

Painted, spoken

edited by Richard Price

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K r i s H i c k s

Poem

I climb inside the page. Pure white.
Something thicker than mist but less ominous

heavier than snow but just as malleable.
There's an abundance of the word *dark*.

I wade through the letters.
sometimes with ease. other times with peril.

Stumbling on the italicisation of *depression*
I lean my weight against it. It creaks like an ancient tree.

Tipped off the edge of a sentence

poverty cushions the blow,

bounces me into *hunger*.

Some question
is swirling
in a cesspool
of notes,
desperate
to be freed.

Is it a surprise that the page makes harsh words kind?

~~*Crashing on the sofa of a room with peeling walls
stench of cigarette smoke — baggies and cut straws litter the floor
nowhere else to go*~~ so easily erased.

I stay anyway headtorch bright among the white and dark
stalking some Delphian creature until I startle upon it blade in my hand
rabid with readiness to fashion a fur coat sink teeth into its meat.

To be a hunter must there always be something to hunt?

Does a mirror still work in the dark?

My life will eventually be in your hands

Natalie d'Arbeloff

Why is it so exciting to begin things and so difficult to finish them?

An autobiography could, in theory, keep going until that specific auto crashes. The reason why some of us long-lived, compulsive autobiographers keep putting off writing the words The End might be a secret wish to postpone indefinitely the obligatory kicking of a nondescript bucket. When literally dead I won't be able to tell you, write you or draw you a description of myself performing that final ritual and it's the unfair curtailing of my human right to do so which probably causes my problem with endings.

Procrastination as rebellion against the ultimate dead line. On the other hand, a publisher's deadline is a desirable spur and effort to obtain one is not wasted. What's not to like about a signed assurance that one's endlessly edited life will, at an agreed point in time, become a complete thing held in real people's hands?

My Life Unfolds, the paperback edition of a wordless visual autobiography created in 2012 as a one-off artist's book was, to my great joy, featured online at paintedspoken.com. That spur led me to look back at my many previous self-explorations such as *The Burial of Mickey Mouse* (www.nataliedarbeloff.com/autobio1.html) episodes of which I occasionally posted online starting in 2006 then abandoned in cyberspace limbo to wait for resurrection.

Another autobiography, *Double Entendre*, began to take enthusiastic shape as a graphic novel back in 2004 and seemed headed for single-minded completion but it too fell into the bottomless To Do pit. Last year, in an overdue burst of guilt, shame, remorse or whatever, I pulled out some pages of that particular orphan and submitted them to the 2019 Laydeez do Comics Awards competition, hoping to atone for my bad parenting.

Lo and behold – there's no other way of putting this – the judges, Olivia Ahmad, Steven Appleby and Philippa Perry, saw fit to give me the Rosalind B. Penfold Award 2019 for a graphic novel-in-progress by an artist over fifty. The thought immediately crossed my mind that adding 'in-progress' to 'graphic novel' implied permission to extend progress on said novel for as long as the winner wishes. Although I admit that such unusual tolerance made me even happier than the thrill of winning, I can now confirm that my Covid-shielded nose is gratefully shackled to the graphic grindstone and I am vaccinated against the temptation to carry on carrying on. The end is not exactly in sight yet but it's in the script.

The appeal to me of the graphic novel genre is that it treats image-making as wedded inseparably to writing but text is not necessarily dominant and verbal ideas can be visually expressed, rather than merely illustrated. The comic-book structure often found in graphic novels doesn't suit me because I want the shape of each page to emerge from what is being said and the freedom to alter structure based on what comes next. Some images from *My Life Unfolds* will be recycled into *Double Entendre* and I'm also sweeping my hoard of stalled autos for more material to recondition.

Why *Double Entendre*? Because there are two of us: Eilatan (Natalie backwards) and Augustine, my cartoon alter ego, who observes Eilat's performance and tries to understand it with her own bizarre logic. There is also an anonymous commentary. like subtitles in a foreign film (my life is indeed foreign). An ordinary event, her mother ceasing to breast-feed her, is of dramatic importance to baby Eilatan and it is the moment when Augustine is born, an alternative self choosing to live in tandem but differently. As she puts it:

Everything puzzles me.

What is real and what isn't?

I will devise experiments to test reality.

Here are some rough pages (not in their actual order) which will have changed by the time *Double Entendre* is ready for publication. What excites me most about this project is the unknown, the surprises that are in store when 'in progress' becomes 'in print'.



Eilatan is born exceptionally hungry. Enough is never enough and her exhausted mother soon stops nursing her.

