



Verses in Search

of the Self
Susan Gilchrist

**Offered in the hope that it
will help others on their journeys**

Verses in Search of the Self

An Anthology of Poems, Notes and Papers by Susan Gilchrist

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Introduction

This is a collection of notes, poems and papers which I have put together to help me deal with a conflict I have faced. Much of the material is very personal. However I have felt it appropriate to do this in case my understanding can help others to deal with the same situation.

Online notes are available on: <http://www.tgdr.co.uk/notes301V>

Although this document has been released on a website these documents are NOT intended for unlimited circulation. I ask anyone who sees them to treat them in the appropriate way.

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Update 2017

These poems describe a personal journey up to September 2002. For further personal accounts and more recent biographical information see: [Gilchrist, S. 2015 d. "Living With Difference"](#) and: [Gilchrist, S. 2011 a. "LGB and T People: Labels and Faith"](#).

For a full personal bibliography: [Click here](#)

A further poetry anthology is available at: [Gilchrist, S. 2003. "Selfhood's Tower"](#)

Website: <http://www.tgdr.co.uk/>

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Preface

Poetry holds words that touch the mind and these poems stand for a journey through life. The poem [The Music Trees](#) reminds us of the cycle of life and death and how uncertain our futures are. In its telling of the song of the leaves it reminds us about how we each pass the gifts of our own generation on to the next.

The poem [Words](#) describes how a poet may use language to bring these pictures to life and to explore our innermost thoughts.

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The Journey

None of us are perfect. [What Thoughts are these?](#) is a poem which describes a part of my own particular journey. This poem reflects an unease which has been present from infancy and is too deep seated to suppress. It tells me that must find the self acceptance which feeds on roots that are secure and to grow from them in a positive way to help others in life.

The poems [Future Imperfect](#) and [A Journey In Search of the Self](#) describe the nature of this journey. Since my earliest memories my sense of gender identity has felt estranged from my biological sex. This identity has been totally constant and has remained strong throughout my life. Its existence defies rational argument. I have used all the willpower at my command but these feelings have never gone away, despite every effort I made. This is the story of how I have tried to manage the attrition and alienation they cause.

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In the end I had to totally invert my approach. This required me to totally accept and to treasure the reality of this gender identity so that I may build my life on a firm base.

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Accepting my Identity

Inwardly from childhood I have had the feelings and emotions described in the poems but to everyone else I totally fulfilled the male role. The poem [Memories](#) describes some of these and there are many more. I now know that I am a transgendered but I did not know what this meant until I read an article about Roberta Cowell published in Picture Post in 1954.

Puberty was a very difficult time, I developed a secure male heterosexual orientation and I tried to deal with the conflict this created by suppressing my sense of gender identity. I used all of the willpower at my command. This normally succeeded and there were times when I felt totally free from the conflict, but any type of minor crisis would create an enormous explosion of emotion, which seemed to erupt from deep in my mind. These crises were difficult to control and the harder I tried to suppress them the more difficult it became. The poems [The Image for the World](#) and [The Conflict Beneath](#) deal with its impact over this period.

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Alienation and Exhaustion

I kept trying to suppress my gender identity until I was 29 but the increasing alienation and my attempts to compensate for it through ever growing effort brought both me and my work to a complete standstill. This reached a crisis point in 1969 when I knew I could no longer carry on with suppressing these demands. That was the time when I first completely cross dressed and this brought the riot of feeling which is described in the poem [19th March 1969](#).

It was clear that I had to totally reverse my approach. I had fought against these feelings with all my might. I have never consciously wanted to be a woman. It is the feeling that I ought to be a woman which has dominated my life.

This was a total inversion of my previous outlook. Instead of fighting this sense of gender identity I now knew I had to treasure it. I knew I had to explore my self identity to find out what makes me the person I am. This gave me a sense of self confidence and a feeling of ease with myself which continues to the present day. In the life I had built I was successful. I was committed to my life as a man and I wanted to keep to this if I could. Therefore I tried to combine all these elements by adopting an outlook which welcomes my gender identity and which also transcends it by celebrating the whole diversity of experience my life had brought.

The poem [So the Crisis had Come](#) describes my understanding. I realized that I had to take a very positive approach. This required me to relate to society as myself and let others think what they like. I also gave myself freedom to interact with society part time as a woman and for the next two years I used this as a prop to help me complete my work.

By doing this I was also hoping to find some natural limit to the need for expression but this never occurred. The sense of naturalness and ordinariness of life as a woman consistently grew stronger. I would take any opportunity to adopt this role and found that I always had to force myself to change back. It became totally clear that unless I was prepared to make a complete changeover I had to again revise my approach.

I had to consider very carefully the direction I wanted to take. By living my life as a woman I would be free from the conflict but I felt this would lead to loneliness and I felt it would be better for me to find a way to continue my life as a man.

For these reasons I decided that I should try to find ways to manage the conflict and keep to the male role. This led to a policy of abstention. To do this I stopped enacting my female identity but in all other respects I tried to keep an open approach. This meant never repressing my sense of gender identity but learning to manage it and living life true to the whole person I am.

I deliberately made the decision that I would not even try to conform to sexual or gender stereotypes, but expect people to accept me as I am. With a feeling of transcendence in place a threshold was crossed and my need to control the conflict disappeared from conscious awareness for the next fourteen years.

I was totally taken aback when the relapse occurred.

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Personality Development

By taking a direct approach I have been able to tell others on a need to know basis. As with many people in this situation I have a strong need to understand why I face this conflict. I also have academic support for this search. The approach which is here adopted is not to try to fit the characteristics of gender conflict into existing theories of personality development but to use the features associated with gender conflict to test the personality development theories themselves.

I also bring my own experience and that of others who have used these theories to examine the development of individual tribal identities in the context of community conflict situations. This anthology is offered in the hope that it will help others on their own journeys as well.

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There are many challenges to be faced and [December 1993](#) is a poem which emphasizes the need for reflection.

A more recent poem [Stones in my Pockets](#) addresses a number of issues. Part of the original impetus for writing the poem was in response to a financial appeal for new church buildings. The poem points out that the success of the building project is not measured by the fineness of structure but by the enrichment of humanity it provides. However the poem does more than this for it moves from the initial consideration of personal identity to that of a group endeavour. I keep the three stones of contemplation which the poem describes. One is the rough-hewed stone of raw feeling, one is the polished stone of outward performance and the third stone is the stone of honest truth.

This poem also draws on theories of personality development using a theory of formation of self-identity put forward by Girard Dawkins, Gallese and others. (For further accounts and more recent biographical information see: [Gilchrist, S. 2015 d. "Living With Difference"](#))

and: [Gilchrist, S. 2011 a. "LGB and T People: Labels and Faith"](#)). A bubble analogy may be used to argue that the creation of self-identity begins through the formation of many small bubbles, each of which represents an individual concept. These bubbles gradually coalesce as they interact to form a coherent whole. Through this each of us develops our own awareness, or theory of mind. This awareness is needed before we can use reason to test the global concepts we form.

However there are some difficulties with this, which I have identified in the poem. In my poem the initial concept bubbles are replaced by shiny specks of granite crystals which the cement of interaction binds together into a solid stone. This model is a better fit for theories of personality development which I have been encouraged to explore.

