

Partly in Riga

Also by Ian Davidson

Poetry

Into Thick Hair (Wild Honey, 2010)

Familiarity Breeds (Oystercatcher Press, 2008)

As if Only (Shearsman Books, 2007)

Dark Wires (with Zoe Skoulding) (West House Books, 2007)

No Way Back (West House Books, 2005)

At a Stretch (Shearsman Books, 2004)

Harsh (Spectacular Diseases, 2003)

Human Remains & Sudden Movements (West House Books, 2003)

Human to Begin With (Poetical Histories, 1991)

The Patrick Poems (Amra Imprint, 1991)

No Passage Landward (Open Township, 1989)

It Is Now as It Was Then (with John Muckle) (Mica Press/Actual Size, 1983)

Critical

Radical Spaces of Poetry (Palgrave Macmillan, 2010)

Ideas of Space in Contemporary Poetry (Palgrave Macmillan, 2007)

IAN DAVIDSON

Partly in Riga
and other poems

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CONTENTS

Partly in Riga

Dirty Money — The Riga Museum	11
Country Girl	12
Mass Graves	13
Café Cuba	14
Sunday Morning	15
Rumbula and Salaspils	18
Skulte and Saulkrasti	20
Occupation and Pre-Occupation	21
The Shopping Trip	27
Dear Diary	30

Wear and Tear

Wear and Tear	35
Hind Waters Breaking	37
The fuzzy world of felt	39
More morphine	40
A Mad Friday	41
Place of Birth — Theatre	42
Pods and Capsules	44
Roll Over	45
Brand me with hot irons	47
Poem about a dolphin	48

Partly Local

Cave Dwelling	51
Open and Shut	53
Don't fence me in	54
Ways around the Lļņn	55
Mother Fucker	56
Chalk Dust	62
Nasty Cough	64

Poor Relations

Poems through the politics of familiarity and poverty

No Go Areas	69
Count to ten	71
Stage Whisperer	73
Bird Call	74
Scared of Letting Go of Letting Go	75
Familiarity Breeds 1	77
Familiarity Breeds 2	78
the projectionist's tale	80
Fingers and Thumbs	82
Beach Head	83
Remarkable	85
Norfolk	88
Blackwater	90
Thick with History	92

The People Poems

Standing watching	95
He moved mountains	96
People 5	97
Trauma Unit	98
On a Station	99
People 8	100
The Day the Hell's Angels Came to Brightlingsea	101
Shop Talk	103
An announcement	104
People Again	105
The Scale of Love	106

This book is for Robert, Brendan and Gruffydd

PARTLY IN RIGA

Dirty Money — The Riga Museum

On the shores of Doles island the reindeer hunters
their situated pursuits; fishing, hunting, things
they can touch before the abstraction of coinage

and its brutal control by enforced amputation.
The scales that calculated the weight of
every crime that gets between teeth, scales

falling from my eyes. The insides of an animal,
the liver of a fish, is cleaner than
dirty money passed from hand to hand.

Failures of the Christian missionaries brought crusaders.
The same the world over, rock and a hard place, devil or

deep blue sea, Russia or Germany. Madonna on a
crescent moon waning the national awakening

Country Girl

Liquid cement poured down the gullet of a country girl
foaming at the mouth every opening stopped.
not knowing if she's coming or going. The violence
of the sex industry overlaid by a salacious aesthetic
concealing the enforced immigration of people not
even carrying their own passports.
The helplines are for the hopeless.
Get a gun.

Mass Graves

Nothing can prepare you for stumbling over mass graves. Between the birches, pines and rowans their raised lips indicators of the tumbled bodies falling from the crumbling edge into history. The shame of collaboration, of not being responsible of losing yourself to the system and giving it all up to the moment when the penetration of flesh is a simple response to an acculturated impulse of obeying orders.

Café Cuba

and I can only dream of moments and in retrospect
(the implications of our actions)
and the soft sound of the trainers on the street
(the waiting and the waiting for the end)
and no future left in Riga and the little that is past
(the flower pointing downward is a rose)
and it is tense in Café Cuba owing nothing
(and to no-one I was partly)
left in Riga with mojitos and the roses
(and a photograph of Castro on the wall)
the confusing science and rods of reinforcing
(and the obvious broken surface)
isolation in the moments I've left over
(and in the little time that's left for going)

Sunday Morning

Practising Rigan as
both a set of nouns and a method
of articulation he walked around
the place, from the parks that

encircle the old town
to the cobbled streets and the
docklands stacked with coal.
The thing with being strategically

positioned is everyone wants your
position. They all want to see the world
as you do. A tunnel opens out as a
system to be broken into at any point.

Waking early hearing a city
breathing. A blacked out Mercedes
slows down and then draws off quickly.

A cigarette arcs from an open window
lands on the pavement. A car alarm goes off.
It is Sunday although in Riga cloud cover is

intermittent. Someone is speaking Maltese on a
mobile phone. At the point of maximum curve,
stress fractures appear, points at which the

material begins to break up. Barriers tumble, one
by one; the early cigarette emotions barely in check
I could barely contain myself heart beating hard

half on the long sofa. Intellectual bullshit you smiled,
life is so much easier and harder than that and it's knowing
who you care about and where to put them in the story.

It looks like I can walk on water. Fuck it. These are hard
nights and days the split between mind and body is so
painful and to put emotions into a system as abstract as

language is too difficult. How arms so thin can even turn the
steering wheel, ankles support a body on twisting
stilettos. She ties back her hair, brushing it up from the nape

of her neck, squinting slightly into the car mirror. I could
ride the river rather than clinging to a rock as it rushes past.
With the tips of her fingers she smooths cream

into her face goes to work expertly with eye liner.
It is a serious business, stopping to fix
your make up in Riga, and it is a serious matter to

sit in the margins and watch the street flow past.
Being a writer and bringing up a family
prepares you for almost anything. A foreign

city can feel much like home behind
closed doors and vice versa. We made
plans. They never came to fulfilment. My

self reflected and apparently tiny
beside the square jawed dummies
in their finery and with ivory fingers

that curve around my neck in a caress
that threatens the simple fact of the body
and relative prosperity kept at the

edge of consciousness. This was a
day job that was never enough. The politics
of the dress code and language that avoids the easy

flow of syntactical structure, alliteration, the coming
and going of punctuation. When words never mean
half of what they say and small hands clutch at something

passing by. You know the situation, a stand off between the
instant and its consequences. I sit and wait for some
time alone anticipating dialogue and its suggestive synthesis.

Voices, eyes glancing off the walls.