

# Scottish Child

Aug/Sept 1993

£1.95

## GRASPING THE THISTLE

Scots, racism and history

**VICTIMS NO LONGER**

**Men speaking out about abuse**

**KIDS ON FILM**

**Photography in the community**

**ADOPTION**

**Surviving five!**

ISSN 0950-4176



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# SNAP!

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# *shifting the balance*

**PEOPLE, POWER & PARTICIPATION**



**A SEAD  
CONFERENCE  
ON HOW TO  
MAKE  
DEMANDS ON  
DEMOCRACY**

**FRIDAY 17th -  
SUNDAY 19th  
SEPTEMBER 1993  
POLLOCK HALLS  
EDINBURGH**

## **KEYNOTE SPEAKERS:**

Linda Gray,  
Director, Sead.  
Judith Gillespie,  
Parents' Coalition.  
Angelica Brown,  
Bilingual Bicultural  
Programme, Nicaragua.

With international  
guest contributors  
from South Africa,  
The Philippines,  
Nicaragua, Ireland,  
Portugal and the  
Georgian Republic.

## **WORKSHOPS**

## **CRECHE**

CONTACT **LESLEY NOCK**,  
CONFERENCE ORGANISER:-

**sead**

SCOTTISH EDUCATION AND  
ACTION FOR DEVELOPMENT

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Scottish Child is a non-profit making co-operative involved in publishing, training and event organisation that promotes an understanding of the importance of children and childhood in society

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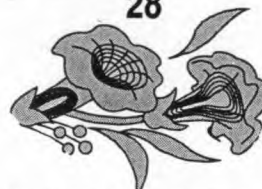
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## **PABLO NERUDA WEEKEND**

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Friday 17th - Readings and Music  
**7 - 10pm £2.50 (£1 concession)**

Bar & Raffle

Saturday 18th - Talks and Bookstalls

**12 - 5pm Free**

Creche & Cafe

Saturday 18th - Readings and Music

**7 - 11pm £2.50 (£1 concession)**

Bar & Raffle

### **Readers**

Edwin Morgan

Agnes Owen

Jim Kelman

Margaret Cook

Jim Ferguson

Janet Paisley

Bobby Christie

Karen Thompson

Tom Leonard

Margaret McQuade McAuslan

Tony Palumbo

### **Readings of Neruda's Work**

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## **British Association for the Study and Prevention of Child Abuse and Neglect**

### **Disability and Child Abuse -Acts of Omission**

Study Day at Ninewells Hospital, Dundee  
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The purpose of the day will be to study the  
links between disability and child abuse. To  
what extent can one lead to the other through  
acts of omission and neglect?

Cost: BASPCAN members £18.00, Non-  
members £27.50. Lunch is available for an  
additional £8.00

For further information please contact: BASPCAN  
Scottish Branch, c/o Education Support Services,  
St. Joseph's Primary School, Bellfield Street,  
DUNDEE DD1 5HX, or telephone: 0382-22105





Thomas O'Donnell

## Putting Our Own House In Order

More than a year ago Jean Raeburn wrote the following in *Scottish Child*: "Scotland today is a disappointed nation, uncertain of its identity, often relying on regrets, recriminations and resentments to rally itself. There can be a reluctance to acknowledge bitter truths. We blame others more than we are able to blame ourselves. This projection of national resentment is sometimes properly based on fact but often it is a self-denying fantasy."

She wrote also of the problem Scots have in hearing criticism from 'outsiders', particularly if they come from south of the border: "The Scots are well accustomed to wag the finger at themselves - they have little need of anyone else to do it for them. Should a *stranger*, a non-Scot, attempt an analysis of the Scots, the personal element will become subsumed in a collective defence of patriotism, national prejudices and the desire to maintain the old myths. The Scots *are* their own history, a history kept alive like a flame by a nation of guardians who, all too often, are consumed by it." (*Scottish Child*, December 1991/January 1992)

So how will Marcia Spencer's tough talking in this issue about Scottish attitudes to racism be taken? Some readers may still want to dismiss her comments as showing too little understanding of Scotland's burdened history. Accusations of 'complacency' miss the point entirely. The problem is, as the poet Edwin Muir expresses it that -

"This is a difficult land. Here things miscarry  
Whether we care, or do not care enough...  
Sun, rain, and frost alike conspire against us:  
You'd think there was a malice in the very air..."

