

# Into the Walled Garden

## Selected Works 2001 -2010

A Dancing Pig Originals eBook

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## **Preface**

Is this book just vanity on my part? The short answer is yes.

That said, I don't think that anyone who writes, whatever their level of competence, does so entirely altruistically. We want to be read, we want an ISBN number or two to our names and we want to gather dust in the lending libraries of last resort...

This collection has come into existence for all of the reasons stated above, but it is also a product of circumstance. Over the last ten years or so I have worked through the small hours with the everlasting support of my wife, Karen. Unfortunately, Karen is with us no more, having succumbed after a long illness to the ravages of cancer and its treatments, and so, propelled by the twin forces of vanity and gratitude for Karen's support and forbearance, this collection stands.

I have no idea who will actually read these pieces, nor do I have any idea how they will take to them. The point now, in these months following Karen's death, is not one of sales or critical acclaim, but is rather an act of remembrance and thanks for the best of years.

As we do, so shall this book...gather dust, I mean, which is the only inevitability that any of us can ever face. It doesn't mean, however, that we can't find grounds for optimism even in the darkest of times. Maybe somewhere in all of this you will find your own optimism too. I certainly have.

Clive Gilson  
Cirencester, July 2010.

## **2001**

### **Wearing Out**

Inside out, flat on a table, all patchwork lining and elbows,  
scissors shut, threads sticking out between the blades,  
silk discarded, off cuts, frayed with use,  
a needle, thread and a steady hand,  
hung on wire at the back of a wardrobe,  
worn again, hands in shallow pockets.

## **3rd Hut**

Behind doors locked from the outside,  
foetal, hands clasped between his legs,  
pupils wide, listening for laughter,  
the night bark, counting hours  
by the metronome of thick soled boots  
and the whip of batons,  
he wills dawn to break.

To see is to remember.

He sees a friend, a man  
with whom he played football  
on scrub land when they were young,  
when the colour of a shirt  
was all that separated them.

Butchers, bakers, plumbers, teachers...

They broke bread across tables  
that now lay shattered by shells  
falling from a distant hill.  
Pots, pans and drying clothes  
hung in those kitchens.

To hear is to remember.

He hears a handle turn on rust,  
grinding dust on its spindle thread.  
A door slams into a wall.  
Scum littered jokes are laughed at,  
flesh breaks on rough sawn planks.

Forgotten names leave gaps in the world.  
Beams of sharp moonlight  
break through shuttered windows.  
Time passes with the rhythm  
of blunt wooden sticks on swollen feet.

In the 3<sup>rd</sup> hut the names that still  
fill the gaps wait for roll call.

## **And We Danced**

Vague, alien, animated shapes  
moved with staccato stubbornness

across a shadow shouldered world  
of strobing cigarette smoke  
beneath a balcony wasted with the slow eyed  
voyeur tribe, the lonely loves labouring  
to pose and peer down into low temptation.  
In a corner, perched on yellow plastic,  
buttoned still where crisps and crumbs  
congealed with ash and ale we sat  
with bottles drawn to lips that talked away  
the smallest hours with large, hollow vowels.  
There we sat,  
above the crowding,  
behind the dance.  
Bands and beer and trinkets bright we stole,  
magpies parading black and white,  
scavenging clean the way beneath our feet.  
Agreeing loudly to hide nervous laughter,  
drum safe within the hangar  
we shared our private jokes  
with red labelled bottles brown and full.  
She blessed our blessed single lives.  
and told me of the enemy who comes with love,  
of the men she cared to forget,  
never forgotten, who lived in the place  
from where I came.  
I said aloud its name.  
Quite where the conversation changed,  
where the thieving pilfered its way  
into this world we looked upon  
was not ours to know in the small hours  
above the dance,  
behind the crowding.  
'Boo to the world' we said, quietly,  
outrageous brevity linking arms  
with nervous hands that trembling met  
and stuck with sweat and beer  
on that yellow plastic kissing couch.  
Another beer to talk with seemed a good idea.  
And then we danced, crowded,  
breaking into shuffled rhythms  
with the impossible flesh of gym tanned youth,  
of flashing hair and leotards,  
on podiums above our heads.  
Close, closer in the crowd,  
watching unfocussed rambling hands  
wander late that night  
in search of a warm place to rest,  
we laughed again,