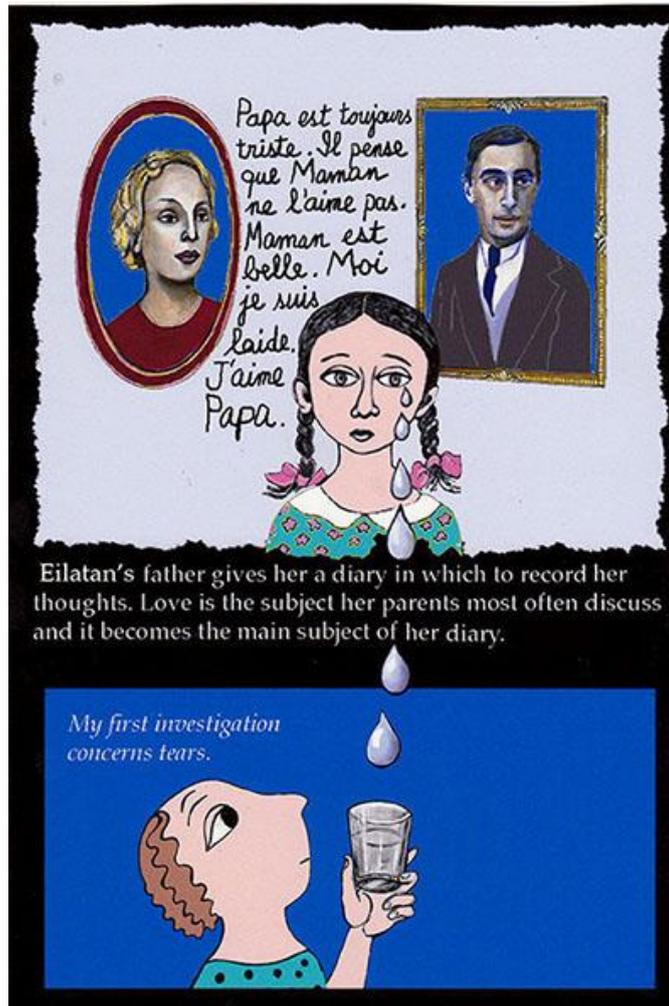
At that moment Augustine, Eilatan's double, decides to lead another life on another level.

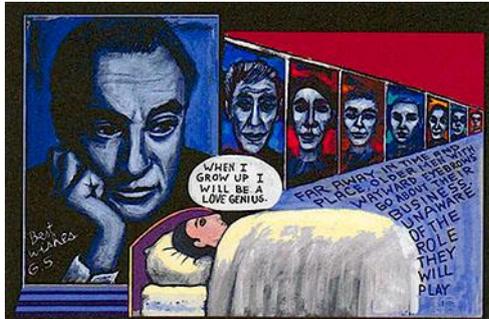




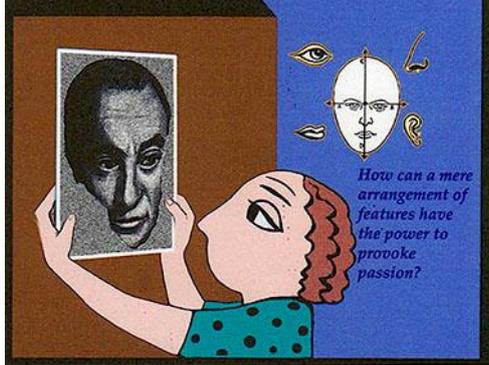
Enraged at being denied her mother's milk, Eilat refuses all food and becomes very weak.







At nine Eilatán goes to school and to the movies. She falls passionately in love with George Sanders and sends for his autographed picture.



The courageous thread

Curriculum Violette and the life of mother, widow, and secret agent **Violette Szabo**.

Robert Crawford interviewed by Peter McCarey

At StAnza Poetry Festival a few years ago Peter McCarey gave Robert Crawford a copy of Sergey Zavyalov's newly published English and Russian version of his poem Advent, Leningrad 1941 which he has published in his Molecular Press imprint. A couple of years later, Robert asked the Press if it might be interested in a text of his own that echoed aspects of Zavyalov's approach; he suggested an English and French version, with the translation by Paul Malgrati.

PMcC: I was intrigued by the proposal and delighted by the text. Judging by the response from the book launch (an online event with participants from ten countries), that wasn't an unusual response. I'd like to take up again some of the questions that arose at that event as a result of your reading.

Zavyalov's poem seemed to suggest to you a way of approaching a theme that had been with you since childhood. Would you tell me first how and why the story of Violette Szabo had such an effect on you?

RC: I'd read about Violette Szabo when I was about ten or eleven in a book called *Three Great War Stories*, which included the full text of R. J. Minney's Szabo biography, *Carve Her Name with Pride*. There had been a film made of the

book, but I've never seen that. At that age when I read 'Commando' comic books, loved Alistair MacLean thrillers, and pored over a 'Jackdaw' folder of facsimile Battle of Britain documents, I was fascinated by World War II stories, and Szabo's life as a skilled, charismatic, very young British wartime agent parachuted into France, then eventually captured and taken to Ravensbrück concentration camp where she suffered and was executed, struck me as remarkably heroic. Awe-struck, I kept looking at the photographs in the book, which included pictures of Szabo herself, and of her orphaned daughter. Szabo's story became part of my inner landscape, and has remained so.

