

THE SHRIEKING VIOLET

Issue 15

Save Birley Fields
Weeds

Frank O'Hara

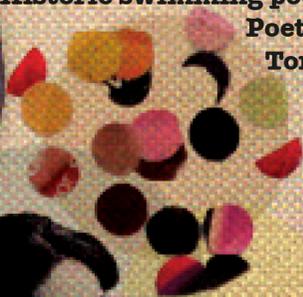
Manchester: Modern city

Ancoats Peeps

Historic swimming pools

Poetry

Torrijas



FREE



1 THE Shrieking Violet was

two at the start of August.

The plan was to produce a 2nd birthday special to coincide, but life got in the way.

Manuel Perez has been promising a recipe for the traditional, honey-heavy Spanish Easter dish torrijas for months but luckily, even though the season's passed, they taste good all year round.

Part of the reason why it's been a while since an issue of the Shrieking Violet is I was recovering from the exertion of organising a fanzine convention at Victoria Baths in May. The festival took over my life for a good part of this year, but was really rewarding — getting to meet likeminded zine-makers from all over the country and seeing the venue filled with hundreds of people.

Another historic pool, Levenshulme Baths, celebrated its 80th birthday earlier this summer (no thanks to the council, who attempted to close it down before public opposition forced them to rethink), and I've celebrated by including a page from a guide that writer and illustrator John Mather is writing to Greater Manchester's pools.

Issue one of the Shrieking Violet contained a guide to picking and eating blackberries, that languid summer activity, and the first birthday edition featured a guide to urban foraging by Alan Smith, which referenced Richard Mabey's famous book for wild food treasure-hunters **Food for Free**. The Shrieking Violet is all about looking again at, taking pleasure from and finding a use for what's all around you, however seemingly humble or commonplace, so it's appropriate that for the second birthday special I've decided to focus on weeds — or more specifically the wildflowers that colour every crack and vacant site in the city at this time of year, with added inspiration from Mabey's most recent book, the wonderful **Weeds: A Cultural History**, which was published last year.

Levenshulme Baths isn't the only public recreation facility to come under threat recently — Keith Reynolds describes attempts to build new Manchester Metropolitan University accommodation on top of Hulme's Birley Fields, and argues its value as a rare urban green space.

Editor: Natalie Bradbury (www.theshriekingviolets.blogspot.com)

Cover design: Allyson Exall (<http://alysonexall.com>)

Writers: Sam Lewis (<http://beingthere.bandcamp.com>), Brian Rosa (<http://brianrosa.net>), Josef Minta (<http://typograph.posterous.com>), Keith Reynolds (<http://valiantveggie.wordpress.com>), Manu Perez (<http://britofilia.blogspot.com>), John Mather

Illustrators: John Mather, Levenshulme Swimming Pools, Alex Boswell, Frank O'Hara, Josef Minta (<http://minta.posterous.com/>)

Photographers: Keith Reynolds, Brian Rosa, Alex Zamora (www.feverzine.co.uk)



Photo: Alex Zamora, Fever Zine, speaker, Victoria Baths Fanzine Convention

To tell me what I've got wrong/contribute/request back copies email:
Natalie.Rose.Bradbury@gmail.com



Placard from the protest at the planning meeting. Photo: Keith Reynolds

Birley Fields – A “last stand” for Hulme’s urban wildlife? by Keith Reynolds

2



THURSDAY 30 June 2011 was a memorable date for me. Not just because it was the date of a national public sector strike against vicious government cuts, but because it was also the date of an entirely different sort of strike. A strike against Hulme’s last remaining expanse of true “urban wilderness”.

On that day, the City Council’s planning committee voted in favour of Manchester Metropolitan University’s plans to build a massive student campus on the 30 acre site known as “Birley Fields”. The decision, which was not entirely unexpected by those fighting the plans, sealed the fate of what had become Hulme’s last remaining “wild-green space” and threatened to decimate the diverse flora and fauna which it had come to support.

Hulme, which takes its name from the old Norse word for “land surrounded by water or marsh” is no stranger to upheaval and the loss of its wide open spaces: up until the 18th century most of the area consisted of farmland and meadowland which was eventually lost during the industrial revolution thanks to the building of “slum homes” for its workers.

In the 1960s the town planners’ “brave new vision” for Hulme ushered in the wholesale clearance of the old “slum homes” only to replace them with concrete “deck-access” blocks, which included the notorious “crescents”. Ironically, if not tragically, these badly designed and badly built concrete “cities in the sky” soon became the modern day “slum homes” of the ‘60s, ‘70s and late ‘80s until their eventual demolition in the early ‘90s.

In the early ‘90s the area was to “reincarnate”, once again, but this time in the form of housing on a more “human scale” and which included, for the first time, a mixture of social housing, privately rented and “owner-occupied” properties. Although Hulme still had its problems, the begrudging consensus seemed to be that this particular “incarnation”, whilst by no means perfect, broadly got it right.

The same could not be said of the plans for Birley Fields, though.

The sprawling Birley Fields site had been no stranger to change, either, and many of its own “incarnations” mirrored the upheavals which had taken place throughout the rest of Hulme: it was once home to Jacksons Farm until around the 1840s and then became the site of the Holy Trinity and Catholic Apostolic Churches – the land making the transition from that of being cultivated to one of being consecrated.

During the 19th century it also accommodated rows of hastily erected “slum



Two big maple trees in front of the iconic Hulme arch bridge. Photo: Save Birley Fields facebook group.



3 housing". The shoddy, crumbling terraces would eventually make way for an altogether different version of "slum housing" in the 1960s. Of course, further clearances meant the rubble of the former would eventually mingle with the rubble of the latter. The nearby Birley High School, from which the remaining site takes its name, was also eventually demolished in the late

1990s and has been largely swallowed up by an "office park".

Whilst most of the buildings demolished in the '90s made way for immediate re-development, there was one rather big and rather green exception. The remaining 30 acre "Birley Fields" site was left relatively untouched.

Cleared of all its former buildings and unmolested by the rapid re-development taking place all around it, Birley Fields was a "blank canvas" awaiting nature's fertile and verdant "brushstrokes". It didn't have to wait very long. The existing young trees, which included maple, poplar, cherry, apple, plane, whitebeam, chestnut, rowan, beech and willow, amongst many others, seized their chance and reached for the skies. Wild grasses and wildflowers reclaimed the abandoned land and shrubs including wild rose, wild privet and dogwood blossomed in the emerging wildflower meadows.

Common blue butterflies established breeding colonies thanks to the re-colonization of its caterpillar's favourite food plants, birds-foot-trefoil. Nettles thrived as did the small tortoiseshell and comma butterflies, whose hungry black caterpillars voraciously devoured them. The tree canopy broadened out and thickened, its dappled shade creating the perfect conditions for Speckled Wood Butterflies to breed on the wild meadow grasses below. And while Bumble Bees intoxicated themselves on the abundant, nectar-rich clovers, kestrels would hover overhead, hoping to swoop down and catch small mammals hiding in the long, meadow grass. The invertebrate population boomed, with swifts and swallows "hoovering" them up on the "day shift" and flitting bats doing much the same on their night-shift .

During the 15 or so years of its "abandonment" Birley Fields had become an "oasis of biodiversity" in the midst of an inner city, tarmac-desert.