This analysis sees the conflicts associated with gender identity as the symptom of the failure to build a coherent sense of self identity rather than the cause. This means that for everyone the development of gender identity proceeds in the same way. Transsexuals develop a gender allegiance which is contrary to their biological sex, but this is at least as firmly held as those for who gender identity and allegiance follow a normal path. Indeed it may be argued that the gender allegiance felt by transsexuals may be even stronger because it has had to be fought for all along the way. The core gender identity, in the sense of an awareness of "being who one is", is one of the first global concepts to be formed and it provides a model which can be used to examine the transition between intuitive and cognitive thought. The acquisition of this concept takes place mainly between the ages of two and three years. However the foundations may be present from a much earlier date and it is often considered that pre-natal influences are involved.

The individual concepts are not lost in this coalescence but they remain hidden in the matrix underneath and this graininess affects the coherence of selfhood we create. In the stone of honest truth this inward structure and the outward appearance both interact with each other and the poem argues that this is the best cornerstone of life.

It is our acceptance of this which allows us to move forward and fulfil our dreams and desires. The poem [Heaven](#) expresses some of the fulfilment that is sought.

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Self Acceptance

True self-acceptance is not easy to achieve and failure to gain it can destroy. The poem [Elastoplast Eyes](#) is about a homeless woman who used to frequent the pews of a London church. Sitting quietly in a corner she would often go unnoticed and by taping her glasses with Elastoplast she was trying to hide from the world. The poem also tells of what we do to her through our own actions. [Is There Anyone There?](#) is a poem about hiding the inner self. The poem [The Dark Hole](#) describes my own experiences in relation to the gender conflict and how I was taken totally by surprise when the relapse occurred.

The philosophy behind my approach is described in the poem [Inversion](#). This asserts my absolute need to accept the truth of my inner identity and to use this as the foundation upon which I build my life. When I do this I can find a firm base and I find that I like the person I am. The storms of the conflict then strike at the top instead of the old base which my willpower had tried to command. This alters the nature of the battle but it does not remove the fight.

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Relapse

I kept the approach of abstention for fourteen years and I found my awareness of the demands of the conflict disappeared. However at the end of this time I faced a crisis which had nothing to do with the conflict. The trauma caused by this exposed the feelings I had hidden inside. This led to the relapse and the poem [Abstaining](#) describes some of the factors which brought it about.

In one sense this approach worked almost too well for I was able to hide from the changes that had occurred. The approach also worked for as long as I could believe I could achieve fulfilment in my present role.

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When the crisis took that from me it took away the sense of transcendence I required. Also since I had calmed the conflict for so long I also felt that some limited expression of my sense of gender identity would do little harm. I could not have been more mistaken. The explosion of emotion I experienced was far greater than anything I had encountered in the past.

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New Directions

I desperately tried to find a way to return to the path of abstention but the experience of the crisis and the change in perspective with age meant that I had lost the confidence I needed to be able to sustain this approach. I sought professional advice. This told me to accept the need to express my sense of gender identity and follow the path it directs. I was also told that I would be given any help I needed to complete this path.

The guidance I received is described in the poem [The Psychiatrist](#). I also felt that I was being given standard advice and that my previous experiences were not being fully taken into account. The poem [Anger](#) describes my initial response at the time to the whole situation.

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I could not find a way to return to the path of abstention and I now take a different approach. This still requires me to welcome the whole of my identity and to celebrate the richness it brings. However I also have to relax the control I was applying. What this requires is outlined in the poem [Control](#). This means that I can no longer enforce a lifestyle which conforms to society's expectations. I have to express my sense of gender identity and follow the path it directs.

I also felt that I needed a deeper understanding of the dynamics of the conflict. The poem on [The Professor](#) is an illustration of my interactions with one of the contacts I've used.

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Dynamics

This analysis sees the conflicts associated with gender identity as the symptom of the failure to build a coherent sense of self identity rather than the cause. The poem [Stones in my Pockets](#) describes some of the principles behind the approach I have taken, however the dynamics and the driving forces behind these developments need to be considered if an understanding is to be gained.

The conflict these poems describe arises from having built the conscious sense of role and identity on top of a contrary more deep seated (and often unconscious) role and identity underneath. The more this inner sense of identity is fought or suppressed the stronger it becomes. The cycle then repeats itself getting stronger all the time until a collapse occurs. This takes place through the total rejection of the conscious sense of role or identity that intellect wants to preserve.

This approach draws on the work of Girard, Dawkins, Gallesse and others. It identifies rivalry and a form of possessive imitation as the driving forces in the creation of the concepts of self we each possess. The process is self-driven and it may start from an influence or perception that is too small to be found, or one whose significance may be totally lost.

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Initial concepts of gender are apparent at a very early age and any incompatibility in these is likely to provide a substantial disruption to the coherence of the self-identity being formed. Conflict occurs when the self-concept we form contains elements of difference which cannot be resolved.

When other methods fail we try to resolve the battle by finding a scapegoat to reject. The expressed objective may be to achieve some stated goal but the main objective is seek the coherence of self that has been denied.

The dynamics and intensity of the development process which this theory predicts removes the difficulties found with the genetic and social learning theories and it also predicts the individuality of character that each one of us possesses. It will also be seen that the inability to find an acceptable scapegoat leads to compulsive demands.

This type of conflict can be difficult for others to understand since it leads to compulsive behaviour where the intensity experienced may be far greater than the modesty of the apparent goal. A wide range of outcomes may also be encountered. For the person affected the drive for rejection and make the outcome perfect may be overwhelming. The behaviour may repeat itself since compulsion is never satisfied. However the goal may not be sought for its own attributes, it is sought because the person feels right.

It is only possible to give a brief outline of some of the salient features of this theory in this preface. Some of these are also contained in the [Origins](#) poem. For an understanding of the theory a number of separate elements must first be defined. References to sources and a complete description are given in the [Papers](#) section of this document.

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Managing Self Identity

Both the advice I was given and my own experience has told me that the conflict cannot be fought. As with alcoholics a different strategy is required. The first requirement is to totally accept one's personal involvement. The second is to acknowledge that willpower cannot be used to control the conflict. The third is to find a way of neutralizing the conflict's dynamics. The fourth is to live life each day at a time.

For alcoholics total abstinence is the route required. However for me the conflict is about the truth of who I am. Embracing my inner identity would be a fulfilment of life and it would give me the coherence of self-identity I seek. All of the professional advice I have received has encouraged me follow this path but that would result in hurt and distress to others. Therefore I have resolved to look for a different way.

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Accepting the demands of my inner identity would allow me to be fully myself. There is nothing else that I would change in life except the frame of reference this requires and if that were to happen the conflict would disappear. I am ready to do this for myself but I choose not to do so because of the relationships I cherish and the responsibilities I possess.

