

Poetry Series

Neil Crawford
- poems -

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Neil Crawford(29/04/56)

I began writing poetry at school(many years ago) - we had a teacher who encouraged us.I continued into my college years.I did nothing with them(there was no 'Poemhunter' in those days) .

When I left work I started a creative writing course under Gladys Mary Cole(a well respected poet, biographer and novelist) here in Liverpool.I contributed to the 'Piazza Poets' anthology and took part in readings to promote the collection.

I am a regular member of the 'Inklings Group'in the city.

I had been on the verge of throwing out my poems but decided to rewrite them instead after I discovered early work was 'stripped down' and made less verbose - 'leaner and meaner' you might say.

Recently poetry had taken a back seat as I am completing my second novel but one or two have been written in the past few weeks.

I have also contributed pieces to the Poetry Forward collections.

Major influences include the Merseybeat Poets(Adrian Henri, Brian Patten, Roger McGough) .

Others include Auden, nce as well as the 'Thomases'(Dylan, Edward) .

I welcome any constructive criticism of any piece I may put on this excellent website.

Thank you.

A Briton Becomes Continental

White drapes partly drawn to reveal
the tilted slats of an off cream blind.

Sun limbos through to caress
the feminine body of a nut brown guitar.

Welcoming post noon drowsiness
I drift into delicious, guilt free siesta.

Neil Crawford

Aegean Ritual

Countless blades of watery knives
dance before my dazzled eyes.

The sun's rays bounce off snow white walls
colliding with my shrivelled brow.

The walnut faced fisherman pours wine
into the sea for Poseidon's delectation.

Beseeching him to intercede with Helios
before our brains are fried.

Neil Crawford

Ah Youth!

The young attendant twirls his keys
then loses them in the pool's deep end.

It is the third time he has done it,
he confides.

On my fourth lung bursting dive
I manage to retrieve them.

Thanking me most sincerely
and profusely

he sits back in his chair
to resume his casual twirling.

Neil Crawford

Another View Of Bahnhofstrasse

Who owns these mocking eyes, the stars themselves? ,
the passers by? .

The milling throng of Zurich streets whose furtive looks
incite retreat? .

The 'high hearted youth' has long since gone,
plus the light that it once shone.

And what are these signs of which you write
that pushed their way through tarmac night? .

No star is evil, it knows no pain, it trusts with both
insane and sane.

The 'wisdom' of 'old hearts' still awaits
for the humble, the tame and the so called great.

Neil Crawford

Assonance

A dour, a sour,
a glowering man
caught in his
umpteenth April shower.

Fraught in the rain,
again, a strain,
a pain the rain,
the rain, the rain, the rain.

Neil Crawford

Attica At Midday

The heat, like a sheet of melting bronze,
sears against the skin.

The bay, holding sway to the east,
beckons the western mountains.

Beneath the balcony, eucalyptus branches burn,
ten thousand crackling joss sticks.

The incessant, choral cicadas
stretch the limits of northern patience

as the cream and terracotta church
sounds its muted bell for noon.

Neil Crawford

Au Bark!

I prefer the dogs abroad
to those we have at home,
their early roundelay of roars
is my canine alarm clock.

The bouncing barks
that chase the dark away
are the dawnly proclamation of
territorial rights.

The throaty bellows that announce...
'We awake, we are here
and if you don't like it,
take a hike, take a powder, take a walk'.

'We are Canaris...
Islands not so far from here
were named for our
forefathers'

'These tumbling alleys
and criss cross streets are ours,
did you not hear Two Legs,
do you not scent the fact? '.

The dogs of England in turn
are truly owned...fighting dogs,
burglar's dogs, spoilt family dogs,
fashion statement dogs.

Happy to sniff crotch and cringe,
they lack the princely lethargy
of their continental

cousins.

(Madeira 2010)

Neil Crawford

Aubard

Dawn smeared through night

in shades of dirty pink.

Pendulant belly of cloud breaks

over grateful, thirsty ground.

Nature, a series of mirror images

linked by unseen umbilical

Reverberates in ourselves,

leaving finite traces.

Neil Crawford

Ballast From A 'shipwreck'

Here, on this whim,
rests my wilful monolith
its roots in webs
of tangled style.

Now, on this shore,
I wreck my wayward boat
and cry from sand to nimbus
for stabilising anchors.

No, not a ball and chain,
though now it would suffice
to glimpse a ghost in its
memory manacles than to live
a life of unfettered bliss.

Neil Crawford

Banana

I find, as I age, I care
less and less for the
colour yellow.

It is a youthful colour,
redolent of tossed hair
and swishing cornfields.

Now, it serves only to remind me
of Van Gogh's inevitable madness
and his absinthe fuelled suicide.

Neil Crawford

Bargain

I could be your garden lawn,
I'm perpetually half cut.

I could be your hair dryer,
first blowing hot then cold.

I could be your wallpaper,
some say that I'm stuck up.

I could be your breakfast table,
occasionally getting laid.

I seem to be your least favourite book,
always being put down.

Neil Crawford

Beachcombing

A life held together with regret is a kind of net
cast backwards through time.

It drags forth for perusal the flotsam
and the jetsam of the years.

There, among the old boots, the bike frames
and the plastic bags are one's hopes,

one's dreams, one's loves. I lug them
to a corner of the 'beach'.

I have my priority pile as I sort through
the poignant catch, most of it is what it appears

to be, rubbish jettisoned from the cruise
ship of life.

But with Poetry as the 'beachcomber'
something may be salvaged from detritus.

Neil Crawford

Before A Fall

He rose, on wings of hope, to his new found friend, the sky
while all around him those with tougher hearts and hides
imposed their cold reality where boredom reigned supreme.

From tattered thoughts he made those wings and Icarus-like
he flew to other precious worlds where tomorrow was more
certain as a cosmic rebirth called.

Neil Crawford

Between Night And Day

Insomnia renders all dawns dull,
commonplace and worry full.

Dread's onrush in the day's first minutes
here comes the world and 'all things in it'.

Once again vain effort's made to silence
the powerless tirade

I swear at the radio's ghastly news
the programme's guests and their paltry views.

Haven't I heard this all before,
the earthquake, the economy, crime, the war? .

What's to be done with all this knowledge?
I muse over my bowl of porridge.

Sod it all for a game of soldiers
they should find some broader shoulders

Mine are too narrow for the whole world's woes,
my brow does not need any new furrows,

As eye and mouth begin to twitch
i save myself with the on/off switch,

My daily duty thus performed,
I preserve the right to be uninformed.

Neil Crawford

Blue Sun

For the people who stay on the pioneer planet,
entire life times will pass in one day.

No rescue, no heartbreak, no nothin'

Stifling in the rays from a blue sun,
tossed on the waves of an orange ocean.

No rescue, no heartbreak, no nothin'

At their 'Forum for the Missing',
they conspire, they cajole, they cavort.

No rescue, no heartbreak, no nothin'

Burnt by their azure Sol, they whisper
to their children of distant, dying homeworlds.

No rescue, no heartbreak, no nothin'

Neil Crawford

Brazilica Beat

Rainbow serpent wends its way
down the multi-puddled hill

Drum thrum of jungle origin,
new heart beat for the city,

Imported from a distant shore
where cultures cruelly met

The festival begins with whistles,
whoops and claps.

Bird of Paradise plumage,
floats from all mythologies

Cut a path through the English dusk,
a challenging kaleidoscope.

Neil Crawford

Burn All The Flags

Burn all the flags but one,
incinerate the lot,
they keep us all divided,
not questioning the plot,
they fly above the murderer,
the liar and the sot,
burn all the flags but one,
incinerate the lot.