blue into brown,  
sparkling.  
I walked her to her coat  
and paid a silver penny  
to a man behind a glass wall.  
In the velour warmth of an old brown Ford,  
driven, like Miss Daisy, homeward  
I looked into soft brown eyes  
that guarded no more.  
Under the passing flare of streetlights,  
as morning's toppling milk bottles  
accompanied the things that she said,  
those soft brown eyes touched mine.  
She fell asleep.  
Putting her softly safe,  
protesting some alcoholic chivalry  
I went home ...  
Too much beer.  
I looked again another day into her eyes.  
We traded baubles, solitary birds,  
pleasant enough the world as we chirped,  
but well away from the sticky rent  
of worn out plastic seats.

## Arif's Legs

Flip-flops smack hard baked sand,  
a rhythmic chattering beneath the soft glide  
of cheap silk sarongs and ludicrously loud  
beach shirts. Cracked earth and spare weeds  
line a path that passes bare tables  
in the yawning shadows of a Nepalese restaurant.  
Arif swings out of the shade and waits  
in the sun on a corner. He squats, smiling,  
in the company of mangy mongrels,  
lounging the day away, waiting,  
for half finished meals and overflowing bins at dusk.  
In the down draught of beer guts and sweat  
Arif's limbs jut and break at right angles.  
He crawls on one bent leg, propelled  
forwards by one smashed and twisted arm.  
His left hand bends impossibly backwards.  
His right arm, his good arm is raised,  
palm upwards and creased with dirt.  
Flint brown eyes glint as he smiles  
under the spindle bower, with dogs  
scratching their arses and the sores

behind their ears. Arif waits, counting  
the slap of fat foot falls, preparing his smile.  
Seeing colours emerge from the heat haze,  
Arif shuffles out onto the path, beams,  
and knowing the many colours of money,  
declares his eternal love for Manchester United.

## **At One Blow**

*For Gerhart Riegner*

“Received alarming report that in Fuhrer’s headquarters plans discussed and under consideration according to which all Jews in countries occupied or controlled by Germany numbering 3½ - 4 millions should after deportation and concentration in the East be exterminated at one blow to resolve once and for all the Jewish Question in Europe”

*From a telegram sent to London & Washington by Gerhart Riegner in August 1942 containing a report on the Wannsee Conference, January 1942.*

Yellow paper, annotated, the surface  
barely scratched, broken codes,  
confusion, evidence ignored,  
insubstantial, too few to witness,  
and tired with the effort of making war,  
of moulding a new world in the shape  
of this collective act of will,  
there is a comment:

“A rather wild story”.

## **Badger Hunting**

Wet grass and wellington boots.  
In dew drop glitter and the endless  
chatter of bright eyed expectation,  
we wandered along the bank  
of a skittling, rain swollen stream.

Through the layered water flows  
stones glistened and caught sun beams.  
Spots of colour flashed, blue-green dapples,  
refracted moments of peace and dazzle  
amid the muddy squelch of our heavy feet.

From a gully, sunk dark and deep,  
parallel to the gravel bottomed water,  
a robin skimmed, dodging our loud bustle,

and breasted the long, wet grass,  
disappearing into a tangle banked hedgerow.

By a rocky waterfall, she tested the ground  
and held my hand as she paddled,  
happily waiting for the spill of water  
over the top her wellington boots,  
laughing at my overgrown caution.

Looking up through bare branches at the sun  
we caught the shift of small white clouds  
along the morning's cascade breeze.  
Below the crown of newly budding leaves  
the sky stood still and giggling, we revolved.

With every step we soaked and soiled  
our trouser bottoms, watching the windows  
that looked out above us for the twitch,  
the curtain sweep that would show  
a watching eye and a mother's smile.

In the mud, we looked for paw prints,  
counting claw marks to catch the passage  
of night barking badgers, but all we found  
were the stamped treads of early morning  
boots and the scratchings of a dog.

