

Poetry Series

**Amos Greig**  
**- poems -**

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## Amos Greig(05/04/1973)

I have been working with a local small publishers for nearly 25 years. I designed their logo and helped edit some of the books. In 2001 I won a bursary to the John Hewitt Summer School and also studied poetry at James Simmons Summer work has been used in several anthologies and I am currently working on my first book of poetry. I also publish an literary e-zine called A New Ulster. I've also worked as a visual artist including book covers, logos and children's murals.

# Brother

Too young to know  
Too old to die  
You were only a little babe  
Never had a chance to play football

Chase girls, ask for help  
Robbed of a chance to grow,  
To learn, to have help with homework.

Buried beneath a cross  
In a town where family no longer  
Walk,  
Vandals smashed tore down  
Your gravestone.

Your memory lives on  
In times of need I've felt you there  
The brother who should have been.

You who never grew up  
Have helped to keep  
Guided from beyond  
Never forgotten.

Still when I needed  
Someone to talk to  
You were there.

Rest now little brother  
Your memory lives on.

Amos Greig

# Childhood's End

I was 7 and a half  
When I lost my  
Childhood.

I had many friends  
My closest was called Peter.

Your actions turned him  
Against me, my family  
My religion.

Home became a prison  
School a place of fear.

You who embraced anger  
Stoked the fires of Hatred  
Used violence to give yourself a voice.

I was 7 and a half  
your deaths stole my childhood  
My home, my friends.

Only now at 35 can I look back  
And realize that was the beginning  
Of all my later emotional problems.

I still bear the emotional scars wounds that run deep.  
I no longer hate you for what you took from me.  
And yet, I Still Wake In The Dark Afraid  
Because of you.

Amos Greig

# Corrymeela

He was different from me and yet the same,  
We had both come to this place of healing  
Because of the pain our homelands had suffered.

Communication was difficult  
I spoke too fast and he too slow.  
We laughed at our jokes..  
Out of respect,  
Confusion was writ on our faces.

He was different from me and yet the same,  
We both had been victims of violence in  
our respective spheres, he because of the shape of his nose,  
I because of my religion.

Communication was difficult  
Pain was our common dialogue,  
Our rosetta stone.

He was different from me and yet the same,  
Both caught in violence saw people maimed,  
Killed.

Communication was difficult  
Understanding came slowly  
Followed by different comprehension.

He was different from me yet the same,  
We spent a week baffled by the violence which brought us here  
A nose? Religion?  
These were stupid things to fight over  
primitive, medieval all too human.

Communication was difficult  
We laughed at our differences  
Cried at our similarities.

He was different from me and yet the same,  
This place of healing melted away our pain

Burundi, Belfast  
Spheres apart and yet the same.

Communication was difficult  
It opened a door  
We saw a future  
Where violence was no more  
An end to bigotry and fear

He was different from me and yet the same,  
We both had suffered  
Had reason to hate  
We came to heal.

Amos Greig

# Dark's Parasite

Your dark birth has long been prophesied,  
My dark parasite needed yet twisted  
Far beyond your original purpose.

You have shared this flesh since infancy,  
Your dark touch has left its mark,  
Ravaged my body stained my soul.

Sadly your parasitic presence is  
Needed, serves a primary function,  
A function carried out grudgingly.

That touch a constant reminder,  
Flares, the rage cripples,  
Draws blood, steals breath.

Entropy approaches our parting  
Inevitable I wait for that day:  
Torn, your functionality important.

A caged beast you punish:  
Your host lashes out blindly,  
Rage and pain all consuming.

I am consumed, clutch  
Just below the ribcage,  
Your prison,

God but there are days  
I find myself asking,  
Why life's parasite? Why birth?

Amos Greig

# Ducking The Weave

In late summer your family disrupted the roads  
Brought traffic to a standstill,  
A line,  
Mother and children blocked the way.

Bright plumage instead of banners,  
Quack quacked in protest at our  
Intrusion into your domain.

The road so often used by man  
Belonged to you and your feathered friends  
An artificial tributary crosses ancient ways  
Masks the waters of life.

You remember,  
Ritually return each year,  
The valiant pilgrimage  
Fraught with danger.