Burn all the flags but one,
they render us all slaves,
they wrap us in their shrouds
as they drag us to our graves,
they serve as gags and blindfolds
while leaders rant and rave,
burn all the flags but one,
they render us all slaves.

Burn all the flags but one,
let that one be your own,
plant it in the places
where the tribal rags were flown,
raise it on the mountain top,
drape it on your home,
burn all the flags but one,
let that one be your own.

Neil Crawford

Captain Beefheart's Entry Into Heaven

Captain Beefheart is entering Heaven
let all the angels rejoice,
some will play the marimba,
others will mimic his voice.

Zappa will play the fanfare,
Coltrane will surely join in
Kurt Schwitters will do the M/C ing,
his cries outdoing the din.

Ginsberg, Burroughs and Henri
will write the rave reviews
Pollock will paint the scenery,
Howlin' Wolf will sing the blues.

John Peel will be his mentor
and show the good Captain around,
he was his staunch defender
and turned us onto his sound.

The Seraphim will wear toppers
and grow their beatnik beards,
the Host will throw party poppers
to celebrate the weird.

The 'Pantaloone Duck' will welcome him
with its 'webcore, webcore'quack
and the Captain, in ever good humour,
will holler 'Click, clack! 'back.

Beefheart is entering Heaven
cherubs dress golden streets,
turn the speakers up to eleven
and jive to the crazy beat.

He's gonna 'booglarise' Eternity
the Holy Ghost he'll 'magnetise'
he'll dwell in the cosmic serenity,
in the 'Blue Million Miles' of those eyes.

The Captain is entering Heaven
and the world grows a little more dark
God has reclaimed her treasure
by retrieving the 'Sun, Zoom, Spark'.

So Captain beefheart has left us
and there is no recompense,
he was part of our past and our present
but now the future 'sure looks tense'.

(Written on the day that Captain Beefheart died in 2010.
Those phrases in inverted commas are quotes from his
the non-UK readers - 'John Peel' was the most
influential DJ of his generation and a big Beefheart fan) .

Neil Crawford

Captive Eye, Imprisoned Heart

No light at tunnels' end
no village round the turn
no suspect morals to defend,
no bridges left to burn,
a traveller lost on this journey's part
to the captive eye, imprisoned heart.

No waves on seas becalmed,
no mysteries to explain,
began this life unarmed
and ended it insane,
no virgin secrets to impart
to the captive eye, imprisoned heart.

No graves on grassy slopes,
just dull ashes in some urn,
no optimistic hopes
and nothing new to learn,
all losers now with no fresh start
from the captive eye, imprisoned heart.

Neil Crawford

Cityscape

Obvious rural melancholy sold by Turner, Elgar, Blake
pales into insignificance beside the cityscape.

People seen from buses, sat in the cruel, white light
of the late night launderette or the arcade's dangerous door.

The city's desperate niches radiate despair, they mirror
the pastoral fraud, these poison blossoms here.

Edward Hopper pictures, unpainted and unframed
capture unknown sitters, unwanted and unnamed.

Corners crammed with loneliness, claiming naive lives,
snatched from light to dark in the blinking of an eye.

Neil Crawford

Codicil

Move my headstone when I die
so none shall know my resting place.

Few knew it when I lived
in death let none where I lie.

Smash all proof with the hammers strong
that pounded my young idiot heart

Leave no chip, no traitorous trace
to mark my final resting place.

Fling the gravestone to the skies
or cast it to the open sea

Let none come over me to cry,
let no one come to comfort me.

Hail, hail namelessness,
I sing of anonymity

To shed this frail identity,
to the ground that welcome womb
I go.

Neil Crawford

Concrete Poem

Cement - that's 'See Meant'

S for 'Sierra'

E for 'Echo'

E for 'Echo'

M for 'Mike'

E for 'Echo'

A for 'Alpha'

N for 'November'

T for 'Tango'

'See Meant'

CEMENT

Neil Crawford

Confession Of Disinterest

It is, more than ever, a petty world, divided,
priorities are inverted, real dangers are ignored,
laughter has disturbance as its source.

An odd desire for silence then, a current motivation,
a private section in a hidden garden beneath
a childhood tree or a secret sea for floaters.

Such morose conjectures serve but to famish further
parades of starvings at the King's fine feast,
the draining of all conscience.

Neil Crawford

Confrontation

Dour Mount Biokova clings, miser-like, to offspring clouds
scornful of encroaching tide, she seems serene
and satisfied.

Smug in her supremacy over this man named, lapping pool
she allows herself sleep's luxury
with no erosion nightmares.

The Adriatic, cold, glass clear and patient,
grins into quisling bay, quiet in the knowledge
of this joust's eventual victor.

(Makarska, Yugoslavia 1990)

Neil Crawford

Contagion

Miserable weather

Miserable country

Miserable city

Miserable people

Makes for...

Miserable ME.

Neil Crawford

Corrida

Any average matador faces bulls with needle horns,
a visible enemy of muscle and bone,
of calculable strength.

But what use swords, daggers, lances against
unseen opponents? , whose base is your own being,
inward and hidden, traitorous to your person? .

There will be no torreadors to save us
when we fall foul of the heart's thundering hooves,
deafened by the cries of blood maddened crowds.

When, trampled underfoot, we lie bleeding into
rapture's sand and ecstasy's absorbing sawdust,
awaiting that last thrust, that final 'coup de grace'.

Neil Crawford

Cosmic Prayer

Mother Universe whose spirit permeates all things,
beyond all names you are revered.

No division exists between Heaven and Earth,
the two are one in your enduring soul.

Full provision is made on this and all days,
all inequalities are the work of Man.

Trespases go unrecognised,
forgiveness is unnecessary.

What temptations can there be
for those at peace? .

What can evil offer to the true? .
Power and Glory are dead ideas

Forever and ever in the Eternal Now.
Amen

Neil Crawford

Could Be Worse

On the old Post Office steps
two battered boozers sat
with similar lined expressions
and identical wooly hats.

As the roll up and the beer can
passed genially to and fro
a busker played 'Moon River'
on his better days trombone.

When I neared the two of them
I thought I heard one say...
'Y'know, this really ain't so bad,
it beats working anyday'.

Neil Crawford

Dawn Notes

Through a window pane in Worcester,
a scene Cezanne might have painted,
sky of cornflower blue, Pyrenees replaced
by pale violet band of Malvern hills.

Trees, fifteen shades of green, surround
higgledy piggledy, sugar cube houses,
burnt sienna rooves jostle with
sun smeared, off white walls.

Emerald swarth of a rugby pitch
(this is not a football town)
draws the panorama to the
sleep kissed morning eye.

Neil Crawford

Dawn Poem

Wake her gently for the day is long
and she deserves the softest call,
the lightest touch upon her brow
to draw her to the troubled world.

The troubled and the troubling world
awaits beyond dawn's weak door,
hallmarked by its shades of blue.
Wake her gently, she is your muse.

Neil Crawford

Downsizing

That knick knack on the what not
has really got to go,
what I ever saw in it,
I simply do not know.

The doo dad by the woss'name
I once thought so chic,
is a pain now it needs dusting
fourteen times a week.

The thingy that I saved for
and cost me quite a bomb
had a nice trip to the local tip,
I chucked it with aplomb.

The gee gaws and the hoo haws
that I was urged to buy
were taken by the dustmen,
I waved them all goodbye.

This process is ongoing
visit if you will,
a friendly word of sound advice,
make sure you don't stand still.

