

# INEXPLICABLE FRAGMENTS

A Selection of Poems  
of Love, Life, Time  
and Place

Barry S. Britzman

Published 2024  
By  
Barry S. Britzman

Copyright © Barry S. Britzman

The right of Barry S. Britzman to be identified as the author of this work has been asserted in accordance with the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988.

All rights reserved. No part of this book may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted, in any form, or by any means without the prior written permission of the copyright owner.

Jacket / Cover image:  
Thomas Honor's 'Spirit of the Vale of Neath'  
By kind permission of The National Museum of Wales.

For  
Nicholas & Rebecca



**These poems** are, in the main, reflections from the viewpoint of maturity. The one surviving poem from my youth is 'The Tide of Time'. Which arrived fully formed at about three o'clock one morning, when I was nineteen years old. Decades later, I discovered the house I then lived in, was once home to my great uncle Edward Bowen, a local poet. Edward's father, my great, great grandfather Walter Bowen, was a noted poet. Both wrote only Yn Gymraeg - in Welsh.

## Contents

Inexplicable Fragments	9
Henllan ‘The Old Place’	10
No Other Sound	12
Above The Falls	13
Walk Gently	14
How Many Years	16
One Heart at Least	17
First Meeting	18
Dancing in Mary’s Kitchen	19
Triumphant Under the Sun	20
Water on Skin	21
Mary, Ever the Same	22
The End of the Day	23
Walk With Me Once More	24
Every Atom of Me	26
Sea Views	27
The Sea	28
Opalescent Ocean	29
Adrift	30
Villa Cimbrone	31
Ys, The Drowned City	32
Ti Amo	34
Vain Regrets	35

Sangiovese – The Blood of Jove	36
So Fine a Yarn	38
Though We Wait	40
Out of a Dream	41
Allow Me This	42
Boundaries	43
So Small a Nation	44
The Old Foel Road to the Red Lion	45
No Encore Please	46
Lucid Moments	47
The Story That Will Never be Told	48
Step Lightly Through the Veil	49
The Purpose in Life	50
Socrates	50
When Young	50
A Parody	52
The Tide of Time	53
The House That Is My Mind	54
There Are Some Truths	55
As the Fruit Nurtures the Seed	56
Acknowledgements	58
About the Author	61



Naturally fragmented rock at  
Sgwd yr Gwladys Pont Nedd Fechan.



## Inexplicable Fragments

I have found myself on many occasions  
trying to imagine what I have become,  
counting the ways my life changed direction  
not forgetting the place that I started from.

Inexplicable fragments of memory  
entered my mind to urge me along  
the unknown road that openly questioned me,  
where I was going and to where I belonged.

But there were no signs on the road to assist me  
and I had no manner of map as a guide  
my mind found answers to some of the questions  
had questions whose answers I feared to find.

All was unknown, and I had no tutor,  
impetuously, I blundered on blind,  
seeking, not knowing, what I would find,  
on this unknown road, or round the next corner.  
But on the road, I would discover  
all travelers need a beacon or guide.

Then I inexplicably, found myself guided  
here by ancient familial ghosts,  
who unknown, had been patiently guiding me,  
back to the valley of my infancy  
without the aid of map or signposts.

## Henllan 'The Old Place'

Many times, here in my youth  
I came seeking tranquility  
wondering how and why those you raised  
forsook this peace and scenery.  
Who were they, and where are they now,  
how would they view my temerity,  
reclining here beside their home  
beneath this remarkable sky above  
and the valley and river below.

I walked and courted my young loves up here,  
admiring this peace and tranquility  
to look on valley scenes,  
now known only by few  
of whom, none now ask of such walks,  
and fewer enjoy such views.

One love in particular lingers in mind  
of such rare quality beauty and grace a  
maid of a most superior kind  
blest with radiance in form and face.

Now, loyally I come here alone  
and sit and wonder where they may be  
some, I know are now dead and passed  
on. and while seated here, I wonder,  
how this house and the valley beneath  
exerts this powerful hold upon me  
Henllan - the old place, I know is your name  
but you never did know of mine.



Natural rock seat near Henllan.

