
and the stone that sang across the water

jim hogg

# Meralda Street

A blaze that burned so blithe and high outlined Meralda street.  
Once famous for her daring, she was never indiscreet,  
was never less than caring; she was shelter from the rain,  
where both the broke and buckled found a harbour for their pain.

And I was welcome there awhile upon another life;  
some would be godless, would be scribe, allergic to the times.  
We dined on vague pretentiousness above our secret seas;  
I didn't ever mean to but I left you on your knees.

And left myself regretful all that Winterlong of course,  
and when I saw your thighs again where drums beat evermore,  
I ate my tongue, I filled my eyes and nevermore forgot,  
and drove into the myths of you through mists forgetting brought.

Our channel shore plays tricks on hearts and tangled us anew.  
You crossed the plains, you climbed the hills, you tunnelled and you flew  
out over no man's land until you saw just who I was,  
and had to clear your throat though you were quite clear on the cause.

I took your arm and all at once, the flood began to flow:  
no stately stream bound for the sea; more child of letting go.  
And I was in the gallery with one hand on the wheel,  
where all the guys were tuned in to your fetching eightsome reel.

You said you didn't care and showed us all just what you meant:  
a nuclear display and much imagination spent  
on someone else's tinder, on your crossed aperitif -  
some nodded at the ceiling in an ecstasy of grief.

And later in the street as you revealed what I'd concealed,  
I pictured us beneath a plane beside an English field -  
so far outstripped in innocence those hidden pastel hues  
I eagerly competed in: your lingerie of views;

those openings all closing down; those clips and frills that surged  
beneath a standard cover to your reef of gushing urge  
that opened up your world to mine before we fell in fear,  
from muddied waters into waters even more unclear.

I stitched that reckless future closed and bade so much adieu:  
no one-way ticket, no through road, no short cut home to you;  
a dead end street where sentiment inclines to writing wrongs.  
You told me once in code I had to quit those simple songs,

to quit the common highway or be lonely in your town,  
but lately the no entries have been sent to hunt me down.  
You soon were into property but slow to swallow whole  
The thrusting ideology of well sprung horny goats

who had you rounded up and tethered to the greasy pole  
but he was right and I was wrong according to my notes;  
and long awaited legacies and settlement of hands,  
they left you shorn of everything but love on shifting sands.

For some the flames are rising still along Meralda street  
whose dangling rigging tempts my inner eye to meet and greet  
so many aching images and credit overdrawn,  
but all that's left is surface now; the heart and soul are gone.

jim hogg

# The Streets Of Glenluce

It was long ago, on Main street  
On a night just like tonight  
Except everything seemed sweeter  
And the night stretched far and wide  
I hear echoes on the wind now  
Blowing down towards the river  
Of voices coming from Moat-hill  
Of voices gone forever

(chorus)

And you, you left so long ago  
Carried off on life's great stream  
It's too late now to let you know  
Too late to mention that old dream

And you always were a stranger  
Though we always seemed so close  
You and I were never fated for  
Anything but letting go  
All the shy kids wait for saviours  
Making eyes at one another  
And when they're taken by the brave  
Their chance has gone forever

Now these empty streets don't know you  
Rosy cheeks and hazel een  
And the years won't flow the wrong way  
To bring you back here to me  
There's just echoes on the wind now  
Blowing down towards the river  
Of voices coming from Moat-hill  
Of voices gone forever

11 11 08

jim hogg

# At Seventeen

I remember you when you were only seventeen.  
The sun was high above us then  
and all the fields were green.  
Shooting stars flashed briefly in  
those long gone autumn nights  
But time, it seemed, just came and went  
So slowly that our lives,  
Felt like they'd never end

I remember you outside the gym when we were young  
Your eyes were full of sunshine,  
there was passion on your tongue  
I didn't have the words back then  
to tell you how I felt,  
But still you took my hand and walked,  
Out where love rose and fell,  
Down where the seabirds flocked.

I remember dancing in your arms at Christmas time  
The local band played Maggie May  
and everything seemed right  
We danced inside the moment  
until the music stopped  
Then climbed the hill to home too soon  
In late December frost,  
beneath a mist wreathed moon.

(chorus)

And now you've crossed the great divide  
Your pain is gone, at such a price  
And I will think of you in grey and white,  
I will think of you on autumn nights  
I will think of you at Christmas time  
And I'll think of when your lips touched mine  
And I'll remember you at seventeen  
When the sun was high  
and all the fields were green

jim hogg



# Double Doors

Two lovers slowly dancing  
There was stardust in the air  
Falling on the perfect romance  
On their innocence and flair  
Blue velvet long black hair

And you and I were waltzing  
But it must have been a dream  
There were legends in the making  
Drifting through that gentle scene  
As cool as seventeen

The double doors swung open  
And we spilled into the world  
In between the smoke and mirrors  
Where forgetting soon begun  
Our rainbow in the dust

Four lovers slowly drifting  
As the credits crossed the screen  
They were legends well past breaking  
On the dark side of their dreams  
As blind as seventeen

(chorus)

And round we danced as love we chanced  
The stars were riding on a bet  
The moon had placed upon the sea  
And lost as on we danced and fell  
For soon your cheeks grew wet  
With wasted years and broken dreams

16 03 2010

jim hogg

# In The Valley Of Light

Beneath the old bridge where the old highway ends  
I sat with my feet in the freezing cold river  
Where time wears away dear but never mends  
It hasn't been long but it seems like forever

Beside Poacher's Pool in the Valley of Light  
We lay here and listened to birdsong so pure  
In each other's arms dear down here out of sight  
In those stolen moments when we were secure

(Chorus)

The breezes blow gently that carry you here  
Soft under starlight across Linton Lea  
The river and I know you'll always be near  
Down here where our loving once set us free

The salmon and sea trout lazed there in the pool  
Just waiting to break for the up-river heights

Across Linton Lea the world lay before us  
But we were too tied then to share in its sights

Those tender red lips I once kissed here are gone  
and prettiest brown eyes that I've ever gazed on  
They used to be mine by this river-side  
Here under the bridge in the Valley of Light

(Chorus)

The breezes blow gently that carry you here  
Soft under starlight across Linton Lea  
The river and I know you'll always be near  
Here where our loving once set us free  
Here where I dream across Linton Lea

jim hogg

# Our Last Farewell

It's a rainy day in Glasgow  
And I'm looking out the window here  
Into your tears of sadness  
When the curtain fell between us

In The Sheuchan Arms I saw you  
Grey blue flames alive in gentle eyes  
And saw us in the distance  
In the war of lips and sighing

(chorus)  
Our dancing days were over then  
And our lips would never touch again  
Irene, you'll never hold me like  
You did through all those long gone nights

Through that autumn breathless whispers  
flared between us in the gloamin' heat  
My back against that jagged fence  
As your neighbours passed us in the street

Now the chords of Southern Man crash  
Through the bars of time to thoughts of you  
So close upon the teeming floor  
As we danced through fire at the Port

(chorus)  
Our dancing days are over then  
And our lips can never touch again  
Irene, I'll never hold you like  
I did through all those long gone nights

Then streaming tears, our last farewell  
By the red brick wall where young love fell  
But I remember fondly still  
Those flames and sighs when we were young

Now the bells are ringing softly  
through the tears and precious memories

It's so sad that we've lost you  
And to say goodbye to you dear

jim hogg

# The Fulmar's Wing

There is a green hill by the sheer  
and final choice that overlooks  
assaulting age and edges near;  
a certain view I'm tending to.

The codes are old that predispose  
a man to think of bargains struck,  
of honour lost, one deal to close  
a story running out of luck,

but not of hope for some years yet,  
though dragging out I couldn't stand,  
beyond that testing chance beset  
when I at last forsake your hand.

jim hogg

# Ode Tae Colin Leslie Dean, Australia's Leading Erotic Poet Allegedly

Weel, colin man, ye've done us proud  
Ye've plestered a' the wa's an' a'  
Ye've sprung fae in a b'low yer shroud  
An' flashed us wi yer whang an' a'  
An' mushrooms rare ye didnae spare  
Until oor very een were sare  
Wi kittlin' skits this day

But feminists aroon the globe  
Are writhing wi their wrath an' a'  
An' probably there'll be a probe  
Wi' bile an' much anathema  
Yer rhymes are ripe fer getting sockt  
Yer tool's in line fer getting' dockt  
In whittlin' fits this day

An' aye it seems there come the day  
Whun structured rhymers, scribes an' a'  
Must realise it's time tae slay  
Some ither fiends some ither whar  
Ye've fed us foo on Aussie prose  
Wi chittlin whits ye passed as brose  
Never-endin'ly this lang day

jim hogg

# Interpretation

And they cannot be recaptured except  
in this mind, in all of the universe.  
It's what old men do while they still can,  
A substitute for all that they can't:  
repeated flights to unseen glories  
they once passed through too hurriedly.  
Each has his own specific details,  
of commonly haunted ecstasies  
we like to believe are beyond compare,  
and too much with us to ever release.

Mine were simple things:  
the creaking of a certain window frame -  
no, there was more than that.  
The bedroom light was the first sign.  
It flicked on and a sudden surge  
of wattage shot through me.  
Seconds later, darkness  
and I'd have to wait  
'til her face took shape  
in the open frame.  
She always smiled.  
And for sixty minutes  
the net of the heavens  
swept down and lifted me.

Or, at 8 on winter nights  
-after I'd whistled the sign -  
(and Andy Williams was finished)  
the hall lamp was lit,  
the front door opened  
and she'd step out,  
in anorak with scarf,  
tight trousers and  
a couple of inches of heel.  
She was only five feet three.  
The first few seconds were killing  
in their thrill.



Or under the light  
at old Maggie's gate:  
coming out from her visit,  
backlit, chatting to Maggie  
the blue flames of her eyes on mine  
striking me light as air,  
excited as any charged particle.

But age and time  
keep grinding away.  
The art of nature  
so finely woven,  
so perfectly pitched,  
self renews through us  
adapts itself beyond us;  
a smouldering blaze  
that endlessly burns  
mortality for fuel.

Last night I dreamt for the first time,  
of her and I in black and white,  
faded images of the two of us;  
riven with ambiguity  
and just as intense as ever.  
Walking together,  
out of the scene of the dream,  
she pointed out a plum tree;  
and when I looked I could see  
only a lime, in shades of green,  
hanging with unripened fruit.

jim hogg

# Leaving Langside

Waves are dancing in the harbour,  
spray is cool against my face;  
life has worn away the armour  
that once kept your mem'ry chained.  
Cross the channel lights are flashing  
through the night for sailors' eyes;  
seems I've sailed too many miles now  
waiting for the sun to rise

We last met down here in sunlight  
in the Mount Stewart public bar.  
You were standing by the window  
and the sun was o'er Belfast.  
We'd lost love we thought was lasting  
but could only say hello;  
so we'd reached the final parting.  
I knew as I watched you go.

Like some creature of the seasons,  
these gales drive me here for you.  
I've lost count of all the reasons;  
now Langside seems empty too.  
Seagulls ride the wind above me;  
they can't leave this foaming shore,  
but I'm leaving here forever,  
never leaving your front door.

Chorus

It's just walls and windows by the road  
And there's no trace left of you  
Just a door into another world  
Sometimes I go walking through

jim hogg

# Your House

## I

I pass your old house sometimes, in the car,  
or walking with friends, and sneak a quick glance  
at the door where we stood in each other's arms,  
or up at the window you'd open at night,  
and masses of images circle and tempt.  
The roughcast's been painted over since then.  
The windows and doors have all been replaced.  
But lingering behind that modern facade:  
the haunting remains of a tale never told.  
It's not just the fear of forgetting it all  
that sometimes imprisons an aging mind.  
It's all the reminders, all of the hints  
of heights that love once promised to scale,  
and the heights from which it's so easy to fall.

## II

And though it's all changed, your front garden fence  
still tempts just as much; to look for your eyes  
through cool starlit nights, when we were fifteen,  
when all that echoed were your voice and mine.  
You kept all my letters hidden up there,  
slowly fermenting behind the old frame,  
'til one day they finally flooded your heart,  
in springtime in nineteen seventy one  
and all was set fair by summer that year;  
which made it the perfect time for a glitch,  
a totally insignificant thing  
the kind of little adjustment that meant  
that both of our lives were changed for all time.

