Is it a urge we all have?
A desire to create waves
A dream to run wild and free
What stops us?
Are we scared of what we may find?
Are we afraid of who we may become?

'A Year in the Wilderness' collects words and images from the first twelve issues of my 'Wild' zine plus specials created for zine fairs over the same period. These are the things I found whilst wandering off the beaten track. These are my thoughts on a life in constant flux.
No more walls.

Reality doesn't impress me; only believe in intoxication, in ecstasy.

―Anaïs Nin

"I think true wilderness can still be found, but it's hard to teach and even when you get there, which is probably why it still exists", —Michelle Paver

This book is for everyone who struggles to express themselves and those who help them find their way. As a born introvert there were so many people who showed me more faith in me than I'll ever have. To Paul, Kerry and William who showed more faith in me than I'll ever have. To Crash and Jess for the zine love.

And to Helen for the loan of the masks, new 'ways of seeing' and for not looking at me as though I was warped when I showed her that first issue. Reality doesn't impress me; only believe in intoxication, in ecstasy.

―Anaïs Nin

And to Paul, Kerry and William who showed more faith in me than I'll ever have. To Crash and Jess for the zine love.
'Wild' came from a desire to expand my horizons. I'd done a series of 'Torso' zines which focussed on how my body was changing. From there it was a natural progression to ask the question: if my body is ageing what is happening to the places which surround me? Are they also showing signs of dereliction? And is this impacting on how I feel about both my body and the outside world.

'Wild' was a way of talking about living on the outskirts. About how the town I live in seems to be growing and encroaching on the green perimeter. Overstepping boundaries. And how it was strange that other places had become wasteland. Unwanted and unloved. It was about promises and failure.

'Wild' can also be taken as a travelogue; these are the places I've been. It can be seen as a comment on wastefulness and unrest – these are the things that we've left behind. Some vulgar scrawl and discarded clothes. Have our lives become so transient? This is what we do to survive. This is what we do to escape.

'Wild' is also about abandonment of childhood and normality. I wanted to touch on the fairy tale aspect of 'the woods'. I've always been drawn to the idea that the woods are a living, breathing and transformative place. So why are they always seen as dark and malevolent? Places where people go missing or end things. Why such evil when I see magic?

'Wild' will always be about contrasts. The photos themselves taken whilst walking to and from the places of isolation. It is as much about disarray as it is beauty. Mixing the graffiti of the motorway flyovers with lushness. Earth, heaven and hell. All part of me. All fighting each other to see which one will survive.
REVELATIONS

The beast's habitat was in constant flux —
the men had dreams
Gone were the brook and green aplenty
Now it could only find factory, artificiality
A constant throb
A constant fear [of grey]
Where could freedom now be found?
The monster howled in vain
Why did progress always bring abandonment?
Life inconsequentially falling away
Colours fading in the hopelessness
Was nothing worth saving? — he felt alone again
Did he not exist? — no, to them he was nothing
How long had he been amongst them now? — it
felt like eternity
They preached a future of change, of ideas
But how can one bypass, one mask the fall?
How long had he been denied, this now? — it
fell like eternity
How long had he been ignored, or thwarted?
Did he not exist? — no, to them he was nothing
Was nothing worth saving? — he felt alone again

timeless
the man felt the woods come alive.

The man felt the woods come alive.

It came in changing seasons.
Desire came through death.
Open to making himself appear uninterpretable.
The man joy in being willing to let time leave his mark.
but he found a way to escape, to question and to shed his skin.
it was about disbelief
it was about fear and sin
the monster howled again
How was this the answer when it meant extinction?

The man felt the woods come alive.

It saw the future, it saw the past, it saw the present.

and what to do, but never how to love:
The man found it many times throughout his life, he'd been told where to go
As the man uttered, he saw that he was right:
He wasn't gone in much more than the moment:
He wasn't sure if he believed in magic:
He wasn't sure if he existed?
What was it exactly?
He never said it is, as a transitory thing
In itself but the rest, sometimes
Stopped any resistance and made him go deeper.
The currents all killed the silence.
A rhythmic sway and a heartbeat, seeds groundward:
That lagoon, the wind blew through the branches.
It's spirit was all around him, beckoning.
The man felt the woods come alive.

In this age of enlightenment the men fell silent
The beast howled again
How was this the answer when it meant extinction?
They preached a future of change, of ideas
Did he not exist? — no, to them he was nothing
Was nothing worth saving? — he felt alone again

The man felt the woods come alive.

In the hopelessness
Life inconsequentially falling away
Colours fading in the hopelessness
Was nothing worth saving? — he felt alone again

The man felt the woods come alive.

A constant fear (or fate?)
A constant trip
A constant threat
A constant fear
Now it could only find reason, artificially
Gone were the book and Green Apiantry
The men had dreams —

The beast's habitat was in constant flux.