Streets away another roadblock  
Threatens to tear society apart  
Yours however has more soul.  
A mothers duty to  
Protect her young,  
She guides them safely  
On the path through reeds, weeds  
And broken lives.

The current generation forgets the old waterways  
Yet I remember,  
Sailing paper boats on the tributary of years  
That you called home.

Amos Greig

# Even Flight

Twilight the even' flight,  
Soars,  
Dives,  
Flows,  
Above us as we are enthralled by winding sirens,

Our journey gridlocked over water's edge,  
While the even' flight,  
Soars,  
Dives,  
Flows,  
Around us beckoning 'freedom' we slump behind the wheel.

Ground down into paste by the detritus of a journey halted;  
Laughing at our misery the even' flight,  
Soars,  
Dives,  
Flows,  
below us reflected in the water crystallized.

Through the water doorway into Irish mythology, knowledge turns (to) bitter  
tears'  
Locked between worlds the even' flight,  
Soars,  
Dives,  
Flows,  
Above us as we slowly painfully creep forward.

Chained to progress I dream of freedom swooping on invisible wings joining the  
even' flight;  
Soars,  
Dives,  
Flows,  
Above, around and below the tyrants free to choose, to cross the threshold.

Amos Greig

# Generation Why

Generation Y should I?  
clones following the latest  
footballers hairstyle  
children with pierced  
ears and glazed stares.

Tribal cultures the hunter gathers  
still call mom the first sign  
of something wrong.

Brave men in their tracksuits  
colours proudly displayed,  
hide their faces for fear of traces.

Generation Y should I?  
stands on street corners  
drinks cider till tomorrow  
devours their brain cells  
with pot.

Tribal cultures traces of bling,  
pants around their hips CK's on  
display, machismo fogs the air.

Lad culture stalks its prey,  
wolf whistles in the alleyways.

Generation why should I?  
get a job? get a wife?  
16 kids my future tribe  
life's great on the brew  
pierced ears and glazed stares.

Amos Greig

# Last Orders

The men stumbled in the cold,  
Mud filled trenches.  
Ole sarge paces watching.  
Where are our orders why haven't we moved yet?

He looks at his watch the glass cracked  
The sky brightens as night is cast aside by  
Artillery fire  
Like a fireworks display he saw as a lad

He prays as the trench shudders and mud ripples  
The very earth feels as if mighty machineries  
Pound her like some malleable metal.  
Where are our orders why haven't we moved yet?

Darkness descends the soil rises to meet him  
Painfully awareness returns  
Then silence  
Artillery stops  
Snow falls.

Men look In surprise  
Open food rations  
No battle for us today.

Were we forgotten?  
Where are our orders?  
Why haven't we moved yet?

Amos Greig

# Legend

Blood dripped onto the green grass  
He turned to his followers  
&quot;Tie me to the standing stone&quot;;  
He commanded  
&quot;Let me meet my death on my feet&quot;;.

Dawn nears  
The campfires grow dim,  
Distant memories.  
Sky brightens.

He looks to the fading stars  
His shield strapped to his arm  
He nestles his spine against the cold hard rock  
Hopes, prays  
That it will pass onto him some of its strength.

His men leave the field of battle  
Unwilling or unable to watch.  
Dawn breaks the horde approaches  
As man slips into  
Legend.

Amos Greig

# Lord Of The Hill

Scaraveen,  
Changing weather  
That is the best description of Irish weather.

Momentary sunshine drew me out  
From carefully constructed artificiality  
I stumbled as a new born  
Into fields of pleasant green.

Yet even here the steady encroachment of man  
The lack of beauty a stark contrast  
To the natural court  
Magpie's the guardians of the gate.

Mocked my passage a warning cry!  
Here comes man the defiler  
I am humbled and stunned when  
I accidentally stumbled onto your court.

Nature scoffs at my presence,  
A sudden downpour soaks  
Me the chill piercing to the bone  
Languidly you arch your neck.

Artificial firefly sprites  
Dance in morning rain,  
As you stand in splendour flanked by  
Equine court, here man is the intruder.

I am the intruder whilst you stand  
Prepared to pass judgement  
Around us the rest of your uncanny court  
Slowly stretches wonders what will be my  
Fate.