## No Other Sound

No other sound  
is ever heard here  
save that of the birds  
or the soft breeze,  
as it weaves through the grasses  
and sycamore trees,  
as I sit silence and solitude here,  
to hear and to listen  
to the unwritten,  
unwritable, musical  
language of trees,  
murmuring the hushed  
opening movements  
of Henllan's arboreal symphonies -  
as the setting sun bathes  
in its soft rosy light  
the banks and rockfaces  
displayed here in sight,  
where silhouetted,  
in silent defiance,  
old stunted oaks, standing  
deep-rooted in rocks,  
still strive to maintain  
their unceasing fight.  
While I sit in peace  
this evening here,  
only to hear and to listen  
to the unwritten unwritable,  
musical language of trees.

## Above The Falls

Melincourt Ravine

How many times have I sat here,  
upon this overhanging rock?  
Where below your waters rush  
unknowing unheeding  
if I am here or not  
to hear the eternal sound  
of clear descending pure mountain water.

Lower down is 'The Lido',  
dammed up to give depth  
by both parents and children  
to deepen the clear near-freezing water  
where my children both waded and played  
and splashed undismayed in the cold,  
swift moving, ice-cold mountain water.

## Walk Gently

Melincourt Chapel

Solitary plain and proud  
within the sound nearby falls  
latent and silent  
the chapel stands waiting  
its west wall slated  
against winter squalls.

And I always take care  
to walk gently here  
among generations  
whose names I know  
who have lain here  
more than two hundred years,  
ancestors, grandparents  
my mother,  
the ashes of my younger brother,  
and more recent  
Patricia my wife  
and Nicholas my son.  
Beside them lies Nia  
childhood friend  
of my daughter Rebecca.  
And here they all lie  
faithful patient and silent.

My father,  
two hundred miles away  
in a pauper's grave  
lies unnamed alone.



Melincourt waterfall.



## How Many Years

Though you wait  
The event may be slow to arrive  
and reveal the intended purpose  
yet you hope with regret once more to feel  
that familiar gentle tug at your sleeve,  
the warm expression of surprise  
that finds you precisely  
where, you were  
intended to be.

So complete, the surprise,  
so warm, the expression  
in eyes that betray  
the pleasure in meeting,  
at such a time, in such a place.

How many years have passed?  
how many days?  
Can you remember when we last met?  
do you recall the occasion?  
I remember seeing you at a wedding  
and lately a family funeral.

All long ago,  
and many years since,  
our hours and days, musing on Henllan  
regretting those lost chances of youth  
overwhelmed both by doubt  
and inhibiting fears of rejection.



## One Heart at Least

Accept, you are honoured  
to be the one chosen,  
take it when offered,  
it may not come again,  
give thanks, that one heart at least,  
holds even you to be worthy.  
if you sing, then sing it  
aloud to the world.

Consider the heart  
and soul of the giver,  
the esteem and measure,  
in which you are held;  
while treading the heartbreak edge  
of rejection,  
it is you it is you,  
it is you she has chosen.

## First Meeting

That first meeting of the eyes  
first reaching out of hands,  
our minds in tune,  
mine with yours,  
your mind in tune, with mine.  
The pain of that first conflict  
as soon begun – abated,  
the silent sad soliloquies  
recited when briefly parted,  
the moving harmonic conjunction  
of eyes, words bodies and minds,  
hint at enchantment awaiting,  
as I reach for your outstretched hand.

## Dancing in Mary's Kitchen

Sensual music of the mind may  
in another seek to find,  
a two-part response,  
in *harmony* and *tone*,  
one can, but does not often,  
dance alone.

And by the terms below betoken  
each *note* aired – a word unspoken.  
The *key*, and *tone* provokes a glance,  
her invitation to the *dance*,  
the *movement tempo* at a pace  
in due accordance with her grace.  
Then she within your arms decides,  
and at *andante* softly glides,  
her silences emphasize  
the private *motif* in the eyes,  
a moving thin-veiled, *idée fixe*,  
of advancement and retreat.

And thereupon she sets the scene  
for *variation on the theme*,  
a plaintive *minor key* employs,  
diminishing full grown men to boys,  
in low *sotte-voce* you alone hear  
she murmurs *sognando*,  
Ti voglio bene, caro  
I love you my dear.

Memory

## Triumphant Under the Sun

Hold time, hold time  
don't let this pass.

A warm breeze curved through the emerald grass  
where we languidly lay half-lost in dreams  
together exhausted outstretched at last,  
hand touching her hand her eye seeking mine  
replete in the bliss of a loving sublime,  
we lay in the sun of our second spring,  
in a private secluded sweet fragrant scene,  
stretched out triumphant under the sun.