What if it all was ordained after all  
and all that broke down was fated to fail?  
Were slants of starlight the shaping force  
that scribbled the future into our eyes?  
What kind of answer would satisfy now  
when both of us know this life takes its course

from millions of unpredictable things?  
Our choices are hardly choices at all  
under duress from the moments that chase  
all of the moments just waiting to be.  
We spill our emotions into the mix  
and destiny seems to lack all control;  
clarity somehow gets all its lines wrong.  
Amongst that whole mess I don't want to find  
obscure explanations, qualified truths,  
implying that I wasn't wholly to blame.  
You waited all night but I never came.  
You waited again and again, all in vain.  
I can't blame the stars that sent so much thrill  
as you and I circled our own little world  
on far distant nights when we were still kids,  
when promise shone brightly in your blue blue eyes;  
before I threw down the reins to my life.

Yes, love comes and goes; hearts break all the time,  
but that kind of love keeps on holding on.  
I was in Glasgow and you were at home  
as fond words of hope, littering the pages,  
drew us together on Hamilton Road  
one cold sunday night as Christmas approached.  
But, cocky and callow, I played it too cool,  
sure-footedly dancing myself into hell,  
against my desire, against every sense.  
A wiser kid would have stuck with the truth,  
and honoured that love with whatever it took,  
would have cried after you down on his knees,  
but, I was too proud and bound for a fall.

And so, some years on, I stood in your house,  
then sat in the room where you used to sit,  
and the house was you, and the air was you  
and I was the two of us, sitting alone,  
breathing in all of my well earned deserts;  
careening though time to your father's voice:  
a whispering chair beside the hall door.  
He was gone too, nearly ten years before.  
And all that I said then, all that I thought  
was haunted all night by echoes of you.

### III

But back on the Crescent, there's old Maggie's gate -  
where some winter nights we'd meet after eight  
to wander again round that half-moon bend  
that bordered the brink of everywhere else  
and long gone world of our very first walk  
on a dark winter's night in late sixty six:  
speed talking, speed floating all the way round  
through the old quarter, and through the new scheme.  
You asked if I mixed up latin and french  
as someone we almost certainly knew,  
passed like a ghost by McGhee's and was gone  
as the two of us just kept walking on...

### IV

I stop one more time by Milligan's house,  
and stare at the woodland that hides so much:  
the road that's lost now but wasn't lost then  
(it ran past the swing tree where I carved our love) ,  
the single track railway that brought us the world  
through billows of steam when trains still stopped here,  
and find myself carried all the way back  
into the leaving of all that I'd known.  
The wind through those trees kept calling me 'home',  
marking with sadness our time and our place.  
And now, from wherever, I still clearly see  
them bending before a surging southerly,  
and still hear its lonely sighs through the leaves:  
a whispering song that reminds me to call  
a number I don't know how to forget.

And here on the desk an old black and white  
with both you and I from so long ago  
when time was only a meaningless word;  
the future was only an endless sky.  
Above me the birds are all flying south  
and raindrops trace crazy paths down the panes,  
to a song you mentioned in seventy three:  
it went 'I want you here to have and hold

as the years go by and we grow old and grey':  
the kind of words I was deaf to back then.  
But here at last, they've cut me off at the pass -  
the patient soldiers of love and regret -  
I look and I listen too many times  
to compensate now for not listening when  
I should have heard what your heart clearly said,  
long before limousines, long before lace;  
though fate rolled the dice one more luckless time  
and steered us both to the same busy lounge,  
the night before you would give up your name.  
We taunted each other with yearning eyes  
but kept our distance and honoured the paths  
from some kind of choices, some kind of truth,  
that led exactly to where we are now.  
And so you became nirvana, no less,  
leaving me blinded, as much by the past  
as I once used to be by the future.

V

And further on round, past the Modrates and Reids,  
our old school looms like a primitive force,  
bustling with kids with the same kind of dreams.  
I walk through this modern age like a fetch  
confounded by scenery of fast flowing change,  
and nowhere the slightest traces of us.  
I superimpose a much older world  
beyond the locked gates, where both of us played,  
and see a satchel over your shoulder,  
mischief run wild on your sweet smiling face,  
and for a lost moment I get the urge  
to lift up a trembling hand in the hope  
I'll see you wave back, from there or elsewhere,  
with no commitment or small talk required.  
A wave across any distance would do.  
But distance like that's not a physical thing  
There is no substance that could ever bridge  
the lives that we've led, the things that we've done  
except for those many moments we shared  
that stay with us still in memory and dreams.

My best guess would be that it all began  
across the old ping pong table at school,  
Yon delicate ball would fade to a blur,  
and speed back and forth beneath our locked eyes,  
minute by minute, both blind to the world,  
that one day would see our game to its close.

Minor revisions 10 05 20 (Originally 2007)

jim hogg

# Isles Of Marie

There's life in the flowing, down over the shore, into the bordering sea.  
There's struggle in wait in the tangle that sways, between the waves and the  
stream  
in that mirror of dreams 'tween the Isles of Marie, reaching in vain for the moon.  
And there by the brink of the rise and fall, we knew what we had was good

For moments so brief, in this chance passing through, we savoured the frost and  
the rain.

We wrestled to live in that basin of life so free of shadow and stain  
on the restless edge of that salty lagoon, far from the tides of the street;  
free of the deals that swirl in a world that sways between rules and deceit

Though icy winds blew through the white sweeping light fading into the dawn  
a blanket of hush sheltered the shore 'til the depths of darkness were gone.  
Or bidden by tides that fell by the sun, we'd wade in sweltering heat,  
into the shallows hoping to share, in the grace and wealth of the sea.

And we were just kids then, lacking in choices, though richly laden with life.  
But witted by that light cutting the night, we couldn't foresee just how blind  
are the eyes of the child to the darkness in life, unveiled as the years unrolled  
when we left behind that dance with the tide, down on the beckoning shore.

jim hogg



# Hidden Hearts

Imagine yourself in a woodland scene  
by the verge of an old winding lane;  
and circled around islands of green,  
oceans of leaves rustling in waves.

Picture the beech and the sitka spruce  
reaching through shade to the dizzying sky,  
with beams of sunshine lighting the broom,  
and hardly a sound when the wood pigeons fly

Ahead in the distance, through shadow and shine,  
glints the White Loch's shimmering blues,  
a border of waves beyond chestnut and pine  
and above it the castle in ruins.

A puzzle in brick from the second world war  
catches the eye and confuses the brain.  
It sits by the lane and tempts some to stop  
where mostly these days serenity reigns;

except in the hearts unburdened down here  
by youth when love was a furious blaze.  
Etched in the bark of some ancient trees:  
initials of lovers in happier days -

consigned to the trust of a living page.  
Under the spell of some primitive urge -  
something so deep that it had to be shared -  
They told all the world they'd been captured by love.

Their carvings remind me when wandering here  
of moments when feelings flowed fresh and pure  
of times when it seemed there was nothing to fear.  
It's the unbroken thread of promise and truth

in the weaving of wonder, light and life:  
we reach through shade to dizzying heights  
for beams of sunlight to show the way through,  
and blown on the winds that carry the leaves

we dream beyond the shimmering blue.

jim hogg

# A Bee Reflects

Buttercup,  
I am the fluxing  
structure that connects.  
You and I are a universe,  
a dancing couplet bound  
in the flowering flow  
of our singularity,  
of incipient spark  
and vanishing flame.

Buttercup,  
I fed the leopard  
through the veins of time,  
contriving sequences:  
the hard poetry of hunger,  
and the blooming of cell  
to petals and tragic wings,  
to the harmony of ash.

Buttercup,  
we are flickering,  
though a long darkness,  
through our lonely selves.  
We are fragile code;  
we are the sparkling stars  
of time devouring comeliness,  
we are the fleeting seeds of  
all that we are.

26 12 11

jim hogg

# Walls

The fire of time raged  
as I fiddled and fanned the flames.  
And now, this plundering  
for a suitable truth  
or all embracing excuse  
in the embers of memory

An inexpressible  
gleaming confirmation persisted -  
given to youth, but not to understand,  
'Save in the tapestry of afterthought'.  
But, 'The bride had consented  
The gallant came late'.  
So, one day I took the train and left,  
home truths panting in the distance,  
that perennial love least of all  
and sprinted off into the future.

To make good my escape  
I built a castle of commitment  
in the shade of bonded memories  
Ambition led,  
I fled to every battle  
to prove myself his equal  
in courage and in truth.  
But abstractions don't always determine  
the choices we're moved to make.  
In the end, forced moves or not,  
the choice is ours alone.  
And there's no-one left to blame now.  
He's gone, 'over bank, bush, and scaur'  
looking better by the day,  
as I fall ever deeper  
into this unravelling,  
this chaos of criss-crossed lives  
where the only one that's real  
seems to matter least.  
Anyway, somewhere too far  
into one cul de sac too many

I finally found my feet  
but only half prepared,  
I turned to face, to chase,  
the falling leaves,  
to resurrect  
the evergreens and forget-me-nots  
I'd struggled to cremate.

In the shadow of the cliff  
above McTaggart's Rock  
skim Razor Bills in flight.  
It's no effortless affair.  
There's a vague desperation there  
and in the beating of wings  
a strange echo  
of a symphony of symmetry  
of a moonlit flight over paradise:  
the haunting melody  
of a far off Castle Kennedy  
where cackling geese  
in massive arrows  
come cascading down  
upon cool moonlit waters  
lapping snug against  
the narrow and winding  
honeysuckle lanes of Inch.  
It's not by chance I'm there again.  
Every choice I ever made  
eventually led me back  
to the many things that sprung  
from a short sheltering there:  
to a skin of the teeth escape,  
round the rock beneath the ravens;  
to Old Maggie's gate beneath the light,  
to the flotsam and jetsam  
of abandoned dreams,  
and betrayal  
of a bond sealed in blood,  
almost everything else  
and love most of all; and,  
all at once, as if I'd been blind,  
the crashing of tin cans behind a limousine;

to grains of sand through my helpless hands;  
and worst of all, at least for a while,  
to news of her regret.

That place was:  
unquenchable flames that youth ignites,  
a gathering of ghosts,  
sanctuary and Armageddon,  
the clumsy dance of memory,  
and all those nights with you;  
the leaves that left the trees,  
and all their promise for decay;  
a chain of moments passing  
marking out the ways we passed  
so gently from each other  
to the arms that hold us now.

But time moves swiftly on,  
And the calm that came  
Came a little too late.  
But turmoil called of course,  
like a warning:  
that rock beneath the ravens -  
for there's no forgetting  
that wall of water waiting  
under vast black wings;  
that sinless savage splendour  
which calls me now and then  
to test those odds again,  
the judgement of fate perhaps,  
or some personal imperative;  
for all we choose  
and all that's chosen for us  
steers us to the harvest we've sown,  
so recklessly,  
so innocently,  
along the way we've shaped  
along the way that shapes us.

And so it came to pass.  
Out of road at last,

an army of memories marched  
through the tissue of a tired past  
to leave me in tatters  
and almost free at last  
in the windswept wastes  
of my castle made of sand.

Refs

Richard Wilbur - Year's End

Walter Scott - Lochinvar

June 2003

jim hogg

# Kisses And Quarks

Galaxies fly blindly within us:  
vast turning fields of all that we are,  
the wild need of the crying child, and ice,  
flames, and thought faster than light.

Knee-deep in wonder in the stream,  
we parse its every swirl, down to atoms,  
the language of the universe, that platform  
for the tumult of emotion we paint it from,

to shape out of it some kind of kinship  
a sense of everything called home: sunset,  
the lives of leaves, sun-scarred skin, flight  
and the maths of music, colour and decay,

the towers and powers we fabricate.  
It hangs around us like a canvass,  
painting the artist in us, pinning on us  
limitations we propel ourselves beyond,

the fountain of miracles we imagine,  
bounded primitives that we are,  
to the necessary knife of joy and pain  
thrown into the heart of our universe,

and turning blindly within us.