You approach me face to face,  
A snuffling snort you approve,  
Rubbing your head against  
My chest I am accepted,

Allowed to pass unmolested.

Only when I have passed  
Do I release the breath  
I have held.

Late night sleep is shattered  
By 3 o'clock Equine shadows  
On a moonlit night,  
Your court revels in the wild hunt  
Behind man's domicile.

Braying with laughter  
You lead the constabulary  
On merry chases,  
Ghostlit night the  
Lord's of the hill  
Triumphant.

Amos Greig

# Oil

We barely saw you during the week,  
You who worked nights so that we ate,  
Had a roof over our heads.

We barely saw you during the week,  
You going to bed whilst we got ready for school,  
Tried for a good education.

We barely saw you during the week,  
Running up hugged,  
The smell of oil permeated you.

We barely saw you during the week,  
Always toys, comics,  
Rarely complained.

We barely saw you during the week,  
Toiled all night,  
Slept all day.

We barely saw you during the week,  
Walks in the park,  
Pushed on the swings.

We barely saw you during the week,  
Always going out  
as you were coming in.

We barely saw you during the week,  
The comforting smell of oil,  
Daddy's home.

Amos Greig

# Onyx Waters

Onyx waters lapped pebbled shore,  
Lonely candles hold total darkness at bay,  
In distance town lights beckon like lonely Wisp's.

Inky twilight, sounds muffled,  
By lapping waters Dingle a distant  
Memory carried on the night air.

Uncanny friends gather,  
On pebbled beach,  
Walking on footsteps  
Past.

Ulsterman, Scotsman, Kerryman and Welshman,  
The chalice and the vine unites them,  
Wards of the chill.

Samhain's icy touch beckons,  
As sleepy friend drifts off,  
Her supine form caught by  
Midnight current.

We four leap into chill waters  
After her kicking up the surf  
Preventing a premature Viking funeral.

Amos Greig

# Peat

I have always enjoyed the smell.  
of burnt peat, sometimes I would  
languish in the smoke wreathed chambers.

For my Irish ancestry peat,  
serves as an opiate,  
drawn from common stock.

Our soil gives up its secrets,  
reluctantly always claims  
a price, pairs of shoes, trinkets.

Headless bog mummy,  
peat preserved your clothes,  
skin but no identifiers.

A pagan brethren,  
What are you?  
A sacrifice?

Your head removed suggests  
a crime an act of violence  
or random act of animal.

Morbidly I wonder do you smell  
like burning peat.? As you join  
the legions of royalty and anonymity

Plucked from the soil by curious  
hands. Do you rail against such treatment?  
or are you beyond such instincts.

Amos Greig

# Quicken Muse

Quicken muse, your words  
Can spark an amber fire:  
Defender of the past  
Vanguard of futures  
Enemy of the present.

Quicken, muse your words  
Portray these foetid qualities in  
Tumble down civilization  
Harbinger of change, whisperer  
Of possibilities?

Quicken muse, your words  
An island, a door.  
The Poet Oracle,  
Prophet, doomsayer.

Quicken, muse your words,  
Open new worlds,  
Share these burdens  
Deliver hope, wisdom?

Amos Greig

# Ring Toss

Bronze Age shelter slowly eroded by the careless  
Impersonal presence of sheep and cattle,  
Ironically being repurposed for original  
Role.

For the uncaring traveller only a fungus encrusted  
Sign stands vigil marking the entrance point.  
Tramping past the jogger and the dog walkers  
Represent the passing of time.

Mists of altitude erase the present, mask the past,  
I climbed the turn style approach the raised embankment.  
Cotton wool clouds wrap the unwary,  
Ground becomes treacherous.

Flax dots the area while windswept trees all  
Flow toward the horizon. Fairy rings they  
Are sometimes called four and half thousand  
Such places mark previous occupation.

Blindly I stumbled slid down the ditch  
Sight and sound obfuscated,  
Harsh ice water shocks me back to the present.  
I claw my way out of the mud,  
Roots dragging pleading with me to stay.