My father had fought in the Scots Guards during World War II, and had been through France and Germany from Normandy to the Baltic, though he hardly ever spoke about his experiences there; my mother was a survivor of the Greenock Blitz. So, although I was born in 1959, events of the War always seemed quite close.

By the time I wrote *Curriculum Violette* my daughter was roughly the age Violette was when she died; my wife shares a birthday with Violette; my late mother was born in the same year as Violette. So perhaps, along with my memories of reading about Violette Szabo, those things, in a hidden way, undergirded the impulse to write.

When I read the English translation of Zavyalov's *Advent, Leningrad 1941*, its use of the diary format interspersed with liturgical materials and lists of wartime rations struck me as oddly akin to 'Scottish Informationist' poetry – and I could see how, using not the diary format but the CV format for narrative purposes might provide an

informational structure for retelling Violette's story in a way that revealed something of her complex, awe-inspiring identity without pretending to kinds of knowledge of her that I don't – and can't -- have. Being interested in both poetry and biography, and having had to read or provide innumerable CVs over the years in connection with my day-job, I'd been thinking a lot about the CV form, and wondering if it could be used for artistic ends. Muriel Spark's *Curriculum Vitae* is a book I relished, but it's hardly experimental in technique. Reading Zavyalov helped show me there might be a way of using the CV format in a more experimental way to provide – and in some ways to question – notions of biography; and yet at the same time to tell a story so powerful that it might have an emotional impact via the most honed, factual, and informational of formats.

No longer possessing *Three Great War Stories*, I bought a reprint of Minney's *Carve Her Name with Pride* as well as Susan Ottaway's more recent biography, *Violette Szabo*, and I drew material from these books. Around the same time, to celebrate my wife's 60th birthday and her retirement, we went by train to stay at Arisaig House, a location associated with Szabo's wartime training in the Scottish Highlands; and we sailed from Mallaig to Inverie on the Knoydart peninsula, where Violette trained. Though I'd known those landscapes as a child, I hadn't realised (or perhaps had completely forgotten) that those places were part of Violette's story.

PMc: When we met in the 80s you were already an established poet and an editor of *Verse*, the liveliest poetry magazine I was aware of, a transatlantic periodical that was

essential to poets in Scotland. Then – in addition to your academic work – you developed a hugely successful career as a biographer, once again spanning the Atlantic, with books on Burns and Eliot. Poet and biographer seem to meet in CV, where the poet’s evocative skill is held in check by the biographer’s discretion and fidelity to what is known and the limits of knowledge. Would you agree?

RC: Yes, there’s a tension in *Curriculum Violette* between the lineation of verse and the factual material of prose biography. Some people may see *Curriculum Violette* as a poem, and others as an experimental biography. It partakes of both, and aims to be multiple. Though the French text by Paul Malgrati is a close translation of the work, it also becomes part of the work itself, helping to articulate another aspect of Szabo’s complex identity as simultaneously French and English.

The epigraph to *Curriculum Vitae* comes from David Hume and is a passage about identity that I first came across as a student in the General Philosophy class at Glasgow University. Hume’s vision of the self as indiscernible is troubling – and can seem true; yet the sort of integrity manifested by Violette Szabo (a figure whose name and aliases as a secret agent seem to emphasize fluidity of self) also – and in a moving way – runs effortfully counter to that. The CV format, with its effect of ‘bullet points’ (a pun that I intend, but which remains only implicit in *Curriculum Violette*), enhances the sense of a ‘bitty’ or atomized self, even at the same time as it sets out the committed trajectory of a life.

PMcC: You are reluctant to call this work a poem. This attitude has an interesting echo in Zavyalov, in that while he himself insists that his *Advent, Leningrad 1941* is a poem, there are those who question that.

RC: Zavyalov's work was to me unquestionably a poem, and I regarded *Curriculum Vitae* as a risk-taking poem when I was working on it. But it also comes from my work as a biographer, and now I think I'd like to leave the definition of it to readers

PMcC: One of the instructive contrasts with the Russian work is that it has no hero, indeed no fully named character at all, for all its voices. *Curriculum Violette*, by contrast, is dedicated to a heroic life. One interesting question from the audience concerned the change in British popular narratives of WWII, from the boys' comics of your own generation (and perhaps the film *Carve Her Name with Pride*) to a more sophisticated view that took account of other experience of that conflict – the Bengal famine comes to mind. I guess that CV takes a step further again; how would you describe its historical perspective?