We are frequently told, that we are but dust,  
and time after time, that all things must pass,  
love is driven by nature to propagate,  
but we alas, were acquainted too late  
and just embarked upon our second spring  
when love leapt out unbridled  
as an exquisite lust.

What cared we  
at such moments,  
that we were but dust?

Memory

## Water on Skin

When we emerged  
from the sea  
we kissed eagerly,  
and then enchanted  
I watched the water  
course down your body,  
meandering curving  
caressing your skin,  
it knows you as well  
as you know I know you  
has license to go  
wherever it will,  
gravity courses it,  
your curves give direction.  
I see how the droplets  
accent the beauty  
standing in front of me,  
you in your sunlight, bejeweled  
glistening skin.

## Mary, Ever the Same

Is it the wind in the trees that nightly I hear?  
murmuring softly Mary your name,  
or is it the sound of the rain on the leaves?  
Whatever it is, I know you are here with me,  
daily and nightly, it is ever the same,  
your unseen presence softly addresses me,  
recalling past times and speaking my name,  
since the shock of your leaving  
cruelly came home to me,  
your daily return now eases the pain.

And in the near distance, the sea not far from me,  
recites in your memory, a remembered refrain, \*  
of your way with words, in tongues unknown to me  
today and always, and ever the same.

So, you are not gone, you always are here with me  
and I know such love will not come again,  
it was a part of Fate's cruel irony  
that we met so late; Life was ever the same.

\* *'La Mer' by Charles Trenet*

Memory

## The End of the Day

Memory why do you weigh upon me  
in the evening when I'm alone?

As when I reach the end of the day  
it ends, and I'm sitting alone,  
and memory floods my mind,  
and I face,  
another evening alone.

Nothing pains more than memory  
when, the worst is the first  
to emerge from the past  
to burden me,  
in the evening when I'm alone.

And perhaps, as I watch a film,  
I reach out expecting to find  
your hand there on the arm  
of the chair,  
but find your hand is no longer there.

Memory, why do you weigh upon me?

## Walk With Me Once More

Memory is not for nothing,  
blest fragments of past life recall  
of those sacred blessed moments  
that made the pain worth it all.

Walk with me once more - to nowhere,  
just walk with me once more,  
and I will make it never-ending,  
just walk with me, once more.

I will serenade you gently  
softly sing to you of love,  
praise you with words eloquently,  
with all the store I placed in love.

Come, please take my hand, once more,  
hold it, as you used to do,  
fix your pale blue eyes upon me  
so brim-full of love and you.

Recite Ronsard's 'Les Amours'  
while I recite John Clare to you  
of his Mary, in the evening hour,  
I live the absence he endured.

One year, one year, of separation,  
one year surrendered to the flay,  
how could fate so separate us  
when we had only reached our May.





Mary in Melincourt ravine.

## Every Atom of Me

I know I began, and coalesced,  
in simple cellular  
multiplication,  
in humanity's wondrous process  
of love, and replication.  
Sharing but briefly  
our time on this earth;  
for I know that in time,  
every atom of me  
will one day deliquesce,  
melt into a liquefaction of clay,  
but afterward, nevertheless,  
each elemental atom will find  
another form to inhabit,  
transform, migrate, and recombine  
in another form of expression.  
Maybe metamorphose  
to the seed of a tree,  
grow, free and strong  
and house birds whose song  
will herald each day  
with the hymn of creation,  
and in season scatter  
new seed to the clay,  
in eternal regeneration.

Memory

## Sea Views

The sea,  
now in the distance, is quiet,  
and the beautiful undulations  
of sand dunes,  
soften the line  
of an otherwise plain,  
horizontal horizon.  
Hands, touching hands,  
your eyes seeking mine,  
and they remind me  
we are alone,  
as I covertly scan  
the soft curving lines  
of your elegant body,  
I see how the sand dunes  
attempt, to mimic or echo  
these soft, curving lines,  
embodied in you  
and realise how you,  
and the dunes in the distance,  
confirm my perception  
that female perfection,  
is a part of Nature's  
cunning deception –  
the eternal beguiling  
ensnarement of man.