As I lay panting my breath fogging in the cold winter's night  
I could see the city light's like water droplets  
Beaded on a spiders web trapping humanity,  
Contained within the city gave  
The false illusion of freedom.

Amos Greig

# Shelter

Sheltered field of pleasant green  
The susurrus of distant wind,

Nature gossips  
Protests at intrusion,

Between windswept trees,  
Belfast, metallic fossils, David and Goliath,

Painthall Studios: the vistas  
testaments to urbanized myth

This is my quiet place,  
A step away from the world.  
Apart and yet a part.

Amos Greig

# Sin Eater

Smoke etched shadows  
Crowded the halls  
The night you were assaulted,  
Dressed differently a bright flamingo target.

The hunter and his prey,  
You and your friends  
Worried mother sent her eldest  
To keep watch armed only with his mobile.

A stranger in a strange land he stood out,  
White coat, chinos and shirt,  
Seemingly misplaced in a sea of black.

The crowd accepted him,  
His reputation working within,  
Cross community projects.

Before long they shared their pain,  
He was only there to watch, report,  
He took it all, a feast of sorrow.

From the abused artist, to the single parent,  
They came to him, danced with him,  
Shared with him.

He stood watch, a silent sentinel,  
Against the violent hounds lurking  
On street corners.

Developed an ear for the music  
Helped the community until the  
Time came, a victim wanting  
To take a stand.

Names were given  
The police acted  
A man assaulted,  
Reported his pain.

At last the sin eater could go his way,  
The work done,  
The tales consumed,  
Boiled within him like a fetid stew.

Your scene has grown now  
No longer afraid, you run  
Alternative evenings:  
Your club, Unity,  
The message - one of openness.

The sin eater watches'  
From the shadows of the smoke machine:  
His metamorphosis complete,  
Joins the meadowed  
Floor of Goths,  
The sin consumed.

Amos Greig

# Social Decay

Steel capped icebergs' pierce the sky.  
In artificial towers  
Rapunzels refused to let down their hair,  
Satisfied to watch the tired and hungry  
Like ants scabble for scraps.

Sharp eyed 'suits' stand at bullet proof windows.  
In climate controlled towers,  
A hand forms an O shape  
Crocodile smilers imagine crushing every bug  
Before returning to solitaire and innumerable  
Facebook updates.

Smoke like a jealous lover hoards the city  
Smothers the masses in her choking grasp  
Industrial furnaces churn out mass produced  
Tomorrow's perfect flawed commodities  
Shelf life limited

The seagulls fight over scraps  
Countries and business  
Scrabble and bicker over dwindled resources  
Un sullied beauty  
The prima donna runs from the stage her  
Makeup ruined.

It is always four degrees colder under the  
artificial steel valleys  
Cold caress of monumental man  
They erode nature's purpose  
Millennia replaced by minutes  
Business and cities hold a diseased  
Desperate need  
To leave a legacy

Lines of tired and weary  
Tramp towards the factory gates  
Shackled to endless drudgery  
Unnoticed the fisher king flies away

His place of beauty overcome with dross

The music box winds down

The ballerina stoops

Gathers her flowers accepts the crowds ululations

Masked youths rebel before a burning bus

In their towers untouched

The great smile and crow

Let them eat cake

Amos Greig

# Solitude

Faceless streets close in around, as corridors seem to stretch into infinity,  
A burst of adrenaline and the heart seems to beat irregularly a small bird  
Desperate to escape the cage. The flight of logic begins as images blur into  
Chaotic thoughts.-

Why am I here?

Where am I?

How do I get away?

Rapidly now the intakes of breathe like pressure changing to swiftly for  
The deep sea diver-

vision threatens to blur-

hands suddenly seem to be the

Source of too much water become clammy

Why am I here?

Where am I?

How do I get away?

Feeling the world is watching judging seeing the panic a tsunami of  
Depression crashes in eradicating the last vestiges of self control. Panic,  
Anxiety are only a breathe away. Claw desperately to an outstrung branch  
Of reality.....the tender fragile hope snaps and the wave washes everything  
Away-

Why am I here?

Where am I?

How do I get away?

Looking out/

through/

near misted eyes/

struggle

.gasping like a beached fish/

in the grip of delusion/

opened Pandora's

Box/

can't think straight/

help me! ! !