Whilst it was remarkable that such a "Turner-esque" landscape could exist less than a mile and half from Manchester's city centre, it was perhaps even more remarkable that it sat on top of a "toxic crust" which included asbestos, arsenic, lead, mercury and other contaminants, which lay just below its surface from previous demolitions. Its lush green, growth gave testimony to the tenacious adaptability and resilience of nature when left to its own devices.

Alas, the option of continuing to leave Birley Fields "to its own devices" (or even as a managed green space) was not one that was ever really on the table.

Designated a "Brownfield" development site, the Council steadfastly refused to see its intrinsic value as a "wild green space" whose worth could be measured in its natural beauty and biodiversity. Ironically earmarked as the site for MMU's new "green" campus, Birley Fields' trees were ranked into A, B or C classes and set the context in which they would be "selectively" chopped down. Whilst they promised to erect bird and bat boxes at their shiny, new campus in partial mitigation of the habitat loss, most of the wild, flowery grasslands and tussocky habitat – in which the birds, bats and invertebrates foraged – was destined to go. Their own ecologist said of the new scheme: "It is certain the development will result



Bumblebee on Bird's-foot-trefoil, Keith's balcony garden. Photo: Keith Reynolds



Common Blue Butterfly (*Polyommatus icarus*) on Birley Fields meadow. Photo: Keith Reynolds.

in the permanent loss of the existing suitable foraging habitat, comprising 105 trees (55.26%), 0.07ha scrub, 4.11ha grassland and 0.39ha ruderal vegetation, through direct land-take and landscaping.”

4



In terms of supporting Birley Fields' wildlife, it could be said that the addition of a few bat and bird boxes, when set against the substantial habitat already being lost, was akin to demolishing a housing estate, replacing it with a few bed-sits and not even bothering to reinstate the plethora of food shops which had previously been there.

Although MMU promised to replace the trees they cut down, small trees have nowhere near the same “wildlife value” as that offered by large, established, native species trees of some 30 odd years. The “replacements” then were never really going to be “like for like” And if these same “replacements” were of a non-native, ornamental variety, then their comparative ecological value would be compromised still further.

It didn't necessarily have to have been this way. It was argued that with sufficient political will and imaginative re-design, it could have been entirely possible to build a campus which retained substantially more of its “wild green spaces” and trees. That a truly “green campus” was one that both retained and surrounded itself with the substantial and biodiverse “green buffer zone” which was already in existence. As we already know, Thursday 30 June 2011 settled this argument once and for all.

And whilst Birley Fields in its turbulent history has been cultivated, consecrated and eventually concreted, it is the neglected areas on its fringes which might offer some faint glimmers of hope for some of Hulme's urban wildlife. On the rough strip of municipal grass near Hulme Arch, “cuckoo flowers” still flourish. A wetland wildflower, and food plant for orange tip butterflies, they might well have been descendants from the time when Hulme was once marshland. Passing by the school on Stretford Road I have seen bats flitting in and out of its trees, feasting on nocturnal insects. And on the streets surrounding Hulme Park, I've also seen scurrying hedgehogs and a little further on, witnessed long-tailed tits feeding in the Scots Pine trees. In Hulme park itself, butterfly caterpillars can be seen munching those nettles which have had the temerity to “gatecrash” its flowerbeds. And at the nearby neglected and threatened “spider park”, wildflowers including pink campion, poppies and “shaving brush” headed knapweeds offer nectar to bumble bees and hoverflies.

Higher up the food chain, sparrow-hawks have even been seen winding in and out of its trees, hunting for dinner. All of these things offer glimmers of hope and show how nature can and does adapt to its environment when given the chance. However, wildlife habitats are not islands – they are all interconnected and the loss of one can have a devastating effect on the others. Is Birley Fields the “last stand” for Hulme's urban wildlife? Only time can fully answer this question.

But now that the campus development is finally going to go ahead, the reality, I fear, is that the common blue butterfly might not now be quite so common locally. That the flocks of Scandinavian Waxwings which visited Birley Fields to forage in the winter might, at some point in the not too distant future, wish they'd just stayed at home. And that by the time the shrill buzz of chainsaws has long finished reverberating around Birley Fields, the joyful hum of bees (already massively in decline) might well have diminished still further.

Keith Reynolds writes the Wildlife Garden Balcony Blog about “creating a mini wildlife habitat on a tiny balcony in Hulme, inner-city Manchester”.



5 Weeds

by **Natalie Bradbury**



A mini-meadow under Canal Street.

THERE'S a common phrase 'one man's junk is another man's treasure' — a concept without which charity shops or car boot sales would be unable to survive. Its equivalent in the plant world is 'one man's weed is another man's flower'. Living in the city we may not have the space or time to cultivate a garden with perfectly maintained, ordered flowerbeds. Yet the city's plethora of building sites, vacant spaces, transport infrastructures, canals and derelict buildings mean the city is greened over and coloured in each summer by flowers that flourish in the in-between spaces leftover by a city that's always in a state of flux.

There's another saying that a weed is simply a plant in the wrong place, and many so-called weeds can also be found cultivated in gardens. As nature writer, former TV presenter and *Food for Free* cult figure Richard Mabey puts it in his most recent book *Weeds: A Cultural History*: "Plants become weeds when they obstruct our plans, our tidy maps of the world." *Weeds* is a thorough overview of the long-established place of weeds in our national culture, from literature to folklore, and Mabey approaches the subject with personality and passion.

Mabey humanises weeds and accords them an almost heroic status as "vegetable squatters" which are "a kind of living graffiti — impertinent, streetwise, living one step ahead of the developers and urban fusspots". He argues the case for weeds today as "vegetable guerillas that had overcome the dereliction of the industrial age" and notes their ability to survive and adapt to whatever man throws at them. He sees the so-called brownfield sites where weeds are often found as the new "urban commons" saying these places are "the most jazzily colourful and biologically rich zones of the cities", the "last informal open spaces left", where new ecosystems and plant communities have evolved entirely appropriate to what's around them.

Inspired by *Weeds: A Cultural History*, this is a short guide to just a few of the flowers that can commonly be seen brightening up Manchester over the summer months, whether glimpsed from a train or car window, trampled underfoot or simply smelt in the air after rainfall. I highly recommend buying the book to read more about the backstories of Britain's wild plants and how they arrived over the centuries from native habitats all over the world.

Bindweed

Colour: white.

Bindweed looks pretty, an elegant white flower that resembles a gramophone speaker, but it's an invader that smothers other plant and is often unpopular with gardeners. The plant is also known as 'Devil's gut' because of its insidious roots, which take over structures like fences.

Brambles

Colour: whitish pink.

The spiky, tangled branches of brambles bear pinkish white flowers which, as well as looking pretty, herald the growth of delicious end-of-summer fruit the blackberry. Brambles colonise wastegrounds, building sites, railway sidings, tram stops, canal banks, even the bottom of your garden — anywhere you can think of!

Buddleia

Colour: purple or white.

The king of the weeds, you know the summer's arrived when buddleia blossoms. Originally a mountainous plant, it curves over to create bushy corridors taller than your head and fills the air with its distinctive perfumey scent. Buddleia is also known as butterfly plant because of its attraction to butterflies. Buddleia's seeds are light, so easily spread by the wind created by trains — hence its predominance by railway tracks, as well as any crack in any wall, building, bridge or building site. Some people also cultivate it as a shrub in their back garden.

Clover

Colour: white-pink to purplish

Better known because of its leaves, a well-known symbol of luck, clover's small, ball-like flowers can be found

dotted about grass.