The approach I take is not to deny or prevent change. It aims to make a smooth change possible so that if it is needed it can come at the right time, for the right reasons and in a way that minimizes the trauma it creates. Any failure in this would lead to compulsion and catastrophic collapse. This means that I must be able to balance my commitment to the life I have built against the expression of selfhood my identity demands. The balance changes as commitments alter and as ideals for the future give way to the realities of the past. This requirement for change therefore increases with age. To calm the dynamics I must truly believe in the balance I keep and be prepared to make any change as it demands. This means that I must also remake my commitment each day at a time.

The poem [Changes with Age](#) addresses these issues.

In order to maintain my transcendence I have to be able to look to the future for fulfillment in life. However old age becomes more and more a time for looking back. My greatest fear of all is that of becoming trapped in a role I reject. My own acceptance of this freedom to change is the best way of maintaining my current approach. That means that I must plan my life in a certain way. The implications of gender are implicit in every part of life but they are overt in relatively few. If I am free from the fear of entrapment in a role that I come to reject then I am free to celebrate the selfhood I possess and can look for the transcendence I need.

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Religion and Guilt

All conflicts produce feelings of guilt and blame and the poems about [Guilt](#) and [Forgiveness](#) describe my understanding of these. I do not feel any guilt for who I am. However I must take responsibility for my actions and if this is not done properly I could feel great guilt for what I might do. I believe I have taken what for me is the right course and I feel at peace with my religious beliefs. However these beliefs do more than that for they urge me to use my experiences to help others deal with their own situations.

The poem [O Preacher Man](#) illustrates some of these concerns. The mantra of "Love the sinner but hate the sin" is often cited as an appropriate approach but it must be remembered that these situations are not driven by the pursuit of any action but from the sense of selfhood people possess.

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The euphoria of certain types of religious belief can be used to suppress the dynamics of the conflict and it may often be believed that a "cure" has been obtained. This may last for years. However the roots of the conflict still remain (as my own experience has shown) and these may erupt at a time of crisis or when the euphoria is lost.

The problem with many such groups is that anyone who does not conform to its rules of behaviour may be ejected from its membership. These people may be told that God still loves them but to be practicing or non-practicing is not the real issue. In this context I would also question the use of the word sin.

The act of rejection becomes a personal attack of the self-identity of that individual and not of their practice. The hurt and self-loathing caused by this can be enormous. It is also very destructive and totally negative in its effect since any attempt to fight or suppress the conflict drives people deeper into distress.

I also believe it is unbiblical, for we are told that God alone will be our judge. Our responsibility is to be at peace with Him. That is something for our own conscience to deal with, not for other people to impose.

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Transvestites and Transsexuals

An initial common history for transsexuals is that of repression of the inner sense of gender identity. This continues until this repression can no longer be sustained. Providing some sort of outlet has the effect of affirming the true gender allegiance, which is opposite to that which they are attempting to enforce. The more strongly and more often this drive is resisted the stronger it becomes. The dynamics create a runaway drive, where repeated compulsive encounter further increases the demand. The scapegoat is usually the most obvious symbol of the trauma, and this is normally the genitalia of the birth assigned sex. Gender reassignment surgery becomes an overwhelming demand, and the relief when that is completed is enormous. Removing the symbols of the rejected gender allows transsexuals to move forward in their new role. Most merge invisibly into society in roles appropriate to the gender allegiance possessed. However the focus is not usually on the gender role. The contrast between behaviour and desire suggest that gender is the focus but not the drive and reassignment satisfies the objective of allowing people to be themselves.

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Transvestites may similarly try to suppress their cross gender identity and also fail. The need for an outlet through the enactment of their cross gender identity then arises. However instead of creating a runaway drive, the act of expression acts as a test which confirms the truth of the male gender allegiance which they possess. For transvestites the ability to pass as a woman in society becomes the key ambition. Through expression it also becomes the scapegoat to reject. The compulsion becomes self-limiting since the act of expressing the female has the effect of affirming the truth of the male. If this is resisted it can also become overwhelming and the expression of the cross gender identity gives only temporary relief. Some transvestites do live full time in the cross gender role. However for most the need for expression is episodic although the compulsion is no less severe. All the medical attempts to relieve transvestites of their compulsion have failed. Now the usual advice is to encourage transvestites to accept their drive, to find an acceptable means of expression and to treat it like a hobby to be enjoyed.

The ability to dress and pass remains the focus of activity for transvestites and this can result in the creation of male stereotypes of women. When transvestites and transsexuals first start to explore their gender identities it can be difficult for them and for others, to distinguish between the two conditions. However as the exploration progresses the differences become more clearly seen. The dynamics of the conflict send people in different directions and this polarization creates a threshold which separates the two groups. For quite a few years I was in close contact with a group of transvestites, whose friendships I have valued greatly. The poem [The Gentlemen's Meeting](#) describes the differences which I encountered, and these reflect the differing natures of the demands.

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Gender and Sexuality

The poem [Encounter](#) describes one of the interactions encountered while crossing the gender divide. Amongst the transsexual population there is often no interaction between gender identity and sexual orientation either before or after transition or during it. Both of these act as though they are independent entities and this would fit with the predictions of the theory here being used.

This independence between gender identity and sexuality can lead to serious conflict since many transsexuals will make relationships and enter marriage in their biological role. Some may enter marriage in an attempt to prove themselves in the biological role or they may think that the commitment of marriage will put an end to their gender conflict. However my experience suggests that for the great majority, marriage is entered into for love, relationships and the lifelong commitment that it involves. Enormous conflict occurs for both partners when the drive to transition becomes too strong to resist. Many marriages break up even though the transsexual partner desperately seeks to maintain the relationship: for despite their transition they loose nothing of the love, relationship and commitment they have made.

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For myself I possess a female gender identity and male heterosexual drive. While I have had to go into great depth to explore my gender identity I have not found the same need to explore my sexuality. I am also chaste. However I do not sense that my sexuality would be an impediment to making the gender transition in any way. I do not know what would happen but I have the suspicion that homosexuality and heterosexuality should be described in relative rather than absolute terms. The one thing that I am certain of is that my love and commitment to the relationships I have made before transition would always remain.

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Summary

My whole approach has been to try to develop a management strategy for a conflict which I knew I could not use my willpower to control. Professional advice told me that change is inevitable, that the outcome of following it can be made personally and socially acceptable and that I should give way to my selfhood's demands. I was told that to try to fight or suppress the conflict would lead to an even greater crisis in later years. I was offered encouragement and help to explore this change.

I do not find any conflict with my religious beliefs provided I handle the change in a responsible way. I also find my beliefs give me a responsibility to use my experiences to help others in conflict situations. The act of making the change would also remove my internal conflict and give me the coherence of selfhood I seek. However I choose not to take this path because of the relationships I cherish and the responsibilities I possess. For as long as I continue with this approach I shall have to find ways to manage the inner demands.

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As I grow older the hopes for the future give way to the realities of the past. Commitments also change and old age becomes more and more a time of looking back. This makes the conflict more and more difficult to manage. In order to maintain my transcendence I have to be able to look to the future for fulfilment in life. Exhaustion is the major feature which has led to the collapse of my previous approaches and as I grow older my greatest fear of all is that of becoming trapped in a role I reject.