I want to GO HOME

One of the gray empty faces detaches, approaches talks calms and

Reassures,  
Sit down count to ten then breathe and again slowing slowing slowed, a  
Warm overly sweet tea is placed in my hands &quot;you're all right now it Was  
Just a panic attack&quot;  
Why am I here?  
Where am I?  
How do I get away?

Amos Greig

# Spasms

Social cohesion was our dream,  
we the gardeners and cultivators of tomorrow,  
watched in sadness as rot set in,  
turned our hopes into bitter memories.

Future's potential sparkles like  
embers on the breeze as,  
tomorrow's burn like  
yesterday's discarded leaves.

Like carrion calls, Twitter,  
comes to life informing  
of the ongoing strife,  
hyenas circle the fire.

Deirdre of the sorrows sheds her tears,  
turns from the fire, pulls her shawl  
tight around her shoulders.  
youths take to the street with blood on their mind.

Time has shown that nations come and go,  
only nature remains triumphant,  
armed with shield and spear  
she hunts humanities creations.

We are embers on the wind,  
fireflies dancing, fleetingly,  
time consumes our brightness,  
masked by modern lies.

Amos Greig

# Spring Onion

From wild spring onion, flowing water,  
The crumbling watermills they fled,  
That countryside gave way to a harsher inner city environment:  
A spot of green,  
A sign of mold or possibly grass growing  
in the cracks of the pavement.

The garden much loved by all, the large  
house with sliding doors abandoned,  
Replaced by red brick, terracotta tiles,  
the only spot of iron painted green an  
old mangle in working order,  
two up two down a house pierced  
through by metal rods  
holds up the remains of the past.

From a back path with open  
fields to enclosed alleyways with runnels  
for water,  
Sparrowhawks, blue tits, give way to  
pigeons and seagulls, clean air for inner city  
Smog, there is a sadness, there, in the  
cramped house, cramped streets and cramped city.

Greenery taken for granted  
becomes a prized and precious gift,  
Water for the parched man the  
family grasped at every moment,  
The noise so distant, all  
pervasive not even childhood's  
imagination can hide it.

Time passes youth, a great healer that  
dulls the pain, offers anaesthesias

Amos Greig

# The Journey

A cold February morn saw three coracles set forth.  
Three teams of rowers competed to reach the small island,  
located in the lake.

One ship foundered; broke along its keel, plunging crew into icy waters.  
Rather than face an icy tomb they were plucked from waters by another boat,  
located in the lake.

Black bags, hoops, planks of wood, rope and gaffa tape made up the frame.  
The boat builder based his design on ancient coracles, pictures in a book,  
located in the lake.

Following ancient waterways, the fifteen crew soared past their competition.  
Their vessel fibreglass; streamlined, without soul,  
located in the lake.

Celtic pride soared in modern heart as they saw the closing shore.  
Soon to sit by open fire and share a drink or two on the island,  
located in the lake.

Like mythical Bran, the shipbuilder and his crew closed with their sacred goal.  
Promises of sausage and beer beckoned to them from out the February mists,  
located on the lake.

Irish ingenuity beat modern technology as the vessel came to shore.  
Like journeymen of old they gingerly set foot on the land,  
located on the lake.

Amos Greig

# The Lost Boy's

Urban concrete jungle  
In the twilight hours  
This is where the lost boys are.

Kaleidoscope eyes,  
Discordant vowels  
These are the marks the lost boys make.

Electronic beats,  
Songs of angst  
These are the sounds the lost boys need.

Sad panda eyes,  
Downward faces  
The war paint of the lost boys.

Drum boogie,  
Anti fashion,  
This is what the lost boys wear.

Rejected by society,  
Reminders of youth since lost  
This is who the lost boys are.

Two o'clock shadows  
Artificial mist provides cover  
As the lost boys slip home.

On the dance floor,  
By the bar  
This is where the lost boys are.

Amos Greig

# The Time Machine

It begins almost motherly,  
a return to the warmth of the womb,  
a central point on the journey to oblivion,  
time travel is a lie an uncaring trick of time.

