

Belonging

Also by Martin Anderson

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

MARTIN ANDERSON

Belonging

followed by

The *English* Boat

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CONTENTS

A World Impatient to Sound

- Occulta 11
- A Boyhood 14
- Flume 17

A Constructed Place

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

Residues of Light and Air

- The Pear Tree 39
- Thames 43
- Edges 56
- Belonging 60

The *English* Boat

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

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

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

—Hugh StVictor

A WORLD IMPATIENT TO SOUND

OCCULTA

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

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

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

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

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

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

without really meaning to,
in a dispersion
of phonemes

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

to seize it

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

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

but you would never
pronounce it.

A BOYHOOD

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

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

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

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

Shoreditch, Purfleet, Gravesend,
while the marsh burned

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

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

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

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

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

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

Flume

Rippled

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

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

particulars,
air, with all its
laminations
and distractions,

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

calling