# The Sea

2016

The grey-green growling sea  
now breaks upon my shattered shore,  
driving gale-tides cast me  
headlong high awash,  
where neither oar nor sail  
can prevail against the water's rush.

No light shines me on my way,  
no sunrise revives me,  
no bright dawn unbends  
my aching brain,  
and I must try to make amends  
for imagined unrepented wrongs.

The aged singer of ancient songs  
of land and earth;  
my berth for now,  
until I too, am with the earth;  
will offer no apology,  
nor cry for help or plead for me,  
and will not sing my eulogy,  
but mock this feeble effort and pretense  
to the solitary sullen art.

# Opalescent Ocean

Mumbles July 2021

Oh! such a glorious afternoon  
the water lies unmoving and still,  
the opalescent ocean and sky  
merge and blend exquisitely,  
only the anglers disturb the waters  
casting their lines into ripples made  
by slow-moving somnolent fish,  
even the slow-moving somnolent people  
in amazement gaze  
on the transcendent scene.  
Their eyes witness that  
which a camera cannot,  
only the mind and the eyes  
are able to capture  
the sublime opalescence  
of ocean and sky.

## Adrift

Adrift on an ocean  
with no sense of direction  
carried blindly  
on treacherous currents  
and navigated by forces unknown,  
the storm when it comes  
will give you no warning  
all will desert you,  
you will be alone,  
and what then  
of all your happy days?  
and of your glory days?  
happiness fades,  
but glory dies quickly.

Memory

## Villa Cimbrone

In the gardens of Villa Cimbrone, Ravello,  
light-blinded, by the sky and the sea,  
I stood upon the edge of the world,  
on Terrazzo dell' Infinito,  
where, the sea and the sky,  
and the sky and the sea  
blend into a view of Infinity.

The land falls sharply down to the sea  
with nothing to see beyond,  
but the Blue!  
The Blue!  
Oh! - the Bright Blazing Blue,  
From Terrazzo dell' Infinito.

## Ys, The Drowned City

Suggested by Alan Stivell's recording of 'Ys' and 'Eliz Isa' from 'The Renaissance of the Celtic Harp'. 1972

It has been a dark day,  
and the night now grows darker,  
as murmuring sounds  
float over the water  
to this southern shore  
of the bay of Douarnenez.  
Retreating waves  
wash the shingle and shells  
away from the land  
to the everlasting mills of the sea,  
there to be ground,  
slowly to sand;  
while overhead,  
listen!  
the sighing breeze carries,  
the sharp scream of seabirds,  
as an unseen harp  
strikes a chord,  
to unsettle the soul,  
and silence the seabirds –  
it pauses,  
and, in a minor key,  
repeats the same phrase –  
as the sea-bound shingle and shells  
collide with the following incoming wave  
to fracture the water to spray.



Over a distance of decades,  
the haunting sound  
of the harp still pervades,  
the diminishing cadences  
fall on the ear – more softly, and fade.

## Ti Amo

Velvet soft, full, and round,  
blood-warm and cupped  
within my hand  
a sweet perfumed delight  
to mouth and eye,  
what words can articulate  
the pleasure, sight, and rapture  
or the mind intoxicate?

The world sways, stays blurred,  
brush with lips the blush  
and taste the wine.  
and say again how sweet she is,

Oh Corvina, Rondinella,  
warm as the blood, and fruit perfumed,  
tell her, tell her,  
Ti Amo, Ti Amo -  
Ti Amo *Amarone*.

## Vain Regrets

Take with me a glass or two  
perhaps we'll make it three  
and talk of this and that,  
and maybe that,  
and whatever else may be.  
recall lost friends and episodes  
in life, that we regret,  
try to undo the harm  
we dealt and felt,  
and perhaps confess,  
to those elicited loves we kissed,  
and maybe some we missed.  
those we admired,  
and those we desired,  
and those who denied us un-kissed.

The bottom of each glass reveals  
in crystal pure transparency  
life's sad misty merry-go-round,  
in its evanescence it shows  
a transient glimpse of  
an aged wimp,  
hoping for another go.

## Sangiovese – The Blood of Jove

While the light reveals all that you see,  
I stand here unveiled, exposed to your sight  
in brilliant red and serene sensuality  
in anticipation of desire and delight.  
Your wandering eyes examine my form  
on view before your critical gaze  
anticipating refusal – yet,  
you approach and I blush,  
as you sense my perfume,  
and your eyes reach deep to my soul  
am I so clearly revealed to your gaze?  
my virtue so easily read?

