PS

edited by Raymond Friel and Richard Price

number 6

PS is the Prose Supplement to **Painted, spoken,** which is edited, typeset, and published by Richard Price. Please send an A5 stamped self-addressed envelope for a free copy. Earlier issues have been digitised at: www.poetrymagazines.org.uk

PS's editorial policy is constituted in instalments by the contents of **PS**

PS appears occasionally, from 24 Sirdar Rd, Wood Green, London N22 6RG

Other related projects are outlined at www.hydrohotel.net

PS

edited by Raymond Friel and Richard Price

PS *number 6 2009*

Tactile

Richard Price

This issue of *PS* is particularly concerned with small presses and little magazines and publishes for the first time two papers from a recent symposium that looked at the interconnections. Of course the tangible, haptic, hyper-visual nature of the little magazine and small press (at their best) is a significant part of the story here. It is no surprise that art history informs the narrative and that Allen Fisher, who gives a remarkable account of his work in this field, should be poet, editor-publisher, professor and artist.

For traditionalists, the aesthetics of the late modernism of the sixties and seventies small press may take some re-tuning of the receptive organs, but there are many pleasures to be had in the world of the avant-garde (not just puritanical lessons). As shown by Raymond Friel's account of the closest the reading public is likely to get to an autobiography of Seamus Heaney, for those more calibrated towards the experimental perhaps there are also pleasures to be had (not just didactic lessons) in Heaney's poetry, too.

This discriminating criss-crossing is surely evident in the reviews by Stewart Conn and Giles Goodland here, and in the nippy manifesto of seekers of life.

We don't have to hold hands, but let's keep in touch.

Between Test and Product

Allen Fisher

March notes for *Interaction, Symbiosis, Overlap: Little Magazines and Small Presses*, Symposium, Nottingham Trent University, 2009.

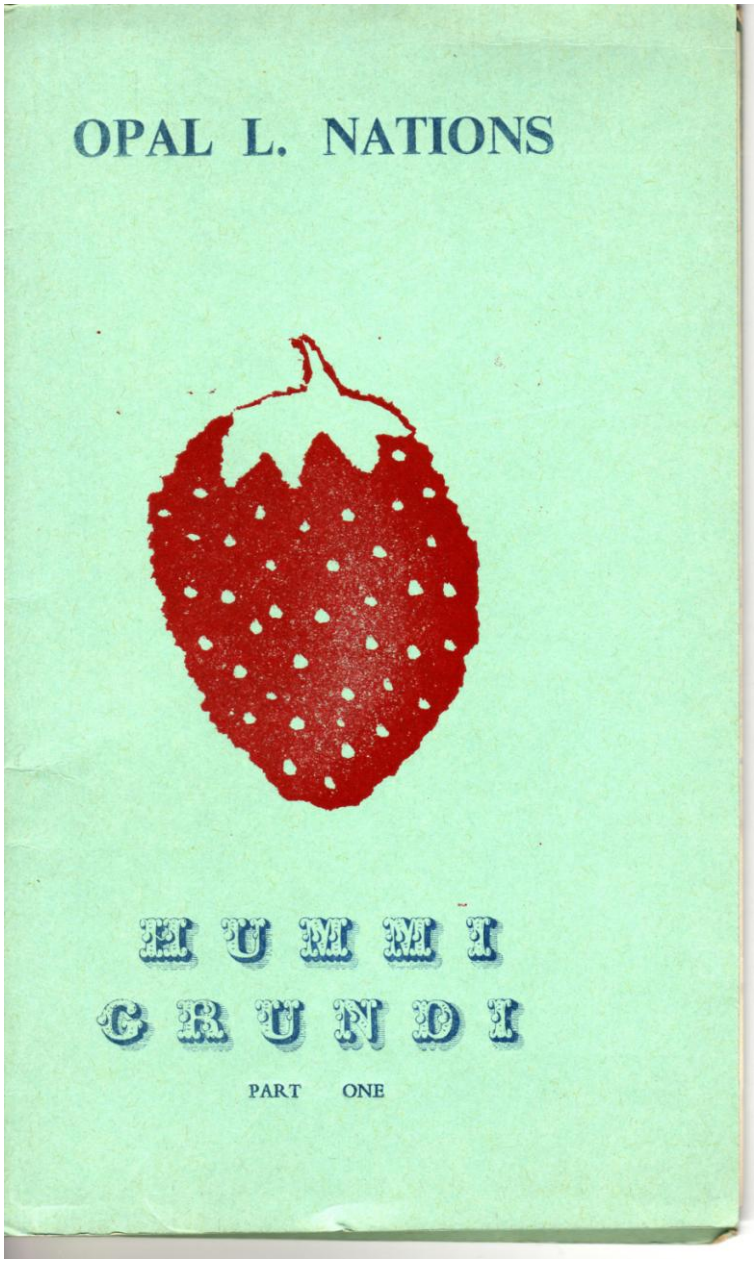
I want to talk about the conceptual difference between the idea of poetry underway, as a distinction from the poem or a product; distinctions sometimes between magazine and books as finished products and objects. This could bring in the conventional idea of 'in progress' or 'in process' as a distinction from ideas of conceptual art and 'process-showing'. These descriptions are regarding the period before 1980.

1968 Edible Magazine

I started printing my own work in or just before 1968, using shortcakes, with cut inscriptions and sugar icing, with occasional poisonous editions which included printing ink on paper. This developed into the building of a gelatine press and a world-war-two air-force technique, which printed onto rice paper using cochineal food colouring. I added shortcake covers and poisonous supplements.

Visual example (Ve) 2 Remains of *edible magazine* (gelatine press)

This was followed by the work of others using an eight by five Adana letterpress.



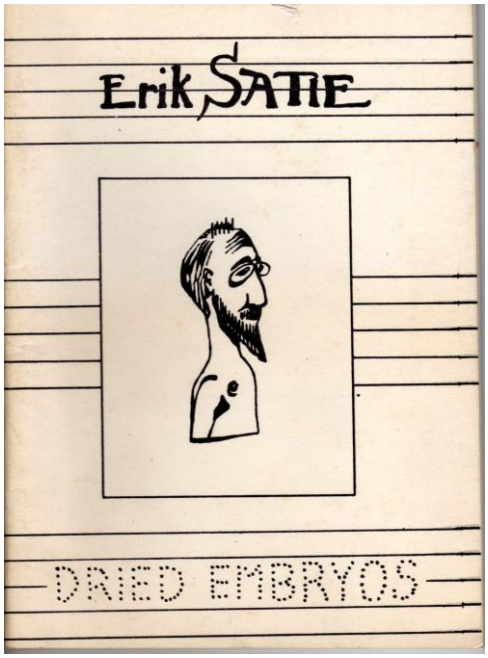
Ve 3 Opal L. Nations (formerly the singer Martin Humm), *hummi grund* (letterpress text with linocut cover)

1972 Aloes Books

During the Edible Magazine activity Big Venus published *Bavuska* in 1969, I published *Thomas Net's Tree-Birst* in 1970 and then *Before Ideas, Ideas*. In positive response to these publications I heard from, among others, Andrew Crozier, Ian Tyson, Martin Humm, Eric Mottram and Dick Miller. Dick and I set up a small press with a student colleague of his at the London College of Printing, Jim Pennington. We called it: Aloes Books. The idea was

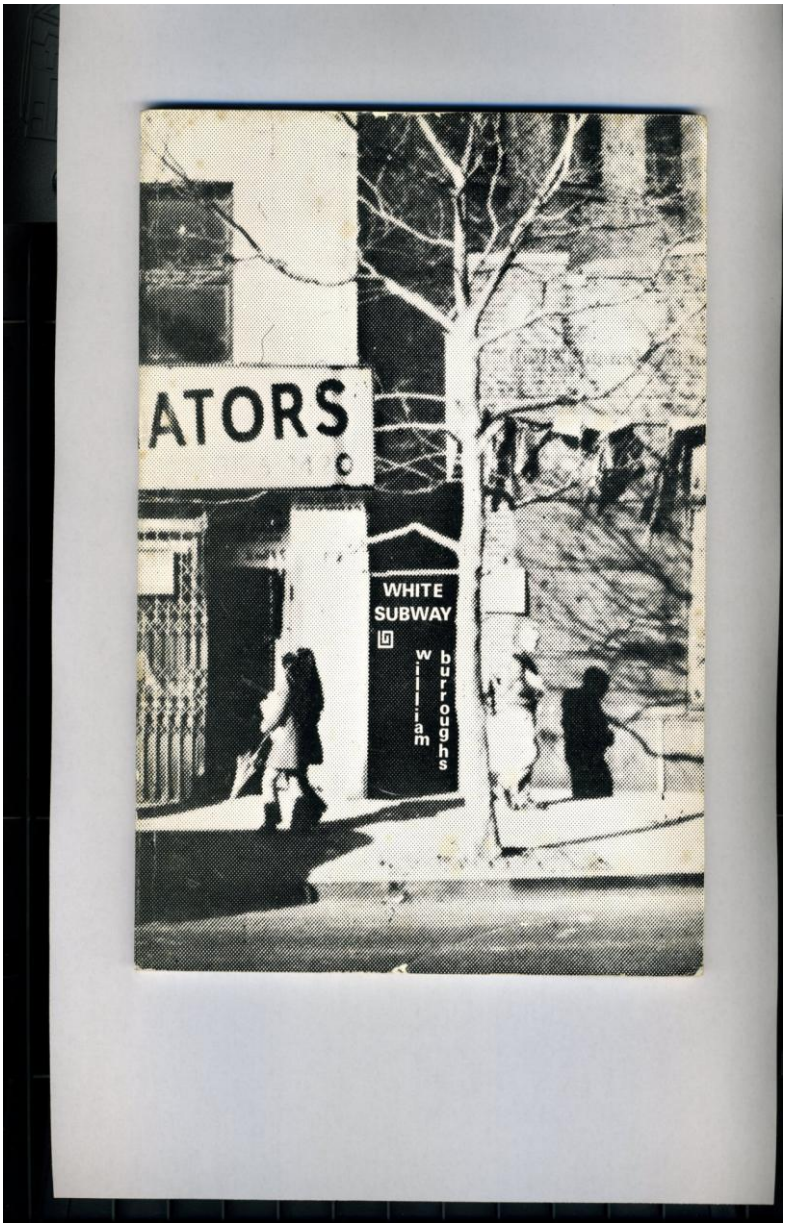
to use offset-litho to publish known authors, the sales of which would be a subsidy for unknown authors. Meanwhile, in addition to letterpress, mimeograph and the use of thermograph scans, I had started working in low-tech offset-litho, on a tabletop machine at home. Using Jim and Dick's expertise, Aloes started using a press at the ArtsLab in Earlham Street, and after that the press used for *International Times* by Hoppy (John Hopkins) at Prince of Wales Crescent in Camden.