Then, by a winter bare drooping hazelnut ,  
where the last husks of fallen autumn rotted,  
we found the track of the black and white,  
the rooter of the dusk, dipping to drink  
before trotting away into the bog grass.

With high pitched screams of delight  
and close held hands, warm and light,  
we tracked the broken shapes of running paws.  
Indian scouts, tassel jacketed frontier heroes both,  
we forged our very own earnest little blaze.

Moss stained, abandoned, fungus crowned logs,  
that flaked and crumbled in the damp morning stew,  
lay across our stumbling, soggy way.  
We found the head of the hill tumbling water  
and prodded out the smell of black leaf pools.

Where the water bubbled free and fresh,  
between wind-cracked, tumbled branches  
and thickly braided bramble tangles,

we found the dens, the scrape footed doorways,  
that hid the hunted badgers safe from day.

All at once, loud and strong ,she babbled,  
chattering, in harmony with the free flowing gossip  
from the sun gleam stream below us.  
Collecting hazelnuts and cracking them with stones,  
we idled, passing happy minutes with sleeping Brock.

## **Balancing Mixed Vegetables On A Motorway Bridge**

Fergus vomits in the street.  
Walking to the pub he stops  
and deposits bile in the gutter.  
“Better out...” he says.  
Fergus walks miles out of his way  
to find a bridge over the ring road  
and urged on by boys who admire  
the calculated insanity of the man,  
he climbs onto the safety rail  
and walks backwards with his eyes shut.  
None of the boys can tear their eyes  
away from road kill fascination.  
Fergus shouts and cracks a smile.  
The boys grin and shout back,  
in thrall to the image of a body  
lying fifty feet below them.  
The trick is being in control,  
balancing the weight of possibility  
against their lack of imagination.  
The boys are sick in the gutter,  
depositing small rivers of Tetley’s  
finest ale down the drains.

## **Bantry, With An Umbrella**

On the way down we stopped on a beach,  
bordered by tufts of marra m that clung to our boots  
like dead men’s hands crawling across the empty spaces  
littered with bottle tops and shivering plastic bags,  
where black headed gulls skirled below the black rocks  
that rose to the headland. We kicked over the tracing  
seaweed, skimming pebbles on rolling curls of white  
and gray, and lifted sand in the tread of our boots,  
as the wind whipped in between buttons on our coats.

After lunch in a timbered pub, Guinness smoothed,



warmed after the rain, jackets dripping puddles  
of rainwater onto stripped and stained boards  
in a place where suits ate lasagne and mussels  
and skies loomed, as oiled as the seal heads  
out in the bay, we sat and made jokes about weather,  
whiling away a few minutes with impossible clues  
in a cryptic crossword maze, our straying hands  
making the best of drying hair in a firelight glow.

Headlights on, mid afternoon, passing zipped up cars,  
driving down a track of mud and shingle, passed gates  
that led to half built bungalows squatting below branches  
that scattered water and autumn leaves to the wind,  
where half-hearted dogs barked sadly from under the shadow  
of rain swollen eaves, we drifted sideways at a bend by a path  
We found a spur, a break in the overhang, parked and sat  
beneath glass, alone with a curl surf tide that wrapped its weight  
around an island whose head bobbed for air in the clouds.

Walking up from the beach, pulled inside out by the sharp  
Atlantic squall, a wee man emerged from between tufts  
of sodden gorse. Ambling up with a smile and a question  
or two, he explained about surveying and places to stay  
with a Jamesons for warmth. Manoeuvring a green Mercedes  
out from behind wind bent trees, he disappeared, red lights  
merging with the dusk and rain, still smiling at the thought  
of talking away the late afternoon minutes with impatient lovers,  
lovers too polite to be rude in the mists of Bantry Bay.

Inside the gray upholstered world of a Fiat,  
while the skies poured out their hearts to the tip of our hats,  
with you astride my lap, jeans wrapped around your ankles,  
your mouth buried into my neck in soft, warm sighs,  
the shape of the handbrake imprinting on your left knee,  
I felt your warmth thrill through me in deep kisses,  
The mists sloped in on the island, lights and sounds faded  
beneath the rising night at the end of a simple, waterlogged day,  
when we made love in a Fiat on the edge of Bantry Bay.

