

*Sweet Dust*  
&  
*Growling Lambs*

**Also by Phil Maillard:**

*Keeping Still* (Spanner, London, 1976. Selected by Chris and Val  
Torrance)

*A North American Journal* (Blackweir, Cardiff, 1976)

*Grazing the Octave* (Gallopig Dog, Swansea, 1977)

*Quartz: A Winter Book* (Gallopig Dog, Swansea, 1979)

*Portraits* (Gallopig Dog, Newcastle-Upon-Tyne, 1980)

*Plot 20* (Gallopig Dog, Newcastle-Upon-Tyne, 1987)

*Coming Up From Silence* (Canna, Cardiff, 1999)

*A Staircase in the Sierra* (c/ w *Imágenes* by Val Collett, Canna,  
Cardiff, 2006)

**Sweet Dust  
& Growling Lambs**

*Three Books*  
*by*

**PHIL MAILLARD**

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*To Val, Chris and Graham – as ever.*



# RIGHT UP AGAINST IT

*Poems, 1980s*

## NEW DECADE SONG

*Name/a thing/ & you gain a measure/of power  
Chris Torraine, 'Citrinas'*

In the north

some slight earth tremors

& here in Wales

a night full of rushing water

We go out in the tongue

of clear Polar air

after the storm

The steep streaming roads

are deep in lines of mud & stones

& black leaf-mulch

White hills

ride the distance

Up around the Forestry

we cross battlefields of smashed trees

where they have been cutting

In the plantations

between the crowded pines

it is gloomy

& lifeless

To name

is not just to gain power

but to set ourselves

within some pattern

some pulse

some shock wave

as the first drops of more rain

prick the puddles

as I align a stone on the Roman road

down a firebreak

& straight to the lights

on the long low shed

of the open-cast at Rhigos

bright

below the dark sweep of the ridge

## HILL COUNTRY CONTRASTS

We walk down to the river  
thinking of the old man—

*We don't know enough*, he had said,  
implying no lack of detail  
no lack of information  
but a completion  
by death.

We had sat in the parlour  
aware of time  
Time passing  
Time passing slowly  
Tick  
Tick of  
the old clock in the corner.

He'd said goodbye in the garden,  
under his copper beech  
in his Sunday suit, with a box rule  
sticking out the top pocket . . .

We walk down to the river  
through the bluebells and orchids—  
3 dippers whip downstream—  
you bathe, lovely mammal,  
dark hair floating, miming  
your tingle and chill in water  
cold from underground.

LAMBETH (FRAGMENT)

Sweet dust

The taste of  
sweet dust

I'm an old man  
a many-lived man  
& in chaos  
I come back to London

*Something you feel  
or you don't*

Walking through a sunny square  
like a man who has found his feelings

& the marked faces—  
*weakness & woe—*  
remind me  
how I'm always looking out for you—  
my face too  
jarred in the black Tube window  
tired with looking

The Pleasure Gardens of Lambeth

The Temple of Flora, The Apollo Gardens, Vauxhall

CONTENTMENT PASSE RICHESSE

Estates abandoned  
Dust  
    Ah, Lambeth!  
Topaz Street  
Corrugated iron windows  
Parliament suddenly  
over the river

The Matter of Britain

Growling lambs

SCRAP SUS NOW

A nudge in the back  
in the speeding police transit  
*Fallen on the floor, have we sir?*

The cat  
does the Lambeth Walk  
across the wet concrete

## PHANTOMS

*Or, If you want to dream, cut out the picture.*

*If you want to fly, cut out the coupon.*

—RAF advert.

*For Phil Morsman*

I never see jet-fighters now  
but think of Phil, the painter,  
inscribing their silhouettes  
& their mental glint  
on mountain & valley,  
over cliff & field.

Images of death.  
Heirs of first war trench  
& plague pit horrors.  
Power thrust. Smooth  
sex thrust, the naked girl  
looking out the window at  
the curved shape low over the roof.  
Spaceship rescue dreams,  
waiting for the aliens  
as we did for the barbarians,  
some kind of solution.  
Fear, & fear-born hopes.

But I am not equipped  
to make distinctions.

I have not the technology.

I write of Phantoms.

The truth is simpler  
as they unzip the sky  
over Wye's curve at Symond's Yat  
or skim along Eden's valley,  
or as they start up the jackdaws  
in the Glen of Mercury  
or compete in outline  
with cormorants & geese  
over the Isles of the Wanderers

or as they do not appear  
above the bright furrows of  
Phil's painting *The Field In July*.

*I didn't put them in,*

he said, *but when I look*

*I can hear them.*

*I can see them.*

But I am not equipped

to make distinctions.

I have not the technology.

I write of Phantoms.

## AUTUMN SONG

### *Darkness & Light*

Out on the moor  
in the rain  
the heather is dark  
& the rushes hold the light  
into themselves  
The river turns wild  
foam-brown, full, fierce

To re-enact  
my father's woe

Dogs barking  
at either hand

The corrupt lower Neath  
sliding slow & muddy  
through the ruins of industry  
between damp, dutiful towns,  
black wharves & breakers' yards

The upper Neath, innocent  
with a secret knowledge  
of innocence, a leaf, dropping  
onto the pulsing surface  
of the water

A man on a bicycle  
leading a horse  
through the village  
at dusk—sparks  
striking off the road

## FOR R.

There are so many of you  
& each seems blind  
to the others;  
you confuse me.  
But sometimes we ride  
that simple current between us;  
& sometimes we kiss  
in empty rooms.  
Now & then we even  
talk to each other!  
Sarcasm is our best mode  
of communication.  
Once, having firmly agreed  
on the impossibility of it,  
you suddenly showered my neck  
with kisses, then  
pushed me away.  
Your body said one thing  
and your mouth another.  
You said, *You don't*  
*understand me—*  
*I'm flighty—*  
*you're so serious.*  
I said, smiling,  
*You're nice,*  
& I meant it—  
quite simply, I approve of you—  
and you said, *I know!*  
What could I reply to that?  
What could anyone reply to that?  
I see your problem  
but that's not my meaning.  
You're about the least flighty person  
I've ever met,  
& me, I'm certainly  
not serious.

What am I trying to say?  
That we don't understand each other  
at all? Or that we share more  
than you can afford to admit,  
with your elaborate defences  
& emergency exits.  
You're a person of power  
on a difficult, stubborn path;  
you're efficient & calculating,  
you're emotional & physical & demanding & silly,  
you're reactionary & anxious & can't relax,  
you're running away from yourself,  
you're tied to a stone,  
& somewhere  
you're alone & afraid.

I remember you saying  
you had no family farther back  
than the train across the border  
from a small country  
that scarcely still exists.  
You have no roots  
other than centuries of pain.  
Despite your Birmingham accent  
you're a refugee,  
you're one of the Boat People.  
OK, you've got problems;  
but don't force me  
to be critical.  
Now I'm regarding you  
shyly, or with anger—  
must it be like this?  
When can we  
look at each other  
& simply  
smile?