Slowly through rheumatic eyes the present,  
fades away, sound, cold, future,  
all these are frozen,  
waiting release..

The first signs of possibility,  
appear bubbles in the stream,  
each a window, a doorway,  
into the past,

Here a child did not fall out of bed,  
their sudden awakening saving the lives  
of those dwelling within.  
The Time Machine is a lie.

Rather than showing the past,  
each portal leads to a distortion,  
a prison for the unwary,  
Here he went to university;

sought his dream as an artist,  
there is a tightness now,  
sudden desire to breathe,  
The Time Machine will not allow it.

The traveller realizes,  
the trap they are caught in,  
Focused so tightly on the  
journey they did not notice the;

failing strength in limbs,  
there is an urgency now,  
a burning now time seeks,  
to consume them.

A sound, a voice, a mothers distant  
cry, the present has almost faded to black,  
Hairy thews pluck the traveller from,  
the machine breathe life back into;

fragile body too weak for time travel,  
too weak to be left unsupervised,  
in the local pool the boy opens his  
eyes and cries.□

Amos Greig

# The Wilding Path

I see the hidden spheres which over lap our own,  
not all of the time but there are moments,  
of crystal clarity/  
In the rain/  
A sudden ray of sun.

There are places where the doors are open,  
the tiniest whisper of a forgotten past,  
previously/ I stood near one,

The whispering wood to many this overgrown,  
tree choked with vines is a part of nature,  
I have seen beneath the veil/ to a stone wall

An old mill my hands traced the stone work,  
in the deepest shadows where man isn't welcome,  
The silence was deafening/  
It opened my mind to,

Vistas past.

A hard working miller busy grinding  
corn as children played in the waterhole,  
women busy drying clothes laughing at their antics.

I stepped back into the warmth of the day  
the chill seeping from my bones,  
I look down and see the waterhole now filled with -

sediment nature's cruel touch has scoured it away  
slowly overgrown as the angry waters surged past,  
I walked onwards reflecting/  
I played here as a child.

My path crumbles before me/  
seemingly the ground smashed by an angry god  
huge rents make it difficult  
to cross.

I came to a tributary a place where I once waited for seven hours.  
lost as a child frightened tears and snot smeared my face in the dark/  
I waded across the stream passed the lying rocks.

Skipping across bleached stones the bones of mountains past,  
I slowly approach the coldest of places,  
The chill settling in I can feel your uncaring gaze/  
lingering  
hungrily/  
your/  
feminine form/  
trapped in the stones which formed a perfect circle around you.

Our/  
eyes meet/  
I was but a child then/  
you pointed the way back  
for a price.  
A single/  
ear/  
promise/  
to return  
Did my mind play tricks?  
did you really move to  
stare?

wood rubbing against wood/  
the cackling of a hag?  
the ivy flowed like a/  
mane of unkempt hair down your back.

A single ray of sunlight breaks the silence/  
Bird song/  
like children's laughter  
soared out the moment passed,  
I see you for what you are a tree twisted by a quirk of fate,  
to a child's eye/  
feminine form/  
anguidly stretched towards the sky  
pleading, placating.  
I turn and walk away from the cackling tree,  
I hear a peal of feminine laughter and run home

away from that accursed tree.

Amos Greig

# The World Turned

The world turned...

I see chest of drawers, wardrobes, tv, painted models dusty abandoned,  
bandana's The Ladder plays softly mingles with distant dogs barking and window  
framed birds chirping.

My world turned...

I see old scripts discarded sketches that never existed a pile of art pads, note  
books, models, pencils, paints an assortment of artistic implements.

The world turns...

I see an army on parade permanently waiting inspection, I breathe the air  
incense lingering on the air a hint of sandalwood. I see my prize a trophy of a  
successful hunt the complete Smith Skylark series complete with original box.

My world turns...

I see yellow mellow walls sea blue trimmings dust motes dancing like fireflies  
trapped. Performing silently for some unseen audience. I lose myself in their  
pattern almost catching the rhythm, time.

The world turned...

I remember ancient battles, read and make believe re-enacted glorious defeats,  
hollow victories.

This is my world...

This is their dance, their celebration, memorial.

This is my world.

Amos Greig