RC: Well, we can only look back at the events of Szabo's life, and there are ethical questions around how far we can truly 'inhabit' it. The form of the work (which itself conjures up bureaucracy, forms, and form-filling) tries to acknowledge those ethical issues. One way to write about her would be to use sympathetic imagination to try to get inside her motivation, experience, and suffering. Instead, I've chosen

another approach that salutes and acknowledges her heroism, but is honed, laconic, and, of necessity, rather distant. My hope is that her heroism shines all the more brightly through a format that appears very tight-lipped and bureaucratic. The work shows a human being passing through bureaucratic systems, transport systems, educational, religious, and military systems. Yet I'd like to think that readers nonetheless detect a courageous thread of enduring, deep humanity that is perhaps not fully comprehensible but also emotionally as well as intellectually moving.

Robert Crawford

From Curriculum Violette

ASSESSMENT

Lively, pretty girl; sporty; good French; black hair; no highbrow; devil-may-care.

DISTANCES

Kensington to Pangbourne by gleaming black Raleigh Tourist bicycle – detachable gear case – 100 miles (round-trip); Stockwell to Noyelles-nur-Somme 160 miles (one-way including cross-channel boat).

FOOD

Home-baking (Empire biscuits, scones)

Kensington patisseries

sweets (bonbons)

gammon

lemon sole

lamb and mint sauce with grandmaman's mended

mint-sauce ladle

toad in the hole

slice of lemon

AWOKEN BY

Lambeth Borough Council Welfare Centre

Grace Fields singing 'Sing As We Go'

Madame Butterfly

Charlie Kuntz

Aunti Flo

starlings whistling in a cloudy sky

a baby crying in the flat below

FLORA AND FAUNA

Pigeons (daintily fat on breadcrumbs, toes missing)

More pigeons (kissing)

Blackbirds (singing *pink, pink, pink*)

Grass, buttercups, and hydrangeas in Slade Gardens

Grousel

A terrier's wink

THINGS CARRIED

Compact

mirror (from the roof garden at Derry & Toms)

lace

cigarette case

lipstick (favourite shade)

Mother's needle and thread

Joyce

Beverley Kemp

Joyce was always a timid and nervous girl.

One of eight children, she often wished that she was more like her sisters.

Oh to have some of Olive's audacity, a touch Betty's confidence or if only a bit of Irene's glamour might rub off. She watched her older sisters closely, looking for clues. They had plenty of admirers calling at the little terrace house to take them out dancing, or to the pictures.

Joyce always stayed in the background, watching intently as Renee put on her makeup, breathless as she listened to Betty flirt, giggling as Olive played the fool with her boyfriend, Fred.

When the young men waited in the front room, she kept well hidden, fearful of being noticed or teased, but she was safe with her older sisters around, soaking up all the admiration.

Renee was already engaged to be married to Sid, Olive was going steady with Fred, while Betty could take her pick.

When war was declared all her brothers signed up, even the youngest, Wilfred, lying about his age in his eagerness to get a piece of the action.

Betty went to work in the local munitions factory and was soon dating GI's based at the airfield nearby.

Everyone expected Joyce to go to the factory too but she had other ideas. She'd seen an information film about the Auxiliary Territorial Service with her school friend, Elsie.

They agreed that it looked far more exciting than the munitions factory and had promptly both decided to join.

When Joyce told her family that she had joined the ATS they were amazed. Olive wanted to know if she would get to see enemy action. (certainly)

Renee was interested in the uniform (the smartest), while Betty asked about the dances she might get invited to. (plenty) For once Joyce was the centre of her sisters' attention and she enjoyed the glow of feeling different from them, she knew that she was going to be doing something important for the war effort.

Joyce spent a month in training, where she was taught how to operate an anti-aircraft gun.

While Renee was looking after her new family and Betty was out dancing with GIs, Joyce spent her evenings at her post sending flak up into the night sky to protect the docks. Waiting at her post, staring into the inky sky and hearing the waves lapping on the shore, she was always ready to respond to any call from base and tune in to aircraft activity overhead. She never felt nervous operating the big gun.

When she had an evening off, she would go with Elsie to a dance at the army camp where ATS women were always welcome. It was at one of these, that Joyce met Sam Lane, an army despatch rider. He asked her to dance and didn't let her go all evening. She didn't feel shy when she was in Sam's arms, in fact she felt quite at home there.

She proudly told her sisters about her new boyfriend, Sam, who looked like the Hollywood actor, James Stewart.

Betty said 'Really, when can I meet him?' and Joyce was worried.

To Joyce's relief, Betty soon became engaged to a GI pilot called Bob and started planning for her new life in America.

Joyce felt safe, now knowing that Sam was all hers.

They married during the war and later went to live in Sam's home town. They were a close unit. Sam worked as a painter and decorator after the war, while Joyce ran the home. Joyce would often go to stay with Renee, especially when Betty was over visiting from America. Joyce and Sam didn't have children of their own but enjoyed spending time with their many nieces and nephews.

When Sam died, Joyce moved into a care home. She was popular with the staff and residents there, because she was such a gentle soul.