Revised 24 12 11

jim hogg



# Girl From Essendon

Lord knows it's not for money now  
She turns out and she sings and smiles  
As if the sun stopped going down  
And still they're standing in the aisles

And lovers in their hordes who kissed  
Their first loves to her serenade  
In black and white, are bound to miss  
The moments gone, the dreams that age

It seems so long ago  
that I first heard the song  
The story of two strangers  
and how they fell in love  
How brief their time together,  
and so their love so strong  
left them broken hearted  
when the fair was movin' on

When you and I were only kids  
In sixty four she stepped ashore  
You hopped about on chalked out grids  
I rolled the stones and kept the score

Soon something beautiful was born  
Between us and that haunting song  
But as the fair of life moved on  
Our tapestry of love was torn

It seems so long ago  
that I first heard the song  
The story of two strangers  
and how they fell in love  
How brief their time together,  
and so their love so strong  
left them broken hearted  
when the fair was movin' on

There on the stage she sings so sweet

And I can hear and I can feel  
Two beating hearts on our old street  
And for a moment it was real

21 12 11

jim hogg

# Gifted Puppet

I can see them now: invisible wires  
running directly into the minds of your dogs.  
You'd beat the drums until you found  
their frequency of fear and fixed them to it.  
Or shot them if deafness kept them free.

That wasn't fine by me, but I didn't  
have the air for barking sympathetic pleas.  
The fine cabling firmly fixed in place  
your animals needed no leashes to speak of;  
so keen did they seem to do your bidding

out on the moors, like distant extensions  
of you and your intentions, obediently running  
circles round dogs deprived of the protection  
of your approval and throttling inhibition -  
piano wire bound to some old darkness.

"Highly strung" was always a puzzling phrase  
to a boy harnessed by thought strangling steel.  
But I couldn't be shot, and I couldn't be sold  
for the fortune that fear made your dogs worth  
to men who craved the power in your forehead

to kill the light of my late afternoons.  
Crunching tyres down the track, and the crack  
of a door snapping shut, tuned a terrible tension  
into your gifted puppet cowering low  
behind the hills of my dreams.

31 12 08

jim hogg

# Moments

The subway's too busy, the street is too fast  
Eyes missing moments we value too cheaply

A word or a sentence released to relieve  
Severs or chills, and a chance is missed

A dream or ambition gives power and pride  
And promise leaps brightly into the sky

Where totems and titles are raised in vain  
Agendas, divisions inch into the light

Old age's regrets don't mean very much  
As time sneaks away and the past gets revised

Our kisses in haste, and the words never said  
Leaves on the Sycamore slowly turn red

'Til a voice mumbles horror we'll never unhear  
And moments too real crowd suddenly in..

When did we last walk down by the riverside  
Far from the smoke and the dust, you and I?

11 09 08

jim hogg

# By The Red Brick Wall

Immune to age was how it looked,  
as if the books of time were cooked,  
to those with luck enough to share  
some part of you. Your 40s hair  
and filmstar looks had me well hooked  
from the start. I tried not to stare  
and to play it cool and free, but,  
a rising flame and rising fear  
saw me rambling on like a nut-  
job through the words you had to hear.

And not one eyelid did you bat  
as you took my hand and we sat  
on the steps of the old school gym,  
you in grey and white and me in  
another world, a Cheshire cat  
in cream so deep I had to swim.  
And so it stayed for months on end.  
But all of us who wanted you,  
we had no sense of time back then.  
We all did what we had to do,

always with one eye on the days  
that lay ahead, where the long chase  
of the lives we dreamt of, would lead.  
And, what we had soon went to seed.  
By the red brick wall, face to face,  
in streaming tears we took our leave.  
As for loving you, I couldn't  
help myself. It was obvious.  
And I blamed - because it suited -  
events beyond the two of us.

And twenty years would pass before  
we met again and briefly spoke.  
The usual stuff came flooding back.  
It was ninety two, at the track,  
and we'd no time for chat of course,  
then, or later in the crowded bar

of the pub where we last met, dear,  
when time was short and moving on:  
much faster than we dared to fear,  
'til word was out that you were gone.

Superlatives were the first thing  
I reached for when the news came in,  
though you were never one who paid  
the slightest attention to praise.  
But, when the bells began to ring,  
the throng that gathered in your name  
for decency and humble strength -  
and not your startling looks at all  
for which both men and women fell -  
was proof enough of what we'd lost.

jim hogg

# When The Sky

When the sky turns dusky red  
Only one star bright enough  
You come to me, now and then

Out of something rising up  
All that's left of history  
Black and whites of dreams that once

Couldn't wait for Saturday  
Couldn't be without your hand  
No such thing as shades of grey

You and I knew where to stand  
From the launchpad we were bound  
Pretty swiftly into sand

Having crashed we turned around  
Got back on our feet again  
Caught the next dream into town

We had so much time to spend  
Wasting time and skimping on  
All the things we might have learned

One more winter's day has gone  
Not that things are clearer now  
Looking back's a kind of con

Makes the real unreal somehow  
All of us see different things  
In the shadows, in the clouds

If we had the gift of wings  
And the wit to travel through  
All the songs nostalgia sings

Where would you go flying to?  
Would I really fly to you?

jim hogg



# Bounded By Wings

Love is a dancing of very small things  
Or river of madness without release -  
A starburst of moments bounded by wings

That carry us; an exquisite disease  
We greedily suffer its blissful ache  
Or river of madness without release

It's a serenade and the vows we make  
In the heart of the storm, the dread of loss  
We greedily suffer its blissful ache

And borne by love there's no gulf we can't cross  
All that it brings seems especially true  
In the heart of the storm, the dread of loss

An answering call that's suddenly through  
Under our radar and under our skin  
All that it brings seems especially true

In eyes that can't hide the smiling within  
Love is a dancing of very small things  
Under our radar and under our skin -  
A starburst of moments bounded by wings

14 12 11

jim hogg

# The Old Lane Through The Woods

There's a track through the trees from the White to the Black  
that I walked as a kid and I often went back.

Now the years slip away and the distances grow,  
but if time gives us time and we get to change tack  
if the notion should take you then I'd gladly go:  
in wildest November before winter's trance,  
at the height of the spring when the daffodils dance.

We could stand on the bank where the Rhodies convene,  
like the first of our kind who looked down on that scene,  
on a loch with no name, with no castles around,  
or old burial ground of the meek and the mean;  
though the rich bled the poor, by the sod they're all bound.  
Or we'll maybe just stay on the old woodland road  
and head north to the Black with the odd jumping toad.

There's a whole constellation of things we can view.  
In the summer there's herons and sometimes deer too,  
and there's dodging and weaving through armies of leaves.  
Though the foxgloves are rare I'll find one just for you,  
and then swing on the Ivy through Sycamore trees.  
If you ever have time we could wander off down  
that old lane through the woods whether wintry or lown.

But I know all too well that this life is a crush.  
There'd be too much to do if we didn't all rush.  
And I wonder sometimes how it all went so wrong;  
but they're calling it progress with hardly a blush -  
in a world where rich hippies can still sing along.  
There's a place where that craziness doesn't hold sway;  
if you're ever back home we could go there some day

14 12 11

jim hogg

# By Logan Mill

I remember lending you  
one of those old 33s  
My Imagine, by John Lennon  
at The Toll beneath the trees  
In a long unfolded world that was  
the springtime of our lives  
When nothing seemed to matter  
more than having a good time

But lately I was minded  
to remind you of how long  
I've been without the means  
to get listening to my songs -  
It's more than thirty years,  
and that's much too long to wait -  
To see you laughing freely  
once again for old time's sake

If you only could have stayed dear,  
if you only had the chance  
To venture home to see us  
for at least another dance

Your hazel eyes were glowing  
with yon flickering something  
We strayed so close and slowly,  
along the brink of loving  
In the harum scarum disco  
on Wig Bay's windy shore,  
On the half deserted floor  
in the haven of Drummore

Of course Lennon was a pretext,  
for how could I forget  
Those moments oh so sweet  
and oh so carefree and complete  
That lingered through the years -  
Oh how soon they disappear-  
Since you and I last kissed dear,

down by Logan Mill

27 02 07

jim hogg

# Midnight On The Mansion Hill

No rings or vows, no settling down,  
Not on the cheating side of town  
We took that short and winding road  
Up through the trees where no-one goes

No veils or lace, no wedding cake  
And no thought for the hearts we'd break  
No, not until we'd had our fill  
'bout midnight on the mansion hill

No roses, cards, or kids to raise  
Just forty nights and forty days  
It had to end and we both knew  
The very moment we broke through

No walking out, no worn out shoes  
No long ascent, no coy refuse,  
Just sudden crush and overspill  
'bout midnight on the mansion hill

Mid-summer long by stars or moon  
By breaking dawn that broke too soon  
We pushed the limits of the light  
And kept the real world out of sight

'til one night in the afterglow  
The silent tears began to flow  
and years of love began to chill  
that midnight on the mansion hill

No sadness darling, no regret  
The die was cast, the course was set  
Though you were worth the two of us  
The rules say one should be enough

And I'm the last one to pretend

I wouldn't do the same again  
No holding back, no ritual  
'bout midnight on the mansion hill

And oh my friend I won't ask why  
You rolled the dice - you can't deny -  
I failed the test and all was changed  
I threw away the years we'd shared

Her beauty was my sole defence  
For trading in my innocence  
For more than momentary thrill  
'bout midnight on the mansion hill

10 12 11

jim hogg

# Kincardine Bridge

I should have known the time would come  
Sometimes emotions make no sense  
I knew too well you were the one  
Our love was always so intense

I tried to run, you tracked me down  
And cornered me with all my dreams  
I tried to hide but you'd bring round  
A love that conjured all my fears

In Armadale and Whitburn town  
We drank beneath the bloodstained roof  
I played with all my cards face down  
Your brother checked my eyes for proof

All through September we made love  
Like making war against all doubt  
But doubt was never real for us  
It's just that I saw no way out

Looking hard into the night  
I wonder what you loved in me  
You left so much of you behind  
And I'm still trying to get free  
Afraid to turn in case the light  
Falls full upon a kid in flight  
Running from one last surprise  
Into the distance in his eyes

The heatwave passed and I passed out  
I kissed goodbye to Whitburn dreams  
There was a hunger in my mouth  
Your eyes had never looked so green

And I was free with one 'but yet'  
But still I didn't turn around

'til later, on the Ardwell straight  
Your Vauxhall Victor homeward bound

My folks were won without reserve  
But I still had that freedom itch  
Your love was more than I deserved  
When we last crossed Kincardine Bridge

October flew; we cried our last  
The morning after Burnside Inn  
In Castle Douglas public park  
Forever in the autumn wind

Looking hard into the night  
I wonder what you loved in me  
You left so much of you behind  
And I'm still trying to break free  
Afraid to turn in case the light  
Falls full upon a kid in flight  
Running from one last surprise  
Into the distance in his eyes

110309

jim hogg



# The Gates Of Innocence

Up round St John Street we walked one night,  
while moonlight brightly glowed,  
my arm around you, yours round me,  
with two friends long ago,  
so deep into love's old sweet dream  
in moments now long flown,  
and like a leaf upon the breeze  
my heart was not my own.

Oh the road to winning you was fraught,  
with quicksands all the way.□  
I sank and swam, I walked and ran,  
I wooed you night and day,  
to simply hold your hand so soft,  
or gaze on eyes so blue,  
in steep green fields at Clachanmore  
when I worked next to you.

But no moon nor love could quite foresee  
that I would wriggle free,  
against my heart, against my will,  
somewhat regretfully.  
The roads we walked were soon to part,  
to sever us for ill,  
to leave the Crescent we once walked,  
to ghosts that haunt me still.

And the thoughts that circle round me here,  
all strengthen with the night.  
as if the years have fallen to  
that young love's breathless might;  
your eyes beguiled the doubting stars  
and left me void of sense,  
before the moments we fell through  
the gates of innocence.

Now the moonlight shines less brightly  
on the lonely fields we cleared,  
and St John Street is not as sweet

as when I held you, dear.  
The friends we walked with on that night  
still walk together yet  
and their full moon's promise holds as true,  
as when we two last met.

