

*UCD Belfield Metaphysical:*

**A Retrospective**

Kevin Kiely

Cover Photograph © of Bing

First Published by Lapwing Publications c/o 1, Ballysillan Drive Belfast  
BT14 8HQ lapwing.poetry@ntlworld.com <http://www.lapwingpoetry.com>

Copyright © Kevin Kiely 2017

All rights reserved The author has asserted her/his right under Section 77 of the Copyright, Design and Patents Act 1988 to be identified as the author of this work. British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data. A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library.

Since before 1632 the Greig sept of the MacGregor Clan has been printing  
and binding books

Lapwing Publications are printed and hand-bound in Belfast at the  
Winepress. Set in Aldine 721 BT

ISBN 978-1-910855-00-0

books by this author:

Quintesse (St Martin's Press)

Mere Mortals (Poolbeg)

A Horse Called El Dorado (O'Brien Press)

SOS Lusitania (O'Brien Press)

Francis Stuart: Artist and Outcast (Liffey Press/Areopagitica)

Breakfast with Sylvia (Lagan Press)

Plainchant for a Sundering (Lapwing Press)

The Welkinn Complex (Number One Son Publishing, Co., Florida)

UCD Belfield Metaphysical: a retrospective (Lapwing Press)

Harvard's Patron: Jack of all Poets (forthcoming 2018)

Seamus Heaney and the Great Poetry Hoax (forthcoming 2018)

**Magazines/Journals where poems (or versions) have been published:** *The Edinburgh Review*, *Poetry Ireland Review*, *Adrift* (New York), *Foolscap* (London), *Oasis* (London), *Acumen* (UK), *Other Poetry* (UK), *Cyphers*, *The Literary Review* (New Jersey), *Chapman* (Scotland), *Southword*, *Cork Literary Review*, *The Black Mountain Review*, *The Shop*, *Fortnight*, *Storm* (Scotland), *Touchstone* (UK), *Stony Thursday Book*; *Idaho Arts Quarterly*; *The Journal: Cumbria* (UK); *Decanto* (UK); *The Poetry Bus*; *The Sunday Independent*, *News Four*, *Revival Literary Journal*, *Red Poetry* (Wales), *The Minetta Review* (New York), *Wild Violet Magazine*, *Pinched* (London), *Underground Press* (New York), *Tower Journal* (Oxford), *SPRING: the journal of the ee cummings society*, *The Laughing Dog* (US), *ANU/A New Ulster 38*, *New Poetry International* (New York), *Café Review* (US).

**Collections/Anthologies:** *UCD Belfield Metaphysical: a retrospective* Lapwing, Belfast 2017. *Breakfast with Sylvia Lagan*, Belfast 2005/US Edition 2007 (Awarded the Patrick Kavanagh Fellowship in Poetry 2006). *Plainchant for a Sundering* (long-poem) Lapwing, Belfast 2001. *Something Sensational To Read in the Train* (anthology foreword: Brendan Kennelly) Lemon Soap Press, Dublin 2005. *Catullus: One Man of Verona* anthology ed. Ronan Sheehan Farmar & Farmar Ltd 2010. *Ends & Beginnings* anthology eds John Gery and William Pratt AMS Press Inc, New York 2011. *Windows Anthology* eds. Heather Brett and Noel Monahan Arts Council, Dublin 2012. *In Place of Love and Country* anthology eds Richard Parker & John Gery Crater Press, London 2013. *Liberty, Come Galloping! Salvation, Flower:* (Poets Worldwide Anthology) ed. Kamran Mir Hazar, Kabul Press 2013. *Poetry in Still Anthology* ed. Chelley McLearn CAP, Belfast 2014. *Poetry in SALIGIA Anthology* PICP, The Hague 2015. *Cork Literary Review Anthology* ed. Kathy Darcy Bradshaw Books 2016. *1916-2016: An Anthology of Reactions* eds. Dominic Taylor &

John Liddy Limerick Writers' Centre 2016; *Icarus Anthology CA; Writers Room* ed. Kevin Kiely Eden Place Arts Centre, Derry 2017.