Looking for ways out of this sense that everything - even the weather - is a hostile force, we could do worse than spend time reading Mike Lew's book, *Victims No Longer*. Raymy Boyle

makes it the core of his article in this issue. Lew's account of work with male survivors of sexual abuse is so imbued with the belief in the possibility of change and recovery that you are led to wonder how it might be possible to take this kind of learning which an individual can do for him or herself and apply it more widely?

There is a good deal in *Victims No Longer* that is relevant to an understanding of Scotland's present condition as well as to the problems of the male survivor of abuse. Take for example Lew's observations about the isolating (for Scotland read 'divisive'), effect of abuse or his advice about letting go of attitudes and strategies that may once have been helpful but are now counter-productive, holding the victim back from growth and wellbeing.

Some might feel that a book like *Victims No Longer* could never have been written in Scotland because it exemplifies just that belief in being able to take control of one's history and move on from it which Scots can't or won't allow themselves to have. And many might reasonably argue that changing national attitudes is not simply a matter of 'scaling up' a therapeutic approach to individual abuse.

It may be worth a try however, since the alternative, seems to be to swing forever between the extremes of self-hate and self-congratulation: a Scotland polarised between east and west, north and south, catholicism and protestantism, male and female, rich and poor and, increasingly, black and white - and all the other dualities which afflict this nation.

We have to begin to tackle these splits. Out there is a world which is equally riven with horrific divisions and conflict. What part has Scotland got to play in it? And how can Scotland play any part at all unless it starts to put its own house in order?

## Food for Thought

### PRISONS

A car drew alongside me as I took the air with a fellow prisoner. The **Scottish Child** editor, was at the wheel. The window was rolled down, "George, can you write up a short report on the **Scottish Child** conference for the next issue of the magazine? It would be better if it was written by a prisoner." I noticed the engine was still running. So the first instance of kerb-crawling in a Scottish prison was recorded.

The conference on **The Imprisoned Family**, took place at the end of May, well before the recent riot in Shotts, although reference was made more than once to the kinds of problems, such as family visits, which prompted the latest crisis there. Everyone on the staff already knows where the flash points in the prison system are, they just seem reluctant to deal with them other than in traditional ways. Having said that however, there was a good turnout of middle management from the prison service at this event as well as lots of other representatives from statutory and voluntary agencies.

Having attended similar gatherings many years ago in 'another life', as a social worker, it was gratifying not to see a clutch of conference 'groupies', that odd breed who survive on a diet of closely-typed handouts and rubber chicken from the standard buffet. As always, though, it was easy to spot the select band of prisoners permitted to attend. They were all impeccably dressed.

What can you extract from the vast array of topics that were aired over the course of the day? One suggestion made was that imprisoned fathers should be allowed to have time with their children in a clearly designated area of the prison. Such a set-up already operates for women prisoners in Compton Vale. My own initial reaction was one of scepticism but perhaps, on reflection, it could work. It would certainly tie in with the sentiments of **Opportunity and Responsibility**, the prison service report which drew the most sustained examination from Joe McGrath, a main speaker and, like me, a 'customer' (to use the current jargon), from Noranside.

Joe talked about imprisonment leading to the fragmentation of the family and how the system strips the prisoner of 'identity, personality and individuality'. Families and prisoners serve different types of sentence during a period of incarceration. Families may be stigmatised by friends, relatives and the local community. They may be stripped of the social contact that could give them the identity and strength to face this traumatic experience. Some social and psychological difficulties are predictable and, perhaps, preventable. Others are more specific and unique to each group of individuals we call 'a family'. Why do some families internalise the grief and loss experienced by the removal of a significant adult and others act out their frustrations in destructive fashion?