01 12 07

jim hogg

# Strangers

The scent of bluebells fanned the flames of spring  
And you, like cherry-blossom, rode the wind  
And muscular with youth you strode the way  
Between the choices we would make or break

We passed with daring eyes and thumping hearts  
Across the tarmacadam, on the paths  
Your kind request still took me by surprise  
Beside the tennis courts; behind my eyes

As soft as April leaves in springtime rain  
Your words, ran helter skelter through my veins  
As arm in arm I held the perfect love  
But in your shadow everything fell short

It's hard to find the words to tell the night  
About the tempting vision you defined  
Like Marilyn Monroe and Eve combined  
But I was terrified and so, declined

You walk my dreams disguised as other girls  
Along the corridors of that lost world  
Like cherry-blossom on the springtime breeze  
Or scent of bluebells blown between the trees

chorus

Evelyn it was long ago  
When you were sunshine, I was snow  
But I remember everything  
Everything that might have been  
No, nothing's ever what it seems  
To strangers passing on the street  
The petals fluttered on the breeze  
On London Road between the trees

jim hogg

# Old Ha's Fire

Old Ha (younger than we are now I'm sure)  
Would carry out the boxes and papers each week  
And empty corn beef tins which never burned  
To build a sizeable fire in the county yard:

A sprawling outpost of abandoned decades  
Army huts and council stores with broken windows  
Estranged from that modern world of the sixties  
Irrelevant to the flux we chased and played in then

He'd heap the rubbish up and scratch the box  
And if the wind was in the west, kneel to the job  
The papers would flicker and the liquid flames  
Poured back and forth across pages and edges

Until it gained the upper hand. Slowly, the spreading heat  
Would capture us, as we huddled together up wind  
And gazed, into the dancing kaleidoscope  
Bewitched by a primitive secret, hidden

In ourselves or in the strange quiet of the burning.  
If we talked, the flames would keep their hold;  
We'd angle our heads slightly to the listeners  
And talk into the fire, never breaking eye to eye contact

With the scorching deep heart that held us enthralled.  
Ha would stand with a stick, and, every now and again,  
Exactly at the right moment, poke some slacking,  
Some dying patch of flame, and goad it back into life

Always avoiding the hot hypnotic heart of the blaze  
The perfect impenetrable centre that fixed us there  
Until the precise moment it's hold began to falter  
When suddenly, he would go at it with abandon

Master of the flames again, he disappeared to the shop  
Unyoked, we'd disengage, but as if hung-over,  
Would stand for minutes, glancing vacantly at the tins,  
Lying at strange angles, mottled black and grey

As the ash, light as air, vanished on the wind

15 01 07

jim hogg

# Lines To Light

How brightly sunlight blazes through  
The windows of this sullen hall  
To kiss the dreams that children drew  
In innocence upon the wall

How darkly promise falls from grace  
And human sympathy retreats  
To leave so little moral space  
For those whom worldliness defeats

I have no power to command  
The smittings of that ancient book  
I have no answers in my hand  
Or strictures none of you can brook

For I know only this much truth  
That all our standing tall still leaves  
Us lower than the most uncouth  
Of all the creatures Earth conceives

And all their ruin, all their thrill  
They cannot choose and cannot rue  
As we construct a crumbling hill  
Where only madness knows what's true

jim hogg

# Monie A Smile, Monie A Tear

There's monie a smile and monie a tear  
On the mystery tour that brings us here  
It's monie a mile and monie a year  
Since you and I sailed fae the crumbling stane pier  
It's time noo tae quit the ocean o' dreams  
Tae gan hame tae the village by the trees

And the wun was fair; we had followin' seas  
Your een were glowin and your heart was free  
I lost myself in an whirlpool of words  
In a world of hunger, egos and swords  
I searched for a song to make it alright  
Way back whun everything was black an' white

And time was wi' us for monie a mile  
When the starlight was bright and filled the night  
Our hopes reached the sky, and strangers were friends  
The waves weren't breakers between us back then  
When we were the morning, fresh as the breeze  
Blowin' oot fae the village by the trees

Noo the loch and glens, and the trees and the hills  
The oul stane harbour, they're all waiting still  
And roon the ledges o' galloway's cliffs  
There's flocks o' herring gulls and razor bills  
And doon by the surge at the Yellow Isle  
There's monie a curse and monie a smile

Or is this me back to the dreamin' again  
Oe'r the bridges of time consigned to flames  
When kids fell in love by the oul village shop  
And stole tender kisses doon by the White Loch  
Tae set them aff doon the road that leads here  
Windin' far fae the village by the trees

jim hogg



# Like Rain

I stood today on that ironwork footbridge  
over the White Cart and its blooming banks.  
Your river was running the wrong way again  
around the old village and under the stars  
down by the ruins under blue skies  
through purples and yellows and lilacs.  
and the sun was the sun of a June too long flown  
and your bridge was an archway made of stone,

It was nowhere near Paisley or these bass-beat days,  
yet only a blink or a heartbeat away.  
I saw you between those two lochs we know so well.  
You stood on the arch there and looked east and west,  
your eyes full of distance, and heart light with dreaming  
that flooded the air of the dance hall  
where I saw in your eyes what all young lovers seek  
when we danced close and slow for the last time.

Too young on the scene then I saw it all too late.  
Though graced by it there and remembering now  
is more than enough, dear, I finally know it  
as the archway retreats and the old town hall fades  
and the riverside riches of Paisley impose  
just only these few sweet reminders  
in this town where we're blind to each other once more  
and where time, falls like rain through my fingers

July 2008

jim hogg

# The Sea

That smoth'rin' grindin' brew that lashes stane,  
That kisses stane, that hurls and smashes stane  
Beguiles us whiles beside the slidin' tide  
Whar millions sook her bounty  
As if entitled tae the ride

That sweetly swishin' wine that cayries life  
That tends tae still, that neutralises, strife  
Begets oor cow'rin' awe by tow'rin' swell  
Wud kill us wi' her beauty  
Wud snuff us wi' hurtlin' hell

That witchin', trancin' sang that tempts us in  
That builds vast ships and cleanses suff'rin' sin  
It drags us snagged intae fell funn'lin' rips  
That race bitchin' through her bulk  
Burstin' whiles on placid lips

That mindless warrin' and sparrin' wi' earth  
Her mirrorin' the sun and massive berth  
Her thrash o' attitudes an' shades o' thra'n  
Tae the tunes o' vicious wun  
A' churn in the heart o' man.

jim hogg

# Farewell To Islay

Snowflakes on your long blonde hair  
we slipped and slid over icy ruts,  
by the curve of soot stained tenements  
long swept from Eldon street.  
The Kelvin cut through floes of ice  
by the back of the bustling Doublet.  
Students of liquor spilled out laughing  
in front of us into the snow.

A cold wind swirled through Maryhill  
to the doors of the Q M Halls,  
where I last heard your voice;  
and last looked into your eyes.  
Before you left for Oban  
from a Glasgow that's almost gone.

Pale blue ink on pale blue lines  
reminds me of your letters still;  
reminds me of a teenage girl  
who crossed the sea from Islay,  
of tremulous shyness,  
and a tender lilting song,  
when I was lost in all that you were.  
Your beauty was the least of it.

And yet, I recklessly figured  
that a bit part  
was somehow good enough for you...

What is it that really matters here?  
I might have asked myself.  
But all of my so called intellect  
was aloft, on blind wings  
or juggling mindlessly  
on lower tracks I couldn't jump  
and in the end I let it all go;  
no explanation why,  
no farewell to Islay,  
silently,

as if you'd never written,  
as if we'd never been  
except for a wintry absence  
of your laughter by the Kelvin;  
of pale blue eyes through flakes of snow.

jim hogg

# Dark Harbour

The lights are shining down upon broken stones and fishing boats  
In the amber haze reflections reach for the night that's crowding close

And on the hill the old hotel is watching over all  
And I think I hear a voice I know  
From somewhere down among the waves that kiss the harbour wall

The revellers all come and go at the Crown and Harbour House  
There's a solitary violin in the distance drifting down  
And from the south a quarter moon is watching over all  
And I think I see a face I know  
Beneath me in the rippling images that rise and fall

And I'm thinking of so many things  
of all the roads that led me on  
and all the words I've wasted on  
dreams that take us nowhere  
when all that ever mattered  
was waiting for me here

The outside world in silence waits beyond the edge of night  
for the pilgrims on the glory road that the most of us walk blind  
And in the air the promises that kept us driving on  
And I think I hear a song I know  
In the old dance hall I held you close; by morning I was gone

Now it's Hogmanay and bitter cold, but nobody seems to care  
In the amber night below the lights there is music everywhere  
And from the harbour deep and dark it's time to turn for home  
And I think I hear the bells ring out  
From somewhere o'er the Auld Lang Synes that echo round the shore

I've been thinking of so many things  
of all the roads that led me on  
and all the words I've wasted on  
dreams that take us nowhere  
when all that ever mattered  
was waiting for me here

31 10 11

jim hogg

# The River Of Me

I launched myself on the river me  
Way back when I was two or three  
I sailed out through the wall of snow  
Beneath the bridge where all kids go

That Cheyenne Bodie was ten feet tall  
His voice so deep it filled a hall  
And that was who I dreamed I'd be  
Until Cochise came on the scene

There was ice on the river and ice on the pond  
And the singing nun sang on and on  
There were trees on the river bank, cliffs by the sea  
And fish galore in the river of me

The fields were full of cows, corn or wheat  
The air was thick with bees and heat  
The summer lasted all year long  
I never knew til it was gone

And then of course came that high school girl  
Her glances made my river swirl  
More complex than the universe  
I never knew what she'd do next

There was light on the river and light on the pond  
And the singing nun sang on and on  
There were trees on the river bank, cliffs by the sea  
And fish galore in the river of me

And up we soared towards the sky  
Through songs and dancing by and by  
My waterfalls and waves ran high  
For just the winking of an eye

And in the distance the quiet sea  
was waiting on the river me  
And on the banks the weeds grew tall  
Where rusting leaves began to fall

Now there's night on the river and night on the pond  
And the singing nun is long since gone  
There are trees on the river bank, cliffs by the sea  
And memories in the river of me

I launched myself on the river me  
Way back when I was two or three  
I sailed out through the wall of snow  
Beneath the bridge where all kids go

jim hogg



# Missing

The boots of clunking time  
Kicked us all around this life  
But for moments we stood free  
On the surge and peaks of dreams  
And now here in these dark glens  
Where the air seems cold and thin  
I wish I wasn't wishing  
I was with them still

The chestnut trees stood tall  
By the banks of Inch canal  
They were much too tall to fall  
Through the branches to the grass  
And the loch was icy cold  
cold as fear of diving in  
but you who knew no fear then  
dived completely in

chorus

and breaking down the walls  
took us miles away from home  
where the riper fruit hung low  
to beneath the crashing stone  
that you almost died below  
and the sudden storm that came  
it chased through field and woodland  
all the frightened braves

And soon it came to pass  
That we all went passing through  
The last gates of innocence  
And to talking from a glass  
And we grew to greater heights  
And we flew on distant flights  
We climbed the steps and hills and  
Traded flight for bills

chorus

And now the sun's come shining  
on these streets and fields we knew  
but like the changing river  
they've changed into something new  
something new that's hiding all  
those people who were small  
who stared into the sun until  
we saw right through into the blue  
who skipped the change of step  
as pure as morning dew

And donning coats of distance,  
Over rags of truth and chance  
We climbed the hill of purpose  
Just as if ambition owned us  
And kept collecting stuff and chains  
til suddenly the road became  
an ever growing faltering  
in the fog that fell between  
all we are and all we've been  
And all those innocents  
Have been missing when we met  
Through those intimacies spent  
like strangers on the street  
on a bend that keeps on turning  
like a spiral, incomplete  
decked with "all our yesterdays"  
out of bounds and out of reach

The boots of clunking time  
Kicked us all around this life  
But for moments we stood free  
On the surge and peaks of dreams  
And now here in these dark glens  
Where the air seems cold and thin  
I wish I wasn't wishing  
I was with them still

jim hogg

# On Hamilton Road

It was down by the corner on Hamilton Road  
On a cold Sunday night when we met long ago  
And we tenderly talked about what might have been  
And your kiss was so soft and your lips were so sweet

We were only eighteen; I was full of it then  
When we sat face to face in old F O S 10  
And to have and to hold you, to fall or to dance  
To win or to lose you, my very last chance

And the heavens held station above us that night  
All the stars and the moon, they were waiting for signs  
And you offered the dream I'd had since we were kids  
And I threw it all to the cold winter wind

It was coming on Christmas, I was blind, I was young,  
and though all that unfolded was distance my love  
You can still find a part of me chained like a ghost  
In search of that dream down on Hamilton Road