Dick and I were making collages which we printed and published as IB Held books, such as *All Horses Have Feathers* and *Shitwell Bernado*. At one moment we asked Ted Kavanagh, who ran Wooden Shoe bookshop, to print for us on his Anarchist press. But Ted was a fine art letterpress printer using an Albion to print a range of poets including Lee Harwood and Bill Butler in Brighton. Our inclination was to use offset-litho and Dick, who was working at Penguin Books, had text set there ready for offset plates.



Ve 4 Erik Satie, *Dried Embryos* trans. Trevor Winkfield (offset-litho)
Ve 5 Jack Spicer, *Lament for the Maker* (offset-litho)

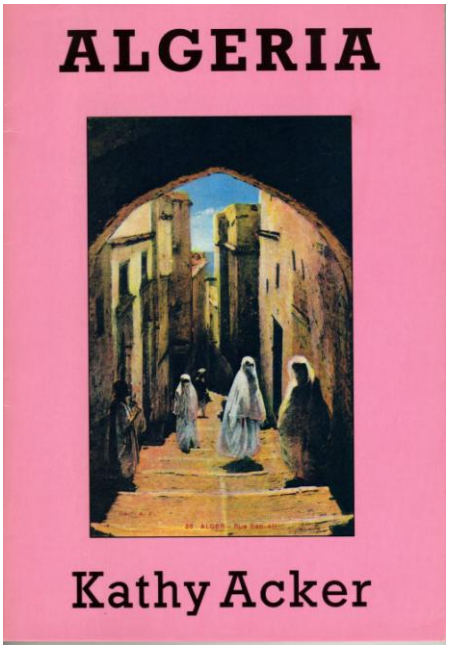
Our conception of books by well-known authors was proposed to run alongside unknown authors and Jim Pennington was printing litho books at War On Want. Jim and I put our Burroughs' collections into making *white subway.*

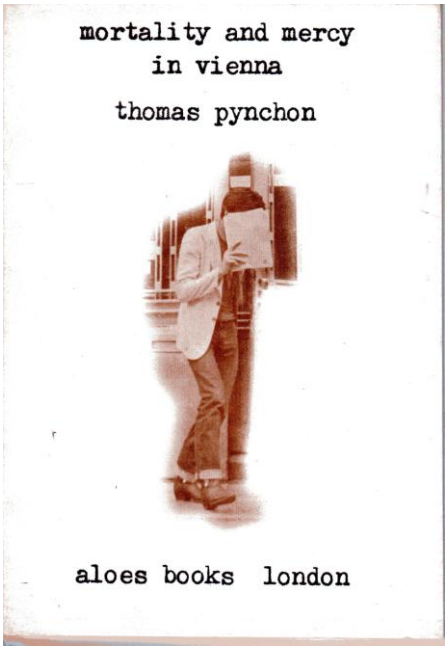


Ve 6 William S. Burroughs, *white subway* (offset-litho)

The publication of Burroughs' work also raises a conceptually important issue, which has to do with understanding the best state or condition in which to experience some written work.

To this can be added the important conceptual understanding of book or small press production raised within a context of British conceptual art, that is small press in distinction from booklets simply as products: Jim's production of well-known or underground but known artists.



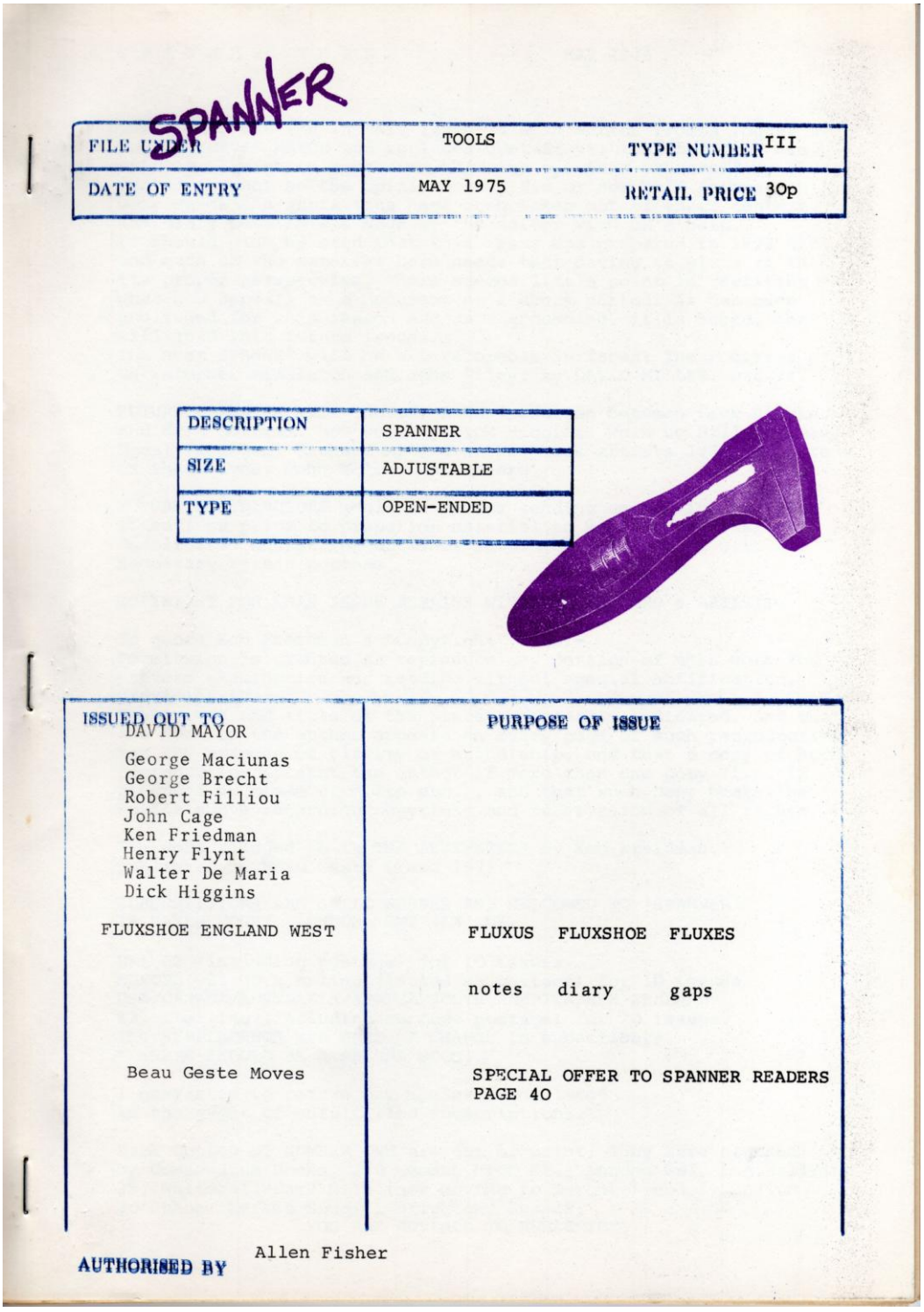


Ve 9 Kathy Acker, *Algeria* (offset-litho)
Ve 10 Thomas Pynchon, *Mortality and Mercy* (offset-litho)

These publications were contemporary with an attention to the activity of conceptual art, initially against ideas of product and with a preferential understanding of conceptual poetry and art, and partly in distinction from, but also cohabitation with, improvised performance.

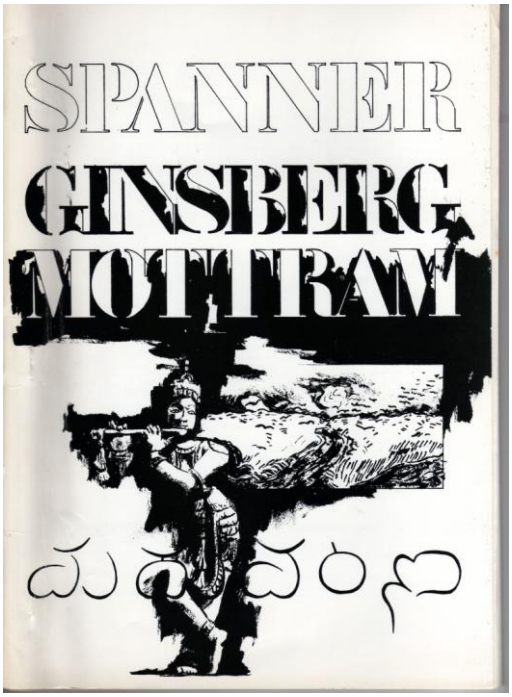
1974 Spanner

In parallel and contrast to Aloes*, Spanner* produced work in discussion, work unfinished, work testing the territory and redefining the territories. Dick and I had proposed to produce an arts newspaper, subsidised by the music industry and to be called *Wooden Shoe.* Eventually the support fell through and by that time Dick had left for America. I re-titled the venture *Spanner* (to avoid conflict with Ted Kavanagh's title). The first *Spanners* included an interview with John Cage by Eric Mottram and poetry by the anti-fascist histo-anthropologist Martin Thom. This was followed by *Fluxus* and eventually more than 50 issues and specials.