Neil Crawford

Dwindling

Sometimes I do not feel the need for company

Sometimes I do not feel the need

Sometimes I do not feel

Sometimes I do not

Sometimes I do

Sometimes I

Sometimes

Some

So....

Neil Crawford

Eco Poem

Rain and light on skin,
shadow shot forest drools,
mist and spray on rock,
incubating summer storm.

Neil Crawford

Elgar's Crossword

In the tiny house of Elgar's birth,
among the memorabilia,
we found a yellowed newspaper,
framed in a glass case.

The great man was, it seems, an inveterate
doodler - top hats on footballers, moustaches
on women, smoking pipes in children's mouths,
you know the sort of thing.

His crossword attempt caught my eye,
all clues but two completed.
We solved them in seconds.. 'Cabaret'
and 'Melancholy' being the evasive answers.

When time allowed conjecture
I thought it strange those eluded him,
given that he was a musical spirit
quite prone to bouts of sadness.

Neil Crawford

Episodic Exodus

One day Human Beings will stand on
distant, virgin worlds, their gaze turned to
invisible Earth, blue jewel,
sphere of clouds.

They will be new immigrants,
brave foolish pioneers,
their children New Earth's founders,
fresh history's architects.

Take heed, proud Mother,
your offspring stride the midnight void,
scattering all before them,
they gather worlds like shells...

They will be new beachcombers,
these delvers of the dark,
these sorters of cosmic flotsam,
here Mother, contemplate their beach.

Neil Crawford

Epitaph For An Epoch

To whom we bequeath this planet's toil,
don't be like us, we were the worst,
we were the butcher and the meat,
hooked in the window, bleached of shame.

Our gaze averted from the slaughter's rite
was proof of our sincerity, we mouthed 'love'
with our hemlock lips and shifted places
in the poor doomed queue.

Innumerable massacres were no omen to us,
we shrugged at the given order,
the arena was swept of innocent's pleas,
our ears stopped with History's corrosive wool.

Neil Crawford

Et In Arcadia Ego

You sit in the garden all afternoon
this drives me up the ivied wall.

I repair indoors to my keyboard
to tap out in the half light that I love

Romantic, idyllic, pastoral poems
about an England long faded from view.

This is the difference between we two,
you are in each miracle moment

while I can only watch the febrile seconds pass
on a merciless, slowing clock

recording their footprints
on a dust destined page.

Neil Crawford

Failed Foray

Disheartened at the sight
of her wedding ring,
my intention to chat
is forestalled.

I beat a retreat
to the crossword
that was earmarked
as an ice breaker.

Building about myself
bars of cool silence,
my unsought aura
of gruffness grows.

Neil Crawford

Fair Exchange

Diocletian ran the known world
from his cabbage patch in Split.
Officially retired, he would sit
in that garden, dispensing advice.

Generals, Consuls, Courtiers
would seek him out to pick his brains.
All he asked in return, the ex-Emperor,
was that they each admire a cabbage.

Under his broad brimmed hat
he would spin the visual echo,
the tiny, emerald world, before their
glazing eyes he would turn it back and forth.

Eliciting praise for every rib and contour,
every shade of earthy green.
It wasn't too much to ask as he sheltered
from the Dalmatian heat.

An old, cunning man, who knew
how to run a world, promoted,
as he saw it, to growing cabbages
from seed.

Suitably directed, the 'powerful'
would return to Rome,
to carry on the machinations of
said crumbling Empire.

And all they had to do
was to admire a humble vegetable
Did any understand what Diocletian
was really telling them? .

Neil Crawford

False Friend, Abandoned

I have given up on my heart
that device has been left
to its own devices.

What good did it ever do me? .
It simply lead me down dead ends
and left me whimpering in the dark.

It helped to pump my head
full of romantic nonsense
and idealistic twaddle.

Consequently I was isolated by ideas,
made weird by soap box
tub thumpery.

Cut off from the hedonistic throng,
I turned my anger on myself,
setting up a poison aura.

I mean all levels of desertion here,
emotional and former will
be easy, given my masculinity.

The latter will be tougher,
surrounded as I am by the rampant
exercise culture.

But I would rather let it run to ruin
than allow the 'Big C' time
to consume alive me from the inside.

When I would crumble like an empty husk,
choking on the memoried dust,
with one last tap from hurtful life.

Neil Crawford

Farewell To Westphalia

We watched the smoke grey heron rise above the frozen lake,
your son in law, his thoughts on war, walked his son
at the water's edge.

His other boy, at the 'me, me' stage wobbled on his garish bike
while you and I, well wrapped, found safer footing
on a wettish slope.

People strolled, people jogged, people walked their German dogs,
oblivious to approaching wrath
whispering at the heron's wing.

Neil Crawford

Farmhand And Tourist

He walks through clouds while watching hawks
in the course of his working day.

Surefooted as the goats he tends, he treads
the steepest inclines with aplomb.

From under vital brim his shielded eyes squint out
as he guesses at our packaged, humdrum lives.

Our coach departs and he shakes his head,
I am sure I see a pitying smile.

He returns to his flock as I begin the long trek home,
back to Monday morning desk and pointless paperwork.

Neil Crawford

Fatalism

Observe the night's mad birds,
see how their wings slice
the cold, crisp, cellophane air.

Feathers conceal deceptive strength
and well honed
survival skills.

They will outlive me,
when I am long gone,
their day's pattern will go unchanged.

Undeterred by my unwitnessed passing,
they will grace the same
avenues and squares.

Recall the mad night's birds
and how they coaxed
the fool to write.

His pen dipped in invisible ink
borrowed words fading
on a crumpled page.

Neil Crawford

Fishmarket

The salty tang of death is all around,
denizens of the deep dragged from home
to the drowning air.

Flung onto ice, their black eyes stare
onto a browsing world
too hungry to care.

Neil Crawford

Foyer Flower

Undulating, almost sensual vase
with slashed, slanted lip
contains a plant I recognise
but could not ever name.

Leaves like a crocodile's lower jaw
support seductive petals and
stamen that thrust eagerly
towards the ceiling.

Set against a rugged, but fake, stone wall
the shades, the reflections,
the light and textures are all
crying out to be painted.

Depiction, not description, is needed here
I slouch away defeated
as the still life waits
for the painter to pass by.

Neil Crawford

From A Hotel Balcony

Kitchen assistant in white cap and coverall,
powder blue pinny, clicky clacky catering clogs,
is late...again.

Drumming down the back steps she stops
and, confident that no one sees...
adjusts her knickers.

Wiggling her ample hips like a belly dancer,
before darting indoors,
excuse prepared for indulgent chef.

Neil Crawford

Funchal Farewell

Busy, bustling little city
stretches, yawns and winks
at her flitting lover of a moon.

One canine choir master
conducts the others in their own
dog dawn chorus.

Portuguese Navy boat,
grey, cartoon flat against
shifting, myriad blues of sea.

Stepping reluctantly onto waiting'plane
I find, while I can leave Funchal,
Funchal cannot leave me.

Neil Crawford

Future Recollection

Down by the abandoned railway
we watched the fishermen

returned from a disappointing yesterday
with their sense of hope renewed

somewhat like ourselves as the scraped scales
of love fell about our idling feet.

We shall return here many times
throughout our countless lives.

One day it will all be okay,
we will finally convince each other

we will land the unbaited, thrashing catch
so often thrown back.

Neil Crawford

Future Shock (A Very Short, Sci-Fi Tale)

The android soldier
set down its weapon
and, facing its human commander,
resolutely refused to obey.