One possible approach to the

needs of families in prison may be, as Jean Raeburn suggested, to put the needs of children at the centre of visiting arrangements - in practical terms to create a layout in a large room where children can move easily between a play area and the area where the mother and father are sitting; to make it possible and permissible for the prisoner to intervene *as a parent* if the child is in difficulty, without having to leave the direct parenting role entirely to the adult visitor.

Silvia Casale raised the question which leads on directly from these observations: when shall we finally have a nationally agreed code of standards for all prison visiting in Scotland?

Could this be a chance for **Opportunity and Responsibility** to show what it can deliver for the imprisoned family? Prisons now say their aim is to re-educate prisoners to accept responsibility for their crime, their sentence and themselves. Conference consensus appeared to highlight the importance of what is happening outside, as well as inside prisons. Long-term prisoners may survive by eventually divorcing themselves from outside concerns. Problems of acceptance and reintegration suddenly re-emerge when liberation looms. Freedom brings its own fears. By focusing mainly on the prisoner the prison service has aimed low and missed. Focus should be on the needs of the whole family.

Better quality visiting for families and more fruitful contact between fathers and children - already to some extent

acknowledged as important for women prisoners - would give men a chance to appreciate and learn the responsibilities and the pleasures of the parenting role. It could be the first occasion for a man to step outside repressive cultural norms that imprison families in patriarchal attitudes and values - norms that dictate women's place as 'at home with the weans' and men's as at work (or in the nick).

It's an old truth about which little is done so far, that no-one is trained to perform that most crucial job of all: parenting. If the conference clarified anything at all it is the importance of that role. Prisoners could and should be encouraged and educated in areas of primary care where basic needs are recognised and responded to from a base of knowledge and awareness. Fresh insights have valuable effects beyond the original remit. What benefits accrue in terms of improved prisoner and family esteem, family-bonding, institutional stability and eventual citizenship can only be guessed at.

It was a tiring day - always a good sign for these sitting-around-thinking type days. Sadly it ended on a black note as I spotted Dr Coyle scurry away with a carrier bag full of chicken drumsticks and an unknown catering person packing up the only remaining slice of Black Forest gâteau. I contented myself with a morsel of cheese lying under a table. Still, as they say, robbers can't be choosers.

George Chalmers



The Scotsman 13 July 1993





## Hotter than July

### MUSIC AND DISABILITY

It was the hottest day of June this year. The place? Glasgow, though to listen to the music you might never have believed it.

Downtown Rio in the Mardi Gras season - that's what it sounded like, as the music swelled out and the rhythm lifted your feet from the floor.

We were at the Royal Scottish Academy of Music and Drama and the occasion was a concert of music: percussion and composition by a group of adults with special needs and their fellow musicians, students from the Royal Scottish Academy.

The mood changed through the day, starting with the Wild West and switching to a gentler, personal note with a composition called *The Dream*, played by Greg, one of the group's guitarists.

Different ways of creating music are used in the two groups. The composition group creates work by singing or humming a particular musical phrase and slowly building it into a completed work. Some of the group members have written their own songs and guitar pieces, poignantly expressive compositions which touched the heart.

And this is how it was after lunch, when the second session got underway - a jam session, with the group using drums, whistles, and a vast array of

percussion instruments, to create a deep pounding samba rhythm. That was laid down first of all by the Academy students and then built on in turn by the members of the group. The big, beautiful, loud noise came bursting from the stage and we were in it too - lifted out of the concert hall by the strength of the sound, the insistence of the beat, joining in the carnival atmosphere, shakers or drums in hand.