But there's no place for sorrow though love fled the field  
Like the swirl of the snowflake preparing to yield  
Because you were the sweet breeze that gave this life flight  
The beautiful storm that once brought me to life

chorus

Now the world keeps on turning from the world we once knew  
From rusting school gates where I waited for you  
To streets where we're strangers by night and by day  
But Hamilton Road - sometimes seems like yesterday

7 10 06

jim hogg

# The Final Spark

By Mountain Ash and roses wild  
Recalling all we've been  
Let's cast our eyes o'er views so wide  
And think on what's unseen

And by the stealthy Luce so dark  
Let's quietly sit and wait  
To catch that final flashing spark  
As sun and river break

Now take my hand and let us walk  
Towards the falling sun  
Unveil our hearts and let us talk  
Of rapids still to run

And on the sands where rivers meet  
Let's gaze through twilight's glow  
At sea trout surging clear and free  
So briefly from the flow

And now, by hay just freshly mown,  
Beneath the polar star,  
Where Saturn hangs above the cove,  
Let's kiss once more before we part

(11 07 08)

jim hogg

# Sea Of Sand

You sent me to the moon  
Across a silent sea of sand  
I was reaching for your hand  
But you were standing on a hill

You launched me to the moon  
Across the wind between the stars  
I was reaching through the sand  
But I was fading out of view

I was just a photograph  
An old fading black and white  
Taken by a passer-by  
When the sun was out of sight

You sent me to the moon  
I caught the desolation bus  
There was no-one there but us  
I saw your shadow on the sand

You sent me to the moon  
Down every road we've ever walked  
Every place we strayed or talked  
When we were higher than the wind

I went searching all the stars  
Between the avenues and bars  
You were everywhere I went  
In a different universe

You sent me to the moon  
Across the frozen wastes of old  
Where the howling wind blew cold  
Where I lost you in the snow

You sent me to the moon  
Although I didn't want to know

But I built myself a home  
Between the rainbow and the stones

I was frozen to the bone  
In the icy wind of truth  
I was free and on my own  
In my castle on the moon

You sent me to the moon  
Without the merest second thought  
But we learn from every loss  
There's even rainbows on the moon

You launched me to the moon  
And now you want me to come home  
Leave behind the rags and bones  
But it's so far back down the road

Now you're just a photograph  
An old fading black and white  
We were standing side by side  
And my hand was in your hand

You sent me to the moon  
Across a silent sea of sand  
I was reaching for your hand  
But you were standing on a hill

(Thanks to Tailor Bell for 'higher than the wind')

jim hogg

# The Queen's New Horse

We're welcome yin and a' to clim' aboard the monarch's ride  
Birthed by gilded mitts behin' the blue and yalla strides  
She's armed wi information and a mission tae truncate us  
An saddled far an' wide wi gorgers surgin' tae deflate us  
They've got her by the tongue and they're lashin' in the boots  
They're shootin' fae the hip and they're stirrin' up the soot

An' Scotsmen drunk on attitude are forced to lie below it  
The highlanders and lowlanders and them that cannae show it  
Are missin' kissin' Embra, an' that hussy fae Arbroath  
But in their ringin' lugs can hear a chantin' comin' close

Her saddlebags are rattlin wi' lood cravin' and persuasion  
But gi'en her hade she's lackin' in a basic explanation  
She's a wee bit unacquainted wi reality and truth  
But strewth it's ocht but truth that this here hooper must pursue  
In droves she hads crusadin' hopes o' burnishin' the few  
An dishin' staney comfort if yer poor or on the broo.

A yearlin' noo she's quite a beaut, she's struttin' a' the world, man  
Her weel snipped cloth is blowin free, she's snortin snuff and dogma  
She's whippin in, she's whippin oot, manoeuvres tae up-raise us  
Oor sov'reign's horse is full in flicht in a hunner pointless races  
An a' the gulls and gulled are oot tae sing her praises.

10 05 11

jim hogg

# A Girl With Hair Like Yours

A girl with hair like yours  
Was standing on the bus  
She hurled me back into  
A sudden swirl of us  
I couldn't push straight through  
I couldn't turn away  
We kissed down by the shore  
In cold and salty spray

A girl with hair like yours  
She turned on all the lights  
She broke down all the doors  
Invaded all my nights  
She told me she was mine  
then caught a flight to Spain  
I danced around the gym  
With you and Don McLean

A girl with hair like yours  
Made everything less clear  
I set sail for her shore  
We walked down every street  
my hand alive in hers  
She drove the world away  
She said she couldn't leave  
Then said she couldn't stay

A girl with hair like yours  
She soothed me 'til I bled  
We'd walk that extra mile  
Wherever darkness led  
We crossed the oceans wide  
And flew too near the sun  
I thought we'd reach the light  
When you were twenty one

A girl with hair like yours  
was electricity  
She lit some ancient fuse



With nails and chemistry  
She broke into my veins  
And left my heart in flames  
We burned in darkness when  
Our love was innocent  
We danced across the bay  
While Harry Nilsson played

(chorus)

It wasn't so spectacular  
Not blonde or black it's true  
And neither this or that colour  
Just curly brown and hanging down  
It got me wanting you

jim hogg

# The Church Hall In Drummore

She's sitting down beside the wall  
When the music starts to play  
I'm walking slowly 'cross the hall  
And I'm lost for words to say

I know her name and nothing more  
But there's something in her eyes  
We're in the village of Drummore  
In the Church Hall side by side

Some kind of spell falls over us  
It's the nineteen seventies  
We're oh so young and lost for love  
And we gently start to kiss

Her lips are soft; she holds me tight  
And we're seized by tenderness  
But something took me off that night  
From her sweet and tender lips

From time to time I think of you  
In your village by the shore  
And how the years so quickly flew  
Since we kissed then kissed no more

I caught your eye in Mill Street once  
And we said a warm hello  
It turned my thoughts to love and chance  
In the church hall in drummore

(chorus)

I held you in my arms that night  
A short and precious time  
And you were more than you'll ever know  
So long ago dear in Drummore

jim hogg

# The Night Broke Away

A shadowed northerly, late winter's bite,  
Lifted long waves, ran them deep into night.  
I fixed them with you, when first you refused,  
So far between us; remote as the news

Once in the paper I fell on your name.  
Not quite believing, I read it again:  
married to legend, coincidence said.  
Still, history leads wherever it's led.

Maybe I tried that much harder with you.  
I buried the trail and burned down the view.  
That's how it stayed, 'til the night broke away,  
Here, where the breakers break over today.

jim hogg

# The Blood And The Bloom

The dark green leaves twist in the wind  
And bloody berries dance December  
Flights of geese bank round the moon  
And stars that blinded us remember

The tide has turned, the time has come  
To carry back the beauty  
For all that love bequeathed us once  
Was never ours for losing

Or would you have us waging war  
Upon the ground that raised us?  
Or by the night sky o'er this loch  
Renounce the flames that saved us

In this haven time grows stale  
The far sky threatens who knows what  
Will we dither by the gateway  
Knowing all roads lead to loss?

All our dreams, and all our years  
Narrowed down to one last storm  
To choose the harbour of our fears  
Or the blossom and the thorn

There is a path, there is a chance  
Where we'll bleed, but where we'll smile  
Where the light and shadow dance  
Where the holly still grows wild

4 11 07

jim hogg

# Seasons Of Galloway

The fields of wheat glow gold and sway  
Old mem'ries flock from everywhere  
On summer winds they drift in waves  
Back to her towns and villages

As guillemots crowd ragged cliffs  
And herring shoal off Clanyard Bay  
Her sons and daughters all come home  
In dreams of their young Galloway

'Til gales come howlin' from the west  
The Cree runs high beneath the bridge  
And Falling leaves ski down the wind  
And starlings swirl upon the wing

For summer's gone and sadness swells  
In waves that break in Sand Eel bay  
But shades of autumn weave their spell  
Amongst the lanes of Galloway

Above Glen Trool the Merrick heights  
All sleep beneath a chill of snow  
And flights of geese come sweeping in  
Across the White loch, flying low

While icy waters plunge down through  
The Glen of Luce towards the sea  
The cliffs are silent as the grave  
And winter winds blast Galloway

'til bluebell blossoms scent the woods  
And timid deer and foxes roam  
Amongst the cover on the hill  
Above the village of Drummore

As swallows swoop through ancient ruins

Reminders of old yesterdays  
But green shoots promise life again  
Across the hills of Galloway.

03 09 08

jim hogg

# No Defeat On Love

Stillness called me here  
where bitter stars are few.  
From shadow to shadow  
the night is yours.  
Senses sharpen,  
faint galaxies approach  
attentive and glistening,  
invisible wings beat overhead  
across this darkening loch  
as castle lights fall dim  
and fell the walls of time  
to give us this stage again  
under spotlights  
of endless possibility.  
Or so we might have thought  
had we been older,  
for innocence is blind,  
groping in vain for us now.  
But in the embrace of your night  
regret holds no dominion.

The sweetest comfort reigns  
in the aftermath of a love  
woven not by chance  
or by choice alone,  
but for you and I to win or lose.  
For nowhere is it written  
that such and such must be.  
And though moves may be forced  
by history unfolding,  
the end remains unknown  
until it flies or falls.

Yet even this parting and its taint  
inflicted no defeat on memory,  
no defeat on love.  
In the beginning  
it was the little things;  
In the end

it was everything.  
Losing it is beyond me now.  
And here,  
where something of us plays on,  
by the light of the indefinable  
by the flowing depths  
of the unwitting wisdom  
of this heretical universe  
I am thankful.

12 01 07

jim hogg



# Lines To

And if I can remember  
What I couldn't help but love  
And if even part of that  
Still holds as true  
As when we knew each other truly  
Then maybe I can bear to lose  
The skin deep things  
The qualities of youth  
That work the initial  
But not the lasting  
Magic of love  
For the silky smooth grows lined  
The gypsy fades to grey  
And time keeps stealing from the eyes  
All this I know too well  
When I catch myself  
Unsuspecting  
In a shop front window  
Where you might be too  
And not recognise or be recognised

I suppose there's a tender  
and tragic beauty  
In this failing and fading  
But I'm not afraid  
Of what we'll see - yet -  
Should we meet again love,  
Unless,  
We've lost too much  
Of the best we had within us once.  
I pray that I'll catch sight  
Of the little things  
That came from the heart  
Depicting that inner balance  
In which I longed to share;  
The absence of affectation  
Your irresistible honesty.  
And pray there's still something here  
Of what touched you too

So long ago

I tried to fix myself of course  
By writing songs  
You might be amused to hear  
As if this was a disease  
As if I could exorcise  
The demons of lost love  
By charming them into other rooms  
Other ears  
And sundry halls  
By means of minor chords  
And anguished words  
To sicken them with endless recitals.  
And drafted a lengthy tale  
With you as principal,  
Baffling the best minds on the planet.  
All to no avail or worse  
As every curative design  
Seemed to breathe new vigour  
Into those oh so seductive memories.

Eventually it came to me  
Why charge up the past by fighting it?  
Accept the beauty of what was  
And carry it in its place  
Which doesn't mean it matters less.  
If we met tomorrow  
I would still be a mess

But still I wonder where you are love?  
Walking on some nearby city street  
With your languid elegance  
Glimpsing the years  
In that sobering window  
And wondering too?  
Or with your family  
Round the table of a lifetime of love?  
Long past what might have been  
And happy now?  
I hope so with all my heart,  
But miss you still,

No less than ever.