6



Daisies

Colour: white (and yellow)

The most humdrum of flowers, daisies tell you spring is on the way by reinventing everyday grassy areas such as lawns, meadows and sports fields as a sea of white (their heads close at night and in wet weather). It is thought that they have medicinal properties for healing wounds as well as afflictions such as mouth ulcers, and the flowers are also popular with children for the age-old pastime of making daisy chains.

Evening primrose

Colour: yellow.

This plant has a bashful beauty — its flowers droop their heads in the day, opening in the evening — as well as useful medicinal properties (evening primrose oil is used to treat period pains). It's a coloniser and likes disturbed soil, meaning it takes over cleared land such as canal banks, roadsides and building sites. Its shoots can be eaten in a salad.

Geraniums

Colour: purple-blue

Also a popular garden and house plant, geraniums are known as cranebill because their flowers resemble the bird's head. Their scalloped petals can be eaten as part of a salad.

Poppies

Colour: pale orange and yellow deepening to intense red.

The symbolism of poppies is well known — they are associated with death, but also rebirth and new life, because the plants were among the few things to survive amongst the destruction of Flanders Field during the first world war. They are also strongly associated with agriculture and harvest — hence their old-fashioned name corn flowers. Poppies are sometimes known as thunder flowers or lightnings, because picking them is said to bring on a thunderstorm, whereas keeping them in your house is said to protect against lightning. Poppy seeds are spread into the cracks between paving stones and distributed over building sites, fields and hedgerows by the wind and birds. The plant grows in soil that has been disturbed.

Roses

Colour: Lots, including pink, white and yellow.

Among the most fragrant of our wildflowers, filling the air with scents from apple to honey, they add colour to the side of motorways, train tracks and canals. Roses are also amongst England's most recognisable symbols — think of the Wars of the Roses between the houses of York and Lancaster! There are dozen species of wild rose in the UK, distinguished by their simple five-leaved design, the most common of which is dog rose. Mid to late summer, rose bushes are laden with fat rosehips which can be collected and made into rosehip jelly or wine, a good source of vitamin C.

Rosebay Willowherb

Colour: pink.

This plant is also known as 'Fireweed' as it rapidly colonises fire-damaged places — most famously the bombsites of London during the second world war. It also likes the side of railway tracks, as its seeds are spread by the winds created by passing trains.

Thistles

Colour: purple

The aggressive, pineapple-esque looking thistle is the national emblem of Scotland, signifying nobility. Look out for its prickles! Perhaps because of their thick, luxurious topping, thistles were once believed to be a cure for baldness.

Valerian

Colour: pink or white.

Fragrant valerian lurks low down, found close to the ground in clusters. It is a sedative and used as a cure for insomnia. The girls' name Valerie was derived from Valerian.



7

Dan Dubowitz & The Ancoats Peeps

by Natalie Bradbury

WALKING around Ancoats, it's hard to believe it was the birthplace of the industrial revolution, that the quiet, cobblestoned streets would once have been ringing with the clog-heavy footsteps of thousands of workers crowding into the mills. Almost as hard to imagine is that businesses still operated out of its centuries-old mills well into the twentieth century, clinging on even as production was moved to cheaper factories in the developing world. Walk around the area for long enough, though, and you start to spot things. Brass portholes, barely noticeable, are attached to the outside of boarded up mills and empty buildings. Many look from a distance like just another piece of the buildings, pock-marked as they are with functional bits of metal. Crouch down, though, and peep, and you're looking into another world, a place where workers have just popped out for lunch and could be back at any time. At the end of each of the Ancoats Peeps is a scene, a tiny bit of history; close-ups of machinery, slowly rotating objects, a room with workers' pin-ups still on the wall, the inside of a public toilet. Some have a photographic stillness – until you realise a tiny detail is moving. You're not really sure what you're looking at, or even where you're looking at, but want to look again and again and again, waiting for someone to return or something to come back to life and spring into production again.

The Ancoats Peeps, of which there are a dozen in total, dotted about Ancoats (their exact number and location is delightfully mysterious), are part of a project that's spanned the best part of the last decade. When the last of industry was moving out of the area and buildings had been compulsorily purchased for redevelopment, the Ancoats Urban Village Company decided to hold a nationwide competition for an artist to undertake a public sculpture as part of the regeneration of the area, which was by then run-down and crime ridden. Artist and architect Dan Dubowitz won the commission; however, when he arrived in Ancoats in 2003, he was clear that a sculpture would not be right for the area. "I went and handed the cheque back. The area doesn't need another visual object to try and define it. There is a tendency towards edifices and big objects but Ancoats needed something subtle you would stumble across. It needed something about the whole area and the identity of the area that people could be involved in. The whole area is a sculpture in a way, a visual beast."

Whilst most of the historic mills of Ancoats (those that weren't victims of arson) are still standing, in many ways the area is being rebuilt all over again. Not just in conversions and new apartment blocks, but culturally, as an area, in people's perceptions, as a place to live and work, a community, and it was this that Dan found he needed to address – why regenerate the area, when it was derelict, over any other part of the city, instead of just leaving it to rot or knocking it down and starting all over again? He explained: "I discovered a real problem that no object could ever address, which was cultural continuity. Ancoats has been such an important place and about certain things – capitalism and communism, written about by people like Engels – and now it's a wasteland. It's going from industrial to domesticity. I had to ask: "How is it going to be about that if it was once about dark Satanic mills? What is Ancoats going to be used for next?" There aren't really professions whose job it is to ask those questions but they still need to be brought to the table on a weekly basis and asked over again. I was asking, "If we're going to build, what should we be building and why?"

Dan has experience of working on cultural masterplans around the country, although he admits: "Some of them don't really kick off and get that far. Public art is a very fraught field. The idea that art is something that beautifies an area does not help. So often the brief of an artist is to try to rescue something, for example liven up a public space when they decide it needs something. There is a huge value in involving an artist at an early stage – but it shouldn't be assumed that it will lead to a physical artwork." The regeneration company agreed to let Dan approach the project organically. Dan was given his own studio and set about deciding what form his involvement as an artist should take. He started by exploring Ancoats and its stories, getting to know the dynamics of the area and the diaspora of its people by conducting hundreds of interviews. "There were still one or two man businesses in Ancoats – little guys with repair shops hanging on in corners. Lots of people have their own stories



from different periods.”

Dan had decided to focus on art rather than architecture when he realised he was more interested in wastelands and derelict buildings, and working with what was already there, than putting new buildings up. Once he had gained access to the deserted mills of Ancoats, he started documenting the place as he found it: “Once I got inside I'd just stay there all day. I developed a kind of photography using very long exposures and through that I got to know the place.” The resulting photos are beautiful. You feel like you're looking at a scene from a fairytale like sleeping beauty. Once industry moved out, nature moved in. Under glass ceilings, mills become greenhouses, overgrown with ferns and trees. In other cases, whole rooms were found intact, walled up. Some of these photos now sit in light-boxes in Cutting Room Square – the first ever public square in Ancoats, and another product of the regeneration process.

8



Part of the success of the Ancoats Peeps is that Dan was working with a diverse team that included not just town planners, engineers, architects and a landscape designer but a photographer and archaeologists. The latter unearthed all sorts of artefacts relating to the area's history, including eighteenth century ladies' shoes and a penny that had lain undisturbed in a roof of a mill since it was built. Dan realised the value of leaving things where they were: “I said, if we found things walled up, instead of putting things in a museum why don't we put them back? The team really understood the wider ramifications of things we found and their interest to wider types of people.” Dan appreciated the willingness of different members to bring their expertise to the team, but also “step outside the group and think outside the box”. There was real commitment to the area: “We sat in a room and knew that if we all made decisions this part of the city would be different. We weren't interested in writing reports that would just sit on a shelf.” He admits: “Ancoats was all-consuming. It took over my whole life. The space is really quite special. It really got under the skins of people. It has a spirit. It's something with no rational words, that you can't put your finger on.”