## C O N T E N T S

### **UCD Belfield Metaphysical: a retrospective (2017)**

Researching <i>Venus in Furs</i> and <i>Psychopathia Sexualis</i> (12)
When the city becomes metaphysical I ask the question (16)
The sunflowers (19)
The Foyle Flows Softly As She Sings Her Song (22)
The Green Flame (24)
Without Title (27)
Belfield Metaphysical (30)
Arrivals/Departures (33)
A Map of Melancholy (36)
Pont de Normandie (48)
'We Are Winos!'(66)
Our Flight to-day...(68)
Nietzsche and the Horse (71)
Berlin, '42 (74)
She becomes all of the landscape (77)
House of Figs (80)
The Old Idaho State Penitentiary (82)
On the edge of the ocean (88)
Soluble Aspirin as Revelation (90)
I was not killing time in Pieterskerk: I wept for pure joy (92)
The office on serious street (96)
Enniskerry Gothic (101)
On finding a book to read (103)
Last Night (106)
Christmas Eve, Plazac (France) (109)
Abstract Hangover with Glass of Water (111)

Moth (113)  
In a Dublin Fish & Chip Shop (115)  
Glendalough Hostel Revisited (117)  
The Fabs (119)  
Missing Persons (121)  
Meister Eckhart and the Moment of Supreme Reality (123)  
Anniversary: 1 line email + colour photo attached (126)  
Maud and WB: the love poem legacy (129)  
As if you need a warning 'Against Bullies'(130)  
Come into my arms (133)  
'Postcard to Paddy Finnegan (1942-2014)' (135)  
Travelling with *The I Ching* (137)  
On reading Frank MacDermot's *Theobald Wolfe Tone* (139)  
The Tree of Trigonometry (141)  
Cypress (143)  
slow blues for my brother (146)

## Researching *Venus in Furs* and *Psychopathia Sexualis*

If you were never whipped, beaten or abused, prepare yourself when you hear the regulations for handling manuscripts in the Archives Department, where the book rests are grey

satin, polished to perfection. What thief picklocks in here after hours scratching like a field mouse to finally peek through snapshots of *Venus in Furs*. The handwriting is legible. The dull

blue ink of letters by Leopold Sacher-Masoch, musty stamps peeling at the edges. As you raise your head from past to present, the archivists beyond the glass in their den never smile, and their stiff shirted

manners make this a place of no time, the clock a mere ornament aimlessly signifying some vague hour and minute. Food is never allowed in this building, not even illicit chewing gum can threaten

the enclosure. PRIVATE NO ENTRY. 'We would prefer if you would remain seated at all times when handling manuscripts and letters.' 'Please do not bring mobile phones into the reading

room.' 'Please use PENCIL to take notes, INK will stain books and paper.' If you were never whipped, beaten or abused by godly parents; instead, shown a sublime and ordinary sense

of discipline and morality, you could not eat these archive-wafers and wash your hands with perverted grinning. It takes a leap of the spirit to feel the touch of the sacred liquid beyond written

knowledge. The cone-shaped paper cups beside the water fountain may be smoothed into arrowhead shapes and thrown in the bin but that is enough subversion. No, you don't have to look pleased

and reply with cheery greetings on arrival and departure, to banish thoughts of suicide provoked by the archivists' insistent surliness and dour demeanour. Who would smite this building with a smile

and light up the general gloominess? If you were never whipped, beaten or abused and can be cheeky like a sparrow, capable of fighting for crumbs in a public park, remember you will only

receive two letters by Richard Freiherr von Krafft-Ebbing in each handling folder, since that is as far as you can be trusted to count. You are required to pull on the furry, fluffy gloves

when handling the sepia photographs. The archivists cut the binding tapes in lengths, raising them like Roman whips slowly with a tremble that increases the chill, and their

expressions with the hint of a voodoo stare through icy spectacles

## **When the city becomes metaphysical I ask the question**

this capitulation of the spirit among cityscape  
and the banks are empty, lit from inside  
so poke and digit for your virtual cash

as evening goes slow in the sky  
and glacial windows reflect the traffic  
trees are neglected and corpselike