The concert, the culmination of two years work by the students with Artlink clients, was held before an invited audience. Lucky us - we were seeing and hearing what music-making is really all about: the chance for people of all levels of ability to

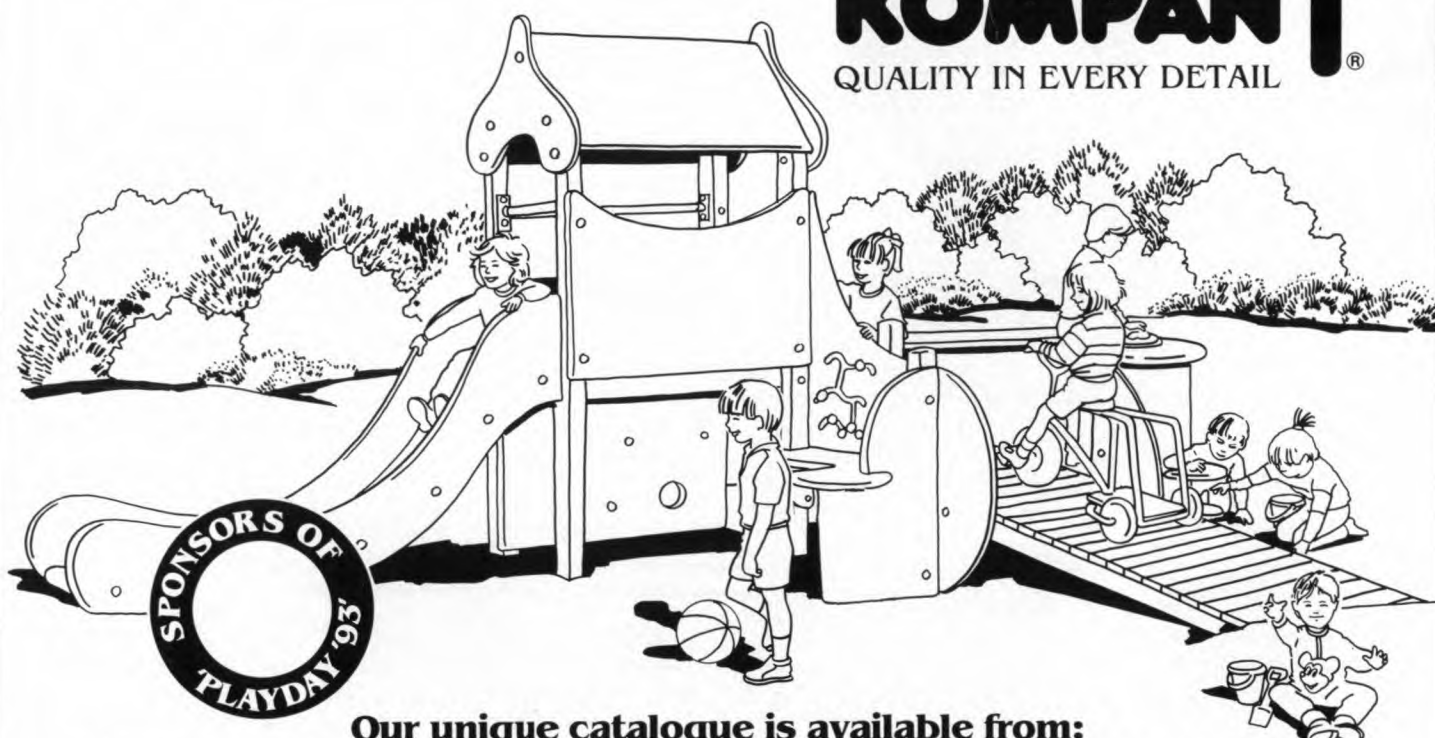
express themselves other than through words and to do so within the safety of a group. Not that the therapeutic benefits were being touted openly - it was simply plain for all to see the enjoyment everyone was having in this performance and in the knowledge that music can be made in all sorts of settings with all sorts of people and it can give the player as well as the listener a greater sense of personal achievement, greater confidence in social gatherings, in coordination, in self-awareness - in all the things which go to make us feel fully participating members of society.