I hear you inhale once more, my perfume  
and audibly murmur delight,  
so slight the sound, but sufficient to learn  
that which you sought, now stands within sight  
and your hand slowly encircles my waist  
as you elevate me to your height  
and slowly raise me to your mouth,  
where your lips wander,  
so close, brushing mine,  
your velvet-like tongue,  
tastes me, teases me  
slowly appraises me,  
as you ask for my name.

I reply,  
Tu mi conosci come,  
Sangiovese,  
raise me, praise me,  
taste me and drink.

## So Fine a Yarn

A Cautionary Verse

So many jewels,  
finely strung,  
and hung upon,  
the finest thread,  
shining brightly  
in the sun  
beguilingly  
high overhead.

But this fine pearl-like imitation,  
is not what it seems to be,  
it hides a deadly invitation given,  
any butterfly or bee.

See admire,  
but pass them by  
to loiter there  
could prove fatal,  
don't dine with spider,  
at her table.

She will weave  
so fine a yarn  
you will find it  
hard to leave  
while held suspended  
by the thread  
of her tale,  
and how it ended,

for each,  
fool butterfly  
and bee - now dead  
on which she fed.

## Though We Wait

Though we wait,  
we may not see it arrive,  
or witness how it began,  
as a light in the distance  
along a dark road,  
or a speck upon the horizon.  
A slow approaching illumination  
and gradual clearing of vision,  
the setting in order of disordered images  
from the depths of the mind's dark divisions,  
the uncatalogued pages graved upon memory  
with detail unclear, but well understood,  
with knowledge we never needed to learn  
born of experience that can only be earned.



## Out of a Dream

Someone already has said it before,  
beautiful things dissolve into tears.  
My morning's blue sky began to turn grey  
and then a storm arrested my progress  
I paused and thought, now I am wet,  
I can get no wetter,  
I will step on in spite of the weather.  
Water may wash, and purify  
I willingly welcome a purification  
a benediction, to which  
I have no objection.  
Thought is the birth of more than one thing  
the germs of ideas and motivation  
then – out of a dream, I woke to remember,  
you and the horse that ran away,  
and a lake that was bordered  
with strange-looking houses,  
built with stone coloured as yellow as grey.

## Allow Me This

Allow me this, if nothing else  
total freedom of thought and expression  
an hour or two in good company  
no matter the weather, time or the season  
unrestricted access to memory  
to settle with friends, dine and spend time  
provision of food, music and wine,  
to ease the righting of wrongs and omissions  
creating a mood free of division.

There are times when I walk  
where there are no people  
and call upon solitude  
to be at my side,  
or sit with me at my dining table,  
when at such times the mind may ponder  
memorials of a lingering past.  
When was it and where, did we long for love?  
And fail to see when it arrived  
in the sweetly soliciting nature before us  
the silent unspoken attention displayed  
in an affectionate smile.

Title prompt given as an idea by Carole Hopkin whilst  
she made coffee. Pontardawe 2023.

## Boundaries

The limiting boundaries of being  
are never entirely rigid or clear,  
they may allow access to search and explore  
a deeper reservoir of meaning,  
that memory will forever hold dear.

Sight and perception can be misleading  
and error may lie in the blurring of vision,  
for where we are now is not eternal,  
we are only here for the time being.

There is another dimension beyond  
the one we are able to see,  
we do not stand at the edge of a pond,  
but the ocean of eternity.

Discount the limiting distance of vision,  
retune the senses to what lies beyond,  
where we are now is for the time being  
there is a beyond, beyond the beyond.

## So Small a Nation

Mor Fach Gwlad  
For St David's Day 2022

What was it that the invaders feared  
in their attempts to subdue it  
from so small a nation,  
and, so few a people,  
that over the span of two thousand years  
they built and fortified hundreds of castles,  
among them the mightiest castles in Europe.  
Caernarfon, Beaumaris,  
Conwy, and Harlech  
Cardiff, Caerphilly,  
Coity and Flint,  
Builth, Blaenllynfi  
Abergavenny, and Aberystwyth  
Abertawe, Ystumllwynarth and Nedd,  
yet still the proud cry from the people is heard  
“Ond, ry'n ni yma o hyd”.