Neil Crawford

Halcyon Day

I saw a Kingfisher once, watchful on a rock,
down by the valley brook.

A small, wise voice said to me...

'study this carefully, you may never see it again,

Except perhaps in films or books,

but never in the sun kissed flesh'.

The turquoise, gold and flashing green

combined to split the amber stream.

I stood, transfixed, as in a dream,

a second from an afternoon

Colourful, ephemeral, captured

by the mind's obedient camera.

Neil Crawford

History In The Making

In the course of my daily rounds
I see angels milling about,
I see heroes and heroines
publically projecting from
grim domestic lives.

'though it is hard to believe at times,
I mix with the great, great grandparents
of people who will live forever,
colonising countless worlds,
cruising back and forth
on the tracks of conquered time.

Neil Crawford

Holiday Snapshot

White cat,
Blue balcony,
Pink apartment block

Noise of
Orange bulldozer
Abhorred.

Neil Crawford

Home From Home

Snowdon's flat back propped against
God's mantelpiece of sky
summed up the holiday experience.

Away from the post card facade
it was all something of a
cultural sham.

Behind the gaudy colours seldom seen elsewhere,
beyond the beach balls, the buckets and spades,
the inflatable sea creatures

Mums and Dads still argued over whatever,
children felt uneasy or unhappy,
and dogs got lost while the Welsh rain fell.

Neil Crawford

Human River (Street Scene)

Junkies, flunkies, cheeky monkees,
boozies, floozies, 'non too choosies',
buskers, tuskers, 'out of luck sirs',
bruisers, cruisers, ten time losers,
locals, vocals, ever hopefuls,
punks and monks and sexy hunks,
artists, chartists, 'break my heartists',
rockers, mockers, teenage shockers,
coppers, shoppers, traffic stoppers,
ranters, ravers, little shavers,
bikers, hikers, 'do as you likers',
drinkers, thinkers, 'on the brinkers'
chuggers, muggers, randy buggers,
t-shirts, 'me-shirts', 'court at three shirts',
rowdies, dowdies, 'much too loudies',
lovers, shovers, angry mothers,
livers, , givers - Human River.

Neil Crawford

I Do Okay

Two Latin ladies snap themselves
outside the Cavern Club.

To them it's the shot of a lifetime,
I pass the sign almost every day.

I even played a few times
with a couple of my juvenile bands.

There are those who, owning that memory,
would die quite contented.

Neil Crawford

Intruder Alert

Chopping up chunks of thought
previously destined for diaries,
and calling those chunks 'poems'
is my new 'metier'...

My new 'raison d'etre'
my new 'modus operandi'
my new 'gesamptkuntswerk'
if you will.

You don't like it? ,
you don't approve? .
Who asked you anyway? .

Come to think of it....
Who are you?
and how did you get in here? .

Neil Crawford

Kiln

Time is not my enemy today,
like it was yesterday,
like it will be tomorrow.

I am scouring out the hollow
in a bowl of clay-like moments,
clinging and cloying

I mould them into
a recognisable shape
and heat them into life.

Neil Crawford

Ladies Day In Town

'Ladies Day' never fails to catch me out,
the day before the 'National'
yet each year a fresh surprise.

Surrounded by human butterflies,
teetering, tottering on dagger heels,
I am dazed by their exuberance.

'Fascinators' pierce disobedient hair,
body parts wobble in all directions,
but they don't give a toss, today fun is 'boss'.

Their shrieks complete the urban score
adding to the usual sounds,
the city centre opera.

No one else bats an eye,
I am the only gawper
at their mad, irreverent splendour.

Hours later they will return
with red faced, angry men in tow
who exorcise disappointment noisily.

But for now, they set the scene
in magenta, gold and day glo green,
as they wend their raucous way
to grandstand dreams.

Neil Crawford

Lakeland Dusk

Past Arnside where the meadows blur with bay,
small pools of landlocked sky collect
among defiant green.

The sun clocks off and slips away,
distress flares from a Titan
streak the pastoral scene.

At Grange over Sands
grey stone frames an abstract view
of crimson, yellow, gold and rust

The thus depicted inlet, dims
and softly scolds
impatient dusk.

Neil Crawford

Lament

The silence of the rocks and stones at the Oracle of Delphi,
brought me to my spiritual knees and awoke a fresh humility.

Boulder dumb and story full the ruined temples vie
for the quicksilver attention of the jaundiced modern eye.

Invading it like ants, a shutter clicking swarm,
we cast a cursory glance, its mysteries ignored.

When our 'civilisation' crumbles what will our descendants claim?
..the glorious corporate burger and some cheap computer games.

Neil Crawford

Lines

We live lives marked out by lines,
how can it be denied when everyday
it greets our eyes? .

Lines of communication,
the lines we read between,
the lines we toe, the battle lines we draw.

The lines that have been crossed,
the lines in the sand, the white lines,
the double yellow lines.

Not forgetting....

Time lines, head lines,
fine lines, dead lines,
Front lines, side lines,
back lines, bottom lines,

tree lines, tee lines,
A-lines, bee lines,
goal lines, touch lines,
try lines, bye lines,

score lines, sky lines,
eye lines, hem lines,
hair lines, waist lines,
bass lines, face lines,

Tube lines, railway lines,
tram lines, air lines,
cruise lines, chat up lines,
pick up lines, punch lines,

washing lines, shipping lines,
fishing lines, marriage lines,
border lines, date lines,
telephone lines, bookies lines,

Plimsole lines, parallel lines,
power lines, picket lines,
water lines, ley lines,
Nazca lines, horizon lines,

blood lines, flood lines,
coast lines, flat lines,
love lines, wealth lines,
health lines..but most of all..

Life lines.

Neil Crawford

Love's Tired Ghost

I heard him the clockless hours
when life's a brittle, plastic blue
and silence silver precious.

Through waterfall streets
with Harlequin
his dappled ghost ran screaming

under the canopy
that swaddling,
that shrouds have aped.

I chained myself to his pinnioned feet,
the sweat poured from
my memory.

An unwelcome, foolish passenger,
mere luggage for that
nomad.

Past the deep frozen nymphs
that he had stored
in alleyways.

Past the neutered centaurs,
his scalpel still in quivering
hand.

Past cobwebbed harps and flutes
(none hungered for love's food)
we journied...

Past the headless rose,
its thorns he filed with
a ritual kiss.

Past the perfumed rivers
and Hope's tower
built of cards.

Past the penless poets,
their tongues he held
in aspic, we stopped...

'Here, guard my impetuous cheetah,
hold hard his straining
rein'

He handed me a ribbon, far pinker
than my soul, which, looped around
my innocence, made the beast secure.

On learning his identity, my toffee grip
relaxed, his pet galloped to conquests
and my mandrake innocence followed.

He spoke...

'I am Love's Tired Ghost,
I mourn the unborn child,
I mourn the dead that lived in hope...

I am Love's Tired Ghost,
I ride on empty trains
that have no destination...

I drive engineless cars
down endless midnight
highways...

I caress the stars
and spit on sense,
I am Love's Tired Ghost..

and, in the absence of a
hammering truth,
I am all you have..

I am Love's Tired Ghost'.

Man Made Eclipse

Colours almost without number,
clay grey, leaf green, rich raw umber,
yield beneath my hurried feet
as I reach the verge from off the street.

I pace a grove of ancient trees,
ignorant of their destiny,
the city centre's closing in,
bringing its aesthetic sin.

New multi-stories give us shade
not the cooling, song filled glade,
Without a voice to question 'why? ',
these trees will be soon to die.