## **Between The Lines**

The tiger, crayon camouflage, red stripes,  
is made bold by grubby hands, a bitten lip,  
a felt tip pressed too hard.

Later, on a nettle fringed path, gingerly  
sliding passed the stings, she looks for

the prowler, tiger wild.

By thistles, roped, and shaggy, a horse  
stops browsing, brown eyed and fly flecked,  
heavy with becalmed summer sun.

Surprised she drops her most brilliant thing,  
red stripes on white, sugar-sweet and sticky,  
grass stalks and dry earth.

In the stalking grass, between the lines,  
the tiger licks a paw and skips away  
chasing pollen heavy bees.

## **On The Never Never**

A patchwork of bricks and crumbling edges,  
damp, dark moss creeping along canals of mortar,  
marks the spot where a body is buried

at the edge of a shaggy, sun starved lawn,  
brick meets cold earth, a fringe of grass  
windblown on a bloom of loose blown leaves.

Delivered in blood on whispered wondering  
about football boots and strapping lads,  
the infant boy opened his eyes and cried,

His mother held him on her stomach,  
while he choked and swallowed mucous  
and was carried away from his mother's breast.

Born and died in sixty-one and there was I,  
blue and borrowing for Christmas sixty-two,  
borrowing his time, borrowing his place.

One infant lays in a solitary, unvisited grave,  
lays with me upon my chest  
and opens his eyes to watch me sleep.  
We are breathless both and silent. I may  
look as he would have. I may sound  
as he would have. I have borrowed his time.

## **Brilliant Miaow**

Every s mile,  
every move,

every padding paw  
every pounce,  
every tumble,  
every honest flaw.

Blanket ponies,  
grass green air,  
painted whiskers twitching,  
Coloured faces,  
button noses,  
dream weavers stitching.

Behind the scenes,  
at front of house  
parents standing proud,  
while under lights,  
the youngest act  
before a captured crowd.

Standing high,  
singing loud,  
beaming under lights,  
hands sting,  
flowers bloom,  
grinning in the night.

Every laugh,  
every prowl,  
every why and how?  
Every spark,  
every graze,  
every brilliant miaow.

## **Burn Out**

Fantasies become more real than the world outside the window  
and days pass by marked by the spill from dirty ashtrays.  
Crumpled tissues fall from an overflowing blue plastic wastebasket.  
A page sits white, unspoilt, waiting for words of substance,  
while the eyes that stare upon the empty spaces fill with images of glittering  
prizes.  
Too easy to make another cup of tea or drift away on radio voices,  
anything rather than commit thought, that crime against creeping indolence.  
Sounding positive is all hollow echoes and bouncing sounds.  
Conversations happen and you try for depth, for a resonance,  
for any bloody sound in your voice except the wasted flatness of vowel  
and the consonant without edge. There are no ideas.

## **Burning Books**

Four hundred and fifty one degrees Fahrenheit.

Crisply charred letters fall like snowflakes,  
perfect crystalline structures.  
Black windows glitter diamond spots of light  
where sparks dribble across the night.  
Each floating ember is a letter,  
a burning flicker of inspiration  
falling to earth, fading and dying  
on cold, hard ground.  
Feverish tongues lick spines,  
curling through bindings,  
obscuring sense and sentiment,  
unravelling logic and argument,  
laughing at a lover's pains  
and life's raw comedy.

Stanzas weep. Chapters suffocate.

Some where, out there  
at the edge of the fire glow,  
a blank page is set and the story  
starts again from the beginning.

## **Calm**

Tears may fall beneath this down turned veil,  
rain upon an unwashed face, where stains  
are drawn upon deepening crags.  
Beauty, fondly remembered, shines on the crest  
of each scar crack ridge, each care roughly worn.  
I shall not turn my face from the light,  
but lift the close meshed net from these eyes  
and reveal these shadows, this cold profile,  
this eroding salt water landscape.

Tears may fall beneath this down turned veil  
and fill the gullies, drip by slow caught drip,  
that lay bare beneath heavy lidded thunderheads.  
Laughter pricks and picks its way  
across this pitted diamond mask,  
dancing faery steps through rippling, moonlit pools.  
The hurricane wind lies quietly in these eyes now.  
I have found calm among the dark edges

that rise and smile with your soft and gentle voice.