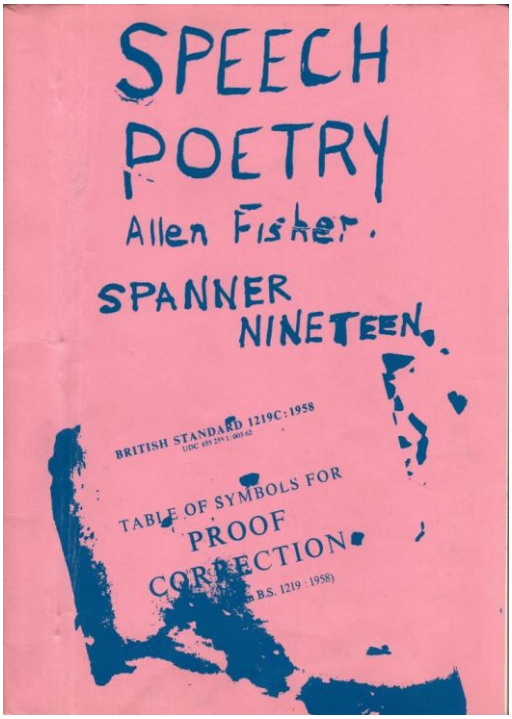
Ve 11 Fluxus issue, *Spanner* 3 (offset-litho)

Spanner eventually also took on essays that were not acceptable to scholarly journals but which poets wanted to read:



Ve 14 Eric Mottram on Ginsberg, *Spanner* (litho cover and mimeo pages)

and discussion anthologies:



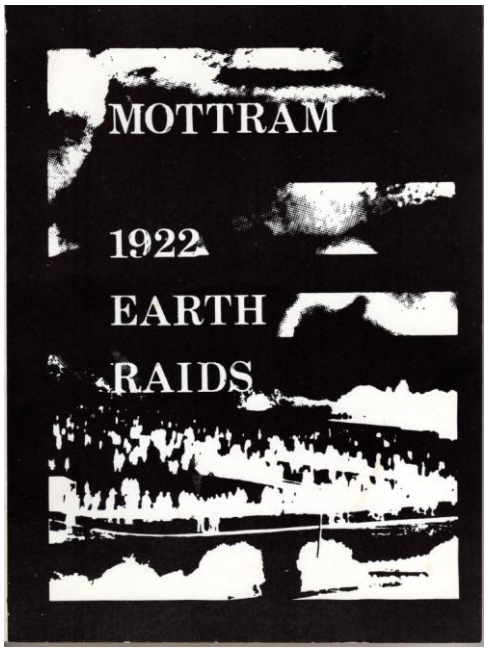
Ve 15 *Speech Poetry*, Allen Fisher edited, *Spanner* number twenty-something (silk screen cover and mimeographic pages)

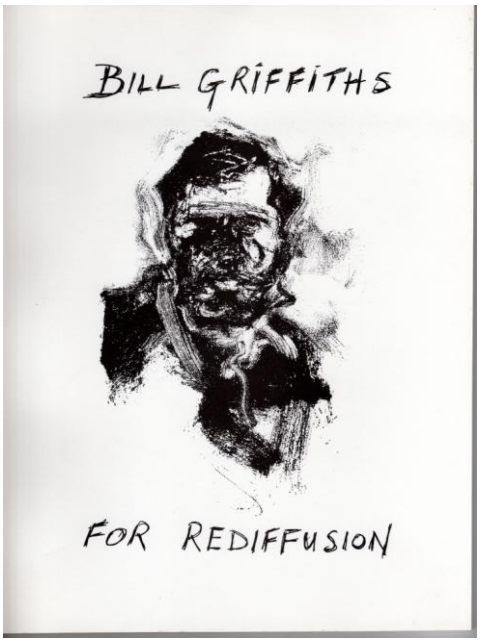
Eventually these were collated as documentation in ten-issue sets:

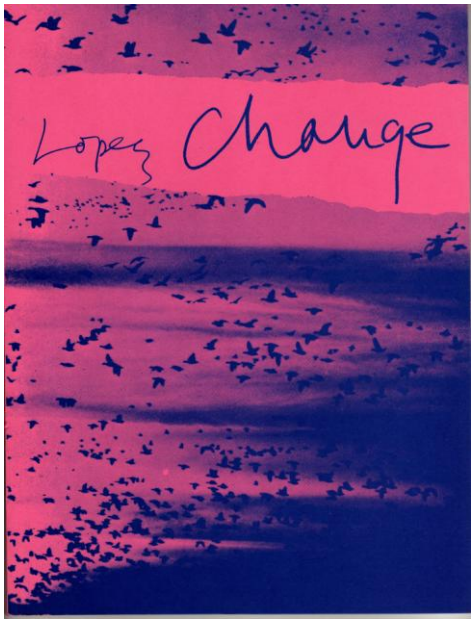
Ve 16 *Spanual* (litho, mimeo) and *Spanual Two* (I didn't collate beyond twenty issues)

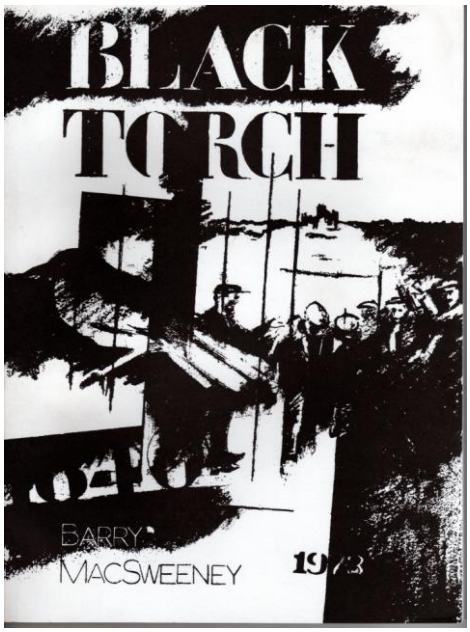
Meanwhile, with Elaine Fisher, I started a series of well-printed and trimmed mimeograph books with wrap around offset-litho covers, based on activities in London, a new kind of local, processual product:

1975 New London Pride (all offset-litho covers, mimeographed pages)









Ve 17 Eric Mottram, *1922 Earth Raids*
Ve 18 Bill Griffiths, *Rediffusion* (with litho illustrations)
Ve 19 Tony Lopez, *Change*
Ve 20 Barry MacSweeney, *Black Torch*

The art of testing and then documentation had revived as a newly understood product, conceptually different from its former

self and with a reading public that purchased the lot, usually within a year.

'"To Shake the Torpid Pool": poets' pamphlets and the role of little magazines.'[1]

Richard Price

Based on a paper given at "Interaction, Symbiosis, Overlap: Little Magazines and Small Presses", English Research Symposium, Nottingham Trent University, 7/3/09

Recently I was involved in a British Library campaign to honour the authors and publishers of poetry pamphlets, the Michael Marks Awards. As part of that I compiled a list of ten poetry pamphlets from the last century that I found of interest, and which represent a range of poetry approaches, though not of course an exhaustive one. The hope was this would provoke discussion about the role of the pamphlet in the wider poetry infrastructure, perhaps in culture in general, while increasing publicity for the Awards and so encourage pamphlet publishers to enter.

Today I would like to use that brief list as a way of suggesting, in the light of the survey work David Miller and I carried out to produce *British Poetry Magazines 1914-2000*, certain patterns of behaviour shared by little presses and little magazines and certain connections between the two forms.

I decided to choose ten pamphlets, which I'll simply list now: Edward Thomas, *Six Poems* [1916]; W. H. Auden *Poems* (1928); Dylan Thomas *18 Poems* (1934); Philip Larkin *The North Ship* (1945); Roy Fisher, *City* (1961); Ian Hamilton Finlay, *Glasgow Beasts…* (1961); Bob Cobbing, *Six Sound Poems* (1968); J. H. Prynne, *Fire Lizard* (1970); Denise Riley, *Marxism for Infants* (1977); and Kathleen Jamie, *Black Spiders* (1982).

Friends Pre-United

The first element that immediately struck me when I looked at the publishers of these books was the role of the individual as publisher, meaning either self-publication or publication by a friend. Two of these books are arguably self-published – Finlay's *Glasgow Beasts* and Bob Cobbing's *Six Sound Poems*. Technically I suppose they are publications of The Wild Hawthorn Press and Writers Forum, respectively, but both presses were then owned by the authors and co-run with friends.

A further five of the pamphlets were published by friends of the poet in question. In Edward Thomas's case, the artist-publisher James Guthrie (not to be confused with the better-known artist of the same name, whose heyday was the end of the 19th century); Auden is published by Stephen Spender; Roy Fisher by Michael Shayer and Gael Turnbull (as Migrant Press); Prynne by friends Barry MacSweeney and Elaine Randell (as Blacksuede Boot Press); and Denise Riley by her friend Wendy Mulford (as Street Editions).

Two authors appear neither to be self-published nor published by those in their circle – Philip Larkin and Kathleen Jamie. If that is the

[1] The title is taken from W. H. Auden's "II" ("I chose this lean country"), in *Poems*, [London:], S.H.S, 1928, p.11

case, it is interesting that Larkin and Jamie, characterised today as more mainstream poets, appear to have begun their publication history without an obvious help from any old boy or new girl network.