They will feel the hand of man,
they simply do not fit the plan,
when distant strangers set the view
that's 'good enough' for me and you.

Neil Crawford

Manifest

I went down to the Dee
to see how things were going,
I tried to push the Dee
but it was happy with its flowing.

Like trying to rush the writing,
I sensed there's 'nothing doing',
both will move at their own sweet pace
and leave me to my stewing.

Neil Crawford

Mental Whistling

I had oatsy woatsy with honey woney
for brekky wekky.

Hmmm, yummy, scrummy
in my tummy, wummy.

Cheezey wheezey on toasty woasty
for lunchy wunchy.

Eggy weggy and chippy whippy
for teasy weasy.

Sorry, folksy wolksy, I've gotty wotty
a bad attacky wacky of ablouty wouty.

Neil Crawford

Mentioned In Despatches

The 'No Man's Land'
between reality and fantasy
is scattered with masks...

those we chose ourselves,
those imposed by others,
those left by errant lovers
as they made their escape,
those who found no cover
in the deadly, cruel landscape,
those we should have known
but never made it through,
wounded birds - all flown -
and those we should ashew.

At times we risk the killing fields
to leave or retrieve a disguise
dodging the sniper's bullets
as they trace the whites of our eyes,
self contained demons who fire from
the depths of our souls, wreckage
of frail humans in their flooded,
bloodied foxholes.

And all we ever really grasp
is masks,
masks,
MASKS.

Neil Crawford

Missed Opportunity

I enjoyed that pint in the Woolpack,
Laurie Lee's old local.

Had I known he was fond of a friendly
drink with strangers

I would have sought him out
in one street Slad

and 'put one in the pump' for him
as a way of saying 'thanks'.

But misreading a biography
I thought he shunned uninvited company

I was set straight by his obituary
but by then the chance had gone.

If only I had worn my glasses
that morning over breakfast

I could have toasted, with the regulars,
the poet, the novelist, the loving hobo fiddler.

Neil Crawford

Moksha In Makarska

In the cooling shade
of the sea shore pines
near to the pebble beach,
you had a flash of insight,
your Moksha in Makarska.

A word the ancient Hindus used
for 'sudden revelation',
after years of ardent study,
a glimpse of the Eternal,
of truth filled comprehension.

Countless lives you have spent,
overturning countless stones,
shouldering disappointment's rocks
when answers failed to issue.

Of we two, I am the more fortunate,
perhaps more simple in my wants,
I only ever need the sea,
with its deep, abiding counsel,
pregnant with the threat of power.

Neil Crawford

Music And Muse

Bukowski did not care for Jazz,
that never fails to surprise me.

The classical was his choice,
Brahms in particular,

crunching across his motel floor,
drink in hand, he swayed to Brahms.

For me, it's Elgar's music,
listening, I could almost believe in God.

Seriously, how could the Human brain
ever produce 'Nimrod'? .

it doesn't seem possible somehow,
it's like a snake hissing poetry.

Neil Crawford

My 'To Do List' For Today

ate for at least half an hour

three healthy meals

for a two mile run

e to a charity

a neighbour

house thoroughly

ice guitar

ethically

someone I love them

ve myself nine times

Neil Crawford

Nocturnia

I have been having apocalyptic dreams(again)
on a planet bigger than Jupiter.

It is home to trillions of lost souls
I call it 'Nocturnia' though I sense it has
another, more familiar name.

There is no colour, only shades of grey.
There is no warmth, only degrees of cold.

There are no feelings of any positive kind.
Sometimes on this desperate world
I can levitate.

That lifts me(literally) above
the crippling boredom.

But mostly I just sit with all the others,
gradually gathering dust, becoming cobweb
strewn.

Neil Crawford

Of The Unknown

Of the unknown we can say nothing,
nothing of authority, nothing of any accuracy,
nothing and be convinced of its verity.

Of Faith we can say little except that it exists,
except that it persists in the snarling
face of fact.

Of fear we can say much, a spur of faith,
the constant guide, the chink in the mail,
the inner enemy.

In all we speak but words,
they trip from hobbled mouth worms
unstilled by a nameless grace.

Neil Crawford

Office Malaise

The Mersey gleams sunbeam white
just beyond our downpour

a slash of light against the grey
we are forced to endure

Indoor and outdoor tedium reigns
clocks are watched, lives overlooked.

Neil Crawford

Overpowered By Proust

I give up,
I surrender,
I yield
I cede,

You win,
you triumph
you conquer,
you vanquish,

You can wait
for Mama's kiss
for all Eternity
for all I care,

And stuff
your pampered face
with sticky,
sickly cakes.

Neil Crawford

Pancognizance

The Universe, we are told, is really simple,
though quite old.

But Man's beliefs, I still propound,
disguise the void we all surround.

Foolish Man, with his labelling mind,
everything pigeon holed, defined

neatly packaged, stored away
for reference at a later date

Being, history, time itself
classified on some cobwebbed shelf

The scientist has one defence
the pursuance of 'Pancognizance'

No surprises left us now
as wonderment is not high brow

adore the mystery I cry
they may solve the 'HOW' but not the 'WHY'.

Neil Crawford

Pensee No.1

Disappearing Appetites

Lost lust
is not
last
on the
list.

Sorry if I'm preaching to the converted but 'Pensee' ('Pon-say') is French for a 'little thought' - Pascal was particularly adept at them. I suppose you could argue that they're not really poems but I include them in the spirit of Adrian Henri who was also a master of a bit of fun)

Neil Crawford

Pensee No.10

Liverpudlian Blessing

May the Lord
have Mersey
on your
soul.

Neil Crawford

Pensee No.11

Query

If we are made in his own image,
does God resent the plagiarism
of the 'self made man'? .

Neil Crawford

Pensee No.12

Go Figure

When you are in a queue,
everyone in front of you
is a complete, hopeless idiot
a time wasting fidget.

Once at the front
you will find that everyone behind
is a total, irredeemable,
impatient swine.

Neil Crawford

Pensee No.13

The Spirit Of Poetry

In English the word 'poem'

is an anagram of 'Mope'

The word 'verse' is an anagram of

'serve' or 'sever'

I have just discovered this,

my goodness, I am clever! .

Neil Crawford

Pensee No.14

From Between Clenched Teeth

Better to be permanently 'tongue in cheek'
than forever 'biting your lip'.

Neil Crawford

Pensee No.15

Starting See Through It All

As I surround myself with 'junk'
that serves to justify each breath.

I think..am I faking my life
the way some folk fake their deaths? .

Neil Crawford

Pensee No.16

Poetry is no place for secrets

(Now, take that as you will!)

Neil Crawford

Pensee No.2

Teacher's Pet

All art is the process
of snitching
to God,

Science is the bully
that 'gets' us
in the playground.

Neil Crawford

Pensee No.3

Modern Politics

Oration,
Ovation,
Equivocation.

Neil Crawford

Pensee No.4

Lapsed Pagan

He allows 'All Hallows'
to fall fallow...
No wonder he looks sallow.

Neil Crawford

Pensee No.5

Aphorism For an Ex

A battered ego
cannot mend
a broken heart.

Neil Crawford

Pensee No.6

Q.E.D.

The rat ran past the sign which read.....

'The rubbish is bringing in rats'.

Neil Crawford

Pensee No.7

Small Miracle

I dreamed I was dreamt.

Neil Crawford

Pensee No.8

Unmourned and Angry

The wrath of a wraith at the absence of a wreath.