09 11 06

jim hogg

# Cross Of Lies

Now every song calls moments home, even grains of summer  
I sit and turn them clumsily to keep the tide at bay  
And here through flattened notes I hear the coming of the drummer  
In all those words like wingbeats that once carried us away

I've got nothing to be thankful for, so I tell myself  
Except the gifts I couldn't choose and all I couldn't get  
For, of all the sons of Adam gone, you're the one I miss  
High upon the cross of lies, tell me how it came to this

You had the power once to kill the sunlit afternoon  
I'd hear you on the old dirt-track; the driver's door flung shut  
I cowered low behind my dreams, and all too soon, too soon  
The hills all fell away and the ragged chord was cut

You fought the world and taught me how to damn myself alone  
You pitched the darkness all around, and so I found the light  
And found the light was shadow I would throw from stone to stone  
And across the darkened water I went wading into night

We had a brother in the world; he toiled upon the land  
He worked with stone and family and he dreamed of modest yields□  
But you and I dreamed out of reach, to plains of salt and sand  
Out of pitch and out of season beyond the fertile fields

I can't forget your glance that day, down in East Tarbet Bay  
You said goodbye in silence to the anchor holding fast  
Now echoes ride the waves that dance through all that went astray  
Through all the circles broken and through all the shadows cast

There was a time we might have talked beyond the lies of life  
So much we could have spoken of: the glory of young love,  
The sweetest lie of all and then the letting go of lies  
But for now the summer's gone and I think I've said enough

I've had loves I should be thankful for, more than I deserved  
Forget the gifts I couldn't choose and all I couldn't get  
For, of all the sons of Adam gone, you're the one I miss  
High upon the cross of lies, tell me how it came to this

It's not the kiss of the scorpion's tail waiting in the wings  
And it's not that cold north-westerly crying through the trees  
It's not the broken wave that's tearing down these cliffs  
It's the harmony that passed us by between the falling leaves

jim hogg

# Sand And Stone

I

I saw you in a magazine  
Pouring tea for the elderly  
Juggling snowballs by the Tweed  
And running miles for charity

Your hair was brown and curly still  
Falling just like it used to do  
When we climbed the rolling hill  
In spring way back in sev'nty two

Winter winds and summer haze,  
looking out to sea  
'cross that high-way of our lives,  
all that gravity  
All that ebb and flow,  
across the sand and stone  
We will not make it home again  
to share the salty wind  
To hold each other just once more,  
to meet along the shore

II

And once again I held your hand  
Where even time has no command  
And all these songs I write for you  
Fall so far short of what was true

And though I see you on the page  
You're still alive inside of me  
Like some weapon blind to age  
A field of blooms, a mystery

Autumn gales and springtime rain,  
looking out to sea  
'cross that high-way of our dreams,  
all that destiny.

All that ebb and flow,  
across the flesh and bone  
We will not make it home again  
to share one salty kiss  
To talk once more of time and chance,  
to dance one final dance.

III

All that time beneath the sun  
Holding you, not holding you  
Running where all rivers run  
What once was free, and once was new,  
What once was me, and once was you

Teenage dreams and tender wings,  
falling into you  
We were only passing through  
something that was true  
Something more than words  
and more than we could hold  
We will not make it home again  
but you and I had time  
For touching souls and dancing slow  
beside the sand and stone

23 03 11

jim hogg

## Snow On The River (Iv)

To Arthur's Seat we climbed one day  
equipped with cheese and wine  
We had a party in the sky  
until I saw the sign

A shadow ranged against the clouds  
politely asking why  
I took my pen and wrongly  
Answered X instead of Y

The ancient bridge across the Forth  
had criss-crossed all my dreams  
in yon Dalbeattie hotel  
beside the little stream

And like a fish trapped in a net  
once desperate to escape  
I kept on staring through the mesh  
when freedom came my way

Not quite as brash as Lochinvar  
I stayed outside the kirk  
I didn't bring my broadsword  
and forgot to bring my dirk

I built my armour round my heart  
and traded love for song  
But plainly Lochinvar was right  
and I again was wrong

And Stirling seemed so far from your  
Balgowan in the spring  
I dreamt you homewards everyday;  
you gave me songs to sing

Though you were Yarrow bound my love  
through Ettrick into Tales  
by complex paths we never saw,  
beyond where reason fails



In Ali's words I caught a glimpse  
of you so long ago  
The surf from Islay's shores  
washed me right back to Woodlands Road

As time came rushing all around,  
a kid 'Who Sold the World'  
It's what fools do when we think  
we've got time and love to burn

□

So where were all my wits back when  
the blossom was in bloom  
too busy with the harvesting,  
or blinded by the view

I'd love to say I've no regrets,  
if only that was true  
But new dawns call while snow still falls,  
and while there's thoughts of you

I look down all the highways now  
and see you in disguise  
You're all the girls I'd fallen for  
but didn't realise

Yet when the time arrived to choose,  
I chose to hit the road  
Amongst the special few love,  
you're the only one I'd know

□

And all the songs I've scribbled down  
I wrote for you alone  
but you're out there somewhere between  
the farthest stars and home

I've chased your shadow, traced your trail,  
I've held you here and there:  
a dream that sparks such blinding flames  
it haunts me everywhere.

jim hogg

# Back To Galloway

If you'll come with me, I'll go back  
To where the River Luce falls blue  
Through glens of Hazel to the sea  
Where my heart lies and yours lies too

If you'll go with me, I'll go too  
To sit and watch the Fulmars soar  
Beyond the cliff towards the sun  
Beyond the horn that roars no more

If you'll come with me, I won't wait  
The Lost Road reaches all the way  
Through all we've known, through all we've shared  
And we must walk that way again

We're going back to Galloway  
Back to the simple life we knew  
When we were young and love was true  
We're going home to Galloway

If you went with me, I would stay  
Amongst her cliffs and glens so free  
Or walk the sands of Ardwell Bay  
Until the sun sets over me

If you'll stay with me, I won't leave  
I dream that some day we might share  
A humble cottage by the sea  
Where we can sit and watch the waves

If you could come, I know you would  
To walk beneath the stars we knew  
To see the sights we loved back then  
When we were young and love was true

I'm going back to Galloway

Back to the simple life we knew  
I'm going back to Galloway  
I'm going home to wait for you

16 01 07

jim hogg

# Crammag Light

The winter winds are blowin' in from Ireland 'cross the sea  
I'm standing on this pierhead here just watching seagulls wheel  
The light is going down now, and I'm thinking of the night  
When you sailed out from this harbour wall, down past Crammag light

The years have passed so swiftly since I watched you sail away  
I wonder if you're on the waves still fishing night and day  
The tourists have all gone now and I'm by the fireside  
In the flames I see you sailing off, down past Crammag light

Oh Robbie, are you never coming back to Logan Bay  
The harbour bell is silent now but seabirds on the wing  
Are calling out to everywhere, above the breaking waves  
But the only song that I can hear is the song the winter sings  
Oh Robbie are you never coming home to Logan Bay

Remember when we stood upon the cliff at Logan Head  
The sea was like a mill pond and the sun was setting red  
The herring boats were drifting southwards on the flooding tide  
In the distance we could see the moon, over Crammag light

The waves are running high towards the fishpond cottage wall  
And all the sea is empty now as darkness starts to fall  
The Sanderlings are crying for another day that's gone  
To the south of Laggantulloch, Crammag's light has just come on

Oh Robbie are you never coming back to Logan Bay  
The harbour bell is silent now but seabirds on the wing  
Are calling out to everywhere, above the breaking waves  
But the only song that I can hear is the song the winter sings  
Oh Robbie are you never coming home to Logan Bay

I've heard the talk about the ghost that haunts the waters here  
They say that when the sun goes down his fishing boat appears  
In winter's gales and breaking waves, or so the legends say,  
In the sweeping light from Crammag, heading north for Logan Bay

(Song)

jim hogg

## Snow On The River (Iii)

I saw you once in Janet's Lounge  
in how you flicked your hair  
And for a moment we were on  
the Town Hall's sandstone stairs

back when it looked like we were bound  
to join the chosen few

I touched your arm and spoke,  
and when she turned it wasn't you

□

I scrawled our names in stone upon  
the seawall at MacDuff

I thought the end would never come,  
but stone's not tough enough

To stand the blast of wind and wave,  
that took the love we had  
Somewhere between the Sandhead shore  
and fading photographs

I watched your plane come gliding down  
from north of Anniesland  
your name was in the vapour trails  
as if by your own hand

You threw your arms around me there  
as everyone looked on

But I was just a refugee  
from someone else's song

□

An Islay piper stopped and played  
Loch Rannoch just for me

I saw your eyes in shadow as  
I stood there on my knees

We crossed the line of madness once  
when whisky set us free  
Forbidden fruit that called so sweet,  
we knew could never be

The notion we've lived other lives  
makes little sense to me  
yet somehow we connected then  
as if we'd always been

We hardly spoke, we hardly touched,  
we often turned our backs  
On something deep that seemed to break  
the laws of time and chance

I heard you once in springtime babe,  
down where the bluebells spread  
Between the White Loch and the road,  
in words we left unsaid

In purple perfumed haze down there,  
I traced the scent of grief  
It wasn't you; just thoughts of you,  
upon a trembling leaf

But sometimes you're there everywhere,  
I'm sure you know it still  
we could have been, as we were seen,  
but not for lack of will

Our good friends tried to keep us tied;  
for that I'm grateful too  
But there were walls that wouldn't fall,  
and so I ran from you

Now memory's too swift it seems  
to fall behind for good;  
Portpatrick isn't quite the same  
but still stands where it stood.

For years I thought you'd crossed the sea  
and checked the stars each night;  
though not a sign was ever seen  
you were never out of mind.



jim hogg

# The Primrose And The Knife

Whilst onward flows the River Cart  
And forward flees time's silent dart  
The loves and hopes o' men abide  
As constant as the throbbing tide  
Oor tenure here is fleeting tho'  
Brief as the swirlin' flake o' snow  
An' dreams, oh dreams, they carry us  
Beyond the stars, then bury us

The future's sweet talk turns tae snash  
A moment precious, then we're ash  
We walk a tightrope through this life  
Between the primrose and the knife  
Between the eagle and the louse  
Between the vixen and the yowes  
We're in the wind, we're in the wave  
Bright as sunlight, dark as the cave

An' from the dust and from the sky  
We carve our truth, we shape the lie  
An' weave ourselves some kind o' sense  
Beyond the gates of innocence  
And noo I'm neither bold nor blind  
I'm stuck here on the path that's lined  
We dared the music way back when  
And I jigged all the wrong steps then

I left you standing on the shore  
But now it's clear, the ceilidh's o'er  
Yet there's a certain sweetness in  
The thought that we might meet again  
Tae sit an laugh at might have beens  
When we were special in oor teens  
Or maybe yince I'll catch your eye  
An' yin o' us will chance a "hi";.

Whilst onward flows the River Cart  
And forward flees time's silent dart  
The loves and hopes o' men abide

As constant as the throbbing tide  
Oor tenure here is fleeting tho'  
Brief as the swirlin' flake o' snow  
An' dreams, oh dreams, they carry us  
Beyond the stars, then bury us

(chorus)

I've worn the holy cross of love  
I've drawn the killing arrow back  
I've seen the eagle flee the dove  
And paradise rise out of ash

jim hogg

# Lost Road

We stood together on the seven five  
Backs to the fields and eyes wide to the light  
My thumb hitched high to the random unknown  
I didn't know where and wouldn't be shown  
We'd learn soon enough we couldn't go home

We sailed straight into yon white water thrill  
Down where the furious waves rose and fell  
With no going back, and no turning around  
We didn't know if we'd make it or drown  
Or if something worse might soon bring us down

When you were the fire, you were the light  
And I was a shadow stealing the night  
You were the av'rage and I was the pass  
I had momentum and you had the class  
Out of the seeds of a circular street  
I stood on illusion, you stood on your feet

Across the table we sat with our kind  
Breaking the bread with our hands full of time  
And gulping down the holy water of self  
Too eager like chicks we leapt and we fell

From high window dreams down to the cold earth

I stand alone here o'er this city night  
But somehow see only your village light  
Off in the far distance beside the lost road  
Down by the old Beech tree under the crows  
Beneath the moon's light where we used to stroll.