The key elements in management are acceptance, understanding, inclusion, inversion, transcendence, expression, hope and belief. Having the freedom to change is fundamental to the approach. There are six steps to this:

- The first is the acceptance that the conflict cannot be fought.
- The second is the absolute acceptance and the personal recognition of the gender allegiance possessed.
- The third is to acknowledge that willpower cannot be used to control its demands.
- The fourth is not to try to impose an outcome for the future, but to live life each day at a time.
- The fifth is to use inclusion and transcendence to calm the compulsive dynamics and their drives.
- The sixth requires the belief that it can succeed.

Transcendence means seeking richness rather than rejection and to live true to the ideals of both lives. It also requires me not to misuse the freedoms this gives in any way, to welcome what it brings, to always be able to tell others on "A need to know" basis and to use my experience to help others as best I can. These requirements mean that I must never try to impose a path for the future which I cannot truly believe in. However I have kept to this path for the last forty years: but life must be lived each day at a time.

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Moving Forward

Part of the management process is one of not becoming embroiled in the conflict. My gender identity is only one part of the selfhood I possess. [Dismissal](#) is a poem about moving forward and about the way I should live my life.

I have used my experiences in a counselling capacity and I am willing to tell others on a need to know basis. I have also made a point of telling key people in the organizations concerned with reconciliation and community development I am involved in. I take the view that I must be as open as possible about my situation in case any misrepresentation should occur.

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When I tell people about my situation the reaction I almost invariably receive is one of respect and support. The freedom to be able to tell people if necessary, and to know that I do not have secrets which I have to keep is one of the most liberating things to work for. I am enormously grateful for all the help and support I have received. The poem [Does Your Bellringing Come?](#) makes its own comment on the poems this anthology contains.

Susan Gilchrist
1 January 2013.

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Verses in Search of the Self

An Anthology of Poems by Susan Gilchrist

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THE MUSIC TREES

She watching sits as ringlets spread
From central stillness left behind
While shafted in their golden glow
Portrayed in stillness on the ground
Light's casted haloes dance their way
Through canopies of branches held
In autumn colours leaves entwined.

For in this warm September eve
No one could tell the blighted fly
Its fitful course across the lake
Would end within the fishes' bite
And soulful in the turmoil's wake
The passing sound of water breaks
The rustle from the trees on high.

Enflamed by sun on forest ground
The ripples reach the nearby shore
Where mirrored by the water's edge
They set in dance the move of trees
With bended light against the sky
To list in time to nature's course
Until dispersed to dance no more.

In tinselled tone the autumn trees
Prepare the way for spring's rebirth
As sapless leaves their work complete
Caressed by wind and nature's force
In endless motion search for flight
From nurtured branches made replete
And through decay renew the earth.

In harmony with nature's realm
The music trees sing of her tryst
To seek not grief when life is gone
But crown the life of offspring run
Where leaf and fly and human form
Give way in death for life's rebirth
The trees sing of our greatest gift.

S.G

November 1995

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WORDS

If a picture can paint a thousand words,
That's an overused line for a start!
Then each poet's task is to reduce these words
To miniatures of their art.

If the words can paint the picture's scene
And colours to it impart
Then each poet's mind must encompass that scene
With expressions that colour the heart.

If the scene reveals some innermost thoughts
Too harsh for the mind to expose
Then each poet's role is to draw out these thoughts
In poetry rather than prose.

If the thoughts expressed in each poet's words
Paint pictures that live in the soul
Then each poet's goal is to create in these words
An image that lives in us all.

If words paint the scene that the thoughts inspire
As the insights of mind are explored
Then the feelings revealed through the poems inspire
The visions enkindled by God.

S.G

July 1994

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WHAT THOUGHTS ARE THESE?

What thoughts are these?
That lie behind those eyes
A tree of mind
Branching upwards towards the skies
And downwards towards the roots
From whence it came
Of futures past
And past things yet to come.

What thoughts to fear?
From shaking of this tree of mind
Grafted to roots
That would bear fruit of another kind
And yearning for this base
Sow conflict's yoke
Upon my life
To scourge myself and all my hope.

What thoughts to share?
My memories of the early shoots
Of childish hopes
Fresh sprung on the ground to soak
The dew of life and build
One's own creation
On happy times
And on a fresh love tended core.

What thoughts to find?
For peace of mind in future times
This tree of mind
Which reaching upwards to the skies
Finds nutrition in the light
To heal the wound
And live anew
Embracing self and all mankind.

S.G

January 1994

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FUTURE IMPERFECT

From my nursery school class I stare perplexed
At the junior school girls about their play
Expecting to follow their paths of life
But knowing that mine goes a different way.

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S.G

As at June 1945

A JOURNEY IN SEARCH OF THE SELF

A dancer may dance to the tune of her heart
A composer may write his own song
I may sing to your words and dance to your tune
But to my heart they may not belong.

You may choose to impose your personal will
On my life and all that I own
But you cannot tell me what I should become
For my heart will say that you're wrong.

No rational words or the thoughts I express
Can alter the heartbeat I sense
The consequence of these conflicts of mind
Is a journey in search of the self.

S.G

December 1993

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MEMORIES

I enjoyed all the fun of the nursery school class
As I gambolled in games and in song
But in the acts of relating to playmates I found
I sensed that something was wrong.

When I looked at each girl in the classes I saw
My own dreams would follow her life
Then learning that this shall not be the case
Would promote my identity's strife.

From the earliest memories in life I possess
These concepts were held in my mind
And from when I was six I'd go dry in the mouth
As I dealt with the passions I'd find.

But I was also aware of reality's commands
And the nature of life this expected
So I determined to fight to master my thoughts
And to build up the role it directed.

The degree of success I achieved in this task
Was far-reaching and totally complete
But it also required I must more than conform
To escape from the fear of defeat.

Then in daydreams alone I'd loosen my mind
To the self which I felt I possessed
And I'd muse on escape or the life I may lead
If my concept of self was expressed.

I did everything right and in all parts of life
My devotion was true and was strong
While I fought to suppress the conflict of self
In my searching to totally belong.

My main aims were achieved in the life I had set
But I could not dispense with control
And the outburst of feeling released in collapse
Was too great to subdue or console.

S.G. 12 October 1996

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THE IMAGE FOR THE WORLD

- 1 If I am what I am
Then am I what I see?
No world's expectation
Can remind me of me.
To live life to the full
My childhood has taught.
The role it assigns me
Must always be sought.

- 2 Success may uphold me
But what does it mean?
Keep true to one pattern
Suppress other dreams!
Build up a great castle
Of achievement and skill
Ignore its foundations
And strengthen my will.

- 3 Married with children
And a lifestyle to please?
In my search for fulfilment
I'd change nothing of these
For all the right reasons
And the love I impart
My marriage delights me
And gladdens my heart.

- 4 Do I run with the pack
Or hunt with the clan?
I run with the best ones
And vie with the strong
I look for high standards
Show care and respect
And live to the lifestyle
Presumed of my sex.

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S.G. January 1994

THE CONFLICT BENEATH

- 1 I live with a conflict
Which sets me apart
And nothing can stifle
The ache in my heart
For emotions existing
At memory's first wake
Impose a self concept
At odds with my fate.