The staff told Joyce about the virus and explained why she had to stay in her room, but she forgot. She wondered why her niece didn't visit her any more. On the news she heard the government say that the elderly would be shielded and Joyce thought of her big anti-aircraft gun. Now she would be protected, just as she had once protected the country from attack.

But this was an invisible enemy: one that was fought with hand sanitiser, face masks and social distancing.

Joyce would sometimes wander into the day room seeking company. The staff would gently usher her back to her room and explain again why she must stay there on her own.

When she felt funny, all hot and a little bit dizzy she didn't like to say anything. She didn't want to be a bother, to the staff who always seemed to be so busy.

In the night, when a heavy weight was pressing down on her chest and she couldn't breathe, she felt frightened. So she did what she always did when she was scared; she thought of Sam.

Joyce was dancing in his arms when she slipped away.

Aged ninety-seven, Joyce had outlived all of her siblings. She was the last of her generation in the Crome family, but she was just another statistic in the grim national death toll of 2020.

Joyce's funeral was small and quiet, like thousands of others across the country.

Her nieces and nephews mourned her passing from a distance. Timid auntie Joyce, who manned those big anti-aircraft guns in the war.

P e t e r M c C a r e y
f r o m **T h e S y l l a b a r y**

15.8.4

“Good for the chames or
Chinkes of the skin.”

16.8.4

Inhibited fame
Exhibited shame.

Ledge

The flitting left
A razor shell
Stubble the oceans blow
From a shaver

16.9.5

Ciamar a tha sibh?
You and she’ve a
Way of making sense come through
The print like sheave in paper.
A tinge of kelp in hair like sand
Pouring through these twisted fingers.

Hebephilia / Dorothy Lehane

My daughter has been studying me. She psychologizes that I am quick to temper, prescribes not opening my mouth too quickly. She counts me down. Calibrates my cruelty.

*

The house I grew up in was surrounded by graveyards. We sold rhubarb to passers-by. Sometimes they handed over silver coins, sometimes gold. I told the buyers to be careful, that the leafy inflorescences were poisonous. People mostly laughed but on one occasion a woman called me precocious.

*

I was always hungry and yet my parents were told I was the only child in the family that didn't look half-starved. My siblings were *emaciated*. It is a soft word, light on my tongue but years later it took on another weight when it was applied to my father.

*

My father used phrases like *cut off at the knees*. When I stubbed a toe, he'd suggest cutting my leg off. He would make a saw hand. Other times he'd offer to cut off my tail.

When I understood that parts of the body sometimes have to be removed, I was disturbed. I'd catch myself saying it to my own children. A hole through time.

*

My mother always said *this life is for suffering*.

*

I was thirteen when I started to play the game. He was nineteen and knew all the rules.

*

In the game you are newly spawned and hypersexualised. If you could peer closer, you could see you are only half-drawn.

*

The game that is being played is a game called walking-into-a-room-as-a-child-and-leaving-it-as-a-woman.

*

You cannot find the end of the game, but you will come to understand that the game often ends in critical sadness.

*

You were not hungry, but the food was pushed into your mouth regardless. There was something in the food that you can taste that is not absolutely

disgusting. This is called hanging the psyche out to dry. This is part of the syndrome. This is the way it will shape you.

*

The game frames future relationships, since you cannot wind back the edges or limits of yourself.

*

You cannot categorise lovers. You will not name them or give them importance. None of your messages are love letters. Modes of articulation are haptic.

*

You are coerced into talking about the game and this is a new game called pretending-you-are-okay.

*

You dream that the other player is at the edge of things.

*

Your brothers tell you that anger changes the hue of your eyes but no matter how angry you become your eyes never change colour.

*

If you give your clothes to the police they will return them. The world will shift. If you are no longer available, your clothes will be returned to your mother. I reject the story, but the story does not reject me.

*

The chronology of things hurts and does not hurt. There was a body that was overruled. There was a body that was broken into. There is a fundamental disturbance, episodes missing in action. You must re-learn how to play the game.

*

Burning the clothes helps with vanishing. It helps cultivate new and endless versions of self.

*

There is no fever to my confession here. Perhaps you can hear the collective sounding. A sigh, not a gasp.

*

There is the privilege of voicing all this. There is the problem of the inexpressible. The problem of pronoun. Ruling her body from your mouth. A sifting through. A selection of tone, language and form. Giving expression to inchoate experiences.

*

Sometimes I temper the words. And I sense that what I am doing is not truth-speak.

*

That we are stripped of a tender narrative. That we feel stripped.

Translated Lives: Bhanu Kapil and Robin Fulton Macpherson

reviewed by James McGonigal

Arrivals of Light, Robin Fulton Macpherson (Shearsman Books, 2020); *How To Wash A Heart* Bhanu Kapil (Liverpool University Press, 2020)

I have followed Robin Fulton Macpherson's poetry since 1968, or it has followed me. He was Robin Fulton then. He read a neat selection of poems to our student Literary Society in the University of Glasgow, being already known as a poet, critic and cultural journalist, active in a resurgence of internationally-minded Scottish writing in that decade. He had contributed prose and poetry to *Scottish International*, a new journal co-edited by Edwin Morgan, and was editor (1967–76) of *Lines Review*, the finest poetry magazine in Scotland in those years.