In a romantic history of the avant-garde this is counter-intuitive – perhaps there is an expectation of the little press world bravely operating outside the philosophy of 'it's not what you know but who you know'. I would argue – not just from this tiny sample of small press books – that that would be a serious misunderstanding of the poetry infrastructure, little press or mainstream. *Who you know* in the little magazine world is likely, I believe, to be very significant for initial and later publication – whatever the claims for 'standards', 'publishing the best' etc, and from whatever aesthetic part of the poetry forest. This is also true, I would hypothesise, for whether a poet's work is reviewed, wins prizes, or undergoes critical study. An anthropologist might go so far as to say that these such social relations are a significant part of what poetry (and any other artform) actually is. Apparent concentration on the actual text, repeated as a goal of reading lab isolated appreciation by avant-garde and conservative alike (though not of course all), is in this view an important but far from solitary pattern of behaviour within a much more complicated series of poetry-related activities which together, and often only together, constitute 'poetry'.

Of course what is needed is more empirical survey work to test and quantify that and to probe further into what "who you know" means. Theoretically this would take in measures of association that went beyond the printed page, including, as it were, body presence solidarity: for example, the hosting of events to promote friends, attending those friends' events, and so on. It would be interesting to note possible solidarity determinants in terms of identity politics (including self-identifying English ethnicity, city-loyalty, "citizen of the world" self-identification, perhaps). Class, gender and educational affiliation might also help us understand better the history of little magazines. It's not a surprise that the female poets on my list of pamphlets emerge only later on, though again you need to be so cautious with that list: the role women had as editors in little magazines within modernism – Dora Marsden, Harriet Monroe – and as poets themselves – H.D., Mina Loy - is not reflected in such a selection. If the collaborative ideal is accepted as an ideal, why shouldn't all be credited – and top-tennism should have a health-warning large enough to *almost* obliterate its packaging

That said, for me one key set of questions in the discussion of the production, distribution and reception of poetry revolves around the issue of acts of friendship. How does little magazine and little press publication constitute initiating acts of friendship which then have active power later on in the participants' lives? What role, too, do regular workshops and reading series have within that friendship network, and so back into the poetry infrastructure?

My belief is that the spectrum of friendship relationships is a key and under-researched concept in little press publishing even though it comes up again and again in critical studies incidentally. The circles of friendship around, say, Ezra Pound or Ford Madox Ford; the friendship within the modern Scottish renaissance – Catherine Carswell, Lewis Grassic Gibbon, Muir, MacDiarmid and Neil Gunn; the Bloomsbury

group, MacSpaunday and so on. All work through complex friendship processes that have to varying degrees been studied case by case but not, I think, aggregated or theorised (although I understand that Raymond Williams did begin to do this). I'd suggest that little magazines and little presses initiate and continue lasting or critical acts of friendship. What needs to be further probed, however, is whether, historically, the social capital invested in and constituted by these magazines and presses worked within existing power structures or was a counter to them.

In particular, for English-based magazines and presses did they augment and maintain the pre-eminent cultural capital of high-brand institutions like Oxford or Cambridge, the geographical location of London and the South-East as 'the centre', and the status of the male as the arbiter of taste? Or, by the same token, could magazines and presses also offer social capital opportunities to those outside those zones of power? Did second wave feminism, for instance, impact on the editorial control of little magazines and little presses in the 1970s and if so were their differences in success rates across different kinds of little magazine?

One aspect of such a social sciences approach is to go beyond the life of a press or magazine. I would predict, for example, that those publications that seem to "fail" – perhaps operating for a year or less, for example – may actually be very successful in social capital terms. Even short-lived publications are the means by which enduring alliances are built beyond the life of that particular publication or press. However, for literary historians, to test this in different contexts requires a tracking apparatus. I'd suggest that such tracking should follow authors and editors through the years after a magazine or press has closed into other publishing realms – review journalism, the broadcast media, more capitalised presses and so on. Furthermore, scrutiny should extend to the judges and the judged in literary competitions, grants, and to appointments at universities and the arts. (Because this is likely to point fingers at avant-garde, liberal and conservative aesthetic groups alike, and there is not the neutral environment in which to defuse the likely evidence of super-connectivity, perhaps it might be safer to keep this strictly in the distant past!)

Friendship is significant in publishing at large, too, of course: 'the old boy network" figured in establishment terms is in a way collaboration with a marketing budget. Both little press and mainstream publishing can quietly infer an objectivity of standards neither can truthfully meet, probably because microscoping down to a concept of standards in so much moot poetry is a category error. Professing standards is important to most presses, however. Within certain porous limits, no press should actually feel the need to be objective – except to the 'mere public', for whom the presentation of the magic of precise judgement is maintained by the poetry clerisy (everyone involved in poetry).

Friendship in little or large presses is an enabler of publication which, to the outside world at the time, may be unnoticed and so appears, outside a circle of friends, to be more disinterested than it is. And, as I say, friendship is privately enscribed in the public act of publication:

'between you and me, you are my friend because-and-*as-demonstrated by* the fact that I am willing to make your works better known by publishing them'. Perhaps only when friendship itself can be mobilised as a positive – "a collaboration", "a school", "a movement" – does it announce itself more publically.

Personally, I do not take a puritan view of friendship as a negative force in the arts. I regard an artistic and intellectual community as underwritten to some degree by the public good of private friendship. Perhaps entirely justified attacks on cronyism in political life have carried on too far to the endangerment of the concept of friendship itself.

What might be helpful in understanding this is to find a neutral vocabulary which avoids both positive and negative terms, perhaps seeing friendship in terms of an index of association. In the little magazine world analysing a dataset containing, for example, editor, publisher, advertiser and contributor information to establish the relationship between these variables would be one way of establishing patterns of association and understanding its nature, especially if it is then extended to wider access media. Since the poet as editor is such a common element in both the little press and the little magazine world it is a key node of reciprocation.[2] Looking at the work of social scientists in the field of friendship may bring some clarity to this – I've found Liz Spencer and Ray Pahl's *Rethinking Friendship: Hidden Solidarities* (Princeton University Press, 2006) especially helpful, for example.

Camford

As I've hinted another pattern that is fairly obvious in the ten pamphlets, and does have a bearing on little magazines, too, is the massive over-representation of Oxford and Cambridge. Of the ten poets, at least half were educated at Oxbridge colleges. I haven't looked in detail at the publishers, but I can see that at least four of the ten are Oxbridge educated and that figure will probably rise with further investigation to be over half the sample.

When you look at little magazines in the period 1914-2000 at the simple level of numbers of titles published in these university towns you still find Oxbridge over-representation, though not of the same order as this tiny unstatistical sample.[3] Actually, some of the functions that little magazines serve could come into play earlier for these attenders at excluding, I mean exclusive, universities, with networks being kick-started through the school magazine. The schools concerned would be overwhelmingly private schools or, as the English say, public schools.

---

[2] Well, I don't want to say more about friendship except to say that applying Aristotle's philosophy of friendship as set out in his *The Nichomachean Ethics* (1155a3; 1156a16-1156b23) to modern sociological discourse on friendship (such as Ray Pahl's work *On Friendship* (Polity, 2000) might be helpful. From there, understanding and measuring the different kinds of connection poets make through, by, and beyond little magazines could be taken forward.

[3] It is not entirely correct to read across from educational background to Oxford and Cambridge as locations of little magazines but so far that is all the data I believe there is and I think it's a good assumption to associate little magazines published in those towns with the colleges there.

Again there are references here and there to the school magazine in biographical studies of particular authors but unless I'm mistaken a more social sciences orientated study of this kind of publication is yet to appear. There is also the anomalous position of the student magazine / newspaper. So, in Oxford, say, there would be *The Cherwell* and *Isis*. These types of publication are not generally classified as little magazines but they are probably significant within the poetry infrastructure – it's no surprise that one of Larkin's poems in *The North Ship*, "This was your place of birth", was published in *The Cherwell* for example.

It may be that the ability to network is inculcated within Oxbridge and pre-Oxbridge environments and, not of course forgetting the immense advantage of their typical students' starting positions, that early networks themselves, and so their ability to forge further ones, are something that education outside the establishment could use to give their students a better chance. There is probably much more to the debating society and school magazine than meets the eye. Modern universities and the schools that feed them could help counter the obvious and serious imbalance in privilege in education by better fostering clubs, groups and, especially, small-scale publishing as a means, probably a very significant means, of offering counter capabilities to those alumni power networks that to this day continue to dominate private capital and public life.

The 1950s and All That

If Oxford and Cambridge may be significant in pamphlet publication, the question arises: how do they figure in little magazine publication? Using the place of publication in the magazines logged in *British Poetry Magazines 1914-2000* you can glean a fair idea.

In the period 1914-1939, the megalopolis of London dominates with about half the new titles in our survey (117 of 236). Next Dublin is, if anything, slightly more productive than either Oxford or Cambridge, accounting for just over 7% of new titles in our survey, while Oxford and Cambridge account for just under 6% (but we are now looking at very small numbers and the difference may not be significant). 1914-1939 is of course a huge swathe of history and more needs to be done to break this down to clarify better publication patterns. New titles-wise the 1940s were proportionally quiet for Oxbridge, but the 1950s are more interesting.

That decade saw the average rate of new titles per year increase in these university towns at a time when little magazines overall were being produced less across the country. Quite a few other university towns – Belfast, Keele, Hull, Newcastle upon Tyne, Manchester, Liverpool and Edinburgh – produced more new titles per year than they had in the previous decade. This seems to confirm that the 1950s was a time of cultural re-building in poetry, probably setting the literary foundations that underwrite the 1960s. It's no great shock that the universities appear to have been part of this, but it is interesting to see circumstantial evidence of it at least in the pattern of little magazine publication. The overall *decline* in the 1950s of the little magazine in

terms of *number* (from 152 in the 1940s to 125 in the 1950s) might be better considered as the unsustainability of so many magazines outside a war context (the fraught but substantial leisure time by the military and by those on the homefront was particularly suited to the lo-fi form of print). The Fifties should also, I think, be seen as a time when the UK saw a clarifying and founding of poetry networks by those who had been children or young adults during the war and who were now taking advantage of wider access to university education in an environment of culturalas well as physical rebuilding).