**Steven Bell**

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**SCOTTISH  
CHILD MINDING  
ASSOCIATION**

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**Aberdeen Conference and Exhibition Centre**  
**Bridge of Don, Aberdeen.**  
**£35.00**

The theme of this years conference is Equal Opportunities.  
DETAILS AND BOOKING FORMS FROM: Room 15, Stirling  
Business Centre, Stirling FK8 2DZ. Tel: 0786 445377



## Practising Democracy

### CONFERENCE

Have you ever caught yourself shaking your head when politicians talk about defending our great democracy? Or despaired at hearing expert views propounded about matters the experts know little of?

If so perhaps you should look out for the conference being run by SEAD (Scottish Education and Action for Development) over the weekend September 17-19th. Titled **Shifting the Balance, People Power and Participation**, it aims to tackle the problem of exclusion from the democratic process, and the feeling that more often than not people are living with decisions taken by those who don't share their experiences.

The aim of the conference is avowedly practical, and is intended to help people discover how to make demands on democracy. As Linda Gray, director of SEAD, points out you have a choice of two tactics. "The first is to look at what you have at the moment, identifying windows of opportunity, spaces where you can have influence, obstacles which can be broken down now. Secondly you can determine areas where the structure is wrong, identifying where more fundamental change needs to be made before you can progress."

The idea is that each participant can come away from the weekend with an agenda for action. "People

know what priorities are, know what the problems are, often they know the solutions too," says Linda: "We want people to make a commitment at the conference to do something."

What makes SEAD's work unique is relating it to the experience of people in the third world. The principle behind much of their work is that of networking and the value of shared experience, "something we in this country are very poor at", Linda says. "There is a common idea that we in the 'developed world' have everything to teach and nothing to learn. It is simply not the case."

An example is Angelica Brown, one of the speakers, who is from the Atlantic Coast of Nicaragua. She has been involved in groups lobbying their government over the separate identity of Nicaraguans living on the coast. They have achieved the introduction of an autonomy law and the setting up of a bilingual, bicultural programme to enable the people on the Atlantic Coast to speak Miskito, an Indian dialect, or English in schools rather than the dominant Spanish.

There may be lessons to be learned in terms of Scotland's relationship with England there, Linda feels, but she adds "Angelica is now running workshops for people to help them to elect better leaders - how can you get somebody who really will represent your

interests?" There can be little doubt that input in these terms is badly needed in Britain today!

The conference will focus on groups who are particularly excluded from the process of democracy - those living in poverty, and women. Last year's SEAD conference was directly about women, but this has been found to be counterproductive: "If you say something is going to focus on women, those who are involved in decision-making, usually men, don't come. The conference will be about everybody but using the experience of women as a reference point."

Most of the speakers and workshop leaders will be women, simply in an attempt to redress the imbalance of most conference platforms where the dominating influence is the male politician.

There will be a wide range of participants, with community groups, tenants groups and people who are involved in single-issue campaigns, who will be able to share experiences.

SEAD is working particularly hard to get people from the extreme ends of the power spectrum to come along. Those who are perhaps most completely powerless, the homeless, are rarely represented at events like this for obvious reasons such as lack of money, or the fact that they don't have an address for details to be posted to. Those who are in positions of power,

councillors and MP's, tend to think they are only being invited to be shot down.

That is not meant to be the case, though, says Linda, "it is important that people appreciate the frustrations that exist for MP's and councillors. It is often the structure that is wrong."

The structure of the conference itself will be novel - people will be placed in base groups, and given a task to accomplish. The base group determines what resources and skills they need to achieve it. They then decide which members to send to which workshops to learn and feed back into the collective knowledge. This provides the scope for development of a sense of belonging and skill in building alliances.