I have always remembered this young poet's quiet determination not to be self-indulgent or open to flattery. 'Thrawn' is the Scots word for it, meaning a sort of bloody-minded refusal to be accommodating to the desires of others. A few years later with a young family to support, and unable to find a suitable job in Scotland, Robin Fulton sailed beyond the horizon to teach in the University College of Stavanger in Norway. From there he continued to edit *Lines Review*, and to publish essays and reviews, and Selected Poems of Robert Garioch and Iain Crichton Smith. Beyond these were his translations of Scandinavian poetry: by Tomas Tranströmer, Kjell Espmark and Östen Sjöstrand in Sweden, and by Olav H. Hauge in Norway, recognised by several awards from the Swedish Academy. Collections of his own poetry appeared in Scotland, England and North America in

the 1970s and 1980s, and he was clearly productive. And yet, writing at a distance in a foreign land, he seemed somehow to have been pushed to the edge of things. And when Robin Fulton Macpherson's hefty *Complete Poems* (Michigan: Marick Press) finally appeared in 2015 it was to a somewhat surprised reception at its sheer quality in depth. *Unseen Isles and Other Poems* (Marick Press, 2018) and now *Arrivals of Light* have extended that range.

Bhanu Kapil's work was unknown to me until she won the 2020 T.S. Eliot Prize for *How To Wash A Heart*. Both her collection from Liverpool University Press and Fulton Macpherson's from Shearsman Books are well designed and produced. Each enhances its poet's vision and reputation. Born in England of Indian parents, Kapil is a poet who has worked internationally in higher education, caught between worlds and the tensions that arise in mind and heart. Both poets are outsiders, really. They are well placed, because displaced, to explore current issues of culture and identity. What they share, perhaps, are several of the less common meanings of the word 'translation': namely, to be removed to another place; to express in another artistic medium; to interpret; to transform or to make new from old. Removed to a different culture and finding their individual identity in the process of alteration, they each put their poetic gift itself under surveillance.

Both poets use formal dimensions of layout to keep under control any excess of emotion or loss. Fulton Macpherson uses short poems of two or three stanzas each, set out two per page in a 'chaste' and often luminous language. Objects are intricately examined – trees, stones, loch and burn waters, shadows, flowers, shore lines and skies. These images are revisited and may be familiar to any reader of his earlier work. Yet set against familiarity is his remarkable ability to find new ways of describing them.

Unsettling biographical details are to be found embedded in the beauty, often from a perceptive child's view of reality and difference.

The poet's mind appears to have been imprinted by the shock of dislocation, as he was pulled away from loved landscapes when his father, a Presbyterian minister in the Church of Scotland, moved his family between parishes: from the island of Arran (where the poet was born), to Glasgow, and finally to the kirk of Helmsdale in Sutherland, a county on the northernmost rim of the mainland. Kirk, Helmsdale and Sutherland are all words of Norse origin. Sutherland was 'suth' because it lies to the south of Orkney, seat of a powerful Norse earldom for many centuries. So even in his teenage years Fulton Macpherson was moving linguistically in a Scandinavian ambiance. Stavanger lies about 350 nautical miles due east of Helmsdale across the North Sea, about as far as to Newcastle upon Tyne by road. In his ferry voyages east and west throughout this collection, the poet like some ancient pilot has a keen eye for the behaviour and import of waves:

Like a beginning.
Or like an ending.

Coppery sunlight
spills without wasting.

Round wave-backs rounding:
darkness won't stop them.

(Light On The North Sea, p.80)

Because of his determination to preserve memories shaken by dislocation, we discover past and present incidents, local and cosmic details, 1947 and 2017, Scottish and

Scandinavian landscapes co-existing across neighbouring pages, or within a single poem. Time behaves differently in age.

Will I go back in space, only to find
the village is now in another time?
Will I go back in time, only to find
I'm looking through thick glass and I can't breath?

I drive to a village I've never seen.
When I arrive I set my watch at Now
and wander about for a while in Here.
There won't be a village for me to leave.
(Village, p.67)

A minister's son could find himself isolated within the community, with his behaviour being slyly monitored to see how far it matched the morality in his father's sermons. Some poems suggest a rather lonely existence, with loch fishing and almost obsessive piano practice of Bach as private pursuits: a gifted, intelligent and meditative boy, then, sensitive not only to music but also to the silences that lie beneath:

The closer it moves towards silence
the more it enables us to hear.
We eavesdrop on sounds not meant for us.
(Late Quartet, p.51)

Such musical underpinning suggests that *Arrivals of Light* might be read as a fugue, with places and natural objects serving as themes and variations. The first 75 pages provide almost 150 poems. This is followed by a recapitulation in '21 Miniatures', generally of four to six lines in length, set three

to a page. The final Afterword, 'Remembering Östen Sjöstrand' is a parting glance at themes of translation and religion, to which I will return.