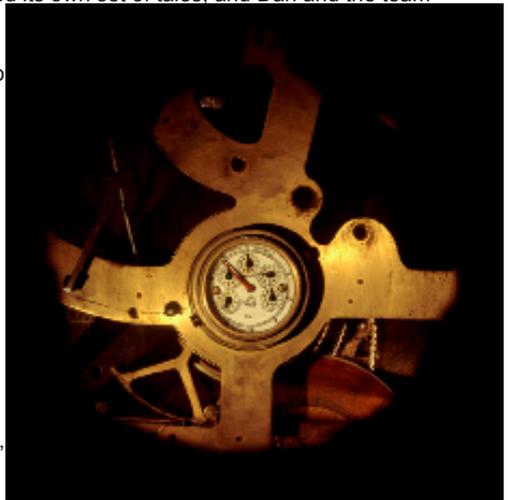
Dan described the creation and siting of the Peeps as “a long and complicated process”. Each Peep was installed on a building site – some of which were then themselves abandoned and became the new ruins of Ancoats, half-built skeletons, when the slump and depression hit (in one case, Dan had to steal in and rescue a Peep from a building which had gone in to receivership). Dan ended up banning the use of the word “art”, preferring the word “features” for his work, and funding came from the European Regional Development Fund rather than the usual arts channels. The reasoning was that “the Peeps would be features in the street and a part of the streetscape, where you'd usually put benches”.

Whilst the buildings have had shell repairs to stop their deterioration, their fate is still far from decided. Though they are no longer ruins, several are still empty and “frozen in a kind of limbo”. However, Dan sees the completion of the part new-build Ice Plant residential development, which recently hosted an exhibition of his photos as well as a display of artefacts rescued from the area, as a turning point. With the Halle orchestra looking at moving into St Peter's church, he'd like to see the area buzz with culture and become a hive for arts activity – “like Victoria Baths”. Mainly, he acknowledges, “it just needs more people in it”. The regeneration of the area has created its own set of tales, and Dan and the team

recently ran a weekend of walks around the area telling the story of the Peeps, which attracted 1,000 people – including former workers who came back to reminisce (one visitor even recognised themselves in some photos of Whit Walks that they'd forgotten existed). It's quite a transformation for an area that Dan admits “was such a no-go part of the city”. Now the project has come to a natural conclusion, Dan reflects: “We all wanted to see the area change in people's minds – we hope if those 1,000 people begin to see what we see then they will tell another 1,000 people.”

Photographs used by permission of Dan Dubowitz.

For more information and to purchase the accompanying book, *The Peeps: The Presence of Absence*, published by Manchester University Press, visit www.ancoatspeeps.com. For more information on Dan's other work visit www.civicworks.net.





The Original Modern

by **Brian Rosa**

MANCHESTER is a city of superlatives: it was the prototypical “shock city” of the Industrial Revolution, Friedrich Engels and Karl Marx’s model for everything that was abhorrent in the industrial capitalist city, and one of the birthplaces

of the labor and women’s suffrage movements. In its heyday, Manchester was depicted in literature of Engels, Alexis de Toqueville and later the paintings of LS Lowry, as an uninterrupted, chaotic anti-landscape of chimneys and smoke, strewn across a featureless topography. Its unprecedented configuration invoked equal parts awe and dread, moral panic and tempestuous visions of the future. In 1833, Toqueville described the crowded conditions, poorly constructed housing, hulking factories, and environmental degradation of Manchester: “From the foul drain the great stream of human industry flows out to fertilise the whole world. From this filthy sewer pure gold flows. Here humanity attains its most complete development and its most brutish; here civilization works its miracles, and civilised man is turned back almost into a savage.” (from Konvitz 97)

Like so many formerly industrial cities that followed, the inability to eradicate the industrial history in Manchester was not out of a lack of desire. From the post-World War II period of deindustrialisation until the late Seventies, Manchester city planners’ main goal was to not repeat the “indiscriminate building of the industrial revolution” (Nicholas 1945, p.87) and to counteract the ‘image of grime and obsolescence inherited from the industrial revolution’ (Manchester Corporation City Planning Department. 1964, p.7). In his description of Stockport, just south of Manchester, historic preservationist Randolph Langenbach described the demolition of the mills around Stockport Viaduct: “the destruction is so complete that one can only believe that it must have been the result of an intentional effort to expunge the 19th-century industrial image” (cited in Parkinson-Bailey 2000, p.203).

We can see these phantasmal landscapes in WG Sebald’s *The Emigrants* in Max Ferber’s walks through 1950s Manchester: “In Ardwick, Brunswick, All Saints, Hulme and Angel Fields too, districts adjoining the centre to the south, whole square kilometers of working-class homes had been pulled down by the authorities, so that, once the demolition rubble had been removed, all that was left to recall the lives of thousands of people was the grid-like layout of the streets...On that bare terrain, which was like a glacis around the heart of the city, it was in fact always and only children that one encountered.” (157-158).

Despite the wholesale erasure of industrial-era working-class housing, what is left of Manchester city centre still bears considerable evidence to its industrial past: the monumental warehouses of Whitworth Street have been converted to residential lofts and offices, the opulent Cotton Exchange building has been transformed into the Royal Exchange Theatre and the Manchester Central Railway Station is now an exhibition and conference center. In the areas closest to the employment, entertainment and retail center of Manchester (and accordingly, of the Northwest of England), the “Dark, satanic mills” are now the realms of the yuppie. Throughout much of the city, the soot has been removed from industrial facades to reveal red bricks, made more vibrant by consistently cloudy skies.

Just as “Cottonopolis” was the first industrial city, and accordingly, for a moment, world’s most futuristic city, it was also one of the first ‘postindustrial’ cities. Since the 1970s, this city of red brick has become the master of municipal entrepreneurialism based on a sanitised industrial history — a new heritage industry emerged, repackaging the city in the sepia tones of nostalgia. Branding itself as ‘The Original Modern’, city boosters Marketing Manchester project an outward image as a risk-taking city





that shirks convention and always has. After decades of embarrassment and disavowal of its industrial dowry, the city's well-branded "urban renaissance" has been predicated on a reinvention that both conceals and reveals its cultural heritage, in an amalgam of selective memory and out-right amnesia.

In a visual and material sense, what symbolises a demystified Mancunian modernity? It's a more difficult question to answer than one might presume. Domestic scenes of back-to-back tenements are the realm of dusty dioramas in museums — mannequins behind glass, nestled among obsolete machinery. In Ancoats, just east of the city centre, the world's first industrial suburb has been reworked as an "Urban Village" inviting in the new pioneers, real estate developers who have built an ornamental extension to the Rochdale Canal, site of a former housing estate, to increase waterfront real estate. In Castlefield, the central node of industrial era productive networks, simulacral warehouses provide residential lofts where real warehouses were demolished in the 1960s.