The potential is there for a fascinating event. Whether it will live up to its promise remains to be seen - as Linda accepts - "it is not unambitious".

The best case would be an event giving people renewed strength for the struggle and positive ideas for action. "When people meet third world activists they are often ashamed of themselves, and say things like, 'We complain because we can't get money out of the council, but this woman fled the country because of death squads, and she's still going back.' They go away inspired."

Stephen Naysmith



Douglas Robertson

## IN BRIEF

Sparky, the Disability Awareness Project, have produced a **play resource pack** designed to help people who run play groups catering for both able-bodied and disabled children. The Sparky project workers have drawn on ten years of experience in the field of integrated play and their hope is that the pack will spread their message even wider among all kinds of groups about the importance of equal opportunities for all children. The pack costs £10.95 and is available from Sparky, Unit 5A4, Templeton Business Centre, Bridgeton, Glasgow G40 1DA. As a bonus Sparky will also provide a twice-yearly *free* update of training and activity materials for the first eighteen months after the initial purchase.

●

The Bernard Van Leer Foundation, based in Holland, has funded a number of local initiatives in Scotland particularly in the field of early education and care for disadvantaged young children. Now it's putting some money into a new **networking** venture: The Scottish Network-Family Policy Resources Unit. The Network has formed a partnership with the Department of Social Sciences at Glasgow Caledonian University to assess the effectiveness of the work of the Van Leer Foundation Projects and

to give a fresh impetus to the whole concept of networking in Scotland.

It could be argued that what's needed in Scotland is not yet another agency *looking at* how services are delivered and whether they're effective but simply more services in the first place. That said, **Scottish Child** wishes the fledgling project well and hopes that it will be received in a spirit of openness and cooperation by those organisations which may feel that its arrival could suggest a doubt about their own contribution to monitoring and publicising the development of services to young disadvantaged children.

●

Having charted the misfortunes of the Training and Development Project at Lothian Play Forum it is good to be able to relate that something positive has come out of its demise. The TASC Agency has been set up by two workers from the former project, Cathy McCulloch and Colin Morrison, to provide **training**, advice, support and consultancy to individuals and groups in Scotland.

Between them they have twenty years of experience in work with pre-school and school age children, adult education and community education and a wealth of knowledge about training, networking and sharing skills.

They are not placing limits on what they will tackle, although they suggest that they could provide support with issues such

as managing workloads, dealing with bullying, coping with stress and challenging stereotypes connected to race, gender, disability and sexuality.

Any individuals or organisations wanting to find out more can contact Cathy or Colin for an informal chat on 031-555 3527.

●

The **Federation of Children's Book Groups** is holding its annual conference in Edinburgh next year. It is to be called Bridges and Barriers and will examine the factors which make childrens' books internationally successful.

What makes a good translation? How are books viewed in other countries? What are the cultural and commercial barriers? The speakers include Joan Lingard, whose books about Northern Ireland reach a much wider audience, Anthea Bell who has worked on the tricky task of translating Asterix books, among other things.

The conference takes place at Heriot Watt University on 25th-27th March 1994. Further details from Rowena Knox, 17 West Savile Terrace, Edinburgh or phone 031-667-4500.

●

A new journal for the swelling band of academics who make a living out of the children's rights industry, is making its appearance this year. Entitled **The International**



**Letterbox Library**, the co-operative children's book club specialising in anti-sexist, anti-racist and multicultural books is about to celebrate its 10th birthday.

For a decade now this women's co-operative has been riding into battle on behalf of children's books where princesses rescue princes, black faces are seen in the foreground and disabled characters turn out to be heroes and heroines too.

They produce a colourful

**Journal for Children's Rights**, it will be coming out quarterly, about a hundred pages of it every issue, and costing a mere 154 US dollars (about £80 sterling), per year. The stated purpose of the journal, from advance information, is to 'provide academic support to the worldwide movement for the recognition, analysis and implementation of children's rights, particularly in the light of the UN Convention.'