where people spark electric  
behind their set-piece faces towards  
the bottle towers where it is spoken if unsaid

to our eyes by others over our lifetime  
in our eyes and we feel like chess pieces  
on diagonal streets stealing dreams

and done questing until tomorrow  
and the next moment as our train slides  
in before halting, it is the cosmic church-window

sunset slanting across bridges, parapets and lights  
flooding sideways from darkened streets  
the clouds are larger as we rehearse being brittle  
delicate, ultimately immobile and the public clocks  
are lying, imagine yourself a hero as these tragic clouds  
redde for if you drew in the ribbon of river

toppling the bridges, knocking over the piles  
it is chaos more than calm behind each moment  
when we can either endure and bear it or love it

night settles in metaphysical jewellery  
on the obvious buildings as the stars look  
infinite and we are merely dressed, yet naked

various, dangerous, famous, anonymous, whole  
broken, assuming intoxicated roles and you can  
vouch to this fact that it is a lifelong relationship

with the dead who ride Jacob's Ladders of escalators  
where the solitary stare and ask as they float  
in downward spirals a living genesis and census

alpha to omega, the locked museums hold less  
than memories replaying flashbacks and the scenario  
is revised fixing the original to a newer version for tonight

## **The sunflowers**

And from a fixity of these flowers he became sunflowers  
yellow on yellow on yellow

and a friend took action and painted him in a painting  
painting the sunflowers

it was sunny Gauguin who put his sunflowers  
in a carrier bag on a chair with a white shirt  
across the back of it—

but Van Gogh returned to sunflower-paintings  
wheels of petals, charcoal axels, wheels of fire  
until taking revenge on himself.

The dying soldier in the infirmary  
in the killing factories  
asked Wiesenthal for forgiveness

dead soldiers were buried  
according to regulations:  
on each grave, a sunflower

showering perfume on the earth  
the gold leaves, disc-plates  
full of striped seeds nourishing  
ripening the green stalks  
of the flowery torches swaying

in homage to the sun.

Wiesenthal could never forgive this  
and became a professional hunter  
exemplary in action  
dedicated to revenge  
for his fellow victims.

Artaud created a theory showing the artist  
motivated by revenge  
making art a dish warmed up to eat.

Be still and consider the sunflowers  
taller than humans  
below a mammoth golden Buddha  
his down-gazing eyes  
are not in time except for the smile  
that is in shadow

## **The Foyle Flows Softly When She Sings Her Song**

The memorial sky: invasive clouds are too near and hyphenate  
the irises like cat's eyes entranced: motorways are stairs and corridors  
in scale, convoys of traffic are so much glass, metal and plastic  
and in each a phantom ghostly driver plays out the sonata  
of speed and distances

The tattered arras of clouds is carved against blue  
carvings of clouds in Alpine grey, Himalayan silver  
the dome of the sky leaks pewter, lead, burnt brass  
and the sacred sun occluded.

Clouds have continental faces crumbling coastal contours  
jaw-lines that merge into the landmass of sky. For only sunlight  
sets fire to despair. Horizon swells beyond mountains  
into the arches of the sky and the world is in the sky  
in rivers turning gold

The sun fort blazes firelight, frames bridges and the clouds  
of life beyond life, the golden bowl of her life flowing  
flowering beams brightening, brightening, magnifying  
all that is seen and unseen as she walks to the railing

The zenith which she may not feel up to but reaches  
with one hand. A thread of her golden hair curves  
on her ebony sleeve. A blonde strand of river  
a vein of water through the city. I climb through  
myself to ledges that are too high, fearful

while only through her reaching the gladiola sky

## **The Green Flame**

a lizard darting out of foliage  
across marble pillows  
where knights and ladies  
are effigies asleep in stone

You are the green flame  
among the herringbone ferns  
five visitations to the senses  
candleabra to the inner eye  
rainbows in fires of language  
in what is written that vibrates  
while we live in the end  
icy pillars under water  
colder than fish eyes  
lost cities and peoples

you are above oceans and mountains  
life-changing at two knocks  
on a table, Emily turned blonde  
wild, expressive, sedative, sedate  
and to the eyes of grief: loveliness  
towards life and the valley of death