When you were the fire, you were the light  
And I was a shadow stealing the night  
You were the av'rage and I was the pass  
I had momentum and you had the class  
Out of the seeds of a circular street

I stood on illusion, you stood on your feet

jim hogg

## Snow On The River (Ii)

I saw your eyes in pale blue lines  
you'd posted out of Oban  
And breathlessly I kissed your words:  
all that I could hold then

But if I listen to the night  
I sometimes hear the chords  
In the smoke that bends away from  
the fire of your words

The Gallery at Kelvingrove  
One Thursday I recall  
Your face in every picture-frame  
on both sides of the hall

And in your eyes wild holiness;  
the kind I could believe  
Like waves that break so free upon  
the west coast of Tiree

I stopped a while at Flannan Isle  
for Christmas, eighty four  
And found the dreams that dreamers weave  
unravelling on the floor

The food was on the table still,  
but all the birds had flown  
As if you'd never even been,  
as I stood there alone

And once by Chapelrossan house  
beneath a sky so clear  
across the white lines of our lives  
your eyes became the sea

The moon was full above Lang Rigg,  
the trees were silver white  
I played your chaperone, and you,  
my weakness for the night

It's so long since I held you close  
it might have been a dream  
Though all the moments we once shared  
still seem so real to me

I spent an evening in your house  
long after you were gone  
But part of you's still lingering  
between the painted walls

Sometimes I see you strolling on  
the lane beside the loch  
Down where the ghosts of you and I  
once took themselves to walk

You're always in the distance though  
I wait for you to close  
'til geese curve down in darkness there  
where water grasses grow

T'was on the isle of Islay once  
from Bridgend heading west  
The sun reflecting from the sea  
Kilmeny filled my head

I heard your voice by Loch Gorm's banks  
break through the veil of time  
It took me back to Glasgow when  
we still walked side by side

On Nessock Terrace one spring day  
a fond and fleeting glance  
unleashed a swirl of memories  
of where it all began

A disco in Drummore Church hall,  
where dreaming filled the air  
we kissed and held each other tight  
and now that's all we share

jim hogg



# The Old Swing Tree

Park at Inch crossroads outside the new Church  
And walk slowly southwards through beech hedge and birch  
Turn left where the hanging tree once used to be  
Straight into the war hidden there by the trees

Where soldiers and huts lined both sides of the Road  
When bombs fell round here sixty five years ago  
By Ash and by bluebell, old sycamore  
Here where the past laps like waves on the shore

Take the wild pathway that hides the Lost Road  
Towards the new village that would one day grow  
And there by the verge you'd have found the swing tree  
In silence, no kids swooping there wild and free

Nor pledging of love proudly carved in that tree  
Those crudely cut letters for you and for me  
And somewhere between times, free in the years  
A few broken hearts, a few smiles and tears

So many dreams that would never come true  
And not just for us but for everyone too  
As time and the world bring us changes to rue  
The gentle give way and the selfish break through

And here am I wondering, listening and lost  
In search of all those precious moments long gone  
Around the old swing tree, felled and away  
By tracks of love carved too deeply to fade

08 02 08 Renfrew

jim hogg

# Drummore

Deep in my heart lie mem'ries so sweet  
Sunrise o'er Cail'ness, sea at my feet  
Wind in the barley drove golden waves  
Carry me free to Drummore once again

High on the Creechan, down in the glen  
So many moments I can't forget  
Round by the Foghorn where Fulmars glide  
Fishermen dangle their dreams in the tide

Only a dream now, Mary has flown  
Reckless we plough, and reap what we've sown  
Time runs so swiftly, soon we grow old  
Carry me home to Drummore by the shore

Lonely the highway, lonely the night  
'til the last corner, into the light  
Down at East Tarbet, high on the cliffs  
Carry me back to the thrill of her kiss

chorus)

Carry me back there; it's where I belong  
Home in Kirkmaiden adrift on her song  
Watching the breakers wash up her wild shore  
As we walk round the point of Curghie to Drummore  
(As we gaze o'er the bay from Curghie to drummore)  
(As we think on the loved ones we'll ne'er hold no more)

14 02 11

jim hogg

# The Long Goodbye

I rarely thought of you  
'til you finally broke through  
I thought the story was complete  
When we talked back in ninety three  
I thought that was enough my love  
But now love's legionnaires have come

And Alison I'm thinking of  
All the little things too much  
Like how your d n a and such  
Wove a spiders web of love and touch  
into something almost glorious

But rarely could forget  
That strange chemistry that crept  
Between us, then entangled us  
And didn't understand at first  
You know that I was crushed my love  
By overwhelming chemicals

But Alison I'm thinking now  
'bout your fingernails and how  
Those firetrails of thrill raced round  
on my throat, and here, in this far town  
and the girl my world turned round without

No, really, it was you  
There was nothing I could do  
We think that life is ours to choose  
But passion rules and cold light rues  
Predestination left us cold  
And now we watch the past unfold

But Alison I can't forget  
Holding you inside room 10  
The lack of light in discotheques  
How it felt when dancing to "je t'aime"

How you curled your hair against your neck

And Alison, oh Alison

Here, across the Rubicon

Our long goodbye seems so long gone -

Cat and mouse we blew the game of love -

But yet, something holy lingers on

(With apologies to David Most and Clive Westlake - and also to Metaphor!)

jim hogg

# High And Dry

We started sometime yesterday  
shooting arrows in the sea  
counting stars and making hay  
Taming truth and electricity.

You threw your cat a butcher's bone  
And killed an Adder with a spoon  
We sprinted for the open door  
and jumped without a parachute

You turned the lights off on our street,  
smashed the gates and left for Rio,  
And I went paddling in the deeps  
Of no-one else but Mary oh

And off we soared on wings of myth  
Without fear and without shame  
Sure that we were first to sing  
Songs of love and truth that made us slaves

We rushed into the ancient dance  
bewitched by dreams, by history,  
and If there was a fleeting chance,  
it stole beyond us silently

like clouds that slip in on the dusk.  
Falling rain upon the river  
Or Albatross as safe and lost  
as geese within the endless skein.

You might have felt time pass you by  
Like a question on the wind.  
Beating wings in life's disguise,  
But the words no longer seem to fit.

And eyes and ears won't let us know  
The secrets driving destiny

The carrion that tears the crow,  
The isle that overcomes the sea

and when the drowning moment comes  
In this life we took to scorning  
The folly of self crowning runs  
through all our dreams turned into thorns

Our wings of soaring out of lies.  
Sacred clichés cast aside  
All we were is all that cries  
All our cares now lying high and dry

The arrows sail the wind's song now  
the river flows out of the sea.  
Crow and carrion take a bow  
Deep in the bones of you and me

We started sometime yesterday  
Making war on fate so freely  
It stole upon us silently  
And tamed our 'truth' with mystery

chorus

There was no-one else but Mary  
But there were hills we had to climb  
Our dreams soon put us to the sword  
And impatience stole our time  
07 01 09

jim hogg

# Never

A bank of parched grass and a spark:  
golden flames weave and wend  
across the blue divide  
and catch us unawares

Unable to douse or steer the blaze  
it rages through our lives  
welding us together  
and settles to a flicker

Until the frost and the rains  
crack the harried surfaces  
and the poles of opposition  
wedge the cores apart

But we lash ourselves together  
against the weathering,  
and the swithering within,  
and steer a course for breaking waves

where common cause would save us  
but here we lie apart now  
two wrecks on the ocean-bed  
silting up with ruefulness

jim hogg

# The Next Train To Eden

..... will be leaving All Reason  
just as soon as it's all clear...  
But I'm too busy thinking  
about poems and Cathedrals  
and beaks and polished claws  
tearing flesh from purpose.  
And I hunt the heart that sees it  
but vaguely sense I've lost it  
to someone else's poem  
to someone else's heart..  
And this railway line that reaches  
flows too much like a river.

And the race is surely done, the heart is surely gone  
but the train is waiting on, the train is waiting on

Our poems all approximate  
A reaching for and rising  
To those great cathedrals closing  
On the echoes of our truths,  
and we build them  
and we build them  
We inch and edge towards them  
O'er the tempting bridgeless gulf  
Or paint and paint and paint  
to bridge it but in vain

'Til the heart is surely worn, the heart is surely gone  
But the train is waiting on, the train is waiting on

And all these dried out sorcerers  
with their ladders of technique  
throw and throw and throw them  
as if they'll take us closer;  
like the mariner who learns  
every rock and every bell  
and every flashing nuance  
of nautical detail  
and in the end he knows the sea



like a dog might know Vermeer.

And their beaks and claws are on.. the heart that's surely worn  
while the train is waiting on, the train is waiting on

I've read them through,  
and through them blew  
the pointless winds of Mars  
on the trail of thin rewards  
whittled crisp from hearts  
in their cloisters in the sky  
where heart is out of fashion  
leaving reason like a canyon  
and knowledge knowing nothing  
can never hold dominion

For revelation comes when they're turning down their thumbs  
their beaks and claws upon the signature that runs  
to catch the train that waits, that's surely waiting on  
and seeing what we've done, all the stars are on the run

All the stars are on the run  
but a poem like Atlantis  
calls us to the station  
for this one time only train  
and though worldliness from shadows  
casts its nets upon the waters  
the creaking wheels are turning  
the Eden seal is burning  
And all of science watches  
as the clocks are rushing on;  
and as vanity shouts proudly  
'I can't afford the fare'.  
the whistle's blowing loudly  
and there's fighting at the gate

For the waiting train is gone, the waiting train is gone  
where tomorrows aren't numbered, where the walking wounded run,  
where passports won't be checked, where every curse is blessed  
Yes the homebound train is gone where the Eden river runs

And I'm still standing here,

weighing pros and cons

28 03 08

jim hogg

# The Big Throw

I knew a thrower once  
A burly mind that knew flight

His life hemmed in by nowhere streets  
and a double helix legacy that left him  
enslaved by break-out opportunities:

the silence that fell as he stepped  
into a pedestalled circle  
into foreshortened distance and time  
where impossibles faltered

I could taste it when he said  
"I really believed I could throw it  
clean out of the park and over the rooftops"  
I followed a crystallised vision  
Into his limitless sky  
a thousand times further than gravity granted  
and he went on believing.  
I saw it in stone archways  
in ancient scripts in hotel bedrooms  
in an endless blur of kneeling to symbols  
and crawling from under  
the dusty rubble of dreams

jim hogg

# Rome Must Be Destroyed

A handful of dirt tossed in the air  
tells us nothing,  
tells us everything.  
Microbes grown from next to nothing  
into a monumental mind,  
the planet become a useless buzzing head  
spinning itself a billion lies,  
we orbit the sacred self,  
a web of morons.

At Zama did Scipio commit us?  
Or did Cicero light the fuse with a word?

- like the dust in the air  
our little eternity  
turns on the whim of the wind

jim hogg

# All The Cloaks

'Just one more turn upon the floor'

I heard you say it in my head  
Or did I throw my voice instead  
To speak directly to the dead  
To lead where I would not be led

The foxgloves grow beneath the trees  
Along the path where traffic flowed  
Across the trains and through the steam  
Where life has lost us one more road

I can't distinguish need from must  
It's much the same with last and first  
You warred between them wild and skilled  
As if your glass was overfilled

With swamps and dunes and flames and frost  
You overcame imperatives  
But none was ever quite as lost  
In polished halls, with relatives

There's no forgiving choices feigned  
Though kindly made, or fondly claimed  
And though we thought we meant it all  
It was not us, and yet it was

.....

'Where will they find us when we're gone? '

Down by the brig between the lochs  
Which we once crossed and then re-crossed  
Or edging into Genoch Moss  
Still reaching for a hand that's lost?

I fell between a thousand things  
The cliff of dreams and rocks of truth  
I flew upon a young fool's wings  
And though we mock it, life is youth

It's by illusion we make sense  
In swimming romance, in the dance  
And in cliché and in our myths  
And enigmatic songs like this

The road you chose was in the sun  
And where you walked I chose to run  
And where I stumbled you walked on  
In dewy grass one endless dawn

And no, not there by falling moon  
Or rising sun that rose too soon  
Nor in reflection 'neath the bridge  
But on the waters ridge by ridge

'But all your cards are still face down'

Whose words were those I have to ask  
They were not mine but in the dark  
You showed your hand, I turned my back  
and left behind the beaten track

And in the late September heat  
You stood amongst the prideful crowd  
And watched the marching, booted feet  
Weave back and forth across the ground

And stop there glistening row on row  
So young and cocky, coiled to throw  
Ourselves upon the righteous wrongs,  
Against the lure of other songs

Though love was keystone to it all  
But didn't seem to count at all  
despite those words we seemed to mean  
across the canyon sowed between

At least that's how it seems from here  
Where unlike then I want you near  
As if I couldn't face love when  
It meant so much to hold you then

'forget the debts that cash can pay'

Behind your house with saw in hand  
I saw you cut across the land  
In blocks the timber fell on sand  
But back then naught seemed circumspanned

Your father walked upon the shore  
Your sister carried all the rain  
Within the clouds of her young soul  
Towards the stars and back again

I did not know you as a friend  
I saw your scar where friendship bled  
Down every stream to every wall  
Where good and evil equal fall

With broken hearts your folks saw sin  
In their own mary magdelene  
For London bound, no Joan of Arc  
She burned like us on shifting sand

The ragged blade was sharp and true  
your blood ran slow to purple blue  
A star like scar for hearts unhealed  
As sacred as the truths we shield

'Oh never leave me, never go..'

