



These are poems filled with emotion ... of trying to grasp the meanings of our past ... of knowing the people and the places around us. My childhood, from the age of five, was in Cornwall, England: in many ways idyllic, but often when returning there to visit, I would find it difficult to truly re-connect with that earlier life ... and the people it embraced.

Mixed Emotions

*Back where it all started from
After a whole world of new experience.
Still the same soul, on a mound of leaves,
As I look to the fields in view.
Part of the same bank, by a familiar road.
The same mound, but a changed mound:
The same hedge changing in time,
As the years of man change the road alongside.*

*Mountains of green built on layers of green,
Pile on top of the other from valley floor.
From where I sit near the pillar-red box
(That wisdom of memory tells me
Used to reside in the stone wall opposite),*

*This abundant, lush growth of high summer sun
Bears no resemblance, but reliance to
The cool, dark days that have gone before.*

*For this verdant plumage that tumbles down
From the top of 'Great Hill' and 'The Break',
Shows an exquisite and matching exterior,
But my mind knows the forbidden halls.
Now an outsider (of sorts), between generations,
(that in itself, a secret to keep from some people),
I am privy to some of the deeper secrets
Of this neatly framed and pristine world.*

*And (let's not beat around the bush),
These are momentous secrets that if told as one,
Seem so incredulous as to beggar belief;
A Peyton Place in a Cornish field.
Even today I was told two more:
Of drunken 'fight to the death' and elderly misdeeds.
But even from my privileged viewpoint,
I can only guess at the iceberg unseen.*

*I love coming back to my past
To cherished people and places chosen to leave
All those so many long years ago,
(because of that choice, now forbidden to me).
But I still look for escape to a wider world
That holds greater perspective: release from creed.
Torn now between many vibrant parts:
Jack of all places, but master of none!*

*These secret thoughts are all revealed
In one momentary action of mine,
As family stood for 'Proms in the Park',
I could not sing those memorized words.
They seemed to come from a past once known,
Clashing with those truths from a wider scene,
To show of a world that I thought long gone,
But one that I cannot dispel.*

Mixed Emotions (above) - a set of complex verses - was for me a watershed. It came with realisation that the place of my childhood - the place I loved to return to, from afar - had become something of a myth in my mixed-up mind. It all looked quite similar to what it had been in my past, but in reality it had undergone changes: some large but others almost imperceptible ('the same mound, but a changed mound'), and now encompassed secrets of family indulgences that remained hearsay or largely unrevealed, and to which I was privy because of my detached persona. In other words, I was used as a sounding board because I was a loosely connected, but central, link-pin. But my connections to the wider world (I had moved away almost 40 years before) gave me another appreciation of life, which meant I could never again be an intimate and captured dweller of that childhood space. I longed to return as a full member, but in truth I was now, only a valued associate!

Strange Revelations

*Everyone faces an unexpected word,
But a stranger revolution I have not heard,
Concerning family matters of a very trusted soul
Who had erred rather gravel just a few years ago.*

*Now my time (at 49) has brought a jolt or two,
But this disclosure came, like a bolt from the blue,
Casting further doubt on the sanctity at stake,
Of a tarnished family background over solid silver plate.*

*Concealments are made to test secrets that are held,
Their unveiling thus ensuring their concealers can be felled.
Bad trees in the forest, cleared away to make safe
The purity of life, in what seems a perfect place.*

*The falsity of this is so clearly there to see,
For innocent young saplings all make semi-rotten trees.
Some conceal, some expose, their less than wholesome parts,
But most (if not all), grow into old and wrinkled farts.*

*The choice thus remains for the new ones coming on,
To conceal or condemn the secrets they have won:
To keep momentum going or to cut and start again;
To support chronic anguish, or acute dose of pain.*

'Strange Revelations' (above) is a fast-moving set of verses that I never imagined writing. A close relative had told me of her continuing stress related to abuse within her own family that occurred in her childhood, many years before. I was shocked, but it perhaps said to me - along with earlier exposure of my own confused parentage - that we are all flawed to some degree: no one is perfect. The issue for my relative was whether to tell all ... or not. I tended to side with the 'or not' verdict, judging that the incident was many years in the past, and the perpetrator, her father, was now old and infirm. My thinking was also that revealing all would cause deep hurt to her mother. In the end, I think she did discuss all with her mother and immediate family members, but it stopped at that. Both the wrongdoer and his wife have since died. Life moves on!

Perspectivity

*A river runs deep
Through the passions of surrender,
But the heart remains true
To the agent of pain.
Glades in the forest
Shimmering fortune down forever,
Casting a sparkle
In the transitory frame.*

England, 1999

Perspectivity is one of the shortest poems I have composed, but it could (perhaps) contain more meaning than all the others put together. Written in between the two poems above, I now find it difficult, even myself, to interpret its full significance. It could be both an answer to *Strange Revelations*, the poem above, while also being something of a prophecy for the first poem *Mixed Emotions* (penned three years after): 'The heart remains true' referring to a childhood life still cherished from a distance. This one verse highlights the fact that a few lines of poetry can, at times, convey more meaning than a ten-page essay on the same topic.

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