## Capulet

Love, the blush on a man's rarely open face,  
is the flower laden line delivered blooming  
in the crimson shadow of Capulet,  
cast from under the mask of muses.

Love, adored of doubts and doubters,  
is the stage upon which we hope and dream,  
a tide, bade stay by a broken voice,  
that foaming breaks across this sea of words.

Love, the fleeting glance that catches hold,  
becomes the dance of eyes entranced.  
Walking, hand in hand, with you, my Juliet,  
we'll leave Mercutio's feud behind us ever more.

## Cold Bone China

Wedding presents, a tea service, bone china,  
cold, unwrapped, shadow perfect.

A bed, after an argument, parallel lines, protecting  
space, personal, burrowing away from warm skin.

Waking tired to the bone in strangled silence,  
making a cup of tea, with second best, for one.

The secret, second time around, is holiday vouchers,  
a pot of tea and sleepy conversations in the morning

and because neither one of us can muster six cups alike,  
there are no worries about spoiling the set.

## Courtyard

With the sun at his back  
he follows his shadow  
across herringbone pavours  
pitted by frost and chipped by ice,  
worn smooth by boot heels.

Each brick was placed  
by calloused hands,  
butted against a neighbour,  
crisp and clean, a geometrically

arranged enclosure.

The sun sweeps the sky,  
a new broom, bright and bristling,  
and stone weathers, dull but  
not colourless under brilliant blue  
brush strokes.

His eyes fix on a point, perspective,  
above the patterns beneath his feet.  
Each stone, individually set out,  
imagined and roughly mapped,  
is a monument to craft and guile.

The walker, focused, wrapped up  
in end-of-year bottom line errands  
and corporate reporting, walks on,  
blissfully unaware of the plan, laid  
with hard skin, blisters and scars.

## **Delamere Crow**

Torn feathers ruffle in a slipstream breeze  
as Delamere Crow parades, hop, hop, hop...

Blues and greens refract metallic sunlight  
and burger bags waltz in small side eddies,  
swag for the bag man.

A simple choice. Necessity. Bullet eye  
seeks and finds on the hard shoulder.

Cigarette smoke billows out onto the wind.  
Delamere Crow skips forward  
and beads his booty question.

Leigh Delamere.

Strutting.

A crow.

## **Don't Speak Saturdays**

Beneath old bricks that hold a fire on winter mornings,  
where mugs of tea steam  
and spin sugar down in their vortex,

dissolving the crystal,  
diamonds without edge,  
kneels a man, his dressing gown hanging loosely  
from care heavy shoulders, bowed, sagging.  
The long blue cotton tie drags across the soles of his feet,  
trailing the ribbons that floated once  
upon a time happiness in the dun air.  
One arm is slung atop a bowed iron fireguard,  
the hinges of which have broken under the weight.  
He flicks cigarette ash onto red glowing coals,  
sweat glistening on his unwashed brow, in the gray sides.  
A hook, buried in the cracked wall above the lintel,  
dangles a scrap of Christmas tinsel, deep crimson,  
shimmering in the heat rising from the fire,  
mirroring his eyes, stuck fast in the light of roasting embers.

Pans unwashed, yoghurt pots half emptied,  
their lids licked down on the worktop  
where tannin stained mugs stack  
and Marmite smeared knives lay discarded.  
A bright red bike, plastic strips of pink  
shining under a strip light,  
lays abandoned in the middle of the floor.  
The sound of metal on metal, draining away,  
scratched and scraped,  
veneers and layers,  
braids that bear the day.

Faded, ringed eyes look out from under a fringe  
of mouse brown hair tied back, tired.  
Under a wrapping of worn white cotton,  
plaid in delicacy, washed out grays and pinks,  
tightly tied at the waste, the hem torn and frayed,  
a woman, clatters through the debris of a kitchen,  
aggressively stalking,  
eyeing the wall with x-ray vision,  
she too deposits ash on glass green,  
hearing the song of another summer, No Doubt,  
rattling in her head with the chorus, Don't Speak.