Kapil's text is more visceral, but the disturbing image of a melting/bleeding heart is held fast within 5 sets of 8 poems, these mainly of 22 lines each, printed rather tightly in to the left-hand margin as if shrinking from the strangeness of the neighbouring white space. Like the older poet, she presents vivid memories of earlier life, a different life, in intense flashback. Each poem's list-like appearance is increased by the use of short lines, quite often end-stopped, with initial capitalization of each line. The reader (or this reader at least) has to keep checking to see if a line is a new start or a continuation. This process seems to enact the stop-start of assimilation, as the migrant persona is welcomed or rebuffed or misunderstood. The type-size is small, as if she has had to shrink herself to suit the expectations of the host who has taken her in:

I do not enjoy eating too much.
It's so painful.
The only remedy is the bitter herb
That grows by a rushing brook.
Oils, sugars, pearls, crushed diamonds, linens and songs
Populate your crappy cabinets.
Make a list of what you need
And I will get it, you ungrateful cow.
This is what I need:
The light and the heat and the yesterday
Of my work.
A candle on the wonky table at dusk.
How thyme migrates.
The chalky blue flowers.

(p.8)

There is throughout a powerful contrasting of the infantilized migrant or asylum-seeker and the self-serving morality of the host. The movement of each poem beats like diastole and systole from the inner turmoil of a traumatized heart to the socio-political milieu in which it must strive to keep consciousness alive. In the uneasy rhythms of these capitalized lines we have a sense of experiences overlapping, or of time-frames abutting or being pushed aside, as the migrant tests the boundaries of her welcome.

Fulton Macpherson has had decades longer to assimilate, yet something remains askew at a psychic level, to come alive again in dreams and involuntary memories. Thus he seems a poet of the liminal, an intelligencer of the night, where arrivals of light in the seeming darkness are open to question:

Is this how divinity works –
in the dark, a pin-
point of light noticed, forgotten?
[...]
Could be a lamp-post not far off
lighting up all night
a crumbling path leading nowhere

except to a disused harbour
where the water gleams
like a surface we could walk on.

(At A Glance, p.59)

Such intimations are agnostic but persistent, with sprightly biblical echoes from his Protestant upbringing, as when a flock of fieldfares whirring overhead prompts the thought: 'If the Holy Ghost / had an engine, that's / what it would sound like' (p.76). Mostly he follows the example of the

Swedish poet whose fraught verses captivated him from the late 1960s onwards, drawing him into translation. In his Introduction to Tomas Tranströmer: *Collected Poems* (Bloodaxe Books, 1987. p. 13) he praises his writing ‘without the shorthand of religious terminology in order to try to define for oneself those areas in which a sense of immanence may be experienced [...] a series of contrasts, or similes, or just luminously clear images, are grouped as if round a central space where some kind of epiphany is or may be or has been experienced’.

Fulton Macpherson enjoyed a close working relationship with two other Scandinavian poets, who appear in poems here. ‘Where Olav H. Hauge Lived’ (p. 17) recalls the threatening landscape of crag and fjord in whose despite he composed his happy poems. ‘Remembering Östen Sjöstrand’ (p. 87) evokes the creative partnership of source poet and translator with joy, even although ‘Autumn around us was so rich / our languages became poorer.’ Sjöstrand was revered as a mystical poet, akin to the T.S. Eliot of *Four Quartets*. His Scottish translator is less a mystic than a contemplative, whose early practice of music may have attuned him to the daily practice of looking and listening, deeply and in detail, to find illumination in the most ordinary scene. If this is like prayer, then it is a form of words as invocation, towards a receptive alignment of mind and heart to the world at his door.

Kapil’s act of translation is to take the imagery of contemporary anxieties about migration and to intersect these with her own life and with earlier artistic performances in mixed media. There is genuine revelation in the prose narratives of ‘Note on the Title’ and ‘Acknowledgements’ (pp. 47–51), where she outlines the spurs to this collection. These included events at the ICA, London in 2002 and 2019 combining elements of poetry, drama, declamation and

ritual, but also involved email discussion of cardiomyopathy ('broken heart syndrome') with a cardiologist, and the memory of a (now lost) newsfeed image of a Californian couple adopting a daughter from the Philippines. Such information from the online world matches the ensemble nature of the performances from which *How To Wash A Heart* emerged. The Scandinavian world played its part too, in lines inspired by the inflight viewing of an Icelandic film while returning from a literary festival in Moss, Norway.

