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href="livid-among-the-ghostings-by-anna-percy.html" title="Livid Among The Ghostings">Livid

Among The Ghostings</a> by <a href="speakers.html#anna-percy" title="Anna Percy">Anna

Percy</a></h2><h3>Published by <a href="http://www.flapjackpress.co.uk/" title="Flapjack

Press">Flapjack Press</a> </h3><h3>Reviewed♦by <a href="speakers.html#denis-joe"

title="Denis Joe">Denis Joe</a> July 2013</h3>♦ <p><strong><em>Livid Among The

Ghostings</em></strong> is Anna Percy♦s first full collection of poetry and my first encounter

with her work and it was a pleasant surprise to find a poet who is both skilful and

imaginative.</p><p> <p><strong><em>Why Waste The Ink</em></strong>, a prose

poem, opens this collection. It is a very touching piece. The opening sentence, ♦I write

because I want men to fall in love with me♦, may strike the reader as humourous, in the context

of the poem as a whole it takes on a feeling of pathos.</p><p> <p><em>Why Waste The

Ink</em> is a good piece to open this volume of poetry with, because it is a very lovely and

sensuous poem which set the pace for the works to come. It could easily have been an

anaphora, but I feel that would have been a much too energetic opening. Though I do imagine

that it could be read out as such.</p> <p> <p><strong><em>Dear Future Lover</em></strong> and <strong><em>Dear

Birdhouse</em></strong>, each written as letters. The form may seem easy to compose in, but

I believe that it is difficult to sound convincing. There are also questions over the legitimacy of

the form, which was introduced by Gertrude Stein, early in the last century. But I believe it to be

a legitimate poetic form. The differences between it and a block of prose are subtle, but when

read aloud it is unmistakably poetry. And Percy provides us with three fine examples in this

volume.</p> <p> <p><strong><em>Ars Poetica</em></strong> is a wonderful sonnet,

using the theme of composing to create a feeling of sensuousness. This is such an inventive

approach as well as being daring. It seems to be based on the Petrarchan sonnet though the

structure is slightly altered with the <em>volta</em>♦ ♦I might not♦ ♦ placed on the ninth line

rather than the eighth. It is a simple but effective devise which allows us to glide from ♦The

courage of the night makes my ink flow faster♦ to ♦The pen stops resisting my fingers♦ (the

opening lines of each stanza) without any awkwardness that sometimes occurs in sonnets

moving from one ♦theme♦ to another. This suggests to me that Percy has studied the sonnet

form enough to accomplish her own approach to it. It is an intelligent approach to this Italian

style, which originally dealt with formal themes. We are left wondering if the sensuousness of

composing is indeed formal, yet the free verse approach suggests otherwise.</p><p> <p>

<p>Percy operates within a free verse which allows her to deal with various themes both formal

such as the beautiful <em><strong>All Shall Be Well And All Manner Of Things Shall Be

Well</strong> </em>(St Julian of Norwich) and the informal <strong><em>When I Am

Freewheeling, Lost</em></strong>.</p><p> <p> <p>I think that these two poems illustrate,

well, Percy♦s craftsmanship. The opening lines of the first poem: ♦You have new

neighbours,/a whole family at you feet since I last visited,♦ is a really delightful opening. The

dominance of the higher pitched vowels gives the lines a feeling of infantile excitement. What

follows is a journey through the emotional scale: ♦I won♦t kneel and cry♦, ♦yet always an

exuberance of growth/even this late♦ to the beautiful (and despairing) closing stanza:</p>

<blockquote><p>My left hand is still sensing your stone<br /> how I clasped it quieting my

sobs  
trying to anchor myself,  
anchor you,  
communicate my need for a monument,  
feeling the granite will float like dandelion seeds.

There is so much control in this stanza; it reminds me of Plath in the way that each line is so well measured, as to take to that very emotion, hanging there like dandelion seeds.

**When I Am Freewheeling, Lost** has a rather freer feel to it: ♦ I stalk the country lanes of my youth/always dream them even darker♦. Again we are to be taken on a journey. This poem is descriptive in its approach and what it is describing is fear (♦ a girl alone at night/discordant sound/shriek of birds♦). But again, Percy keeps everything together well, even a moment of humour: ♦ hands clasping handlebars/the only thing I have a handle on♦. The poem ends in a similar manner to ♦ All Shall Be Well And All Manner Of Things Shall Be Well♦:

and all I can think of is that damp growth smell of grass and moss and cow parsley  
night scent of freedom and terror.

Again skilfully measured lines to allow the reader to feel what the poet is describing. There is something generous about such an approach. The poet is allowing the reader to share an experience rather than read the lines and that ♦s it.

And that sense runs throughout this volume. Percy understands what a poem should do: it should engage the reader/listener. There is no sense of distancing between the poet and the audience in these poems; no feeling of exhibitionism. The poems are not written as much as crafted and that is sadly a rare thing these days, to find poets who take the art seriously. There are good poets out there, who know their craft; who work at it and who go to open mic nights to get their work known.

Then there are the exhibitionists; who think that all you have to do is shout loud enough, preferably with a required amount of expletives, about the latest government policy and how much they hate the Tories and they will be applauded, because they are saying what the audience already knows. They will get the pats on the back and have their egos massaged. Then there are those who treat the open mic night as a counselling session. Equally egotistical, their raison d'être seeking pity or some other such emotion from the audience.

But the real poet; the real artist, will want to bring something to the audience that challenges them; that provokes them to think. Something that will take them out of their everyday lives and transport them to another place. They will not ask for anything for themselves because it is the poem that is the important thing. There are a few of those out there. From this excellent collection, one can sense that Anna Perry is such a poet.

**Livid Among The Ghostings** is available to buy from Cornerhouse, to order through most bookshops and available direct from the publisher at [http://www.flapjackpress.co.uk/page12.htm](http://www.flapjackpress.co.uk/page12.htm "Livid Among The Ghostings by Anna Percy").