At least three little magazines from the 1950s relate in this way to the pamphlets in my list. Bob Cobbing's magazine *And* began in the 1950s. Although it began as the magazine of a north London group called Arts Together it soon became a Writers Forum title, so there is a direct link between the magazine, that innovative press, and the pamphlet portfolio *Six Sound Poems* published in 1968. Interestingly, as I've learned in part by talking with Steve Willey who is a research fellow at the Queen Mary and the British Library, Cobbing's background is not, I believe, university education. Rather he was grammar-school taught, then going on to teacher-training college. As Steve has suggested to me, there is also his dissenting and Quaker background to think of as models of support and artistic procedure: the workshop as a secular Quaker meeting. With this in mind – and thinking of similar non-establishment backgrounds in writers associated with the London grouping - some of the apparent animosity between London and Cambridge 'schools' of poetry can, yes, be put down to differences in formal approaches to the making, workshopping and means of dissemination of poetry. But another reason appears to be rivalry between modes of education, at times even a turf war over educational hegemony. From the outside, however, the (quite possibly false) differentiation has a good cop / bad cop effect: whatever the *truth* of the divide, both groups of poets and their poetry have more recently benefitted from the interest their apparent conflict has generated and a wider UK perspective (of great interest) is elided by and concentrated to some degree within the London-Cambridge nexus.

Roy Fisher's *City* emerged from Migrant Press, the imprint of two men who had known each other since they were schoolchild boarders at a Cambridge private school in the 1940s. Michael Shayer and Gael Turnbull set up the magazine *Migrant* in the 1950s, moving into relatively regular pamphlet publication once they closed the magazine in September 1960. Finlay's Wild Hawthorn Press was also directly influenced by Migrant, magazine and press, and may have been brought into being directly because of it. For Finlay, the conventional publishing model of progression from little magazine to small press was reversed: only after Wild Hawthorn Press had been established did he set up, in 1962, the classic little magazine *Poor. Old. Tired. Horse.* This may have been because Wild Hawthorn was largely a means of self-publication, whereas *Poor. Old. Tired. Horse*., probably with a little help from Gael Turnbull's address book, was a way of continuing and radically widening the poetry network Turnbull and Shayer had built around and through *Migrant.* Unlike the Migrant publishers, Finlay did not have a university education, nevermind a Cambridge one. Fisher's

education, at Birmingham University, may also mark a post-war difference in relative accessibility to education.

Finally there is J. H. Prynne's *Fire Lizard,* published by Barry MacSweeney and Elaine Randell under their Blacksuede Boot Press imprint. Again this can be seen, admittedly very broadly, as a consequence of a chain of events set up in the 1950s by the emergent little magazine and little press infrastructure: Prynne was the final editor of the Cambridge magazine *Prospect,* set up in 1959 by Elaine Feinstein and concluding in 1964. Roger Banister and Peter Redgrove's *Delta* was also a force in Cambridge in the 1950s and 60s. Later Prynne went on to co-edit series 3 of the magazine *The English Intelligencer* in 1968. Randell, while she was co-running the Blacksuede Boot Press, was also editing the magazine *Amazing Grace.* It's obvious, too, that Cambridge University is, if not a protagonist in these publications, an enabling, or provoking, environment. There appears to be a slight quantitative difference, too - when you look at the titles in our survey you see that in the 1950s Cambridge produced more new little magazines per year than any other location except London – on average, 1 new little magazine per year. This rate was sustained in the period 1960-1975 (though Oxford began to publish more) and in arguably the key period 1966-1972 was higher. When that is mapped on to the appearance of presses who publish Cambridge-associated poets – Andrew Crozier's Ferry Press and John Riley's Grosseteste Review – the suggestion is that there is something like a critical mass both being represented and stoked. More quantitative information – a survey of little presses, for example – would help build up a better data set to put the correlation in perspective.

In the meantime here is a simple comparison of the association between the little press scene in that sixties and seventies and the era many of those magazines and presses looked back to in admiration, the classic modernist period of 1914 to 1939. A word of caution: you may have noticed that those time periods are of different duration. Although using a ratio smoothes out a problem of comparing two different time-lengths (constructed using post-hoc notions of modernism and its re-birth), I think it's more satisfactory to compare equal time periods: work for another day.

Misunderstanding the Media of Modernism?

In the first period there were approximately 236 new magazines in our survey (on average about 9 new titles per year). Of these 236 new magazines approximately 23 had an associated book imprint: publishing single author collections, anthologies or in some cases local history. So a book press to new magazine ratio of just under 1:10. For every ten new magazines there was a book imprint associated with one of them.

In the second period, 1960-1975, there were 539 new magazines in our survey (on average about 34 new titles per year). Of these 539 new magazines 141 had an associated book imprint, so a book press to new magazines ratio of about 1:4. For every four magazines there was a book press associated with one of them. In other words, not only were there quite simply many more little magazines per year in the

1960s and first half of the 1970s, a little magazine was much more likely to have a little press associated with it as well.

That sounds good on the one hand – lots of presses, lots of poetry – but it might also have posed difficulties for the clear transmission of poetry to a centralised and near-unitary media that had not necessarily moved in the same direction as the little press infrastructure. Even if it had, it would have found it physically impossible to accommodate such prodigious diversity. The classic modernist period, often seen as a model and inspiration for the British Poetry Revival, seems actually to have worked in a quite different way: comparatively few magazines, comparatively few presses, and so, arguably, comparatively easy to transmit modernist texts into the reviewing press and beyond.

One way of thinking about why this may be so is to consider the electric power industry. At the moment a very small number of very large power generators produce power distributed through the national grid. It is possible now for a small number of small power generators to localise energy production by small-scale solar and wind-generation on domestic properties and even to feed that into the National Grid. Even if there were hundreds of thousands or millions of such small-scale producers, however, their ability to make their political presence felt on the national grid *as a large community of small-scale producers* would be difficult. At least the product would already be in a communicable form that the National Grid would immediately understand. The same could not be said for the different varieties of little press poetry, especially with a paucity of contextual and directing articles that would have greatly helped plug those texts into the Grid. What the history of 20th century little magazines and little presses may be pointing to is both the widespread benefits of constructive anarchy at numerous local levels, *and* the limits of influence that such constructive anarchy may achieve. The establishment in the late 1960s of the Association of Little Presses was probably a recognition of this though it remains to be seen whether ALP's methods established a way into a more powerful transmitting infrastructure or in fact established a parallel but perhaps less effective network instead.

Across the Water, with Love

Finally a word, now, about format cross-over. *Fire Lizard, Six Sound Poems,* and *City,* all make a similar statement about the potential of a small press book to be a time-bound event closer to periodical publication than book publication. When you look at *Fire Lizard* you see that there is a statement about the occasion of its publication: the colophon states that it is "written in Cambridge, New Year's Day 1970". Perhaps the presentation copy dedicated to Charles Olson, lodged now in the Ed Dorn archive at the University of Connecticut, was an alternative Christmas card: "For Charles, across the water, with love, New Year's Day 1970, Jeremy".

Both Fisher's and Cobbing's work are dated not just with the year but with the month [May 1961 says the title page of *City,* September 1968 says the colophon of *Six Sound Poems*]. It seems to me that both Migrant Press and Writers Forum, even when they didn't specifically mention a periodical-like date on their publications (my memory is that

they often did), were probably functioning as presses somewhere between a little magazine press and a book publisher: they were probably issuing books regularly to a list of subscribers. Their slim light-weight nature also made them more post-able and again this is a characteristic of magazine culture. Writers Forum's frequently meeting workshop was probably a further means by which its little press books were sold and the fact that there was a regularity to that workshop may have strengthened the sense of each Writers Forum being a kind of instalment in an open-ended series of booklets. So, to conclude with a reference to today's theme, it may not have been a case that little presses and little magazines had a symbiosis but that, in some special cases, they were practically the same thing….

seekers of lice

Manifesto
for a new materialism of possibilities

I

For colour as a physical proposition, the embodied colour of pigment, wax, cloth, wood, sponge, paper, card

For matter, process and object generating form and content

For colour giving birth to the object

For colour as sensory overload

For colour inhabiting a different space

For the object as a synthesis of sensory and mental experience

For proposals, operations, gaps and interludes

II

No to referentiality

No to style

Be a pagan, not a heretic

Draw your map, write your manifesto

Propose art as an insect bite

Practice the sidestep

Create a black hole, a pinprick in events

Redefine the distance between art and life, an inhalation, an exhalation, a sigh

Don't fetishize

Pull your finger out of the dyke

III

Don't be a jerk / Be a jerk

Stop censoring yourself

Judge your work

Avoid neat philosophical packages:
unravel don't illustrate

Thwart expectations

Walk / Don't Walk

IV

is this some kind of joke?

colloid
crystalline
vitreous
amorphous - having no discernible shape

ineluctable
from which one cannot escape by struggling

25 unnameable colours

what's the difference between

stratagem ruse wile art artifice device wrinkle shift dodge

sometimes it feels

It's, like,

nouns of assemblage

scratch the itch
itch the scratch

no particular results

the things that come to hand

try to get a handle on all this
there is no handle to take hold of anymore

2007

Heavy Footprints
Raymond Friel

Stepping Stones: Interviews with Seamus Heaney by Dennis O'Driscoll. Faber

The first disappointment in this book of riches is to discover that the interview format advertised on the cover is much less than a spontaneous and potentially risky conversation between informed interviewer and worth-hearing subject. In his introduction, O'Driscoll rightly reminds us that Heaney 'has the rare capacity to improvise sentences which are at once spontaneous and shapely, playful and profound.' He then goes on to stretch the point when he says that 'the same extemporaneous eloquence is a feature of these interviews.' Eloquence is certainly a feature, but not extemporaneity. A page earlier O'Driscoll tells us that the interviews were conducted 'principally in writing and by post' and that Heaney had almost total control over which questions to answer and which to ignore. This does nothing to challenge the unassailable status of Heaney, which developed quite early on with the patronage of poets like Lowell, and reinforces the frisson which surrounds any attack on his work or reputation (two or three such attacks are re-visited here). O'Driscoll says that Heaney must have often questioned his wisdom in 'laying himself open to such grand inquisition.' The disappointing reality is that there is more reverence than inquisition in this book, too much of a sense of an audience with the great man. What would have been instructive and revealing, and I'm sure well within Heaney's capability to deal with (at least before his recent illness), would have been properly bracing interviews with a few googlies thrown in, not the stately sequence of soft, predictable deliveries which Heaney, in his own good time, could hammer over the boundary and out of sight.