Neil Crawford

Pensee No.9

Pun on Addiction

Deep End

Neil Crawford

Persecution

English sky as blue as a robin's egg,
empty of all cloud from north to south
from east to west.

And yet it still manages to rain,
pouring down and down and down,
an unstoppable deluge.

These are all the tears
of all the gods, of all the cultures
ever known.

Collecting in the gulleys and gutters
they wait to drown
our mortal dreams.

Neil Crawford

Platonic Stance

Where the dome springs and the heavens laugh
in territories claimed by doubt,
when adolescent boosts are phoney,
I shall seek sanctuary from the ignorant void.

When my earthly resistance is eclipsed
by the shadow show on the cave's far wall,
I shall be the object of the thinker's ridicule,
an unequal meeting of minds.

When my sanity is rent - for coin or in two -
I shall be there where the dome springs
with my Janus comfort
you - dunce identity.

Neil Crawford

'Poetry For Dummies'

'Think like a Poet'
the book advised
so I did and revised
the early work that I had done,
hoping that the words would come

er, er...

tumpty, tumpty,
tumpitty, tum.

Neil Crawford

Portuguese Glance

Framed by green, terracotta and cream,

a typical Madeiran scene.

White boats, white sails, white birds, white wings,

white clouds, white horses.

Sea of lapis lazuli

casting diamond dice.

Neil Crawford

Post Card

There was a storm here last night,

clouds cracked on mountain tops

like eggshells on a basin rim.

Liquid avalanche swept down

into the dusty town,

the dogs, overawed, are silent.

Neil Crawford

Premonition

Gunshot shatters rural noon,
boomerang of birds erupts from cover,
hurtling towards heralded risk.

Later in the shining day we see a barn owl
lost on the canal bank clawing tree
stumps nervously.

I sense we have no future,
it is erased in a flash
of those panicked, tawny wings.

Neil Crawford

Pride's Bayonet

Pride, still variable, took command
and muted that loud, fanfare band
that heralded loves of longing born
and left them deafened, dumb, forlorn.
Slight logic then expelled by lust
pride's bayonet skewered my naive trust.

Speak soft, hallowed communion
of matters dark and dubious
of subjects sly and lecherous,
the dart releasing lash
and the juggernaut's procedure,
the Mardi Gras is banned
in Love's decayed cathedral.

Neil Crawford

Rebirth

Reclaiming the writing of words
is not an easy task.

It is snail slow
and glacier heavy.

But it's something to do
while you're waiting around to croak.

It passes the lead booted time,
it fills the God empty gaps.

Neil Crawford

Repentance

Scenes of odd consistency,
spent feathers on a breaking wave
hint at unravelling paradox.

In these corners claimed by silence
on the edge of nature's miracle
there is but one sad voice.

The tongueless voice of a tired penitent
eager for an end, now quite beyond
a bold enthusiasm.

Neil Crawford

Rocky Logic

Polymorphous identities grind against
haltering, altering, faltering minds.

Mountains in the sea some say,
pushed up from a common bed.

Our outward faces are the peaks
from which we sculpt ourselves

And on those peaks we stand
assured of our uniqueness

Held fast by that common bed
living disparate lives.

Neil Crawford

Rubbing Along

Two walking sticks,
two pairs of dark glasses,

two faces puffed up from
the same heart condition,

one tartan shopping trolley,
a life together.

Neil Crawford

Rural Ride

A lethargic crow sculls its way
through a numbing broth of sky.

The magpie bobs on a springboard branch
ignorant of my superstition.

Villagers stamp at the freezing stop,
fretful for the creeping bus.

Through the smell of new mown grass
and imminent rain, I cycle slowly home.

Neil Crawford

Rusticana

You are only inch deep brother marrow
you are just chest deep cousin'coeur'.

In your near hollow pit you thump defiantly,
but out here in the open you would die.

You would curl like uprooted weeds,
dying leaves from a rotten tree.

You are only Hell deep, Heaven high
half whispered soul

An ambling donkey on an arid patch,
seeking oats when thistles would suffice.

A dispersed seed, a scarecrow's breath,
bounty for the crow.

You are only inch deep brother marrow,
you are only chest deep comrade 'coeur'.

Neil Crawford

Scene For A Surreal Film

On the fourth floor of a somewhat run down
but formerly grand hotel lies a dead, white horse.
An orphaned girl sits beside it.

In the course of the next few days
she will attempt to eat some of its flesh
in a vain effort to stay alive.

A steady stream of fellow guests
pass by, clearly aware of the scenario,
not one, however, stops to help.

Neil Crawford

Scene On A Bay

The cormorant in its plunging moment,
its fish seeking victory, fixed as a tiny
slice of eternal frozen morning.

Older than the crumbling stone which cups
the bay, a rite more real than hunger,
as vital as the pale, receding dawn.

I stand and watch this ominous bird,
this messenger from nowhere, these few
forced lines the only thought it brought me.

Neil Crawford

Sculptures

Spark fresh the rusting motor,
spoke anew the broken wheel,
with neither genesis or nemesis,
an outcome of the mass.

Grip the scrap and forge again,
out of the ash a phoenix rose,
I clipped its wings and called it 'pure'
we watched it plunge from silver clouds.

Neil Crawford

Shoot The Messenger

In the hospital corridor a young couple deeply kiss,
they hold onto each other, in grief or relief,
depending on the news, good or bad,
that they have just received.

While I waited for you,
I saw him, sat two rows away,
he was not waiting,
at least not for another person.

He met his partner downstairs by the coffee shop
where by now I was ensconced.
The news had been delivered,
I wonder if he told her the truth? .

His chin propped on her shoulder,
he looks in my direction,
his face creased with a double pain,
as if to say...

'I know, I know...I just can't,
not now, not today'.
I return to my crossword,
pen clutched between crossed fingers.

Neil Crawford

Sign On Parnassus

Singing is forbidden on the mountain of Apollo,
Parnassus has been still for ages past.

Or so the sign was written, an injunction we must follow
unless we wish to know Greek civic wrath.

I did not praise the god, I did not try to rouse him,
I did not disturb his ancient sleep,

Yet his pathways I have trod
and my actions have espoused him

as we depart
Parnassus gently weeps.

Neil Crawford

Sledge

Copper tubing from a plumber friend
formed the curving burnished rails,
off cuts of corpy planks the stylish
seats and slats.

This was the sledge, made in secret,
in a few snatched hours,
that Dad brought home one blue/grey
winter's evening.

It was used, as I recall, just once
on the tiny hill of the Valley Brook
at the bottom of the road, by the winding
path to the 'Tarzan' rope.

Such snows ceased as the planet warmed
and the guiltless sledge was banished.
In the shed it lay undisturbed
until murdered in its sleep.

Cannibalised for running repairs
its tubes were used in plumbing jobs,
its bright brass screws inserted into
undeserving rawl plugs.

Its slats and seats patched parts
of the skirting board hidden
by stereogram, sofa and haughty,
nomadic piano.

Like his idea to interest me
in football, boxing and rugby
Dad's idea hit a wall and slid
into the waste bin marked 'told yer'.

Lost in reverie from an early age
I was not a rough and tumble boy,
but if I was ever a disappointment
my father never showed it.

We reconnected permanently
with a mutual love of poetry and music
we met on the supposed 'No Man's Land'
between the generations.

I spoke of 'Hughes and Thomas'
he countered with 'Hardy and Lawrence'
I said 'Dylan', 'Hendrix' and 'The Beatles'
he replied 'Woody Guthrie', 'Bruckner' and 'Jazz'.

Many fathers might have thought
such a son effeminate, but not mine
I think he rumbled, early on that, deep down,
I was older than him and had been for some time.

