A Clutha Triptych

I  Bonnington Pavilion, Falls of Clyde

The Falls, once tamed
into functional submission
by that epitome of the ordinary,
a power station, now
churn into ruched pools.
Hoasted back into life
by climate-driven rainstorms.
Keats or Shelley would have understood
the raw energy; Turner too.
As the waters crash and whump below,
above, the Hall of Mirrors,
Carmichael’s Bonnington Pavilion,
stands, abandoned but douce, eyeless
witness. Long before
camera obscuras, rich ladies
would bustle in, promised
the illusion of standing beneath
the Falls – or at least their reflection.
Now the Pavilion seems to stand ready,
waiting. The torrent roars on.
II  THE SETTLING POOL

Dawsholm Park, Maryhill

We near the Kelvin, soon after leaving the station, just inside the park. To my right a moorhen skitters slittery over a dark pool. On its sable top a confusion of lines and curves now mark its track, bullied into being by my heavy tread. A flashing May sun glitters through the leaves. “If you look from this hill,” he says, “you will see the ribbon of green as the Kelvin flows down to the Clyde.”

Such a shining green, we’re told, since the land is still too poisoned for any house-building; chemicals from printing and dyeing two hundred years past. In those days, the gentle roll of grassy hills was used to stretch cotton, bleached by sour milk. Now, only the territory of dogs, and waxed jackets.

The settling pool, arrowheaded, remains, its oily brooding surface still marked by the struggling bird, its depths and darkneses pointing from a tainted past to a confused present. Our tour slowly limbers itself up to move on to its planned destination where rivers meet. I pause, squinting back Towards the pool’s unwelcome shade.
From space, the Firth of Clyde
won't look like much.

Through time though: log
boats drifting through the
marshy lands.

Fish shoaling, spawning
a bridge, a cathedral,
a town. A river
running faster, narrower
as inches - King's Inch, White Inch –
become suburbs, swarmed by houses.

Iron fish spawning sparks,
legends and lifestyles; then
streetcorners, slouched, abandoned heroes;
only statistics now.

Always, always,
the river widening: emigrants
and day-trippers; puffers
and marinas. Until
we come, when will
we come to that last
lighthouse?

And the salt
of the open sea.