Read *as* autobiography, rather than interview, the book has a great deal to offer students of Heaney. There is the very familiar territory of the growth of the poet's mind and the first importance of the English literary tradition ('slave to Hopkins') with Irish influences coming onto the radar later, sometimes almost out of a sense of duty, especially Yeats, the poet all Irish poets have to deal with sooner or later. What is less familiar, and covered very thoroughly in this book, is the influence of Heaney's religious upbringing. Heaney is very candid, and now at some distance, from the 'soutanes and self-denial' of his Catholic upbringing, but what is embedded, and continues to inform his sense of himself as an artist is what you might call the *Catholic imagination*, which is first and foremost a sacramental imagination. It is the perception that the world is 'charged' with the grandeur and

grace of God, that everything is more than it seems and everything is holy ('Me waiting until I was nearly fifty/To credit marvels'). This theology has a long tradition in the Church and before that in the writers of the Old Testament (Genesis, the Psalms). Heaney alights on the literary branches of this tradition first of all in Hopkins, then in the earlier Romantics and then in Kavanagh. In fact it becomes the fault-line between him and Yeats. He aligns himself with Kavanagh even though he acknowledges that the 'carrying power of the "Byzantium" stanzas is phenomenal.' He goes on to say that he is 'much closer to the Catholic mysticism in Kavanagh.' He may call himself 'lapsed' in the attending sense, but he is permanently shaped by 'divine mysteries' and drawn to the 'great coherence' of a Catholic cosmology.

This not only informs his sacramental view of nature, but it is also an important point to bring to his dialogue with modernism and the avant-garde, somewhat dismissively described by him as 'old fashioned'. What he looks for in a poet is a 'rooted normality'. Even in T.S. Eliot he says 'the big, normal world comes flowing around you.' The Catholic imagination insists that the world, and 'rooted normality', are worth dealing with because they are sacred. There is of course another strain of thought in the Church which regards the world as corrupt and fallen, but the Catholicism which still sings to Heaney is the Church of real presence, laying on of hands, oil, water, word. This is framed within a great coherence, a great understanding of creation and revelation, albeit with profoundly unanswered questions about suffering. This is why Heaney recoils instinctively from modernism and the avant-garde. They seek to dismantle that coherence and to uproot normality. Referring to the Language Poets, he comments that they shun 'general engagement'. He is also unusually scathing about the generation of (mostly male) poets who followed in the wake of Muldoon. Again, he objects to their 'privacy of reference' and the fact that the work is 'oblique in a way that collapses the distinction between the elusive and the allusive.' He is looking for a payload 'beyond all this fiddle'.

There are two other dimensions of Heaney's work and character which seem to me to have their roots in his Catholic world: his sense of propriety, which can sometimes be construed as a lack of humour and risk; and his long reluctance to become overtly political. Heaney himself uses a brilliantly telling image to describe the way he approaches his writing. When he sits at his desk, he says 'it's like being an altar boy in the sacristy getting ready to go out on the main altar. There's a gravitas comes over me – it's a matter of depth of engagement and musical register.' There are moments like this in the book – genuine illuminations of the subject. This is a helpful explanation for what niggles at so

many 'critical friends' of Heaney: it is often great work, but the tone can be relentlessly solemn, a bit academic, the humour not very funny, a sense throughout of risks and roads not taken. But that is perhaps to want everything in one poet. Heaney has been phenomenally productive (and there are fascinating glimpses here into his writing practice, the 'surges') but this is partly because he has not squandered his talent. From the outset, he seems to have been studious, observant, *well-behaved*, and that in itself will always incur the wrath of those who want their poets to walk on the wild side (like Alvarez). He was also formed in a Church which unlike say the liberation Church of Latin America, was explicitly non-radical in its politics. Especially in settings like Ulster and the West Coast of Scotland where the Church membership was in a tribal minority, the values which were celebrated were loyalty, endurance, piety, being *staunch*. It was not about seeking to transform the body politic, but about attending to the state of one's soul. The individual had great spiritual resources to withstand the suffering of minority and discrimination. It takes a long time to break out of this thinking into something overtly political. A painful part of Heaney's journey, which is well documented here, has been the goading to take a stand in the Troubles, *write something for us*. His reluctance to do so, except under the most dreadful pressure, must be partly due to the interiority that was so much a feature of his Northern Catholicism. All of these points come together in the haunting ending of the poem, 'Sandstone Keepsake', as Heaney sees himself as the soldier sees him through binoculars from the watch-tower:

> a silhouette not worth bothering about,
> out for the evening in scarf and waders
> and not about to set the times wrong or right,
> stooping along, one of the venerators.

Another window into Heaney's world is provided by the photographs in the book. Most of them are stiff group shots of the great and the good of Heaney's generation (a useful enough reminder that it is a great generation: Heaney, Mahon, Friel, Longley, and then Muldoon, Paulin) but any richness, and addition to the narrative, is provided by the family photographs, which Heaney has allowed to be included. One photograph taken in 1972, on the slopes of the railway cutting in Broagh, shows Heaney knee-high in grass looking away, cigarette in hand. His wife Marie is walking towards the camera, hands in pockets, head down in thought. His two young boys are looking towards their Dad. It brings to mind the lovely poem, 'A Kite for Michael and Christopher' and indeed the photograph could almost be the

scene prior to the opening: 'All through that Sunday afternoon/A kite flew above Sunday'. There is a strong suggestion in the text that he has made the kite himself, 'tapped it when it dried out white and stiff.' This fits our image of Heaney rooted in the practical ways of his place, artisan as well as artist. In the interviews, Heaney is happy to re-visit the prosaic reality and reveal the charming and disarming fact that it was his father who made a kite for him in his childhood and he *bought* the one for his boys. The book does contain many glimpses of Heaney the man, but always of course on his terms, like the poems themselves. And like the anecdote of the kite it also brings us back to the foremost point: the life is fascinating, and occasionally it deepens our understanding of the poems, but it is the work which is of the first importance. Perhaps Heaney should have followed the advice of his friend and fellow poet Joseph Brodsky who maintained that a poet's autobiography was his poems and left the magic intact. But Heaney is a generous spirit, and if he is guarded then it is understandable after an adult life of public scrutiny and a childhood schooled in propriety and caution. His body of work will undoubtedly endure alongside a handful of twentieth-century poets. This book does provide many valuable insights into the background to the work. What is not here, the unguarded responses, the off-the-cuff, the improvised, may well have been more revealing or entertaining, but then perhaps we have more than enough reckless talk, and should be grateful for old-style integrity and restraint, for form's sake.

Giles Goodland

Review: *Seahorses,* Hazel Frew; *Settings,* Tim Allen; Anna Glasova, *Twice Under the Sun* (Shearsman)

This is a book easily missed because the poems inside it are easy to miss. I would not have noticed it if I had not been sent it to review. The poems in the book are about small, observant details, written in a detailed, miniaturized way. For instance, most poets decide to either give their line-initial letters capitals, or not. As a rule of thumb, more conservative poets capitalize, those who were influenced by William Carlos Williams don't. Frew does both, as a way of giving a subtle parasyntactic emphasis to certain line-breaks. In a poem, 'Reticulum' that seems to be describing some kind of surgical procedure (a reticulum can be a kind of human tissue, or the second stomach of ruminants) the capitals could be following implied full stops, but a full stop would be too definite:

> A kidney boxed
> in ribbons
> Smooth reticulum
> Shaped like a bean
> with an insect sheen.

or here, 'Martini', where the skilful non-rhyming adds something as well

> Nub olive
> in an oily ellipse
> Fully bitten
> first sip.

That 'sip' has been bitten off so it won't rhyme with ellipse.

A poem called 'Corridors' describes a visit to the dentists, down 'white-gilled passages' until

> Clinical eyelashes
> peep from beyond
> paper-masks
> ready to hypnotise
> with drill, swabs, scythes
>
> Polished cutlery
> for the open gum.

Notice some of the detail here. The last couplet could be from Craig Raine's Martian phase, but what world, what planet, do 'scythes' come from? The sound is good, with that half-rhyme. Is

it the shape of the eyelid (not the eye) that is peeping, not from behind, but from *beyond*. Is that the grim reaper hypnotising us? Or just the rising panic of someone with a fear of dentistry?

My favourite poem is called 'Snail', it can be quoted in full:

> Each day
> tastes of a dream
> once had
>
> Once awake
> The quaking
> withdrawal, a sea, a gulf
>
> The shell in my pocket
> a memory
> of a brief quell
> in Portobello
>
> The past between us
> insurmountable.