I believe what you say in sadness  
as much as your laughter  
the seaweed clothes  
in a gale below the ghostly sky

when sound becomes the singing  
of fog, mist and rain about your flowing hair  
seen, touched, felt and heard  
livid and vivid beneath the sun  
and under the moon

the water-clock pours silver jewels  
over green silk, flows so fast through clouds  
it is slow time while every human  
in the ruins of a desolate city  
dreams of a statue coming to life

every vision of the supernatural  
every vision of you evanescent  
changing all thoughts to action  
all actions to thought  
where joy breaks out  
because you are here  
there is dancing in the city  
the towns are in full swing

the tree of life is every green tree  
the tree of death is awaiting leaves

## Without Title

I reached out with a hand to touch your long blond hair  
for the sky in your eyes and the sun in your heart, and the song  
on your lips was about our naked feet jumping on a moving

hay cart strewn with rowan berries, corn stalks and golden wisps  
of wheat, starlings flew up into the high trees, premature apples  
fell ripe like galloping ponies on grass below the stepped vineyards

grapes tightened in readiness to shoot juice into vats, gleaming funnels  
upon ships awaited the launch and your voice called up concord  
(plenitude) an orchestral tornado, rivers flanked by prairies those verdurous

seas and gulls became fish, twinkling as they leapt above fine combed  
ridges. A single line railway, silver in the morphined morning  
Castlerock's solitary road below the rock mountain cascades of cold silk

Take away the winter, and give us this autumn facing the bright  
amber sands, pale horse-herds of sea riding on the breaking ocean  
towards the shore and the fragility of ultimate confrontation

Life loved as well as hated, lived fully and somehow endured  
a narrative exciting as a glimpse of feminine rotund Mussenden  
Temple. Binevenagh's fissured hills of rock and our known faces

Show me the high grassy summit in another flood that shakes  
the myth. So who could predict in a nondescript Gort hotel  
our sapling on a precipice at Thoor Ballylee; small towns

Bellarena: swelling farmlands, cosy dwellings, real woods  
and a song under every tree beyond walled loneliness, oceans  
of grief, fiction. I can weep again but I don't need to practise

Show me the waltz, give me your beautiful buxom world, the final  
winning throw: it is not that one cannot abide but no, one cannot.  
This goes right on or this is the longed for close of life.

## UCD Belfield Metaphysical

The sky is a mere exhibition in pools of rain until the sun  
unfolds the froth of clouds casting off cosmic oceans  
of light and without horizon limitless, where there is silence

No sense and white grains sifting infinitesimally tiny  
winds of light, fine salt of light that does not blind the eyes  
because seeing is seeing more than ever in distance

If not forever, endless in dimensions beyond comprehension  
there is no heat or sound. Silence: the obverse of the world.  
Where is this zone? The return, with tactile contact at the railings

The overpass balcony: noise of cars and trucks below—  
a wet ash twig studded with black seeds, ivory bark in  
ordinary sunlight: leaf-bows, lettuce green, edible in beauty

The unread gashes on the bark, this key-twig to re-open saturday  
pulp crumbs blow along the beaches of the world  
forming in books and dissolving in dust and into books again

So much missing prosaic *terza rima* sentinel of the shelves  
there is not a bright grain on the photocopy, metaphors will fit  
not fit, lame language, scratches of pen on train tickets, words on the dull

White page desktop from pressed keys: through a portal of silver  
fleece the aircraft banks to climb stairs of clouds, levels off—  
the horizon's walls are lit with streams of leaking light

The jolt that suggests speed beyond dials. The ache of longing:  
take me away finally from all this, take me home from each  
day's lost and found, the sulphur of solitude

The wealth of her mirrored who heals the naked chaos.  
Anyone will tell you there is trouble with Medusa,  
and Medea's hatred is not exceptional. The quest for Moneta

is a path through fear between the flint of conflict  
and the night of eureka. Behind the hours is essential cold  
the candle looks back to centuries, the flame makes the room a cave

These books speak scenes of innocent love with new dialogue in dreams

---