- 2 I try to escape from
These feelings inside
With total commitment
My thought can provide
But as time and attrition
Bind futures by stealth
Control using willpower
Concedes to the self.

- 3 My estrangement grows
Through increasing age
For I feel like an actor
Condemned to the stage
Depression then follows
With collapse of control
When I lose all my hope
Of fulfilment in role.

- 4 By the skin of my teeth
I've just kept command
Held on to my lifestyle
And maintained my stand
The conflict's unchanging
But persistence entraps
And I fear that my future
Will come in collapse.

S.G.

January 1994

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19TH MARCH 1969

Just an ordinary day in a private hotel near Paddington Station
Rain splattered the window tarnished by gloom, all day it had poured
When I looked in the mirror, my image looked back, I saw and I stared
It showed what I knew and I knew it was true, then the future I feared
On this ordinary day in a private hotel near Paddington Station.

Did I feel sad or did I feel glad? I had no way to tell, I didn't know
Tears tumbled down, for the whole weekend long I sobbed and I cried
My emotions in turmoil through fear or relief, I had no power to decide
The self which I saw was the self that I knew and the self I'd defied
I felt sad glad afraid of a future I couldn't predict, I didn't know.

For the whole of my life I had sought to deny the self I possess
And by achieving success I had hoped I would find fulfilment in role
Which would build the foundation I needed to make my life totally whole
But the harder I tried the more this destroyed my attempts at control
And to find this foundation I knew I must own the self I possess.

With this firmness of base I must seek to obtain the richness of life
Which links who I am to the self I have built, so I've power to endorse
The wholeness of being that's needed to calm the dynamics at source
For fighting my thoughts and enforcing a role brings a runaway force
That compels me to welcome the identity I need for richness of life.

A new course was enforced and a new way of life had started today
Which smashes the thoughts and the precepts my resolve had supplied
So I hope that my conscience will manage the path I am made to provide
When these outbursts of feeling have shattered the control I've applied
A new course was endorsed for this new way of life I started today.

S.G

24 September 1996

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SO THE CRISIS HAD COME

So the crisis had come and I'd have to examine the identity I fought
For my power of control, the defiance I'd used had all been destroyed
With the inner denial, the suppression of thought and disavowal I'd tried
My search for achievement, my need for approval, rationality employed
These all disappeared when I could not defeat the identity I fought.

Then volcanoes of feeling would seek to destroy the life I had built
For the upwelling thrust of subconscious emotions shatters command
Since the more I resist then the greater the pressure I have to withstand
Till their mounting attrition explodes to enforce a compulsive demand
Where the conflict's dynamics will act to destroy the life I have built.

Now my denying had failed I sought to explore my identity's drive
Thus instead of suppression I used ways to assess my inner self's role
And to find why the tensions I faced had caused the collapse of control
Then the self knowledge gained gave freedom to make life feel whole
And I would find peace of mind when I owned my identity's drive.

Through acceptance of self I would find the transcendence I need
To rejoice in the values of self the riches of life and the role I profess
Since the assurance I gained and honing of mind would deliver success
Then my confidence swelled once I knew that I like the self I possess
For my composure of mind would build the transcendence I need.

I must keep to this path for identity's fixed for the rest of my life
But acceptance, conviction and abstention absolved identity's force
Life sparkled with joy and I'd freedom to choose my life's future course
Then I'd happily make the lifetime commitments I wished to endorse
Since peace came for years, and I thought for the rest of my life.

S.G.

24 September 1996

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DECEMBER 1993

Who am I?
What am I?
A leaf blown into a pallid sky?
Or thoughts expressed through a poet's eye?
Now is the time for reflection.

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S.G

December 1993

STONES IN MY POCKETS

In my pockets three stones rest
And give my journey's path I see
In pictures gained within my mind
Which shine in meditation bound
To share their stories true to me.

The first finds granite sharply set
Impelling shape to roughened face
With darkest speckles shining forth
That set in clouded pale shorn rock
Forces form and strength to base.

The second stone I'd now peruse
Well rounded, shiny, water dashed.
Brings time and tide to shape its life
That seeks its place by outer show
Of perfect faces impact-smashed.

The third stone in my pocket now
Has faces shaped by wind and sea
To furrowed hump of dull faced rock
As through its length a crevice runs
To tell us what this stone must be.

Each nugget formed of self I built
Shines like one crystal in its stone
With each one building on the last
They link with granite rock to bind
And sculpt the self beneath I own.

The second stone that I possess
Becomes the self of outside view
I make to match what others want
In chiselled smoothness it impels
To hide from selfhood I'd pursue.

My third stone sets in all its faults
Those features that I wish to hide
But channels opened will disclose
A fitting shape and depth to carve
Foundations that I would provide.

For this stone is the cornerstone
That can match to other's shape
Its roughness too will find the key
To give the mortar binding power
For selfhoods tower I can create.

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This is the stone of honest truth
Giving strength to towers I'll build
So with a structure bound to rock
Of matching base on which it sits
The self it sculpts will be fulfilled.

For this is stone we all must use
Each time we raise a future tower
As from foundations to the heights
Its shape invests its total strength
In structures built on who we are.

We must not build in walls of rock
Made alone with unmatched stone
For conflict from their inner shapes
Directs concern to inward thought
Crushing outreach we would own.

Yet buildings must not only shine
Reflecting light from outside walls
For mirrors set with polished stone
Then focus on the outward theme
That must subdue our inner calls.

So if we'll build with faulted stone
The stone the builders may reject
We use forgiveness and our care
To craft in strength so every rock
Can shape the building we erect.

Then in our pockets every stone
Is valued in the church we'll build
To welcome each of every shape
In love that tells of care and hope
So life by joy and peace is filled.

For in a house we shape by love
Our trust will build the inner tower
Where all take in life's fullest view
To gain by grace the self esteem
That makes us true to all we are.

Then of our building look around
Examine all those stones you see
And if this gives a welcome place
For every person life has shaped
So there God's love may truly be.

12 March 2006.

HEAVEN

Is heaven a place when observed from afar
The Palace of God in His Might and His Power
A place where the righteous sing out His Praise
To God in His Glory, and where no humour strays?
You show me a place where my feet must feel sore
From standing and singing God's praise evermore
Then sometimes I'd tire of the bright golden light
And instead wish to see the stars of the night.

But these views of heaven are not ones of mine
For my thoughts see heaven a place outside time
Where eternity soars free in its own place apart
To observe the time passing like lines on a chart
Extracting from life all the times which we've set
When all the best moments of life have been met
And revealing in these the whole Godhead of joy
With each moment the fountain of love I enjoy.

Eternity is not now, in the future or past
For eternity is where every moment shall last
And the heaven I sense is piled high to the brim
With the passion of love and of care and concern
Overflowing with people whose delight I perceive
Through love which I give and the love I receive
And joining those people whose rapture I share
Are all those I love who will always be there.

Heaven is not here, in the earth or the sky
And you will never find heaven however you try
For heaven finds you from the cries of the heart
Then growing through gladness its praises impart
For whatever our suffering our weakness or strife
When we share all we are with the others in life
We rebuild ourselves in the love and the grace
At one with creation that gives us our place.

