

*Music's Duel*

***Also by Gavin Selerie:***

*Playground for the Working Line* (Ziesing Brothers, 1981)

*Azimuth* (Binnacle Press, 1984)

*Puzzle Canon* (Spectacular Diseases, 1986)

*Strip Signals* (Gallop Dog Press, 1986)

*Elizabethan Overhang* (Spectacular Diseases, 1989)

*Southam Street* (New River Project, 1991)

*Tilting Square* (Binnacle Press, 1992)

*Roxy* (West House Books, 1996)

*Danse Macabre*, with Alan Halsey et al

(Ispress & West House Books, 1997)

*Days of '49*, with Alan Halsey (West House Books, 1999)

*Vitagraph* (Binnacle Press, 2001)

*Le Fanu's Ghost* (Five Seasons Press, 2006)

*The Canting Academy*, with David Annwn et al (Ispress, 2008)

**GAVIN SELERIE**

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**New and Selected Poems**  
**1972-2008**

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For my niece and nephew  
Gemma and Peter

and in memory of my parents  
Peter Alexander Shaw Selerie 1916–1989  
E. Muriel Helen (Lee) Selerie 1916–2007



One said go  
never hesitate

The other said  
you will have to stand  
by each line  
for the rest  
of your life



*from* **Azimuth (I-IV)** *and* **Puzzle Canon**

**1972-1978**

## Star Carr

You stand up a stag,  
the skull pressed to your own  
with horn-spring  
height and hardness,  
reaching into the other  
dark domain

I was the red deer  
I hunted,  
I was the year  
next given,  
I moved above  
the marshy lake

Dancing in the campfire flames,  
dressed for story-telling,  
driven by the load of memory

So the stars shake  
the wind cries  
the riggs beckon

(Vale of Pickering, 8000 BC)



## No Trespassers

Who's here who should not  
dwell, them as needs  
a scape afar

skin to skin  
over ground divide  
in secret coppice heart

urgent commune  
by orbit turns  
to quiet clutch  
and let go

rustle, twitch, grunt—  
what stirs  
under oak and ash  
beside strange creature pulse

from the trods  
of an ancient ridge  
they shift,  
dark grey, white heads  
streaked with black

bedding to the surface  
drag, and nuzzle this soil  
for grubs and roots

two feet away  
some Doomsday trust  
says adult and cubs  
will not begrudge  
our stay since February  
wind by snatches

as the sign, absurd  
back there  
bears witness

## Fyllr

leaning into the hill  
she drew him  
through green skirt, red knickers

a passage guarded  
in modest bud

fear the rays of fire  
sixty times a raging child

knitted the several parts  
bone blood and limb

Fyllr: or Fulla (filler, lifegiver), handmaiden and confidante of Frigg. A Norse fertility goddess.

## Scope

Reeds, meadows, and sand  
reaching flat to the horizon,  
scattered farmsteads on low mounds  
red above the fields

sky spreading into sea  
fixed with ink  
murmuring in stillness  
across the marshes and dunes

a force agitating from below –  
someone walking on the causeway  
a faraway giant  
the clouds alive with orange  
the dykes purple

colour and light  
is form itself

Seebüll, 1972

## The Ring

We sat silent beneath the moon  
in a crown of slender trees  
and the legend precipitated  
a riot of cordage  
from which there could be  
no divergence.

Before the chaffinches  
a stone curlew  
in wild, human voice.  
Before the beech-trunks  
an oval earthwork,  
a later temple  
within.

800 feet, a ridge  
between the Adur and the Arun,  
Celtic banks and hollows.

We looked through silver-grey pillars  
towards Cissbury and Lancing,  
other crests with a separate music,  
towards the tide-pull  
at Shoreham.

Leaf and wing forms without I or it  
murmur as we drop  
steeply from the scarp.  
Our feet plot the nervous system  
of planets wheeling.  
Rabbits scamper in chalk,  
flint-flakes shift and scatter,  
the field narrows to a tunnel  
breathing through foliage.

Sliding more than walking,  
we follow a spear point

marked but strange –  
a world new, potent, inimical  
and besieging: he was talking  
of a serpent engendered by the Sun  
and killed by him  
to protect the human race  
who dreaded its fire and suppleness.  
Of that same god's pursuit  
of a virgin who refused his flame  
and was captured in a freeze  
of writhing sinews.  
He said only: Let her be always  
green and shining.

As each tree became that face  
and dissolved, moving in and out  
of the forest. The years  
an elastic turf under foot.

She raises her arms to the stars,  
she is fresh as gathered herbs,  
she offers new blood for the forgotten,  
she is the night prowler's triple dream.

A panel of perforated black,  
silver profile of a leering mask.  
There was something closed  
that began again. He looked ahead  
at others ganging. Stopped  
as between decades, dim laughter  
about. Maybe a trumpet, a trumpet  
bottling feeling, a harmon mute  
speaking gruffly sweet. Drums  
paring each bar with a rimshot.  
Tremor on seam of contact.  
To each his language – do they know,  
can they, is this a non-repeat frame  
or a blinker jump?

Flecked forward by a thread  
groundlong they go  
passing no should or ought  
where roots coil like pythons,  
branches quiver.

The tall chemist led them back  
to the cottage. After him, in line,  
the psychologist. Last, as a retina  
over crystal, the poet, bringing her power  
with him. Down the lane, by hedges  
and haystacks, they share thoughts  
roughly inherited, take colour  
from iron stalks. Quickly the secret  
is overlaid: a slippery, thorny track  
running south-east between the charted routes.  
To the High Street with its curves and dips  
and no satyric cries.

Icon of that place, his friend's  
woman, she queens it casually  
on the doorstep. The cats are roused.

Brushing fat daisies, they walk  
as intruders in known space:  
the salad on the dresser not for eating,  
the disc on the turntable not for hearing,  
the books, as a concertina, not for reading.

She turns suddenly and laughs,  
her cheeks boned with summer lightning,  
and he sees one thought pass over another,  
all that was anger being pain.

The head swims with spreading legs  
as beams bend in a white room.  
Thinking back, he is thinking of a figure  
but she reverses  
to show a need not voiced  
a morning or a season ahead.

She is wearing a red cotton dress  
with embroidered mirrors. She has bangles  
on her wrist. She drums her fingers  
on the couch. Her eyes pierce  
a male domain, check-shirted.

Soldiers march across the wall  
in green uniforms with red tabs.  
A kettle boils after the gas is turned off.  
He stubs out a cigarette, eradicating  
schooldays. Mud in the crevices  
of a boot sole. Daffodils in a Persian  
carpet, or lilies expiring. Veins  
in an alabaster cup.

What shivers as a tart reply  
is not – you stalk the glint  
of your own weakness.  
A chain unfastens, is there  
by the hearth.

One parts the curtains to find a star cluster.  
Another feels that rich aggregate,  
if ever we were alive, without stirring.  
Our silver mistress, constant in change,  
sparkles in woodland as the village sleeps.