He was the 'young pup' on his first life
while I was the boomerang soul
often counselling caution
in his later, firebrand years.

Neil Crawford

Sonnet

Shall I compare thee to a brewer's dray?
for thou art shaky and intemperate,
rough wind doth churn the consumed hops all day
as last night's drink you regurgitate.

Sometime bloodshot the eye of drunkard shines
and often are his several senses dimmed,
with every heave you hear him whine
by chance and nature, fully skinned.

But thy eternal stomach shall not fade
'cept in the depression of the bulge it showest,
nor shall abstinence brag thou wanderest in her shade
when to the eternal opening time thou goest.

So long as men can drink
and eyes can't see,
so long live booze
and give new 'life' to thee.

(With copious apologies to Bill Shakespeare and my younger self) .

Neil Crawford

Soupsound

The thrum of traditional Indian drums
puts me in mind of boiling mud,
the kind you see in nature films
in the midst of gushing geysers.

The whuuup, falluuup, gooo,
bloopiddy bup sound
that threatens to drag you down
into miasmic soup.

And after all, isn't that what the drums do? .
As the drummers compete to send us into
rhythmic trance, only they take us up and up
and uppiddy, Uppidy, UPpiddy, UPPiddy...

UPPPPPPPPPPPPPPPPPPPPPPPPPPPPPPP! ! ! !

Neil Crawford

Spring

Flowering cherry in full bloom,

wind shook, rain kissed petals

flutter to receptive pool.

Neil Crawford

Springs Eternal

Beneath bird nest hair,
the remnants of a face.

The tangled mass of locks
obscure his looks.

Filthy coat and flapping shoes
show the last stages of wear
and the first of disintegration.

His tobacco fingers search
the bin outside a franchised bakers.

On the outer layer of stinking jumpers
he sports a bright yellow,
'smiley face' badge.

Neil Crawford

Table Top Abstract

Ketchup as red as Spartan blood
at Thermopylae

Brown sauce as rich as the eastern soil
from which its spices sprang

Sea salt sprayed across table top,
one constellation Hubble won't detect

Pepper the shade of the sand
along the Silk Road to Samarkand

unknown orange condiment squirted by unsung poet
onto his unshared, cut price meal.

Neil Crawford

Talking Cannibal Blues

Eat me when I'm dead baby, eat me when I'm dead,
bake Feta cheese round my meaty knees,
yeah, eat me when I'm dead.

Eat me when I'm dead baby, eat me when I'm dead,
I'd be no disaster with home made pasta,
yeah, eat me when I'm dead.

Eat me when I'm dead baby, eat me when I'm dead
with low fat spread on crusty bread,
yeah, eat me when I'm dead.

Eat me when I'm dead baby, eat me when I'm dead
chew my lips with a plate of chips,
yeah, eat me when I'm dead.

Eat me when I'm dead baby, eat me when I'm dead,
boil my guts and roast my nuts,
yeah, eat me when I'm dead.

Eat me when I'm dead baby, eat me when I'm dead,
you already made a start by chewing on my beating heart,
it could make a 'break well' tart...
yeah, eat me when I'm dead.

Neil Crawford

Template

Come to the field Abel,
there's something you must see,
it's a jewel encrusted table,
sent by God, to me.

Come to the field Abel,
there's something you must learn,
about the art of noble sacrifice
and what you need to burn.

Come to the field Abel,
trust your brother's word,
I will delight you with such fables,
leave your thriving herd.

Come to the field Abel,
you have nought to fear from me,
come to the field Abel,
where we decide Man's history.

Neil Crawford

The Last Of Lynn

I saw her walking down Main Street
and she wore an air of defeat,
she studied a shop window,
her reflection made her wince,
to the best of my recollection,
that's the last time I saw Lynn.

It seems she'd had a bad day,
I don't think she faced it dry,
so I passed by on the other side,
well, we weren't really friends,
we just used the same, sad inn,
but when I heard how she met her end,
I shed a tear for Lynn.

Now, I don't really care care
what people think or say,
no one deserves to leave this world that way,
broken and scared with the darkness rushing in,
next time you raise your glass,
spare a thought for Lynn.

Neil Crawford

The Poetry Class

The peal of a funeral bell drifts
through an open window,
it permeates our discussion
of poetic terms.

This class today puts me in mind
of a Samuel Beckett play.
The forlorn scene outside contrasts
with the words of us fledgling iconoclasts.

Disagreements arise over meanings..
'alliteration', 'consonance', 'assonance'
I coin the word 'ponsonance'
for the posing of long dead males.

It raises a brief laugh
from my immediate neighbours, I am so very droll,
we return to our wordy labours while the bell
continues its solemn toll.

Neil Crawford

'The Pool Of Life'

The object of my love, this mudlark town,
illegitimate, pupped by the whorish deep,
hemmed in by England's stale surround
and the 'baas' of slavish, mindless sheep.

A shotgun groom for the pregnant Earth,
pressed yet freed by the singing sea,
mindful of the country's worth
and scornful of its destiny.

Phoenix like will the symbol rise
to fan the flames from the glowing town
and its people will call to believing skies..
'you'll never grind this spirit down! '.

Neil Crawford

The Rejection Of Perfection

Learning to live with rejection is a skill
that's hard to acquire and learning to love
imperfection is harder still for the trier.

The memos in the margin, the solo's one bum note,
the weeds in every garden, the frog in the
singer's throat.

The fluffed lines in the drama, the dancer out
of time, the guru with no karma, the poet with
no rhymes.

To me such things are treasures, yet all of them
are free, the proof of life's true pleasure,
our frail humanity.

The trouble with perfectionists is they never
anything done, they would quibble over guest lists
for the explosion of the sun.

Neil Crawford

The Scolded Alcoholic

Tearful at the earful
he got his belly
beer full.

Neil Crawford

The Seemingly Ubiquitous Wearing Of Black

Why does everybody insist
on dressing like Existentialists? .

I demand that everyone else
be a non-conformist...like myself.

Neil Crawford

The Spell(Tempus Fugit)

Dad would stand and stamp off the rain
on the coconut kitchen mat.

Muttering curses that should have been in Welsh
(he was a Welshman trapped in an Englishman's body)

Poetry and politics made him passionate,
all else encompassed in their pincer grip.

The little yappy dog he initially disliked
would jump waist high in manic greeting

Wet with incessant Cheshire rain, the cloud soaked
denim of his work clothes dripped.

The aroma mixing with those of the evening meal,
hmm, overalls and chips..again.

Linseed oil, wood chippings, sawdust, pine shavings
all mingling, a kaleidoscope for the nose

The warm metal smell of handtools
all polished to chrome by constant use.

A soupcon of swarfega and a pinch of putty
helped to complete the recipe

Unlike his workmates, Dad eschewed a toolbox,
preferring instead a leather bag

Easier to carry on the bike he said
but it hardly, if ever, dried out

Now it gently moulders
in my rotting garden shed

the one final component in the formula
that brings him back to mind

like the ingredients in a sorcerer's spell
used to conjure spirits

Now when I saw a piece of wood
or paint something with oil based paints

Dad is at my shoulder showing me how to saw
or redirecting the wilful brush.

Perhaps I should treat it as a spell
compiling all of the above

'On a square of damp denim trace a circle
in oil(linseed) adding a blob of putty

sprinkle with sawdust and shavings(preferably pine)
a dab of turpentine would help

rub on a patch of old brown leather
and use to polish a disused plane'.