Then heaven is never a goal we'll achieve
It comes only from faith and the will to believe
But could heaven be true or is it solely in mind?
It is only through death such an answer we'll find
And should heaven be false we will never detect
For we'd have nothing left to confirm it's correct
But the heaven that comes in our heavenly birth
Is true to the heaven we make here on earth.

S.G.

21 September 1996

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ELASTOPLAST EYES

So what are the pressures that lead her to bind?
Her life to a world which two cuts have defined
By glasses so taped that its scope is surveyed
From the slits in elastoplast eyes.

Is she someone to pity or someone to fear?
What past and what future is hers to declare?
Her vengeance sought by an anger made clear
In the hurt of elastoplast eyes.

Then who is the child, which is hidden inside?
With the hopes and ideals the world has defiled
She says she's a duchess; we laugh at the thought
When we look at elastoplast eyes.

And what is the cause of the bitterness brought?
Is it hardship or misuse that mankind has wrought?
Which captures her world with a fortune defined
In the mask of elastoplast eyes.

Or could this be someone who's tried to believe?
In a goodness too great for the mind to conceive
Brought low by the values she never could keep
To her world of elastoplast eyes.

Do we notice her fear as we try to walk by?
When we try not to see her or hear anger's cry
As we quicken our step and look towards the sky
To escape from elastoplast eyes.

Then what of the hurt our rejection creates?
Or the way she will hide from the pain it instates?
By concealing herself from the world and her fate
With the veil of elastoplast eyes.

So however disturbed in thought or in mind
Should we treat her like trash in the gutter we find
We'll smash all her hopes by the actions we take
When our brains have elastoplast eyes.

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IS THERE ANYONE THERE?

"Is there anyone there?" Called the vicar
As he knocked on the red painted door
As the toys in their chaos lay in silence
On a prided but untidy floor
But never his knock was answered
And never a voice was heard
As the children were bade to keep silence
As the rest of the house was prepared.

"I am coming just now", called the housewife
With the countdown to entry begun
As she checks to affirm that her welcome
Sets standards her lifestyle has run
For the image she always must offer
Is the best her behaviour can do
In her drive to support an impression
Of control that she seeks to pursue.

But each time her convictions are threatened
The door is then bolted and locked
By acts that themselves bear the witness
To the feelings that intellect blocked
For the depths of her mind holds a prison
Of feelings she cannot explore
Which the selfhood of care and profession
At one time gave power to ignore.

Then the knocking her mind never answers
Destroys the control she's applied
For the torment of children's insistence
Breaks open the feelings inside
And the care and commitment to others
That shines from the depth of her heart
Is tinged with the need for assurance
And worries that fear will impart.

"Who really was there?" Thought the vicar
As he turned from the red painted door
While the housewife took off in the silence
The mask which unworthiness wore
To transfer the concern she is offered
To the image her willpower's prepared
As the toys keep their counsel in silence
On the anguish that nobody's heard.

S.G. September 1998 After "The Traveller" by Walter De-la-Mare

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THE DARK HOLE

A dark hole opens before me
Unprepared, unexpected, I flounder near the rim
And try to swim against the current's flow
But it drags me in
Fearful, frantic, I thrash about and watch the life I've made
Dragged into the vortex down below
With one last gasp I grab a rope
And with all my willpower hold on and just manage not to let go.

But this is no storm of death
For I hear the song of the self in the Siren's call
With a demand for life of a different kind
In the wreck of all I know
Unremitting, unstoppable, the Siren call orders me to take
One single cataclysmic act to destroy the life
Which willpower still controls
And devastate all things and the lives of friends and those I love.

What now does the future hold?
The Siren's call is now out of range but still lies behind
Some future tempest arising from the strength.
Of the conflict's power
Driving, forcing, a future crisis triggered from some event
Magnified by the vulnerability of my mind
To destroy willpower's role
When the next time comes I will not find any escape from the hole.

I must look for another route
Before willpower again fails I must chart a different course
And give expression to the wishes of the self
In some more ordered way
Trying, hoping, to find any new method of retaining control
When I have tried this approach before
And not found any limit
To the distance that self would travel along its charted journey.

What hope does the future give?
Do I continue to resist and face a future catastrophe?
Or am I compelled to follow expression's course?
To end willpower's role.
Desperately, longingly, I search for a way out and can find none
For both drive me to the same unsought for shore
Destroying all that I value most
In despair I cry out for help and do not know which way to turn.

S.G. As at November 1987

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ABSTAINING

Before the first crisis I had sought to suppress
The whole force of my inner identity
And by using ambition and the search for success
I had hidden the conflict's intensity.

Then once I neared thirty that facade collapsed
For I could not sustain its demands
And I took up the need to change my whole life
To conform to self's inner commands.

Now my life sang in tune with my concept of self
For acceptance had found a true beat
But I would have to refuse to enact my self's role
To escape from my willpower's defeat.

Through abstention I'd calm the conflict for years
Then depression renewed its affinity
And as discipline waned the composure I gained
Was absorbed in displacement activity.

The trauma that sparked off the second onslaught
Was set in a changing perspective
When I lost all the hope of fulfilment I'd sought
From the stress of a mid-life invective.

The outlook that changed as I reached fifty years
Lay in thoughts on the future I'd seek
Where my hope of transforming my life is less set
On ideals than the outcomes they keep.

But a blunder provoked the collapse that occurred
And brought me to conscious awareness
That I completely relied on the quality of life
To obtain my sense of transcendence.

Now my turmoil returns since I'm wholly resolved
To keep hold of my present life's role
And bring back the outlook that mastered the strife
Though I've failed to restore my control.

S.G. April 1994

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ANGER

There's a great deal of anger I have to release
Before I'll relax and again find my peace
There's anger at fate that it gave me the strife
Of a conflict I've countered for all of my life.

There's anger with others for forcing collapse
For it was not this conflict that started relapse
And anger with self that I could not withstand
The compulsive drive of self's inner demand.

There's anger with experts who chose to advise
With theories they knew and a past they'd surmise
And anger when this did not back my own view
On how I could follow the course I'd pursue.

There's anger with those who could not embrace
Their own inner pressures they needed to face
And anger because I would hide my own strife
By bearing their burdens within my own life.

There's anger endured in facades I enforce
To conform to the role I'm required to endorse
And the anger I face from self's drive to reject
The whole role I have built and fully respect.

There's anger with willpower and all it decrees
When it seeks to dismiss the self that it sees
And anger at self for the hurt and the strain
From the need to express the life I'd attain.

There's anger with anger at what these can do
To all of the lifestyle I want to work through
And the anger expressed at my own inner pride
In assuming these things can all be defied.

There's anger absolved in the freedom to build
A life which is true and is also fulfilled
The anger which looks to the things I must see
And in this finds the way to let me be me.

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November 1994

CONTROL

The control I exerted for most of my life
Had kept at a distance my own inner strife
But to stay in command of identity's stress
I could never express the self I possess.

The control I enforced first aimed to deny
The tension and stress from identity's cry
But its failure reversed the outlook I hold
To make me keep check on the life I behold.

The control I applied in more recent years
Would seek to resolve my identity's fears
By completely accepting the need to express
This concept of self in the life I possess.