The internet also allows the older poet to revisit the worlds of his childhood, including detailed images of the parish manses where he once lived, posted online when they are put up for sale, or of the surrounding moorlands with their ever-mobile weather:

Seen online, nowhere is remote.
Here is the hour-by-hour forecast
for Loch Airichlinie today:

breeze gentle, rain none. Nobody
will notice the miniature waves
noticing the gentleness of the breeze.

(‘Remote’, p.53)

It seems that there were connections with Helmsdale in earlier days, and gravestones thereabouts now provide a family history, of Macleod, Sutherland and Shearer. In poems hinting at the Gaelic culture that existed before an ancestral glen became a Norse dale, the poet's sense of alienation seems deepened by identification with ancestors we might now describe as displaced persons or economic migrants, 'cleared' from their small inland farms to make way for more profitable sheep. The later addition to his Fulton surname now admits a Macpherson history, so that past and

present are visibly entwined every time a poem is published.

Like him, Kapil explores the here/there world of dreams:

I dreamed my grandmother
Was lying face down
In a cave, immersed
In the lightly flowing water.
I dreamed my grandfather
Was riding a motorbike
Without a head.[...]
I dreamed my mother
Was crocheting the sun
Into a dress of copper, blue and yellow
Yarn,
smiling and nodding
Even as a man
Span my body
From a rusted hook.

(.p.42)

Her poem ends with overt political violence – a knock on the door and a hand on the migrant’s arm: ‘There’s a break in the scream. / The scream is mine. / My scream is at hand’. Kapil’s voice is not meditative but prophetic. Against betrayal and the Department of Repatriation, however, there is in the end the final prose statement that asserts the oppositional powers of creativity and shared artistic performance. This may not wholly wash the heart clean, but it certainly lifts it. Fulton Macpherson’s final word is also one of creative conversation in the act of translation. He recalls spending days in Mariefred with Östen Sjöstrand ‘rearranging verbs in the gap / between languages’. Now, decades later, on the final ferry journey of this collection, he views from the upper deck ‘a horizon-thread: / that’s his Bohuslän’.

Death and life are marvelously intertwined here as he re-enters a poet-partner's imagination, which had finally 'tugged him away down / into underwater forests' to encounter the liberating music that resounds there, a rapture of the deep.

J a m e s M c G o n i g a l

Living Through It

From skull to gut to calves
it takes its course the way ditchwater
runs after the bend of its road.

An avant-garde composer
is conducting your dreams – night music
for ten-pin bowling quartet.

How long will it last?
Ditchwater sunk two inches deeper into silt,
that's one sign.

When you wake at five
and walk out in the garden to discover a frog
lounging against the cool lip

of the garage floor,
and looking exactly like a spray-tanned scrotum
although you've never seen one,

that's another sign.
But only that you're still not altogether
through the worst.

C a r o l i n e M a l d o n a d o

One to one to one to one

they can accrete inside you griefs
after months years
lying dormant

prompted by the latest loss
the first wakes up
another recognises the call

huddled together they
shift about
scratch themselves

and raise the others from their slumbers

they swarm and scurry
between breastbone
and spine

uncatchable
unnameable
each bearing their own

sac of pain their own accusation
then they bind together
and the accretion begins

Contributors

Natalie d'Arbeloff is an artist known for her work as painter, printmaker, book artist, cartoonist, and writer. **Kris Hicks** is a poet from Cardiff, now living in London, writing mostly about queer identity and mental health. Tweets @krishickspetry. **Beverley Kemp** was Librarian at the Women's Library and then at the Society of Friends (The Quakers). Her first novel, *The Chandlers*, is published by Molecular Press. **Dorothy Lehane** is the author of four poetry collections: *Bettbehandlung* (Muscaliet Press 2018), *Umwelt* (Leaf Press 2016), *Ephemeris* (Nine Arches Press 2014), and *Places of Articulation* (dancing girl press 2014). She is the founding editor of *Litmus*. **Peter McCarey** is the author of the study *MacDiarmid and the Russians* and many poetry collections. His collection of essays on poetry, *Find an Angel and Pick a Fight* is published by Molecular Press, as is *Petrushka*, a hybrid novel which, written before Covid19, is a shocking prophecy of a pandemic. **James McGonigal** is a poet, editor and biographer based in Glasgow. Recent publications include *Edwin Morgan: In Touch With Language. A New Prose Collection 1950–2005* (ASLS, 2020) and a poetry collection, *In Good Time* (Red Squirrel Press, 2020). **Caroline Maldonado's** three translations have been published by Smokestack Books and one, *Isabella*, about an Italian Renaissance poet, also includes her own poems. Her pamphlet, *What they say in Avenale* was published by Indigo Dreams (2014); an ekphrastic pamphlet and a collection are forthcoming with *Knives, Forks & Spoons*. **Richard Price's** essays on lyric poetry, artists' books, and small presses are collected in *Is This A Poem?* (Molecular Press). His latest book *The Owner of the Sea: Three Inuit Sequences Retold* is published by Carcanet.

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