*Ond, ry'n ni yma o hyd – But, we are still here.*

*Acknowledgements to Dafydd Iwan.*

*Said to be the most castellated nation in Europe, there was once, more than 600 castles in Wales, one castle to every 13 square miles. There now remain 427. Among the castles built or rebuilt by Edward I were : Aberystwyth, Beaumaris, Builth, Caernarfon, Conwy, Flint, Harlech, and Rhuddlan. Among the Welsh castles captured and repaired by Edward I: Castell y Bere, Criccieth, Dolwyddelan and Caergwrle.*

## The Old Foel Road to the Red Lion

For the Red Lion Inn  
in Penderyn,  
follow the old Foel Road  
from Rhigos,  
where you may be  
excused if you wonder  
what land you are in.  
As the sinister moon  
silhouettes sharply  
strangely diminutive  
Tolkienesque oaks,  
that reach out for you eerily.  
As the road winds  
meanders and narrows  
through ghostly darkness  
around risky corners  
bordered and banked  
by invisible hazards,  
you hope that no ass  
is heading toward you  
with no place to pass,  
or you are not seized by  
unseen wheel-grabbing  
dangerous ditches,  
and held there captive  
until the next morning.

Keep that image with you  
into the Red Lion,  
remember you have  
the same road to return.

## No Encore Please

No encore please,  
not tonight,  
I am tired,

the light dazzles my eyes  
and the noise hurts my ears.  
It signifies nothing that I take my leave  
and quietly finally, vacate the stage.  
It is time to leave, retire from the light  
into the comforting shadows,  
where fears go unnoticed  
and tears unseen.  
What if the curtain does descend early?  
so much in life is only pretend,  
all pretense ceases when the final act ends.  
So, no encore please,  
not tonight.

## Lucid Moments

There are certain lucid moments in sleep  
when what you seek is not of the present,  
were you may see that  
which has never been seen,  
or the knowledge of something  
that has never been known.  
You can love what cannot be understood,  
and hear what has never, been said or sung  
or see without even opening your eyes  
you may realize all in your dream,  
in the then that was now,  
just a moment ago,  
where it existed  
as an instant in time,  
it may persist as a ghost  
haunting the memory,  
or fade, dissolve,  
and be lost for eternity.

## The Story That Will Never be Told

When now and forever have ended,  
and the wind blows no more from the sea,  
when the last sun has descended  
and its light no longer is seen,  
when the moon and tide do not coincide,  
and the sun fails to rise from the sea,  
in the east, where it has traversed  
from the west, in its passage unseen,  
in the morning, no longer attested,  
and its light nowhere to be seen.  
Will we all kneel and pray – or marvel,  
at the wonders about to unfold,  
as the eclipse of the world is portended  
unwitnessed in poem or prose.  
Will poet and seer and we all disappear?  
with the story that will never be told.



## Step Lightly Through the Veil

Step – step lightly through the veil  
you may not see, but it is there.  
Through mist or cloud - be not afraid,  
'tis but one step - and you are there.  
The obstacles are in the mind,  
all will be clear, when you are there –  
step lightly through the veil.

Grief and sorrow of this side  
will softly melt and soothe the soul  
your hopes and loves once more  
will know, consolation of the soul,  
no harboured passions or fears reside  
when you reach the other side  
to meet and greet, and there embrace,  
your lost loved ones, face to face.

Three ideas loosely based on  
the thirty syllable Welsh Englyn.

## The Purpose in Life

Contemplating the purpose of life  
its joys and tribulations  
did some infinite mind  
create it, just for amusement?

## Socrates

In your great wisdom dear Socrates  
as the evening nears its end  
is hemlock truly the nightcap  
that you would recommend?

## When Young

When young, we ran and climbed hills  
that seemed to reach the sky,  
now, more leisurely, our eyes and limbs  
appreciate the nearer things.



Bridge, Vale of Neath Canal  
near Rheola, Resolfen.

## A Parody.

What was something once, is nothing now,  
And what it once was has now ceased to be,  
where it once was, is now of no consequence.  
Why should we value what we can't see  
or measure its present irrelevancy?  
Never and nowhere nor here or there  
perhaps in the distance somewhere afar  
lost in between here and a star,  
too far to measure too far to see,  
it diminishes into infinity.  
Pretenses at substance but dull as dross  
its essence is plainly illusory,  
created insanity in many a mood  
induced by some potion illegally.  
The broken banks of his mind  
are swept aside by unstoppable floods  
of words unconnected intelligently  
“Quick said the bird find them find them  
round the corner. Through the first gate,  
into our first world, shall we follow?”