The control I'd assert with intellect's muse
Imposes its framework on thoughts I peruse
To distance emotion from the concepts I find
As I seek to explore the depths of my mind.

The control I'd adopt would seek to subdue
Sensations of anger that try to come through
So I now try to keep my composure in place
By reasoned discussion of all that I face.

The control I'd impose would cover up fears
As their urgency grows with increasing years
And it fosters resistance as I try to be free
To impart a full welcome to all that is me.

The control I require must do none of these
For it must let me own the self that it sees
And provide me with freedom I need to relax
To follow the path my conscience directs.

Reversing my outlook on life I'd profess
Lets me claim for my own the self I possess
So I build on this base to lessen my strife
With the welcome I give to all of my life.

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18 September 1996

THE PSYCHIATRIST

While I sit and wait for the appointment to come
I see gold plated taps on the washbasin
Why am I here? What should I say? How can I cope?
Questions reel for this eminent psychiatrist.

Then what will he tell me? And how can I recover
The sparkle of life which I'd lost?
I want him to say what I am wanting to hear
How to recover my willpower's thrust.

Then we meet, and we sit, and we talk and discuss
Now the tangle of mind is explored
But the outcome of this is thoughts which attack
The concepts I'd always enforced.

For he encourages me to seek out my true self
By expressing self's role in society
Since it is only in coming to terms with the truth
Will I deal with my stress and anxiety.

The help that he offers includes the support
To pursue this as far as is necessary
And the thoughts he imparts try to make me accept
Total change with full equanimity.

For the acceptance I had was not truly complete
Since I'd hidden deep seated emotions
And the defiance thus needed to counter defeat
Shows the power of their inner sensations.

This problem's so central to my concept of self
That I cannot expect resolution
What I must seek to achieve is a balance in life
Through my journey of exploration.

The permission he gives to express my true self
Has led to a sense of empowering
And I feel in my heart this must be the right step
But I find the prospect disturbing.

S.G. March 1988

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THE PROFESSOR

As we sit and consider we assess and review
The development of personality
For there is limited consensus that psychology can show
With at least five different perspectives
Where practitioners use the one they profess
To assess their individual cases.

Each particular theory fits into a group
Which embraces a different position
On Dispositional, Psychodynamic or Phenomenological growth
Or Informatics or Social Learning
With their different ways to help people who need
To accept and explore their identity.

The reason I come is the work which I've done
In researching my own situation
And the reason he's here is the role he possesses
In a Clinical Academic Department
For psychiatry's the discipline which he professes
And we meet in an intellectual context.

Our meeting has come from a mutual concern
Embraced in a common commitment
Now we each are involved in a counselling role
In caring for friends or for clients
And beyond this he asks if the thoughts I extol
Can be used by his staff and his patients.

In examining each of the theories espoused
And their presumptions of continuity
I'd draw on the work on Children's Theories of Mind
And the place of Mimetic theory
For the study implies there's new outlooks to find
On the development of personality.

To test these ideas from the work which is done
I must also put forward a protocol
Where the general case is both tested and shown
In exploring a research proposition
Which unites and explains the facts I have found
When exploring my personal condition.

S.G. May 1989

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THE GENTLEMEN'S MEETING

To Penny Babs and Anne and to Gillian and Pam
It is time for the monthly meeting
For lunch and a chat the men will bring you out
To share in the life they are seeking.

At the meeting in the club the friendship is good
The drinks and the chatter will unwind
Some jokes can be lewd and the talk perhaps crude
Thus revealing each masculine mind.

No one seems to care and the girls try to please
Using clothes and cosmetics to adorn
But the selfhood they express in their manner of dress
Is dispensed by the maleness of men.

The girls all want to come and the members of the club
Treat the women with a high esteem
There's no one pressed for sex and people can relax
In the social life of their dream.

The men embrace a role which is caring and kind
And the club meets a very real need
But the price the girls pay for living life this way
Is accepting a man centred creed.

The girls who prize the club do not live for themselves
For they dress to a masculine prayer
As I watch them I reflect on their feminine froth
While my ordinary dresses I wear.

S.G

March 1991

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ORIGINS

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ORIGINS 1 BALANCING

It is better to light a candle of hope than to curse the darkness of fear
With this target I've tried to build up a life that draws on the richness I find
And sharing my thoughts with others I trust has brought academic support
For the way I would calm the conflicts of mind which gender has brought.

For gender belonging comes early in life, before self-perception's attained
And before we can use our theories of mind to test the self-concepts we set
We must build up life's framework from pebbles of thought, which we bind
Through those mortars of selfhood, which link the connections we make.

I may also make use of work we have done in dealing with tribal demands
Where identity's drive and a need for belonging demand an exclusion of role
For the disruption of gender and tribal concerns have roots which run deep
With insights to use as a test that may show how our selfhood is formed.

The advice I received had also denied key features my outlook had found
And there is no consensus psychiatry adopts on how our selfhood is gained
So instead I would take and employ the experience my conflict has brought
To use as a test that appraises the theories of how each mindset is made.

Conventional theories attribute the cause to pre-natal hormonal effects
Where the sex of the brain is said to oppose the sex that the body instates
Then attempts to conform to this bodily role will fail to resolve the demands
With later collapse and rejection of role from attrition that gender creates.

Recent research now tends to confirm these features of physical change
But of equal concern is how we construct the selfhood we find we possess
For the knowledge can help us to manage the drive the dissention creates
When we search for the means to balance the power of its inner demand.

Two of these theories make use of the ways that we imitate others in life
Where identity's built on a battle for power between the competing desires
Since each strand that we make must fight to secure the selfhood it seeks
By winning the right to lock its idea to the self that our struggle has built.

But the theories dispute the way this must act to form the people we are
Since one would preserve some linkage between cause and its later effect
While the other declares dynamics instead take over the whole of the fight
Where the rulings of each must alter the way that our selfhood is gained.

Dawkins applied the theory of genes and the battle they fight for control
To argue this process will also dictate the way that our minds will perform
So each of the strands he defined as a meme, to mirror the action it takes
In building the selfhood that comes from the sum of the battles they fight.

Girard described how babies compete for things that the others possess
Through battles not fought for cause or effect but simply possessive desire
So the drive to compete and compulsion to mime imposes a runaway force
Where dynamics define the self we create once cause as a trigger is lost.

ORIGINS 2 GROUNDS FOR RESEARCH

Memetic behaviour, which Dawkins defined, equated how genes will compete
Mimetic behaviour is named through the mime, which Girard declared is innate
The misfortune of words so nearly the same, but where the divergence is large
Is tested in building our theory of mind, from which self-awareness is gained.

Both Girard and Dawkins applied their techniques to study the working of mind
Blackmore and Dennett used Dawkins's approach to study how selfhood is made
Though Girard predates what Dawkins predicts and founded a school of support
His work is not cited by Dawkins himself or employed in the theories he formed.

Girard made use of religion's commands when he tested the theories he gave
And showed they explain both the need for belief and how its psychology works
While Dawkins' approach declares this is used as a means for imposing control
That rejects the existence of God or belief, beyond what our minds may invent.

