

Poetry Review

Edited by **Julian Nangle**

Turning

By: Adam Horovitz

Headland Publications, 2011, 54pp

ISBN: 978-1902096100

Reviewed by: Julian Nangle, Poetry Editor

This is the collection of a true poet. Horovitz comes from a family of poets, of course. Michael, his father, has long been a huge presence on the contemporary poetry scene, organising any number of gatherings and poetry marathons over the years. Adam's mother, Frances, has been a well respected and much loved poet for the past 40 years, 30 of them, sadly, following her death in 1983, Peter Levi maintaining that 'her poetry does seem to me to approach greatness'.

This is quite some ancestry to confront, but Adam Horovitz does it, and in his poem 'The Great Unlearning', at the centre of this collection, he does it in spades. This long poem, unwinding his relationship with his father backwards from the present to before he was born, is masterful. Horovitz manages to hold our attention while holding a mirror to the life he has had in relationship with his father. The moment his mother is 'unburied' will suffice to show the power of his technique, his language and his emotion:

Then a box bursts from the ground,
showering earth in an orderly pile
at the side of a deep hole.
It is carried away
on the shoulders of six men
to a place of alchemy and miracles.

There is much else in this collection, some wonderful images – 'rolling through the bed's / curved memory of you' from 'After the Party', for example; and 'The cars have all choked on / tongues of wet tarmac', and 'I am faced with silence, / the word in seed form' from 'Summer Storm' – a poem I particularly like, as it brings his sensitivity to nature together with a strength of personal feeling (in this case, loss) in a way I can relate to, as, I am sure, can others. There are clearly favourite word sounds, such as husk, dusk and mask – the first two cropping up in a number of the poems, and also some favourite animals; badgers, particularly.

Horovitz is not afraid to bare his soul in these poems, which, to a large degree, is their appeal. So often in modern poetry the task of the poet has been to communicate feeling (if done so at all) without owning it. Horovitz owns it, digs into it, is not scared of it. I applaud him for this.

Many years ago, when Adam Horovitz was about 5 years old, I invited his mother to come and read her poems at my bookshop in London. I invited her because I sensed, in her poetry, an honesty of feeling. I can only imagine that she would be deeply proud that her son takes a similar line in his writing. **S**