Dad, no doubt, would appear in the doorway
shaking off the ethereal downpour

I, of course, would be full
of the usual metaphysical questions.

But Dad, if I know Dad, would simply point
at the kitchen clock...and fade.

Neil Crawford

The True Impact Of Nostalgia

I took my tears and placed them
in a leadlined, foolproof shoe.

Carrying it as though it were a mine
I buried it beneath my dinosaur doorstep

next to the remains of my childhood companion,
the single, unrelenting magpie.

My ancestors were transformed by such ambition
into a collection of encyclopaedias.

Escaping one night to Incendiary Lake,
they were never seen again by Man, beast or bookcase.

My evenings are now occupied with instruction
from the clay car I call 'Grandfather'

he spins curtains from clouds
and primes the cerebral blowtorch

while I am desperate for the magpie
and mournful for the shoe.

Neil Crawford

The Walk To Work

Encouraged by a conspiracy of magpies,
I embrace and inhale the waking day.

Propelled, strengthened by the love
you show and share, I make my way to daily work.

Luckier than some to have a role, interacting,
given relevance by the slot I occupy.

But I am the man you make me,
despite what labels say

issued by society,
that pigeon holing Mammon.

Neil Crawford

Time Of The Signs

Rough lad linking Grandad
disproves a stereotype,
old man - dementia? - possibly,
poor dentures gripping pipe.

With care the young man guides him
past shops he used to know..
'They're all for charity now Grandpa,
that's the way it seems to go'.

'That's the pub I met your Grandma in,
she worked behind the bar,
that fast food place was a dealers
where we bought our first small car'

'Your Mum was conceived on its back seat,
now keep that quiet our Sean,
we thought our lives were so complete,
the day that she was born'.

'Now she lords it over me,
Mussolini in a dress,
she doesn't mean to be so mean,
it's just her way, I guess'.

'Your father left her in the lurch
when you were but a tot,
now no amount of booze or church
brings comfort to her lot'.

'Who does he think he's staring at,
with that snobby look? '
'Now, Grandpa, he's just having a brew
and reading some poncey book'.

The young man's eyes meet mine
and I see his heart is torn
when his Grandad turns and asks him...
'Are you my grandson, Sean? '.

Neil Crawford

Transplant

Someone has brought with them
a great blob of Welsh weather
and daubed it across the Madeiran sky.

Pebble grey and blue, striated
with the Vallies'dreams
and the chorus of dead protest.

It lurks like a smoky puma,
confident of its murderous strength,
waiting for its moment to descend.

Neil Crawford

Tricked

The cafe flowers looked so real
I thought they must be plastic.

There's a message for us all
in there somewhere.

Beware of the truly authentic,
it is bound to surround the fake.

Neil Crawford

Truce Or Surrender?

From tearstained bone my flagpole bloomed
and yet I have no flag to fly.

No regimental colours, no darling lady's favour,
no flag of nation or factional standard do I own.

Hoist then, the dull grey sheet, a fabric, zero portrait,
pronouncing inner blank and reluctance to exist.

Whispering weak apologies and incredible apologies
I nailed my life to the flagpole and stole guiltily away.

From tearstained bone my flagpole bloomed
and yet I have no flag to fly.

Neil Crawford

Turning Over

The dawn chorus long since gone
a lone blackbird trills his song
to the day's blue bloom.
My pillows are clouds I float upon,
my bed, a safe, warm womb.

Reaching out, I turn the radio on,
a voice of doom announces further gloom,
my digit moves the dial a touch along
anf the thrill of Mahler's fourth
fills the room.

Despite the date, it's Friday the Thirteenth, I rise,
silly, furry slippers greet my feet,
curtains drawn, my eyes meet radiant skies,
each day a bright and welcoming
new leaf.

Neil Crawford

'Twas Ever Thus

Men, alas, are martial
or so it would appear,
and yet the driving impetus is based
on groundless fears.

The mistrust of the other,
the dread of the unknown,
'That man is not my brother'...
and thus the seed is sown.

The yearning boy denied a sword
will make one out of sticks,
even though the logic's flawed,
he learns the warriors tricks.

If wooden weapon is removed
his fingers form a gun,
liberal parents are reproved
if they seek to end his 'fun'.

The force seems burnt into the brain
with no apparent end,
someone, somewhere makes a gain
from the death of unmet friends.

Neil Crawford

Unrequited

The tree's branches,
like giant hands
reach out to the sky
but the stars, in gratitude,
refuse.

Neil Crawford

Unto Caesar

It is not a day for Poetry,
its music would be drowned

out by the sound of knives being sharpened
and axes being ground.

But no matter who's in power,
the plastic puppets of the hour..

They cannot slash the sunset,
they cannot cap the dawn

they cannot tax the starling
as it hops across the lawn

they can't reduce the songthrush
as it trills upon the stump

they can't cut back the daffodils
with talk of boom and slump.

Neil Crawford

Warning From History

Those to whom mad power is magnet
are our cannibal enemies,
dismiss them all,
my love lost, weeping doves.

We are their victims,
those robbed of belief,
each 'great man' is an embryonic deity,
his lust is to destroy.

'Build another Empire,
mummify the glorious past'
No, no and no again! .
We alone are the future.

Let us have
our replica of Heaven
albeit scarred,
we ask no more.

Neil Crawford

Web And Weft

Raw, ugly moments
less elaborate than sleep,
smear a beat,
fast and soaring
like iron whispering
through true water.

Their cool urges read
like enormous,
delirious pictures,
knives through bitter sweat,
they always trip
the thinking will.

Neil Crawford

Wetlands

A day out for distraction to fill a diary page
(the middle classes must keep occupied
in this age of financial collapse) .

Two boys escorted to the bird sanctuary
to maintain their education
in the drawn out holidays.

Little prepared us for the sight we faced,
a plethora of birds that brought
Hitchcock to my mind.

The chattering, cawing, clucking brood
the sad, the comic, the stir crazy antics
of the open prison yard.

We pace gingerly among them,
tracing a path through the living stream,
adults seeking a cafe, children chucking seeds.

Literally bitten, the hands that feed
also wave in self defence
against the avian horde.

I have lived near birds all my life,
the gormless hen, the supervising robin,
the crafty crow and the highway hawk.

These here have had their feathers clipped
to prevent inevitable escape, I shake my head
in pity as a shadow hits my face.

Only feet above us, backlit by the sun,
unpinnioned wings against the sky, I see,
for the first time, the full flight of an airborne swan.

Heading for her freedom beyond the lake's lip
and the bustling crowds, a freedom she preserves
in the lilac Cambrian hills.

Neil Crawford

Word Association Exercise

Moon - Glow - Worm - Grave - DEATH

Rose- Thorn - Cut - Bleed - DEATH

Dove - Peace - Rally - Riot - DEATH

Telephone - Conversation - Preservation - Fallacy - DEATH

Hospital - Disinfectant - Panic - Pain -DEATH

Sorry, folks, this is no joke,
if you're looking for laughs
read Ogden Nash.

(This actually was a word association exercise set by my poetry course tutor.I was surprised how it turned out.I must have been having 'one of those days' - it's not meant to be taken seriously) .

Neil Crawford

Writer's Block

The dull conspiracy
between title and text

the 'garden path' titillation
running through

the same old themes
what else to expect?

A body of work
turning blue.

Neil Crawford

Zen Like Practice

A day of deliberate, deliberating actions,
much like micro meditations.

The making of a bed, the recycling
of a bottle.

The tying, no the taming of tumbleweed paper
into monumental bundles.

No great deeds or even thoughts,
that has been the essence of this day.

Neil Crawford