Amidst all of the erasure and reconfiguration, industrial-era transportation infrastructure looms large on the built environment of the city in the form successive layers of canals and elevated railways. Within the sea of brick, the scoliotic railway viaducts stand as the primary beacons of a bygone era that is still central to Manchester's identity. Accordingly, the arches serve as a backdrop to many a Manchester mise-en-scène: in the opening credits of every episode of Coronation Street, the everyday environment of Manchester is signified in the railway viaduct that is nestled in the background of a working-class neighborhood. By the same token, the arches become so familiar in the everyday life of the city that they rarely seem to be in the foreground. From the ground level, they interweave through the urban tapestry, appearing and disappearing, but never far away.

Foregrounding the Backdrop

To identify the "original modern" in Manchester would be to embark on an industrial archaeology, excavating material traces of Manchester's ascent into industrial modernity — the maelstrom of rapid change, technological discoveries, social upheaval, exponential urban growth, and the fluctuating markets of proto-globalisation. The industrialisation of Manchester was predicated on the development of a vast, networked transportation system and the colonisation of the countryside, with the railway playing a central symbolic and material role in this upheaval. As political philosopher Marshall Berman explains, if we move forward a hundred years from when Jean-Jacques Rousseau first used the term moderniste in its contemporary form "and try to identify the distinctive rhythms and timbres of nineteenth-century modernity, the first thing we will notice is the highly developed, differentiated and dynamic new landscape in which modern experience takes place. This is a landscape of steam engines, automatic factories, railroads, vast new industrial zones; of teeming cities that have grown overnight, often with dreadful human consequences" (1988: 18). In this sense, the railway becomes the apotheosis of modernity, and nowhere more so than in Manchester.

We are left with the brick railway viaducts: structures that must have seemed so futuristic at the time, time-space platforms hewn from the same red brick as the temples to industry that they supplied. This infrastructure is not superimposed on the city; its presence continues as an imposition that still affects the reshaping of the city.



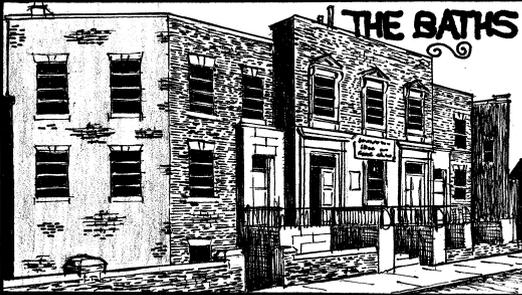
LEVENSHULME SWIMMING POOLS

ADDRESS: BARLOW ROAD, LEVENSHULME,
MANCHESTER, M19 3HE

PHONE/FAX: 0161 224 4370/0161 225 8378

WEB/E-MAIL: info.levenshulmepool @ leisure.serco.com

OWNER: MANCHESTER CITY COUNCIL



THE BATHS

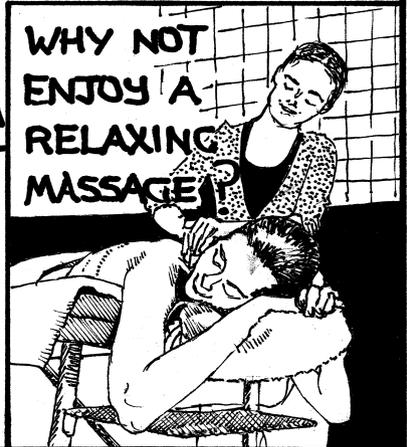
LORD FOSTER,
ARCHITECT,
WAS
BORN
HERE IN
1935



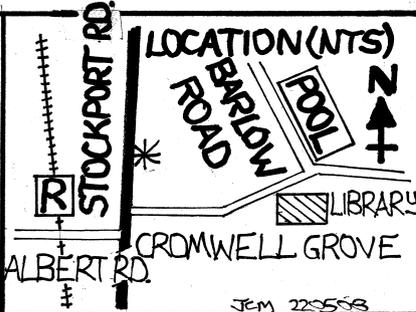
THE MULTI-CULTURAL SUBURB OF LEVENSHULME IS A POPULAR HOME FOR PEOPLES OF IRISH AND PAKISTANI DESCENT. OPENED IN 1931, "THE BATHS" COST £23,950 TO BUILD! MANY OF THE ORIGINAL, INTRICATE FEATURES ADORN THE :

- MAIN POOL 22.9m x 7.6m
- LEARNER POOL 18.3m x 6.1m
- GYM PLUS SAUNA + STEAM ROOM

WHY NOT
ENJOY A
RELAXING
MASSAGE!



R
ROADSIDE
PARKING
IS VERY
LIMITED!



JEM 225558



In Search of Greater Manchester's Swimming Pools

by John Mather

SWIMMING has always been important to me – and I am old enough to be able to say that I learnt to swim in Bury's spectacular Victorian baths. It seemed not just a place to swim, more like a landmark of civic pride and opulence.

Although it was replaced by a modern leisure centre in the 1970s, I always harboured affection for Bury's old baths and often wondered how many other towns had managed to retain their old pools.

The publicity surrounding the restoration of Manchester's Victoria Baths inspired me to begin a challenge which involved swimming in every public swimming pool in Greater Manchester.

You could call my illustrated guide to all these pools a labour of love, because the project has proved to be a larger task than I first imagined! After all, there are 56 pools within the region's ten metropolitan boroughs which make up Greater Manchester.

My guide is not intended to compare or judge pools; I treat each pool on its merits, be it an art décor masterpiece, or plain old utilitarian concrete and glass "shell". My only hope is that it can go some way to celebrating swimming in Greater Manchester and encourage more people to swim.

These assets need recognising for their true worth; after all the recent outcry over proposals to close Levenshulme Swimming Pools only serves to prove swimming's unique and often understated role in society.

Part of the enjoyment of visiting a "new" pool is never exactly knowing what you are going to find! Take the City of Manchester's stock of ten pools, for instance. There is a bewildering array of sizes and architectural styles. Pools range all the way from the prestigious Manchester Aquatic Centre on Oxford Road, as featured in the 2002 Commonwealth Games, down to the cosy neighbourhood pools of Broadway and Chorlton. The latter still retains its original polished brass fittings and cubicles!

And how can I forget to mention the historic Withington pool; it's a bit of a classic and renowned for being the first baths in Manchester to allow mixed bathing, way back in 1914! You might be surprised to learn that it's not the oldest pool in the region – that accolade falls to Crompton Pool (Oldham MBC) which dates from 1899 and I am pleased to say is still going strong.

My visits have also given me an insight into a long forgotten and distant "golden age" of swimming prior to the First World War when Manchester's swimmers literally led the world and Chadderton's Henry Taylor won three gold medals at the 1908 London Olympics!

So, imagine my surprise to discover a namesake, EB Mather, was "Champion of Manchester" in the 1850s! Now that does need following up...

My project is nearly complete, and I have only a handful of pools left to visit. If anyone wants to share any thoughts on pools or would like to know more about my illustrated guide, please contact me at johnkomodo01@hotmail.com.



13 Frank O'Hara

by **Sam Lewis**

We thus see the absurdity of that favourite expression of our traditional criticism: 'X has something to say and says it well.' Might we not advance on the contrary that the genuine writer has nothing to say? He has only a way of speaking.

