



## POETRY REVIEW

*Poppy: and Other Poems of Grief and Celebration*, by Julian Nangle, with a preface by F.H. Mikdadi and an afterword by Christopher Sawyer-Lauçanno, Alyscamps Press, Paris, 2019, 67pp; available for £10 + £3.50 post and packing from James Fergusson Books & Manuscripts, 39 Melrose Gardens, London W6 7RN (020 7602 3536).

Reviewed by Gabriel Millar

I kept putting off writing this review because every time I opened the book and read something it made me cry. Julian Nangle's book about the death of his beloved daughter is an emotional Everest. It's almost impossible to critique someone's grief. Grief is irrefutable, to be approached only with the utmost respect.

Julian has a sure ear. This is well-crafted grief. The rhyme schemes are satisfying.... 'Anniversary' – abba cddc effe – is its own kind of sonnet. 'A Nurse Mourns' has a fine heroic couplet, and there is music in 'This sadness fills me, but so too does love'. 'A Realisation' is a uniquely patterned sonnet. 'Black Screen Death' is colloquial, with a holy ordinariness, about a mobile with a fading battery. 'Boat of Dreams' ..... when you realise what it's about – a man left behind who loved her – catches you at the heart.

It is generous of Julian to let us see and feel his grief. These are poignant poems with varied nuances: the upbeat tone of 'Closing Time', the high poetry of the last stanza of 'Dead'. The distressing honesty of 'Passing Time with Friends'. 'Poems for Poppy II and III' started tears, not least for the majesty of the end of III – 'It is not often a daughter/Shows her father how to die/But you did, and you did it beautifully'.

There are lit moments of transcendence in 'Time's Thief' (for the late poet Jay Ramsay) – 'There is no loss from which we cannot gain'. And the ultimate moment when his daughter tells him '...I think I'll know you always' is a testimony to the fact that love is always stronger than death.

*Stroud, Gloucestershire, July 2019*