To traditional views it's Girard's approach that may cause the greater unease
For it does not require the existence of God to explain what religion must mean
But its outlook supports what theology states in the sharing of love and concern
And instead of rejecting religion itself this may deepen the message it brings.

How sacred and secular are found to relate is the theme which Girard explores
And others have taken this line of approach in research on the precepts he gave
But to test and assess how a selfhood is formed a different approach is required
Which uses the concepts both theories can claim and also our theories of mind.

I must start with the view that we cannot explain the self we feel we possess
From knowledge psychiatry brings to the search or by reason that logic dictates
So in seeking the source of the self we perceive I begin with a reductionist view
That the self that we sense is procured through the sum of relations we make.

The soul is a concept we also embrace, which transcends our physical frame
To be one with creation and the meaning of life that we seek in eternity's realm
Where the self we perceive is set outside time and from the relations we make
Each one of us builds our own spiritual home to make our full being complete.

Social Learning and Cognitive theories will try to explain the precepts involved
But they fail for the linking of cause to effect is too strong for outcomes obtained
So the problem with theories, which for their effect would imitate others we see
Is their failure to match the richness and range which all of us find in our lives.

Both Girard and Dawkins give theories that use the drive of possessive desire
Which imitate others but seek to improve on what their own conquests will gain
And by taking the outcome which last was achieved, and not the original cause
The cycle then builds a runaway force where the impact of cause may be lost.

The freedom this gives to the self we create is seen in the drive and the power
That shapes our own being by concepts we build and sets our emotions on fire
But reality's check and the methods we use must give us the balance required
To tune our own minds in a way that best gives the self our existence creates.

ORIGINS 3 PROGRESSION

For my first thirty years I had tried to suppress the sense of the selfhood I found
But attrition from fighting the discord it brought destroyed the whole outlook I built
So for eighteen more years the methods I used were the ones alcoholics employ
To distance myself from the conflict I faced, that eruptions of feeling destroyed.

For this battle's between the selfhood I feel and that which my willpower impels
Where the more that I try to enforce its demands the stronger the conflict attacks
Then the outcome of this is a runaway drive, which destroys the control I impose
Where I'm forced to reject the gender I'd keep, and with it the role I have made.

The only true way I may deal with this drive is to calm their dynamics at source
By methods that strive to transcend its demand and annul the drive they impose
So my outlook must welcome expression of self and rejoice in the richness I find
By inverting the whole of the life I shall seek and build on the outcome it brings.

S.G.

December 2003

GUILT

Hidden and unheard, guilt comes
Reclusive and malign, guilt strikes
Or through a blazing fire guilt burns
Its anguish marked it wrecks it fights
Its partner blame must set its course
To revel through destruction's force.

Yet guilt can give the warning shout
Take care! Beware! Peruse your course
Redress the force of blame and doubt
From actions past that cause remorse
For guilt assuaged can clear our way
Through all we do and see and say.

Guilt is God of "Should have been"
The force that says you must succeed
The spectre sensed of failures seen
This vampire of perfection's creed
When duty sets its cause too high
It sucks both mind and reason dry.

For guilt's escape we turn to blame
Diverting guilt that's ours to face
Or inwards bend our minds to frame
Its driving power of self disgrace
Then guilt we find will set its grip
On what we know but can't accept.

The guilt we feel for what we are
Destroys all hope of peace of mind
But anguish faced in tearful prayer
Can set us free from bonds we find
When self acceptance gives release
And brings us hope of inner peace.

The guilt we feel for what we do
Is guilt which we are right to fear
For we must own a guilt that's true
Before we'll make the future clear
To see the peace of mind we greet
When guilt's atonement is complete.

S.G. 12 September 1996

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FORGIVENESS

Growth we gain by guilt's release
Arises from the hope that's seen
When harmony brings inner peace
And sense of worth the self esteem
That makes us free to set our role
And gain a life that's fully whole.

But human nature lacks the power
To steer the perfect course we seek
So guilt's dynamics then will scar
Our lives with blame for each defeat
Yet with forgiveness and in grace
We may give guilt a proper place.

Forgiveness does not mean forget
Instead it brings the future course
Where guilt's atonement can be met
Within the power that we engross
So freed from inner guilt to bind
We may rebuild the lives we find.

And we must know we are forgiven
Or that we've fully paid the price
To cancel grief our guilt has riven
And find the peace we seek in life
But we shall never gain this prize
Unless repentance rules our lives.

The trauma our dissention swells
Finds true power in guilt we face
But when we show we too forgive
With penitence we find the grace
To know that guilt must only test
To see if we have done our best.

Then with our lives we seek ideals
That lie beyond our power to gain
So self forgiveness when each fails
Becomes the goal we can't maintain
Yet life will shine with peace we set
Once God's forgiveness we accept.

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S.G. 16 September 1996

ENCOUNTER

He tries to find the words
To ask me out
I wait
I look down and finger my wedding ring
The words cease to come
You are beautiful
He says
And then he is gone.

S.G.

May 1993

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DISMISSAL

With the Love of God to guide
With the Peace of God beside
May our Faith in God provide,
Power we need to do Your will
Love we gain for minds to fill
Joy we find so hurts can still.

Now bless us Lord as we depart,
For Love and Grace which You impart
Can bring Your Peace to mind and heart.
And consecrate the thoughts we share,
To shape our lives in hope and care,
So we will show that God is there.

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S.G.

10 September 2002

DOES YOUR BELLRINGING COME?

Version B

Does your bell ringing come in the day or the night?
At the time when it's wrong, or a time when its right?
When the music of words has a volume that swells
To ring through your head like a great peal of bells.

For the ringing that comes is the sound we deserve
From the way we have tampered with poetry's verve
So words in their singing make tunes that are grand
Which peal with that meaning we can't understand.

So we'll lust for those poems that critics will praise
Where each writer feels free to declare what it says
For our clashing of bells shall last through the night
If our words do not wake with meaning that's right.

Then we ring all the changes to look at the sense
Of thoughts still unclear or contentions too dense
Where the verses we'll seek give power to inspire
Those perfections of form: which reap our desire.

And we grasp at a word whose sounding is strong
But the meaning's nor clear, or the gravitas wrong
Then we struggle to bring out a ponderous sound
That tolls with the message the poem has found.

But other words shatter the framework of thought
With the lightness of tone the tenor bell's brought.
Where the pureness of sound so quickly departs
We'll lose the whole aura and sense it imparts.

Then we toss and we turn as we lie in our beds
When we cannot get rid of their din in our heads
For release we will crave as we wake in the night
Would silence the volume and turn out the light!

Now with our goodbyes this rhyming must cease
So we part from the sound of our poems in peace
To hear their words ringing the changes they give
Which swell in our thought and make poetry live.

For the reason and purpose of poetry's rhyme
Is to tune to our rhythm the thoughts they divine
Where love and the meaning of words we recite
Will ring for your future and wish you goodnight.

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27 September 2002

Verses in Search of the Self

An Anthology of Poems by Susan Gilchrist

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PERSONAL WRITING AND RESEARCH: Updated to November 2015

Susan Gilchrist. Personal Articles: 14 April 2017

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