The man felt the woods come alive.
STRANGER
Than
Paradise
The prophet knew his time was at hand and wished that he could change his path. He wasn’t set for this—he no longer believed. But he knew his death must come. Through sword, through semen, through the thoughts in his head that made him feel evil, through the thoughts in his head that made him aroused. Why couldn’t they see he wasn’t one of them? He looked at the vibrant green with such awe and went deeper into the wilderness. He knew that it was useless and they would find him, hunt him down and demand sacrifice. But for now he walked naked, cherishing each secluded breath, each netted step that proved he was human, each minute step that proved he was human. He knew that was useless and they would find him, and was deterred into the wilderness, into the vibration of his heart, into the wilderness. Why couldn’t they see he wasn’t one of them? Through the thoughts in his head that made him feel evil, through the thoughts in his head, through such awe, but he knew this earth must come. He wasn’t set for this—no longer believed. The prophet knew his time was at hand and his tasks were done.
Is the crumbling concrete a sign?
To remind us we are bound to change.
Grow old and weak.
Bend and break down.
But also to experience new things.
With a new wisdom of sorts.
What do you see other than just a body?
Not some edifice.
Not something to be repulsed by.
A male body.
Human?
Does anyone really know what that means?
Is it just another label to define how we should act?
To care or abuse in equal measure.
To know about death and realise that it is on the horizon.
To have no fear.
But to walk ghost-like through the ruins.
Quiet, ashen and unashamed.
The man knew he was heretic. He wanted to fuck the world over. He didn't care for anyone let alone himself. He realised that there was no hope here. He used to believe in heaven but somehow got lost along the way. Through the sex that they found abhorrent. Through the coarse words that he spat out. What was heaven anyway? A place for cunts who died without sinning. Or were foolish enough to atone for their desires. He imagined it full of people who he used to hate with a passion. He imagined it as endless drone. Lame and insipid - it felt more like hell to him. There must be vibrancy below? There with those who had been condemned as worthless. Those who over time had defiled scripture. He knew he would feel their agony. He knew he would feed off their hate. He knew they would become tribe. He knew he would soon find love. He used to believe in heaven but somehow got lost along the way.
They were bits of kids kicking stuff around the same neighbourhood
Early Seventies babies who ventured everywhere together
Down across the railway line to the waterfall or across the golf course; further and further afield
Adolescence made them insular and had them hanging round street corners
They grew listless and lustful
They tried to look cool
They tried to remember why they liked each other
They lost touch
Maybe it's just one of those things. Time chose their friends but over time they needed to separate
Go their own way and have new experiences
Maybe it's just one of those things. Time chose them
They tried to remember why they liked each other
They grew listless and lustful
Round street corners
Adolescence made them insular and had them hanging around
Across the golf course; further and further afield
down across the railway line to the waterfall or together
Easy Street's babies who ventured everywhere
They were bits of kids kicking stuff around the
So what has been left behind
Left for others to find
Some scrawled tag to say I was here
I have existed
I have made my mark
For once I have had my say
F*ck this, f*ck that, f*ck you
It’s hard to know how we’ll feel when we
reach that moment we have to depart
Regrets and what ifs mingling with warmness
Memories of times we burned bright
Not worried about what lies ahead
Realising that those left will come and go
Roaming through the woods and pastures
Milling around the arcades
Trying to make sense of it all
Trying to survive

Out in the woods the creature roams
Isolated just following its own primal instincts
Yet still fearful
Always fearful
But in the distance exotic smells and cacophony
Forbidden desires and chances
A faster heartbeat
Sure it may end up in revulsion
Sure it may end with expulsion from Eden
Sure it may end in nothing
But what is life without thrill?
But what is life without the thought of destruction?
Randomness and non-conformity
The creature looks both ways and steps out of the shadows
They promised us a brave new world.
Said our futures would be bliss.
Abundant, full of silver and chrome.
They gave us wires.
Things that spat out noise.
Things that became tangled and torn.
Things that corroded whilst he tried to escape.
He grew old trying.
He grew tired trying.
The motorway came offering nothing more than greyness and monotony.
He still didn't know where he was headed but could get there faster.
Things crumbled further.
And yet always an oasis in all of this.
There past the concrete and graffiti he found calm.
There near where the Quakers built their bridge he found lushness and wildlife.
Still isolated but now at one with nature.
There he shed his skin.
All artificiality gone.
There he smelt wild garlic and felt the warmth on his shoulders.
Felt a powerful resurgent energy.
There at once he became alive.
There, forever, he felt home.
So what does this modern world bring us?

Vibrancy of wild flowers with teenaged blue hues? Perhaps we realise though that this wonder is short lived?

Feeling like we don't belong today. Feeling nothing but numbness. Feeling slaves to a distorted rhythm. Feeling like we don't belong today.

Our lives have become insignificant. Our lives are full of cheap kicks and plastic. Discarded dreams (when did we stop imagining a brighter future?)

Discarded dreams (we could have grown up and have sex.) Discarded bikes (was our childhood so long ago?) Thrown away before the time comes. Our lives have become insignificant. Perhaps we realise though that this wonder is short lived?

The vibrancy of wild flowers with teenaged blue hues? What does this modern world bring us?