Alain Robbe-Grillet, 1989

FRANK O' Hara's life was cut tragically short, ending in a road accident when he was aged only forty. Yet, by that point he was already at the heart of a New York artistic milieu that strove towards not only re-positioning the New York as the inheritor to Paris's avant-garde crown, but also creating a new kind of art that would reflect a new kind of America. As artist, critic and Assistant Curator at the Museum of Modern Art (MoMA), O'Hara was uniquely positioned at the nexus of competing and interlocking cultural forces, an exemplar of a new generation in which consuming and creating were no longer held apart. O'Hara and his contemporaries – his fellow New York School of poets and the Abstract Expressionist painters they championed – were fully implicated in society. In a post-war atmosphere of resurgent American capitalism, as Serge Guilbart puts it, "there was a shift in interest away from society back to the individual. As the private sector re-emerged from the long years of the Depression, the artist was faced with the unhappy task of finding a public and convincing them of the value of his work."¹

The art created by the New York avant-garde around this time can, and has been, accused of having 'nothing to say', of only having 'a way of speaking'. We can see that, superficially, this can broadly be said to be true. Yet if we look beyond the 'surface' of O'Hara's work – or, rather, more closely at it – we can see that is there is depth there. Ultimately, by focusing on everyday objects and emotions, O'Hara creates what Andrew Ross terms "a code of personal politics"²; it is not that O'Hara merely speaks and has nothing to say, it is that this act of speaking is his statement – that even the most ordinary action has power in and of itself.

Yet many have argued that O'Hara's work has 'nothing to say'. In its focus on everyday events – the trivia and minutiae of O'Hara's life – many of his poems can, at first glance, appear fleeting and throwaway. His 'Lunch Poems' – literally, poems written on his lunch-break – seem particularly filled with empty detail. 'A Step Away from Them' for instance, appears to just mirror the world around the poet, the enjambment aiding a breezy flow of images passed over without any deep analysis:

"It's my lunch hour, so I go / for a walk among the hum-colored / cabs. First, down the sidewalk / where laborers feed their dirty / glistening torsos sandwiches / and Coca-Cola, with yellow helmets / on. They protect them from falling bricks, I guess."³

Here, unlike a poem such as TS Eliot's 'The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock', loaded with symbolism, or Robert Lowell's heavy, confessional stanzas, there is no deeper 'meaning'; the 'yellow helmets', 'cabs' and 'sandwiches' are just that, they don't stand in for something else. Similarly a poem like 'Lana Tuner has collapsed!' with its witty declamation that "I have been to lots of parties / and acted perfectly disgraceful / but I never actually collapsed"⁴, seems to be a few breezy, throwaway lines with no substance behind them – with 'nothing to say'. Commenting on the train journey O'Hara takes in 'Joe's Jacket', Marjorie Perloff likewise remarks: "it's not a symbolic journey from the old world to the new, it is just a trip."⁵ O'Hara's "images", Perloff says, "are not symbolic properties; there is nothing behind these surfaces"⁶; in 'Music' the reference to "the Mayflower Shoppe" isn't supposed to conjure a sense of gravitas and history – it's just a passing reference to a café.

Many early reviews of O'Hara's work adopted this position; indeed, Geoff Ward argues

¹ Guilbart, Serge 'The New Adventures of the Avant-Garde in America: Greenburg, Pollock, or from Trotskyism to the New Liberalism of the 'Vital Centre', in Landau, Ellen (ed.). *Reading abstract expressionism*. Yale University Press, 2005. 387.

² Ross, Andrew 'The Death of Lady Day', in Elledge, Jim (ed.). *Frank O'Hara: To Be True to a City*. University of Michigan Press, 1990. 390.

³ Ford, Mark (ed.). *The New York poets*. Carcanet Press, 2004. 28.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 49.

⁵ Perloff, Marjorie. *Frank O'Hara: Poet Among Painters*. University of Chicago Press, 1977. 149.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 23.



that, to this day, there is a “refusal by most American critics to take O’Hara seriously”⁷. WT Scott cast them as “fun...gay and host”⁸ in the *Saturday Review*; Francis Hope in the *New Statesman* argued that “there’s not much reality in these sandwiches – only...puppyish charm”⁹ while Marius Bewley describes poetry “amiable and gay, like streamers of crepe paper fluttering before an electric fan”¹⁰.

14



Meanwhile, some modern critics have similarly seen the work of O’Hara’s artistic circle, and especially the Abstract Expressionist movement – one O’Hara championed and often echoed in his poetry – as being dangerously devoid of meaning and critique. O’Hara organised the first exhibition of Jackson Pollock’s art in Europe and was friends with Abstract Expressionist painters such as Robert Motherwell and William De Kooning; their rugged, individualist work was seen as an exemplar of the new American spirit by an establishment engaged in cultural and ideological conflict with the collectivist Soviet Union. For critics like Serge

Guilbart the work of the “modern American artist” of the 1950s and early 1960s, “wanted to write about the impossibility of description...but in doing so integrated [his art] into the imperialist machine of the MoMA”¹¹ – the very museum O’Hara dedicated his adult working life to.

And yet, to go in either direction – to see O’Hara’s poetry as light and throwaway, or conversely as ideologically disturbing in its lack of critique – seems to not look closely enough at O’Hara’s work or his position in society. We can instead argue that the ‘depth’ of his work, its meaning, actually lies in its emphasis on ‘surfaces’, that their prominence in his poetry should be taken as indicative of neither shallowness, nor a lack of engagement. We should see O’Hara as at the vanguard of a new generation of artists involved in a project to create a particularly American kind of art, one that reflected the new status of the artist as part of society – as not just a detached intellectual, but also a worker and consumer. ‘The Day Lady Died’, for instance, is a depiction of a world in which the poet is also a shopper, in which the artist’s (who is also a worker) engagement with the city is now one of exchange value. We see O’Hara’s figure “practically going to sleep with quandariness”¹² in a bookshop, eating a hamburger and “casually” buying cigarettes. As Andrew Ross puts it: “Bohemian poets, as we see from the conspicuous consumption described here, are no longer immune to the contagious seductions of the commodity world. This is not Baudelaire’s poet-dandy-flaneur lured to the marketplace to look but not to buy...O’Hara’s motivated, discriminating consumer-poet has found an entire range of goods...”¹³

In attempting to see beyond O’Hara’s seemingly shallow ‘surfaces’, we should look at his admiration for Abstract Expressionist painters like Jackson Pollock: for David Sweet, O’Hara’s “position mirrors that of the Abstract Expressionists”¹⁴. The Action Painting movement, spearheaded by Pollock, was one in which form resided “mysteriously in the process”¹⁵; these artists made the subject of their work the work itself: its process of production, the energy of the artist who created it, and the world it was borne of. In doing so their art came to both embody and explore the experiences and aspirations of a middle class that, in post-war America, was the newly dominant force in society. Just as the vortices of Pollock’s own bodily space is inscribed onto his drip-paintings, so in O’Hara’s

7 Ward, Geoff. *Statutes of liberty*. Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1993. 39.

8 Scott, WT *The Everyday and the Fanciful*, in *To Be True to a City*. 4.

9 Hope, Francis ‘From “Suffer and Observe”’, in *To Be True to a City*. 13.

10 Bewley, Marius ‘From “Lines”’, in *To Be True to a City*. 17.

11 Guilbart, in *Reading abstract expressionism*. 396.

12 *The New York poets*. 38.

13 Ross, in *To Be True to a City*. 384.

14 Sweet, David. *Savage sight, constructed noise*. Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2003. 196.

15 *Ibid*.