Many minds were deceived in the rush  
to follow and hear the song of his thrush,  
but heed not their state, they are in extremity  
beyond help as he is,  
as he meanders in wonder,  
in an unconvincing brief semblance of sanity.  
The thrush however, sang sweet and true.  
Was he deceived by the call of the cuckoo?

## The Tide of Time

The sole survivor from my youth Circa 1956

I saw the tide of time turn round  
and back to memory's mind  
retrace its path, and there,  
with tongues of fire,  
burn the stuff  
of which the heart is made.

And in the deepening darkness of  
each division of the mind,  
flaming tongues speaking  
in soul searing whispers  
spread their burning havoc across  
the mind's horizon.

## The House That Is My Mind

Memories of a school in Hull.

In the house that is my mind are many rooms.  
all occupied too briefly to call home,  
some passed through swiftly, recalling only  
surface detail, in some confined alone,  
from others I fled, and on passing through,  
securely barred each door behind me.

Only now from this present perspective,  
my mind and vision no longer clouded  
by feelings of loss and self-consciousness,  
nor hindered by what others may think or see  
as my rejection of things they hold dear,  
what they hold dear, I concede and respect,  
but, with respect, they do not live here,  
not in this house, not in this room.

## There Are Some Truths

Memories of a school in Hull.

There are some truths that cannot bear the telling  
those we hide even from ourselves  
long ago confined to the shadows  
and seldom seen since  
their consignment  
to the dark.

When they emerge, they arrive unbidden  
Unwelcome, shrouded and silent,  
part hidden darkly obscure  
but familiar.

They chivvy us, and shift and sneak  
along unguarded pathways  
into our consciousness  
to rend and tear  
and torment  
the senses.

## As the Fruit Nurtures the Seed

Memories of a school in Hull.

As the fruit nurtures the seed  
so, I have kept their deeds in my heart.

Did they truly believe their fate  
was to teach, subdue and indoctrinate  
their many dubious points of faith,  
and mystify those, whose schooling  
would be dignified to elevate  
and judge as high- as third rate?

I remember their church schools,  
rituals and rules,  
those fools in cassocks  
who'd have us flayed  
out of our skins,  
for sins their own fathers made.  
where their catechists, imprint  
the correct response of faith,  
on flesh, with sticks.

Those disciples of hypocrisy  
preaching peace and charity -  
"Suffer the children to come unto me"  
while inflicting practiced brutality -  
made sure we suffered,  
and now dare question apostasy.

And as the fruit nurtures the seed  
so, I have kept their deeds in my heart.





## Acknowledgements

Alongside my love of poetry and words in general I would like to include the influences of memorable people from my life. The first is my mother who taught all her six children to read before they started school, and my father who first taught me to draw.

In 1948 I failed my 'Eleven Plus', being told by one female teacher before I could even sit down for the examination, "This is not for the likes of you". The school was Hilderthorpe School in Bridlington, the teacher a certain Miss Backraff, whose class I was never in, and who before that moment had never spoken one word to me.

The one school of my childhood that could be described as good was St George's Boy's School in Bridlington, which in 1948 was staffed mainly with relatively young and idealistic male teachers. Several of whom I remember with affection, are Messrs. Pearson, Grist, Reid and Williams in particular Mr. Edward Ingram, who, being one of the first to recognize my interest in learning, history and calligraphy holds a special place in my memory. He brought to his class ancient parchments and a book for me to read. The book was *The Tryal of Charles I*, a second edition printed in 1684.

Decades later Mr. Ingram presented me with that same book, which since has a place of honour on my bookshelves.

During my two short years at St George's, we listened to, read and discussed poetry heard on BBC Broadcasts to Schools. Among those I remember were such memorable poems as Shelley's *Ozymandias*, Macaulay's *Horatio on the*

Bridge, Coleridge's Kubla Kahn, Turner's Romance and Cowper's John Gilpin.