I might have walked the borderline  
But such a thought was never mine  
And never was I less inclined  
Except to see what such might find

And found much less indifference  
Than used to dog before I shared  
The fear that scuttles through the fence,  
And gratitude that I've been spared

In clumsy words there may be strength  
In too much polish pointlessness  
But affectation's not all false

However falls the call that calls

And I would river-run with you  
down countless glens where heedless through  
we'd crash and rush and glide and be  
Until we'd over-run the sea

But here there's only minor drifts  
A host of twitches slightly shifts  
And all is changed and all remains  
A hail of arrows make their way

'But no-one listens anymore'

Until we reach the drastic state  
Where fear behoves us to create  
A creature so endowed, so great  
That he alone can wipe the slate

And smite fell time full on the chin  
Unwind the words, the falling down  
And by uncov'ring undo sin,  
Restore the rootless to the ground

And yet it all depends on where  
You stand to listen or to stare  
At all I shouldn't laugh at yet  
At all we wish for, all we get

This flowing place where weaving meets  
Unweaving face to face, and greets  
The stone cold universe of flames  
In all the cloaks of all our games

Where we once crossed and then recrossed  
Down by the brig between the lochs  
Still reaching for a hand that's lost  
Or edging into Genoch Moss

' now tell me: where did Adam go...? '



June 2010

jim hogg

# The Cafe On The Corner

The jukebox in the corner played  
To shadows sitting sipping tea  
The light was low and you were there  
Your collar open to the sea

We leaned across but never touched  
Through some remembered wish or mist  
Some northerly that left us hushed  
And wet where yesterday had kissed

We didn't ever have to try  
When I was you and you were me  
Both amber lit beneath the sky  
In salty spray thrown off the sea

Or slipping silently away  
And maybe that's what scared me most  
We'd meet somewhere as if ordained  
Without a plan, along the coast

And all alone we'd whisper thoughts  
That told us less than all we knew  
For nonetheless we knew the odds  
Were stacked against love coming through

The ferries went, the ferries came  
Their frames of light in tiers that bled  
Together on the broken waves  
That washed where yesterday had led

Where yesterday had wished no more  
Than all we couldn't hold to then  
We leaned across to walk the shore  
And traced us backwards with your pen

Through darkened halls and April rain

So close we seemed to be inside  
Until we'd never touch again  
Across the table by the tide

(chorus)

And all our history came round  
Mars and Neptune took the floor  
To dance us through our falling down  
Mine to doubt and yours to Ivanhoe

25 06 09

(The Kiosk (rip) , Stranraer - circa 4.55pm, Wednesday, December 1972)

jim hogg

# Lin Zhao

The four winds blow us children  
Who do not run before the storm  
Woven delicate as spider's web  
From all the elements of stars  
They catch the monster of the age  
It's thorny shaft hard anchored  
And hurl themselves full on it  
To kill it by the drip of blood  
By the sand of dragging time  
And the sparks of smouldering hope  
That rare and precious blood ignites

jim hogg

# Unknown Girl

You never held your breath you said  
You never promised that you would  
and winter rolled down from the pole  
I watched the flakes fall through the blind  
a blur of white all over town,  
a frieze of time all over now  
and took to reading history

and took to reading history  
I thought I understood  
but I was flying blindly  
through the mountains of the heart  
vain cathedrals of the mind  
with the innocent and wild  
all the hordes of shackled free  
all the hordes of shackled free

And I was blind with certainties  
Just like some fool who would be christ  
I set off with my plans and dreams  
and aimed to gain great distances  
but left them lying under siege  
by liars, dwarves, forgetfulness  
and turned my back on poverty

and turned my back on poverty  
I thought I understood  
but I was flying blindly  
through the fountains of the heart  
Sweet deceptions of the mind  
with the warriors of lies  
and the vultures of the soul  
and the vultures of the soul

And you were watching from the wings  
believing all life's lies would fall  
until they all were saved by saints  
who never gave a damn for truth  
or dreams of making good from ill

and now the leaves of life drift down  
in league with some false harmony

in league with some false harmony  
I thought I understood  
but I was flying blindly  
'cross the deserts of the heart  
round the spirals of the mind  
by the lure of noble cause  
from the cross to Wounded knee  
from the cross to Wounded knee

Now I've no nobler axe to grind  
than building walls against the tide  
with not a moment left to spare  
for spending wisely all we have  
between the rainbow and the rain  
between your eyes and sudden wings  
the ending of all mystery

the ending of all mystery  
I thought I understood  
but I was flying blindly  
with the phantoms of the heart  
sweet concoctions of the mind  
from Jerusalem to here  
on the run from broken gods  
on the run from broken gods

And now the ploughs have broken through  
with hounds, to clear the streets of dreams  
and from the other side of town  
your breathing fogs the window pane  
and fades as hushed as snow on snow  
to leave me searching through the sky  
for ties to bind the crumbling cliff

For ties to bind the crumbling cliff  
I thought I understood  
but I was stumbling blindly  
through the caverns of the heart  
and the mazes of the mind

by the patterns in the flakes  
in the wind that blows the sand  
in the wind that blows the sand

(song)

jim hogg

# Snow On The River (I)

It was back when skies were bluer  
and hearts were worn on sleeves  
I'd fallen for the first time,  
into love, head over heels

then chased its shadow, traced its trail,  
and held it here and there:  
this dream that sparks such blinding flames  
and haunts us everywhere

You were dancing at a discotheque  
behind old Eldon Street  
The wars of love were almost done  
but kept us on our feet

I wore McKechnie's tartan to  
the drumming of retreat  
I knew too well that one more touch  
would lead me to defeat

You were there at this beginning  
when we sat side by side.  
We walked the endless circle  
but slipped through the ties that bind.

We both had dreams and love enough  
though that's no guarantee;  
not every river flows until  
it flows into the sea

It was long ago on Gibson Street  
and you were on my arm  
In snowflakes falling on your hair  
outside the Shishmahal

I saw forever in your eyes  
to music in your voice  
Before I realised that  
I would have to make a choice



In winter now I hear the wind  
so softly call your name  
And through the Kirk of Inch  
I've chased your shadow to the gate

I dream a face in photofit  
before me where I sit  
At last I think I recognise  
just who the photo fits

We lay down in April sunshine  
as the winding Dee flowed on  
A rebel blonde in Levis  
you were Lady Eleanor

the heat-wave came and never broke  
until we said goodbye  
but you were right and I was wrong:  
we really should have tried

From the Ice Rink bar down town once  
we watched the curlers play  
They played just through the glass  
but might have been a world away

Your lips and thighs in passion's rush  
soon torched that winter's nights  
You might have been the one love  
if the choice had been just mine

You're a river running under  
but sometimes you burst through  
The locks and walls I'd raised against  
those moments lost in you

And sweep me through The Bridge of Sighs,  
through flames by Fairhurst Road  
And still my words must fail you  
..... in this humble ode

jim hogg

# I Saw You By The Clyde

I met him by the riverside,  
his Golden Retriever unwinding  
amongst the trees and the winterblown grass;  
and I was whistling Angels of Ashes -  
discordant, in low and sluggish mist  
between the deeps of cold grey water  
and the saturated wishes written  
on faded leaves still holding,  
loyal and fast, to a season we've lost.

And we stopped and talked of change  
of simple things and companionship,  
and I couldn't help but say that we'd lost ours.  
We used to walk and he would race  
around and across, nose deep into spring,  
into ancient commitments and thrill -  
like freedom could be -  
through nettles and budding foxgloves,  
trailing his infectious atmosphere  
through all the woods, and all the lochs  
and all along the ragged ocean's edge.  
And I couldn't help but see him spring  
from the foggy blur into a bounding song  
an old repeating rhythm  
on a riverbank we never shared.

And his eyes were bloodshot from the cold  
and he listened as if he lived it  
(and he would in time) :  
his smile was gentle and honest,  
but he was gone before I realised,  
through knee-high mist and haggard trees  
with that blonde happiness unleashed  
like random star trails darting wild,  
along another riverside.

(For Don 2002-09)

jim hogg

# House Of Dust

I said:

I'm becoming everyone I know.

Chains of them wrangle and snake  
into a starless universe.

I close my eyes,  
eclipse everything that's real,  
un-bang eternity  
and there I all am.

I can barely be me.

Except when I'm humming yesterdays  
in the shower in darkness

-a seventeen year old girl at the piano,  
fresh from palming her naked breasts  
with these compliant hands.

She's playing These Foolish Things,  
andante

and we're in God's house -  
well, an outpost of it.

And I'm thinking of someone else.

I hear the hammers strike the wires  
and some kind of beauty  
cascades, engulfs.....

and I am Narcissus, illusion and saint in love  
impaled on a perfectly sharpened thorn  
a flowing moment of awe -  
suddenly snapped by thought...

and I whisper to the darkness:

I am my own meme,  
my own camouflage.

I am evolution;

I'm every part and every whole;

I am nothing, lost for limits,  
in a log-jammed circle on the desert,  
I spill over, am pushed over.

The circle's edge is an endless burning bush.

And I'm scorched by the ocean that repels,  
that they clamour for all around me,

and I am wounded and they are whole  
in their need, under their false stars,  
and I patronise with pity, curse myself,  
and fight my way back,  
through muddied puddles to the starting line.  
To the fiery silver white teeming of night  
the child in me grasped falsely - or was it truly -  
to the splashing crystal pools that happiness was,  
and I say out loud:

I need a lot more time than this.  
'Oh will you never let me be? '  
There are things I have to change.  
'Oh will you never set me free? '  
- there's a fire on the hills -  
'Oh how the ghost of you... '  
silences the world..  
And this is what it's come to:  
a needlepoint of urge...  
I listen for the breath of the stars  
search for the signature that saves,  
that blocks the fist of time  
and I imagine infinity again.  
Then all at once  
all of it shrinks forever  
and I expand at blinding speed,  
then throw it all into reverse  
to send me tumbling  
down an ever narrowing street  
down the driveway and down the path  
into a house of dust,  
where I whistle in her ear  
-because I'm too shy to sing then-  
'Oh how the ghost of you...'  
and suddenly I'm thrown  
outside the circle  
a defiant soulless ember,  
one 'lover on the street... '  
of ash,  
where the hammers  
simply hit the wires...

(Quotes from These Foolish Things, Link, Marvel and Strachey 1930s) .

jim hogg

# Cave In A Crumbling Cliff

Plash and boom of waves in cave  
A door padlocked in vain  
Steps lead down or up  
And pebbles crunch  
Under waves, under seaboots  
And old dreams

You would live there  
If your corpse didn't drag you off

The hearth and love  
Pull and pull against  
Oars along the heaving edge  
Into an age when miners camped down there  
Safe in huts like shepherds on the cold high moor  
Or lobsters in crevices  
beyond the broken wave  
beyond the need to be  
anything but yourself

The peace and rhythms there  
rescue hearts  
by the serenade of dark grey water  
kissing cliff - tide of light and lost world  
that pulls and pulls by the dead man's gate  
by Velvet Isle to Manhaven Bay:

a boat to carry on your back  
a shell against the songs of crumbling  
and the scar on your chest  
and the tide of time

I saw you from my crumbling edge  
and rowed with you  
as far as the mind would travel  
and the wind forgive  
and cannot go back  
or never leave.



Lizard Point, South Shields

jim hogg

# Bertie

He stowed his oxygen  
and staving standard expectation,  
leapt early from the long range bus  
- a harrier released,  
no masses in attendance-  
and boring blindly to the core  
battered thumping steps we only heard  
along the smudgy edge of crumbled soil  
in unseen raindrops double-blown by spouting underlip and wind  
and, deep in a cliff of shadow,  
tore northerly past random patient stones and us,  
all his knees undoing, down the graph of time  
he never thought to read;  
and crushed the need  
you might have thought,  
til osteopathy  
cagily winched him upright  
and balanced his pounding again,  
into the cluttered night  
of the haring world.

jim hogg