15

'Lunch Poems' we see time restriction (literally, his lunch hour) etched into the fabric of the work. In a world where the dominant liberal political paradigm was one of seriousness and moral value, artists like O'Hara and Pollock were "rethinking the categories of surface and depth"¹⁶. Their idea of 'surface' was one which recognised, "That history...is also made out of particulars of people whose everyday

acts do not always add up to...grand...real politics."¹⁷

To argue you can see deeper meaning behind everyday objects is assume you have some critical position you can occupy; for O'Hara, the aim was to demonstrate your role as just another cog in the wheel of the city, his art a reflection of his status.

Indeed, though O'Hara's work may, at first sight, seem fleeting, there is actually a great deal of careful construction in his poetry. Marjorie Perloff describes how, just as painters like Picasso and De Koonig prevented any 'objective' reading of their work by inscribing its surface with multiple angles and potential interpretations, so in O'Hara's work: "the surface of the poem must...be regarded as a field upon which the physical energies of the artist can operate without mediation of metaphor or symbol."¹⁸

It is the "push and pull interaction"¹⁹ of these forces on the surface of the poem that create the tension, the 'depth', as opposed to any latent symbolism. In a poem such as 'In Memory of My Feelings', for example, we are presented with a multitude of ambiguities. In a passage such as: "so many pistols I have borrowed to protect myself / from creatures... though in winter they are warm as roses, in the desert / taste of chilled anisette"²⁰ there are few certainties – we are unsure as to what these creatures are, why they attack the speaker, and what the 'chilled anisette' refers to. Different styles and genres blend together, moving from oblique literary references (Byron's "Manfred") to surrealist, Dada-esque imagery ("an elephant takes up his trumpet...A gun is 'fired'"²¹). Meanwhile, the speaker's identity collapses into multiple personalities:

"I am a girl walking downstairs...I am a champion taking a fall / I am a jockey with a sprained ass-hole I am the light mist..."²²

The "syntactic energy"²³ of poems like 'Biotherm (For Bill Berkson)' and 'In Memory of My Feelings', with their amorphous, floating clauses and irregular enjambment, serves to create "spatial tensions" that "keep a surface alive and moving". Similarly, 'Joe's Jacket' shifts tense rapidly from past to present to future to create a sense of "absorbing both past and present into what happens now"²⁴.

What we see here is indeed a world made of surfaces, but one created only in order to imbue that world with a vital sense of urgency and importance. These 'surface' qualities in O'Hara's work reflect an avant-garde re-ascribing art with new, American values, those of "violence, spontaneity, incompleteness"²⁵; for O'Hara, the 'now' was all-important. We can say that this attempt to escape temporality lies partly in a "lingering trance of post-war existentialism"²⁶ in his work, but also in something more particular to his time. Marjorie Perloff states O'Hara's interest in the Russian formalist critic Viktor Shklovsky, who argued that the role of art was to 'de-familiarise' the everyday, and that in order to do so "the artist must be as attentive as possible to the world around him"²⁷. O'Hara's many complex surfaces – with their lack of 'objective' meaning, swirling imagery and ambiguous perspectives – are a means of avoiding stasis. As Perloff puts it: "one way of avoiding boredom...is to create a poetic structure that is always changing, shifting, becoming."²⁸ By both staying 'attentive' to

16 Ross, in *To Be True to a City*. 382.

17 Ibid.

18 Perloff, 21.

19 Ibid.

20 *The New York poets*. 23.

21 Ibid.

22 Ibid., p26

23 Perloff, 135.

24 Ibid., 149.

25 Guilbart, 391.

26 Ward, 50.

27 Perloff, 19.

28 Perloff, 20.

the world around him and by creating a surface structure to his poetry that seeks to ward off anything other than 'the moment', O'Hara is able to undertake just such a 'de-familiarisation'.

16



Indeed, with regards to O'Hara's poetry it is not enough to say that he 'nothing to say', or even that he only has 'a way of speaking'. Rather, the power of his poetry arises from the emphasis it places on everyday things such as the 'mere' act of speaking: the focus on the minutiae, the importance it places on the smallest moments and things by responding to them as they are in their immediacy rather than attempting to interpret them. Thus Andrew Ross argues that the "technical obsession"²⁹ with surface in O'Hara's circle "was underpinned by a whole ideology of depth": just because the poems deal with fleeting moments, doesn't mean they don't have something to say.

If the early reviews pejoratively dismissed O'Hara's work as 'gay', we can instead, with the benefit of historical perspective, see this 'campness' as a positive component in his "ideology of depth". Just as O'Hara's 'surface tensions' and attentiveness to detail allow him to breathe new life into the ordinary, so his camp persona ("I have been to lots of parties / and acted perfectly disgraceful...") is "an imaginative conquest of everyday conditions of oppression, where more articulate expressions of resistance or empowerment were impossible...the suggestion that role-playing...could add to the exercise of sexual power was...very attractive...for the gay male."³⁰

In 1950s America, where the paradigm for male sexuality was that of straightness, seriousness and moral value, O'Hara's own role-playing, the seemingly breezy vacuity of the character that inhabits the 'Lunch Poems', hides an attempt to begin "to imagine...the gradual softening of the contours of social masculinity"³¹. We can see an echo of O'Hara's role-playing in Pollock's circle, who, conversely, "took machismo to the point of parody"³². O'Hara's preoccupation with speed, physicality and surface can be seen as a critique of life in a newly individualist society where your body marked the limit of your value and understanding, a new world where institutions couldn't be trusted, ideology and critique were seen to be dangerously loaded (at a time of nuclear threat), and where the avant-garde were a part of both the workplace and the marketplace. David Sweet makes the point that, like Pollock's painting, "O'Hara's poetry also assumes the scale of the poet's own body in ways that both repeat and parody"³³ those of Pollock.

We can see that there are arguments to say both that O'Hara has 'nothing to say' and that he is merely 'speaking'. However, by looking more closely at the surface of these poems, we can see that they provide more 'depth' than it seems at first. With their shifting points of reference, temporal switches and ambiguous imagery, the more freeform of O'Hara's poems imitate the 'push and pull' of the competing meanings and perspectives seen in the surfaces of the paintings he loved. Meanwhile, in amongst the apparently hollow 'campness' and descriptiveness of the 'Lunch Poems' we can detect an attempt to create a state of being in which the reality of things as they are (rather than what we would wish them to be or want them to symbolise) is brought to the fore – be it O'Hara's own sexuality, or the simple pleasure of walking through New York. The beauty of his poetic art is its belief that, in the words of Paul Carroll, "everything or anything can be put into a poem"³⁴ – suddenly, "art preserved the existential present"³⁵. As Andrew Ross puts it, there should be: "little danger of confusing this O'Hara with his other reputation as a poet of trivia who shunned the social, artistic and political questions of his day."³⁶

29 Ross, 381.

30 Ross, 388.

31 Ibid., 389.

32 Ward, 3.

33 Sweet, 205.

34 Carroll, Paul 'An Impure Poem About July 17, 1959' in *To Be True to a City*. 377.

35 Ibid.

36 Ross, 382.



Street vignette

The beauty of starred, broken windows,
Street diamonds from French bus shelters,
Crunch under the heels of drunken feral children,
Diving for cover from life.

Between Ourselves

Repetition, repetition, repetition.
The sound of the word,
Repeated.
A rainbow coloured whorl of oil spilt on wet stony ground,
Reflected and pulsed, back to me through the shine of your eye.
I, I, I,
The repetition of the word repeated.
Nailed down, fixed and then diluted, The I, the
Id of it,
splits the world between us - the me, the you
The I, and the never I

In the corner of my eye

Intangible threads like cobwebs
On your finger tips,
Or fingertips,
on your thigh.
Elusive as attempts to capture sunlight and
memory
In bottles for rainy days
Lost when we turn our face to the world
Yet constantly reforming
On the periphery of angelic vision.