Arriving in the Vale of Neath was for me a late awakening, an expansion of horizons and education. During my apprenticeship I particularly remember several people who helped and influenced me. The genial former NCB Mining surveyor Mr. Ben Davies who helped polish my knowledge of engineering subjects, Eurof Hopkins and Reg Lee, who awoke me to the real history of society. Another was Selwyn Morgan, a man with whom any subject could be discussed. 'Sel' was a machine operator and a playwright. Yet another, in whose memory a small green book occupies my bookshelves, is Mr. John Herbert, former librarian of the Resolven Miner's Welfare Library, one of the thousands of casualties of the Thatcher era. Before the library finally closed, I was returning borrowed books to Mr. Herbert, who in his hand, held a volume of Palgrave's Golden Treasury, which he offered to me, saying "You borrowed this more than anyone, I think you should have it". That same Palgrave's Golden Treasury also holds its place on my bookshelves.

Also from that same valley are several friends and contemporaries whom I remember with admiration and affection. One of whom, a craftsman of exquisite skills, is a maker of violins & cellos sought by professional musicians

In my seventies, I was slow to realise the benefit of Swansea U3A. One of my several group enrolments was the poetry group, then led by Mrs. Brenda Cox, whose real knowledge and enthusiasm for her subject was instrumental in resurrecting my own.

More recently, in 2019, I lost a very dear friend with whom I had enjoyed both a romantic love and love of poetry. She the more knowledgeable, educated in Bristol University and the Sorbonne, was a great lover of French

literature and poetry. She is the Mary mentioned in some of these poems.

My first love was of course, my wife Patricia, mother of our two children Nicholas and Rebecca. Even earlier romantic enchantments refer to admired but unnamed young women, who kindled the flames of unspoken, unrequited love at a distance.

More recently, and importantly, I cannot fail to mention my much admired and respected tutor, Carole Morgan Hopkin of Pontardawe, without whose help and encouragement this collection would never have seen the light of day.

## About the Author

Born in London on August 9th 1937, Barry was the first born of Ceridwen Bowen and Frederick Britzman. The family arrived in Wales in time for the Act of National Registration in 1939. They are shown living at number 2 Maesgwinrig, near Cwmgwrach, in the Vale of Neath. His father Frederick, was employed at the RAF Camp on Stormy Down, which was the reason for the family's later moves to Kenfig Hill and Pyle.

In February 1941, Frederick went to visit friends of his living in Swansea taking four-year-old Barry along with him. The timing was unfortunate, the date was Friday February 19<sup>th</sup>. That same evening, both father and son were caught up in the Swansea Three Day Blitz, for several days Ceridwen, had no idea if her husband and son had survived.

One month to the day later, Frederick enlisted into the RAF, to be posted initially to the East Riding of Yorkshire - the location of 12 WW2 RAF camps, and later to Hussein Dey in Algiers with Operation Torch.

His wife Ceridwen, now with four children under the age of five had to travel 300 miles north, through bomb damaged Britain to live in Bridlington. It was a move that marked the beginning of a sequence of unimagined disasters, leading to the total disintegration of the family. After several changes of schools Barry began his working life in Lincolnshire as a live-in farm labourer. His employer, whom he grew to hate, was fond of insulting Barry's name and origins. After fifteen months of abuse, Barry packed his case and left for Wales.

In Wales he quickly found employment with the Rheola Forestry Commission, but was soon afterwards offered an engineering apprenticeship with George Kent Ltd. After his apprenticeship he became an engineering draughtsman and later advanced into engineering management roles.

When he arrived in the Vale of Neath as a teenager, Barry was astonished at the many cultural activities found in that small valley. There were operatic societies, drama societies, choirs, silver bands and several sporting activities fostered there. He became an active member of the Resolven Youth Centre, and in his third year was elected chairman. He developed a love of rugby, playing for both the Resolven Youth, and later the Senior side, making friends that have lasted a lifetime. He could never have imagined how much of his life would be spent in that valley.

Throughout his life he maintained a love of art, and once held aspirations to be an artist. Since childhood he has read and written poetry, a fact well-hidden during his rugby-playing days. Front row forwards are not usually noted as lovers of poetry.

Some of the poems included here refer to the Vale of Neath, its mountains, waterfalls and river. In particular the ruined farmhouse at Henllan above Melincourt, a favourite haunt. A place where, from a particular rock, he could view the valley and contemplate, how fortunate his life had become since he arrived there. The valley was his home for over thirty-five years, he was married with a son Nicholas and daughter Rebecca. Barry now lives in Swansea.