

Belonging

Also by Martin Anderson

The Kneeling Room
The Ash Circle
Heard Lanes
Dried Flowers
Swamp Fever
The Stillness of Gardens
Black Confetti
The Hoplite Journals

MARTIN ANDERSON

Belonging

followed by

The *English* Boat

Shearsman Books
Exeter

First published in the United Kingdom in 2009 by
Shearsman Books Ltd
58 Velwell Road
Exeter EX4 4LD

ISBN 978-1-84861-037-8

Copyright © Martin Anderson, 2009.

The right of Martin Anderson to be identified as the author
of this work has been asserted by him in accordance with the
Copyrights, Designs and Patents Act of 1988.
All rights reserved.

Cover photograph copyright © John Scarlett, 2009.

Acknowledgements

Grateful acknowledgement is made to the editors of the following
magazines in which some of these poems, sometimes in a different form
and under a different title, first appeared: *Fire*; *High Chair*; *Oasis*; *Other
Poetry*; *Poetry Salzburg*; *Shearsman*; *The Journal*; *Tremblestone*.

‘Occulta’, ‘A Boyhood’ and ‘Light Where There Is’ (originally titled ‘The
Resources’) appeared as a broadsheet published by Oasis Books, London,
in 2002.

CONTENTS

A World Impatient to Sound

Occulta	11
A Boyhood	14
Flume	17

A Constructed Place

Light Where There Is	23
Archipelago Nights	26
A Habitation	32
The Blessing	33
This Tutelary Space	34

Residues of Light and Air

The Pear Tree	39
Thames	43
Edges	56
Belonging	60

The *English* Boat

Liquid Gold	69
Farewell to the Shade	70
Kaah-kaah-kaah	71
‘To Get the Pearl and Gold’	72
Out in the Open	73
Siempre Leal Ciudad	76

A Place Insufficiently Imagined	75
Customs / Duties	77
“They cannot be taught lessons”	78
Heart of Oak	79
“Why all those birds?”	80
Diomedea exulans	81
Home	82
Notes	84

The man who finds his country sweet is only a raw beginner;
the man for whom each country is as his own is already strong;
but only the man for whom the whole world is as a foreign
country is perfect.

—Hugh St Victor

A WORLD IMPATIENT TO SOUND

OCCULTA

That it is
not
worth waiting
for, that
the eye blinks
in a damp
cellarage, watching

doors slam
on it, and all
the room's shadows

face glimpsed
in a window,
a life
looking out
on a life,
crossing streets
entering a house

smell of warm dinners
under corrugated iron roof,
plash of fen
round lacerated knees,
cress pulled
from clear waters

where light
crossed, over the hand
and found
a voice, a consolation
thumb
print upon
fogged mirrors
shadow, breaking
upon others,
in church porches,
under rose-lapped gables,

to echo,
and to order
opaque realities
— yours —
mingled,
mint and creosote,
till one thing became
another

without really meaning to,
in a dispersion
of phonemes

the gold effluvium of a carp
waited,
between banks, for you

to seize it

and, in a river
of elided letters
of drowned predicates
there drifted
something like your name,
a solitude spelt backwards
amid noctambulant voices

trailing a face
a boss, scored featureless
by wind and rain,
heat and cold,
and time

but you would never
pronounce it.

A BOYHOOD

Not a sound
through the dark
air only
a dog barking
click of a dynamo
on spokes, before sleeping

house fronts.
Cold latches.
Environs, barred
to him. Days
held in the element
of despair, floated

up a hill
past the wooded
moat of sky. To
where, and who,
beyond himself,
was watching, if at all

the land forming
round a question,
river moving
through its treacherous sediments,

Shoreditch, Purfleet, Gravesend,
while the marsh burned

white flesh from stalks
and the church threw
its pointed shadow across
the vigour of
a dead pastoral. Ominous
succession of signs; words

to denigrate
the shape of the tongue, stuttering
father's employment, school.
Supineness before authority.
'The best infantry in the world.'
He heard

the afternoon sigh
on the ragged verges
of council estates,
where the shop fronts creaked
out of their
broken names and hoardings

‘Alston, Edwards, Nunn,’
generations that stayed,
and the light, pouring
through orchards and graveyards,
and birdsong.
Journeys, beginning

and ending,
a twilight
of narratives. Where
the river moved
amid the summer spores,
nettles and dockleaves

through small creaks,
trickled, he wrote
his name
upon the softened stump
of a rotting aspen
branch, and launched it.

Flume

Rippled

tongue adrift
on shadows,
 pulled through
a world impatient
to sound

ledger of worn gleanings,
rustling drawers,
the night's thin loams
 growing
whiter towards dawn,
the names of the lost

particulars,
air, with all its
laminations
and distractions,

listening
to what breaks
across itself,
mirror colliding
with its reflection,
 syllable,
 calling

back what
the years discard,
 until you cannot hear
anymore
what it is they are

saying;
cognate of
'to arrive,'
at a point
— ad verbum —
where one is
always departing
died

many times,
forehead pressed against
 wainscots
where you wrote
the names,
 and listened:
 they never
came back.

The freight
of 'here',
lilacs
weaving