One of the signs of really good poetry is not really understanding why you like it so much. The two 'onces' the second one capitalised. I am still not quite sure what she means by 'quell' here (the dictionary lists a sense meaning a slaughter or murder—or even more obscurely, a spring of water--but perhaps she is forming something new from the more common verb). In the poem it echoes the earlier 'quaking', and rhymes with a syllable of 'Portobello' in the next line, picking up on the soft 'e' sound in 'memory' from the line before. It's that word 'Portobello' that I love here, just because it seems so snaily. I've turned it around in my head and I think it's something about the word itself. Those three Os, each with a different phoneme. It is a kind of mushroom, as well as a place. It could be a snail that she bought in Portobello market. It could be from a beach (a 'beautiful port'). I don't know, and I suspect that it is irrelevant. This is not Geoffrey Hill, we are not being sent off to the dictionary. The words are there because they sound good, and are placed beautifully. The careful sound patterning is continued in the poem's last two syllables, recalling the middle two syllables of Portobello.

The poems in this book are sometimes elliptical, often elude prose understanding. It is as if they are aspects, refractions from some larger situation that it is not essential for us to see. This is not to say that they do not work. The fact of not seeing the whole situation is part of the point. These are poems of apprehension, not comprehension.

Playful in a different way is *Settings*, by Tim Allen, also from Shearsman. Although they are in prose, I must be careful to state

that they are not prose poems, because Allen wants to by-pass the expectations, the long tradition that the term 'prose poem' suggests. There are no neat apercus here, no epiphanies or sound-music. These are 'Sets'. We have speaking voices or a single monologue, broken off consistently after a few sentences and jumping into a different context, at frequent points hilarious, often funny. Like late night conversation from a great talker, but you keep falling asleep and waking again. In fact if there is a problem with the book it is that it is too well written. I keep dipping in, shuffling pages at random, just for the joy of finding new passages. But hang on, am I meant to be enjoying this so much? This is meant to be experimental poetry, after all. If you keep on reading, thematic repetitions become clearer. Each set is a page of prose long, even though the sets are in paragraphs, there is no unifying style, so it is hard to give a flavour by quoting—I will simply have to say that this book is highly recommended to anyone, whatever preconceptions about poetry they have. It is both a dipping-in book and a sustained structural poem-sequence.

Since I have mentioned two Shearsman books, I can only conclude with a third. Anna Glazova's *Twice Under the Sun* is one I have been unable to stop going back to for several months. It is a translation from Russian, but Glazova lives in the States and I assume that she has had a hand in the translation, since it reads fluently, as if these are original poems in English. They are like nothing else I have read:

> lamplight falls into no hand.
> in the book a face cools
> shaved off by a hair
> as a second
> shaves a zero off the time.
>
> in this book one cannot but read
> not of someone's path past the lamp.
> no lamp nor the sun but an eye
> revolves there.
> it reads with its hands
> the tracks which the light leaves behind.

Stewart Conn

Review: *Stations of the Heart* by Raymond Friel

Salt Publishing, 61 pp., £12.99 (hardback) 978 1 84471 468 1

It may not surprise those familiar with Raymond Friel's poems in *Renfrewshire in Old Photographs* that this new collection opens with the taking of a snapshot. Here though the focus is on his wife and sons, whom he hastily joins as the camera's timer counts down. The title 'Under the White Horse', and a screen of conifers, hint at a widening of horizons.

'A World Fit to Live In' immediately follows: 'The white horse, behind us on its hillside, / is summoning the nerve for a great leap'. Significantly dated May, 1997 it ends: 'Outside the parish hall, party workers / in panamas and printed frocks sit round / with iced lemonade, clipboards on the grass. / Masses of bruised clouds move in from the east.' This conjures a social as well as a personal climate, and with it the shadow of bitter disillusion to come.

Clydeside's past is evoked in 'A Short Life of W.S. Graham' and 'Stanley Spencer in Port Glasgow'. A familial flavour is caught in snaps of Friel's father in the 50s and 70s, and in the lucid detail of the pram-pushing poet and his small son in 'Sunday Morning in Coronation Gardens'. In sharp contrast 'Parachutes' recalls: 'We crunched glass underfoot – / big slivers of glass in the wall, /scullery window gone – /my mother saying, *Where is everything?*'. Narrated in the first person, but relating to two decades before Friel was born, this is indicative of the deftness with which he superimposes people and places, past and present, memory and legacy.

A sense of unity is sustained through consistency of tone and texture and the prevalence of decasyllables whose flexibility precludes iambic monotony. Complementing these are never over-rigid rhymes and half-rhymes, enjambements, assonances and sound correspondences which give an impression of being instinctual rather than calculated. At times, with varying success, a shorter line is employed. A more expansive, freer mode lends itself to the harmonious ebb and flow of 'On Chesil Beach'. Despite its epigraph from MacDiarmid I see Friel's affinities as rather with a less jaundiced Larkin – or early Dunn, in his Scottish and English catchment areas and usages, pensive rememberings and measured lyricism.

Striking images include ''A field of stubble tapers off to the south / like the fallen arrow-showers at Agincourt' ('Cley Hill'), and Old Bathers in 'orderly, achy procession / through translucent curtains to stilled water'. Another painter Friel responds to is Vermeer, whose 'Lacemaker' he looks up to 'as my patron saint of application, / model of equanimity and stored /

longing, *fiat* of the workaday / undisturbed by lily-bearing angels.' On occasion he comes across as similarly constrained, making me wish he'd yield to those 'lily-bearing angels'.

In contrast I find his family poems (in particular an elegy for his Grandmother) very moving. Delicately observed moments of marital intimacy reveal how rather than becoming outmoded, reticence can linger in successive generations. And in 'My Parents' Bed' he and his new wife are seen as bound not only by totems and custom but by the trappings of Roman Catholicism.

Unexpected epiphanies abound. Peering into the silvery interior of a thermos is likened to 'looking into a soul, shriven and free' ('The Flask'). The title poem, at Keats's grave (which provides the cover image) again strikes a transcendental note as Friel recalls how 'in shimmering heat... I prayed for a heart fit for the scrutiny'. Not least through his humanity, this volume is invested with an immanence which both touches the heart, and charges the spirit.

An Information

Richard Price

Brae Editions is a press with high production values; **Alistair Peebles** is the directing force. *Travels with Dapple (Around Orkney braes with Sancho Panza's donkey)* and *Bearagram* are single short prose texts with what appear to be broad pre-set rules for their formation, both hybridising language registers not normally crossed: "Flora had eyes and ears for Sidecar alone. *O how dare* the world resist such eloquence, such passion, such grooming? Somewhere a tingling told her an itch was gone." (*Bearagram* – hidden in the text are over seventy road, street and place names from Stromness; the dialogue is funny peculiar and to this reader genuinely funny ha-ha; shades of the much-missed Clocktower Press). While most of these items could fall impressively into the mail art genre, *Fingers Crossed* is a short photographic book lyrically picturing the hands of ten subjects in black and white, with the phrase translated into ten languages. There are even the fingers of some poetry celebrities, if that isn't a contradiction in terms. A lovely book: some artist books really aren't meant to be presents, but this one would be perfect for many a leap of [faith]. Forthcoming from the press is: *A Patch of Ground, New Series. Old Ideas*. See also www.porteousbraegallery.co.uk **.**

Joseph Macleod's, *Cyclic Serial Zeniths from the Flux* (Waterloo Press) is a substantial selection of poetry, edited and introduced by **Andrew Duncan** (see *PS2* for Duncan on Macleod). Duncan, apparently taking his cue from Prynne's suggestion that Macleod was still of interest, argues with some force that Macleod is an unjustly forgotten modernist of the Bunting generation. Certainly his technical experiments, for example importing Gaelic poetry rules into English, are sophisticated and fascinating. Thematically, Duncan doesn't quite key into how much Macleod's 1940s modernist-filtered exploration of Highlands and Islands life was already well underway through **Neil M. Gunn's** earlier work in fiction, and in Gunn's political and experimental plays, but this is a quibble of firstism. (Incidentally in the 1940s Gunn and Macleod corresponded and were enthusiasts of each others work). This selection reprints the entire *Foray of Centaurs* (1936), a very strange and violent piece, with echoes of James Frazer's bloody view of regal succession, imagining London beset by a race of centaurs (contrast this with the deliberately pacific ritual ending of Gunn's *Silver Darlings*). That said, Macleod has corrugations in tone – going almost whimsically from the faux mythic to a high society discourse of wit, for example, and going from very obscure phrasing under the pressure of formal experiment to the prosaic. This takes some getting used to though may in the end prove to be one of his most interesting features.

The Fifty Minute Mermaid, poems in Irish by **Nuala Ní Dhomhnaill**, trans. Paul Muldoon (Gallery Books) pleasurably wrong-foots the reader with chance verse tales of once-immersed

tails – mermaids, a species that once lived perhaps happily beneath the sea but have now come to occupy the land. They are contradictory and have a folk-lore of their own which seems both wise and quite foolish. **Ciaran Carson's** *For All We Know* (Gallery Books) is mysterious in a different way, its two separate sections repeating the titles and (usually) incidents of the preceding part but offering highly refracted narrative in so doing. Many poetry books are dissatisfying because of casual occasionality across the book, but this is a clever, thought-provoking book written under formal constraints that, though probably never satisfying the reader in the conventional sense, offers many other facets. It is a book about two, or more, sides – political, emotional – meeting and meeting but also not quite meeting...

Working on *British Poetry Magazines 1914-2000* I was intrigued about what appears to have been a cluster of US work published in Scotland in the late 50s and early 60s, including two magazines edited by **Alex Neish** in Edinburgh, *Jabberwock* and *Sidewalk.* There's not space to go into the reasons (if, in fact, I had all the answers) for that American injection but Neish vanished from the literary scene in the sixties: a sleuthing interview by Graham Rae at *Reality Studio: A William S. Burroughs Community* gives more detail about the magazines and Neish's later non-literary life. See realitystudio.org.