Poems and images ©Josef Minta 2011
www.minta.posterous.com



Torrijas

by **Manu Perez**

18



Ingredients:

A piece of bread preferably from the day before (better a French baguette in 1cm slices, but you can use any sliced white bread).

Milk (enough to soak all the bread)

2-4 tbs sugar

Cinnamon stick

4 tbs honey

2-4 eggs

300-500ml oil

Heat the milk in a pan with the sugar and the cinnamon stick but turn the heat off before it boils.

In the meanwhile beat the eggs in a bowl and set apart.

Once the milk is ready, soak the bread slices one by one, ensuring they get all the flavour but don't get too soft or they'll crumble.

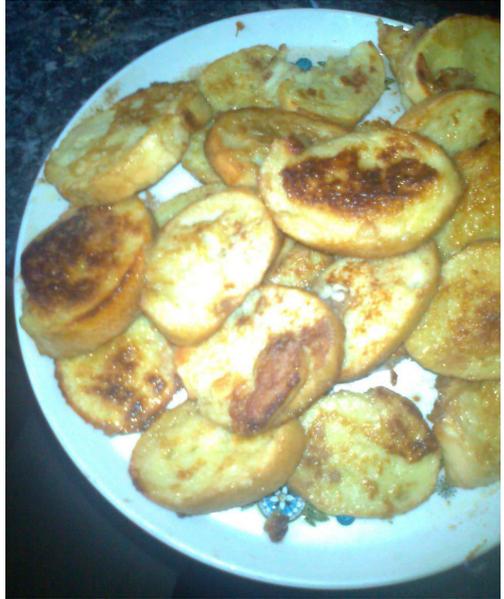
Heat the oil in a deep frying pan until it begins to smoke.

Soak the sliced bread in the battered eggs and fry them carefully in batches of 2 or 3.

Once they start to look golden, take out of the pan, draining the oil, and leave on kitchen paper to get rid of the excess of oil.

When you've finished frying all the bread slices, melt the honey in a pan with some water to make a honey syrup.

Soak the fried bread slices briefly in the syrup and set apart in a dish or bowl. Sprinkle them with cinnamon powder and leave to cool down.



Torrijas have become a traditional Holy Week/Easter dish in Spain. Similar to French toast, they date back centuries, to times when the banning of eating meat due to religious reasons in the Catholic world led to a drop in the consumption of bread; which was used as an accompaniment for meat. So, some smart people back then put two and two together and came with the wonderful idea of transforming the bread leftovers into tasty and high calorie sweets.



Usually torrijas are made with milk, but there are as many variations as you can think of. The most common variation consists of using white wine or sweet wine instead of milk, lowering the alcohol with a little water. I still have in my mind the picture of my grandmother bringing two big bowls of torrijas, the milky variation for the kids and the wine for the adults. Back then I hated the soft melting-in-mouth bread, but nowadays I can't resist a good torrija whether it's Holy Week or not!



19

Good things happening soon

Tuesday August 23, Sic Alps, Castle Hotel. Scuzzy American indie with support from Former Bullies, Milk Maid and Peacesigns.

Sebadoh, Club Academy. Droll American indie, reformed.

Wednesday August 24 and following Wednesdays, 4th Floor Film Night, Hotspur House, 7pm. Manchester Municipal Design Corporation film night featuring *Barbarella: Queen of the Galaxy* and an episode of the Clangers. (See <http://thefourthfloor.tumblr.com> for listings) (weekly)

Friday August 26, The Skin I Live In, Cornerhouse. The new film by colourful Spanish director Pedro Almodovar opens. (Continuing, see website for details.)

Office Party, Rogue Studios, 6pm. Exhibition featuring artists from Rogue Studios based in the old Crusader Mill.

Float Riverer, Fuel, Withington. Manchester rock 'n' roll duo with support from Hunted Twice.

Belle Vue Vinyl Night, An Outlet. Spin-off music night from the Shrieking Violet's favourite fanzine.

Kissing Just for Practice, Star and Garter. Belle & Sebastian oriented disco. Recommended.

Monday August 29, Primordial Undermind, Ducie Bridge. With support from Thought Forms and Sex Hands.

Tuesday August 30, What Lies Beneath, Nexus Art Cafe, 7.30pm. Artists' collective Pool Arts present the latest in their speakers' series: Stuart Nolan on contemporary magic performance and psychological illusion. £3

Comet Gain, Roadhouse. Retro-pop revivalists, but done in a way that makes you want to smile and

dance! With support from ABC Club.

An Evening with MCR Scenewipe, Fuel, Withington. Featuring the Heebie Jeebies, Onions, The Bell Peppers and New Hips (monthly).

Friday September 2, Klaus Kinski, Horses, Thee Cuss Words, Gullivers. Live bands plus Trash-o-Rama DJs.

Saturday 3-Sunday 4 September, DIY Feminist Festival, Platt Fields Chapel Community Hub. Workshops, discussions, debates and events, including another walk based on the Manchester's Modernist Heroines publication, a joint project between the Shrieking Violet, Loiterers Resistance Movement and Manchester Modernist Society (Saturday September 3).

Sunday September 4, Loiterers Resistance Movement, Piccadilly Gardens, 2pm. Psychoeographic walk around Manchester. September's outing, a collaboration with Manchester's Mule newspaper, is themed Drinking in the City. (monthly)

Victoria Baths open day. Manchester's water palace throws its doors open with guided tours and activities. (monthly)

Monday September 5, Core of the Coalman, Hobo Sonn, Serfs, Cabbage Rosette, Ducie Bridge. Night of experimental and noise music.

Thursday September 8-Sunday September 11, Heritage Open Days. Museums and attractions across the country throw their doors open for free for the weekend with special events and tours. (See www.heritageopendays.org.uk for Greater Manchester listings.)

Friday September 9, Chris Mills, The Britons Protection. Singer-songwriter in the Shrieking Violet's

favourite, cosy pub. With support from Liam Dullaghan and the Quiet Loner.

The Pixies Disco, Star & Garter. Night of late '80s and '90s US indie rock at Manchester's best nightclub, recommended! (monthly)

Thursday September 15, the modernist issue 2 launch, Ferrious. Manchester Modernist Society celebrates the launch of issue 2 of its magazine the modernist, themed 'brilliant'. (quarterly)

Wednesday September 21, Victoria Baths Swimming Club, Levenshulme Baths. Friends of Victoria Baths swim in another Edwardian pool. (monthly)

I'm Being Good, Gullivers. With support from Pwhmobs, Bad Orb, Part Wild Horses Mane on Both Sides and The Gamecock.

Friday September 23, Underachievers Please Try Harder, Roadhouse. Underachievers re-launches with live bands Let's Buy Happiness and Evans the Death. (twice monthly)

Saturday September 24, Ford Madox Brown: Pre-Raphaelite Pioneer, Manchester Art Gallery. New exhibition of the painter whose famous murals decorate the town hall. (exhibition runs until January 29)

Drapeau Noir, St Margarets's Church, Whalley Range. A night of experimental, folk and noise in a beautiful church, also featuring Asymptotem and Roases.

Sunday September 25, Manchester Print Fair, Night & Day. Independent publications to browse and buy.

Monday September 27, Ut, Soup Kitchen. Avant-garde New Yorkers, in a basement.