A television, forced play making and white smiles,  
games and videos and inane interviews  
with manufactured wall posters ,  
fame, escape from humdrum worlds,  
laughter echoes for no one in particular.  
Children, high chairs and pretend cats,  
voices rising louder and louder,  
attention sought

between the fire glow stare  
and the muttering dishes,  
still not aware that the snap would come,  
that the ragged edge of this kitchen howling,  
this unwashed, sullen, fire filleted morning  
would fall on innocent heads, easy heads.

## Dormitory

Sergei, my brother, wait with me now.  
Blankets await our rest below cast iron columns,  
between which our bare framed metal beds lie,  
made sparse, empty, until our nail headed return.  
Here we lie, together, breasting fitful sleep  
for the corrugated clatter of ladle heads on bars.  
Day, when all here are awake, is measured by blurs,  
by the creak of the loom and the shuffle of socks  
on splintered boards, is counted upon the draw  
of thread across our hard bitten fingers.  
Day is yard upon yard of cloth; enough it seems  
to cover a world and lay a carpet from here to the moon.  
I remember scratching my name upon a book cover  
when the rains came and rotted our wheat.  
The stars shine now, in summers that bake  
the earth dry, above the crumbling concrete  
and split, sagging, timbers that are the roof upon our world.  
Men sit here, tired and worn down, talking quietly,  
joking tragically, blunting their sullen frustrations  
with coffee as thick as the sap that runs from under  
the bark of the ash trees in the wood where we played.  
Our silent moments, our dreams, your photograph,  
all of these rest here with me when we lay  
our soiled bodies down to sleep. Dust floats  
through the empty day on shafts of light and warmth,  
delivered by the prostitute sun through cheap  
blown glass that hides the world outside, like smoke  
curling through laughter in the bars that we visited.  
Dust hacks away at our sleep as the old ones cough.  
Dust, like the shadow herded hours, creeps across  
the smooth scuffed floorboards and lays deep  
in the fibre of the grey washed pillowcases  
beneath our heads. When it is dark and a hundred  
men lay together in the dim light of hissing gas lamps,  
scratching their lice bitten armpits and crying for home,  
when we keep our boots on to keep our feet warm,  
that is when we look up at the bubbled window panes  
and search for stars in gaps between the clouds.



But like the tight bound clouds that drift the moon away,  
there is no space between our beds, just metal  
and ancient breathing from under moth worried cloth,  
weaved by others who slept here, others who have gone  
to dust or to the iron earthed Steppe, men who worked  
and slept as we work and sleep. We are hived away,  
droning on from warp to warp, far from our poor brothers,  
who struggle to scratch the hard fields, who watch  
summer flowers stand tall on the steppes and drop  
their pollen on the legs of lazy humming bees.  
Rank upon rank lay now with me. Some sleep,  
some lay with watery eyes fixed on splinters  
in the beams above their heads, some talk in their sleep  
of fires and rosy cheeks and warm bosomed girls.  
With the thin warmth of my blanket tucked up to my chin,  
with the hay sagging in my hollow centred mattress,  
surrounded by the low stares of black cheek sunken eyes,  
I think of you, Sergei, I think of home. Then, when I can number  
the edges of the moon no more, I dream of carpet grass,  
dream of flowers and smoke and the burn of vodka  
on long nights after the sweat of autumn harvests.  
In these dreams, Sergei, I watch your back arch  
and your muscles ache, I watch the pot, watch the ladle  
move slowly through lean soup and I remember  
that I will not starve here. Wait for me, my brother,  
stay well, keep well and pray that, one day,  
we shall drink vodka together once more.

## **Fresh Earth**

Spittle dew, will-o'-the-wisp,  
brown spotted leaves  
catching rainbow sun  
in spheres of milky transparency,  
joyful light and crawling dark,  
a soft breeze, the falling leaf,  
fragile, browning in this gift  
of late autumn warmth,  
sullen, hemmed in,  
black-eyed buds hang still,  
throwing seed eyes upon  
the cooling wings  
of far flung swallows,  
spinnaker émigrés soaring blue,  
and damp breath on a flower head  
swells freshly turned earth spilling  
out of crumbling terracotta pots.

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