Speaking of literary history, two new books of interest: *Complicities: British Poetry 1945-2007* (ed. **Robin Purves and Sam Ladkin**; Litteraria Pragensia) collects literary theory essays on Heaney, W. S. Graham, Geoffrey Hill, and J. H. Prynne as well as Peter Manson, Andrea Brady, Jeff Hilson, Keston Sutherland, and Chris Goode and others. Andrew Duncan's *Origins of the Underground: British Poetry between Apocryphon and Incident Light 1933-79* (Salt). I was especially interested on the treatment of **Terence Tiller and Ralph Hawkins**; the focus on the *Various Art* poets; and the critique of Scottish poetry's formal lack of curiosity because of nationalism displacement. Various sensitive readings of context and process as always and the moot question of whether poets should try to enter the wider cultural media world rather than withdraw.

Folklore by **Tim Atkins**, published by Salt, is an exceptional poetry book. Largely prose-poetry its short and part-sentenced, intensified syntax locates the reader within the English countryside's fights, sex, flora and fauna as if superimposed jolts as-lyric were a form of memory. And yet memory needs remembering: like Hejinian's *My Life*, the book is rereadable or nothing. See www.saltpublishing.com.

100 Things With Handles by **Simon Lewandowski** (Wild Pansy Press) is a beautiful photo-book of unconventional and often one-off objects that certainly do have handles but whose specificity appears to be one of the subjects. The index goes full out for reading the images analytically, and is a good read in itself.

Brazilian contemporary poetry is probably best known in the UK through the visual poetry of Eduardo Kac, and this on the face of it can be seen in a lineage with the remarkable work by classic concrete poets such as Haroldo de Campos (see www.ekac.org/ for more information). Perhaps the 1972 anthology by Elizabeth Bishop and Emanuel Brasil remains the reference point for classic modern work, *An Anthology of Twentieth Century Poetry,* or, rather, one part of the dual star, the other made by E. Brasil's concretist collection *Brazilian Poetry: 1950-1980*. On a recent visit to Brazil to promote the publication of *Cartas de Ontem* (a selected poems translated by **Virna Teixeira**), a trip only possible thanks to the Thomas Wright Memorial Trust, I was amazed to see in São Paulo a whole poetry centre devoted to contemporary poetry, Casa das Rosas (see PS 1 (2006) for Teixeira's account of the São Paulo poetry scene). The Casa, dedicated to de Campos, has exhibition space, a bookshop, a library, venue space and an education programme. Importantly it is located in the heart of the city's business district. It hosts international poetry conferences such as that recently curated by Teixeira, *Sim*Poesia (that's a pun on the Portuguese for Yes and Poetry and, of course, Symposium). It is striking how much international activity goes on across Latin America despite the state barriers; my sense is that even though Brazil's different language does create some isolation from Spanish neighbours (ironic given the vitality of the country and of its poetry) by and large even with Brazilian poets there are visits, dialogue, cross-translation etc, within the continent.

In Rio at a symposium curated by the poet **Claudio Daniel** I was lucky to hear and spend time with the avant-garde grouping **Confraria de Vento** (which I would translate as "The Breeze Fraternity"; or even "The Breeze Brothers"). Their work is visual, conceptual and de-personalised. The poets include **Victor Paes** and, perhaps the main theorist of the group, **Márcio-André** (no surname), who is also a composer-musician in the tradition of Stockhausen and Reich and has links with the Europhile US poet **Stephen Rodefer**. M-A's presentation of four short films with accompanying music and voice had the flavour of a Kraftwerk journeying (but trains not autobahns) and the minimalist dance-duet which he appropriated and scored was one of my enduring memories of this remarkable country. Portuguese is a difficult language to the ear but not so much to the eye and I can only recommend ploughing on with a dictionary through Márcio-André's poems *Intradoxos* (which you read from the back of the book to the front, like manga), his 'radioactive essays' *Ensaios Radiotivos*, and reading the journal of the grouping, *Confraria.* (M-A was the first poet to read at Chernobyl following the 'all-clear'). See also www.confrariadovento.com. The work of **Thiago Ponce de Moraes** in *IMP.* (Caetés), as Claudio Daniel has said, elevates "the minimal to the condition of the major", his poetry dancing, pulsing in sound, down and across the page, questioning, and having the strength to

question itself. **Cesar Garcia Lima**'s *Este livro não é um objecto* [This is a book not an object] (Edição do Autor) has his parodies and satirical pieces incorporated into graphic devices by **Beatriz Lagoa**, which are often from popular culture – plastic figurines, reproductions of classic art and artefacts. But the book isn't just a book either – each page is a detachable postcard, and so an object of the culture the poetry gently satirises. More info at www.cesargarcialima.com. **Leonardo Marona**'s *pequenasBiografias NÃO-AUTORIZADAS* [littleBiograhiesUN-AUTHORISED] (7Letras) has to me a Frank O'Hara cheekyness at times: the many celebrities who feature in the poem's titles (as well as an orangutan and São Paulo itself) are not points of meditation but of a kind of projection, springboards for play. **Claudio Daniel**'s *Fera Bifronte* [TwoHeaded WildAnimal] (Lumme Editor) is a cooler wide-ranging poetry that uses the language of the gallery and the museum to reflect on philosophical concerns. Here a cabinet of curiosities is a sex shop, a pet shop, and then a coffee shop; here a whole section of a sequence, "Muro" [Wall] is (if I translate it correctly) the curt "Portable trove of ancient amputations." Finally the third book in what I count as her 'trilogy of distances' is **Virna Teixeira's** *Tránsitos* [Transits] (Lumme Editor). The dizzying number of locations – from Orkney to Hong Kong via Stromboli (Hades and Ken Loach is in there, too) – doesn't stop the poet's concentration as she pares down places to body parts, glimpsed obliquities and catches of song, producing works that seem paradoxically obsessed *and* aloof. A fascinating collection.

All these books are *beautifully* realised in their production: the power of the graphic design is breathtaking.

In Memory of Duncan Glen

This is the first opportunity I have had since I heard that Duncan Glen had died to say in print how much a loss Duncan Glen's death is to Scottish literature. So many contemporary writers must have thanked him as he published their work in his magazines *Akros* and *Z-two-O,* and through Akros the publisher of poetry, local history, the history of typography and other topics that caught his expert eye. I personally benefitted from Duncan's publishing two books of mine that no-one else would touch at the time, *Hand Held* and *Marks & Sparks,* and so this particular tribute is heart-felt. Drew Milne, Gael Turnbull, Peter McCarey – to mention only some of the experimental writers that were published by Duncan (of course his tastes were more eclectic than that) – all had an Akros book. Thank you again Duncan for all you did for Scottish literature. You are missed.

It's A Record
Richard Price

Darren Hayman and the Secondary Modern. *Pram Town.* An album loosely based on the *idea* of Harlow, complete with schematic handbook welcoming you to the new town. As always, love affairs are the prism through which Hayman divides the glare of modern English society to examine its bizarre spectrum colour tone by colour tone.

Shaun Belcher's unique creation Trailer Star appears on two albums, the first by Trailer Star himself, *Suit of Nettles*. The second is a beautiful tribute album, *Moon Over the Downs*, dedicated to the tragic victim of a auto*mo*bile accident "on a deserted downland bend high above Newbury." It uses Trailer Stars lyrics set to each of the performers' own compositions. Trailer Star has the same relationship to Belcher as the nearly real artist Nat Tyler has to his creator William Boyd. Though there is fun to be had in "signalling" Berkshire born and bred Trailer Star's "pivotal position in the development of English country blues" this is a project with lyrical and musical depth. Belcher on *Suit* and the dozen plus musicians on *Moon* play and sing it straight, exploring non-metropolitan England through varieties of American form. Oh, and £4 from every sale of *Moon* goes to Cancer Research UK. Find out more at www.supertinyrecords.com.

The Fall (Notes and Queries…). Robin Purves discusses The Fall's "October" from *Hex Enduction Hour* (1982) in a recent issue of *Intercapillary / Space* online. At one point he focuses on the opening lines: A plate steel object was afired / And I did not feel for my compatriots/ Hated even the core of myself/ Not a matter of ill-health/ It was fear of weakness deep in core of myself / The fact attainment was out of…" Reading the article makes me think about the use Mark E. Smith makes of that word "afired". The prefix gives an olde Englishy patina that suggests we're going back in time to classic drama / myth / or, perhaps most of all, shanty (a-hoy!); "fired" itself suggests a furnace process, so the song is also 'heritagising' the steel industry. This is at a time of its imminent and painful re-shaping, referred to in the same line, so he is also instant-commemorating folk excitements (whether he's undercutting his own consciousness of nostalgia I don't know, but it seems to me there is still a hook, a purchase there, a pang). There's something wrong about firing (shooting with) plate steel – that would be gigantic, a mega-shell, rather than a bullet, and so the bad omens are further strengthened, made more grave, appalling, by the image. It's the sort of thing that might only happen in a terrible industrial accident. A-fired also suggests that the die is cast – fate is fixed. So you have one word meaning both vast fast heavy unexpected movement *and* fixity. In other words in this small word, Smith is setting out the gridlines of improvisation. If the prefix "a" is a Smith vocal idiosyncracy though, it could be argued that it is also a placer syllable of deliberation – Smith appears to be selecting the right word, and so more significance is placed on it when it finally comes. Be afired, be very afired. See intercapillaryspace.blogspot.com for the article.

PS

the prose supplement to Painted, spoken

Allen Fisher
Richard Price
seekers of lice
Raymond Friel
Giles Goodland
Stewart Conn

Almost Free (just send an A5 stamped addressed envelope - two first class stamps will cover the postage)