Scotland, you'll be glad to hear, has a representative on the advisory editorial board. It's Professor Stewart Asquith at the Centre for the Study of the Child and Society at Glasgow University. Perhaps Professor Asquith can pass on a few back





quarterly catalogue which often has a theme such as the recent 'green' list and the forthcoming South Africa edition. The catalogue is also a forum for debate with readers letters and news pages at the back.

Having proved conclusively that there is a demand for alternative views and positive images of minorities, Letterbox have also managed to side-step the trap of being politically correct for the sake of it, promoting only readable,

well-illustrated books. In addition Letterbox were among the first to list books which deal with complicated issues affecting children, such as death, bullying and divorce.

In the process they have expanded from two women working at home to a 10 strong part-time staff and a large membership. As a growing co-operative pretty proud to be close to our fifth birthday ourselves, Scottish Child says congratulations, and good luck, to Letterbox!

issues to those of us here who haven't got the odd £80 to spare to keep in touch with what the 'experts' are saying to each other about children's rights these days?

●

For the first time this year many Scottish District Councils are taking part in celebrating **National Playday** on Wednesday 11th of August as a means of drawing attention to the child's right to play freely and safely and also as a way to promote play services.

The day is sponsored by play equipment manufacturers Kompan and this year's theme is 'Safe Neighbourhood Play' or as they

put it more bluntly in Kilmarnock and Loudoun: 'Kids Not Cars'. Promoted by The Association for Fair Play for Children in Scotland it is hoped that not only will children enjoy the exciting activities on the day but will feel the benefit in the longer term of the emphasis put on their needs. There are impressively imaginative programmes so if you're near Glasgow Green, Howard Park in Kilmarnock, Carlisle Recreation Centre, Leighdykes Playing Fields in Saltcoats, Raploch in Stirling, Motherwell or Dunfermline you can join in the bungee running, gladiator jousting, dinosaur treasure hunts, circus workshops, den building and African dancing. Well it certainly beats saying 'Go play in the traffic!'

# 未濟

## Siobhon

So this little one  
won't ever  
walk or talk  
win school prizes or  
be the belle of the ball  
in fact this little one  
won't ever amount  
to very much at all.

What a shock  
that must have been  
what a waste, what a pity  
what a shame  
but pointless really  
this talk of blame  
when it's a chance you know  
we all must take  
if we're vain enough  
to procreate.

Yet this little one  
with the pretty name  
is unique. See her laugh  
and smile as she plays  
her game, hold her close  
feel the heart that beats  
within her fragile frame  
know her moods, meet  
her needs and though  
there will be pain  
love her, love her dearly  
for she is quite beautiful.

Margaret McQuade McAuslan

This is the complete version of a poem which appeared in the June/July 1993 issue.





# from small beginnings

**Raymy Boyle** reviews **Victims No Longer** and asks why the sexual abuse of boys has so far received so little attention in Scotland.

"Until recently there was little support for survivors of sexual abuse and little information or understanding was offered. Finally the problems began to be brought out in the open. Women began to talk about their abuse, books were written and we began to learn how to heal. But even then men's needs were rarely addressed..."

So states Ellen Bass in her foreword to **Victims No Longer**, a book which takes on the responsibility of opening our eyes to how incest and sexual abuse affect boys and men and how recovery and healing can be theirs. Despite the growth of awareness of the problem of abuse, we seem to have skilfully avoided acknowledging the fact that men too have been victims, are victims. Why, as Ellen Bass says, have men's needs not been acknowledged when so much has begun to be achieved by female survivors? What differences are there between the abuse of girls and the abuse of boys?

Mike Lew, the author of this outstanding book, begins by reviewing with us once again, the differences in the cultural conditioning of men and women. A male survivor perceives abuse in the context of being a man in a particular society which imposes particular cultural norms on men as a group. Lew acknowledges men's

deep debt to the women's movement which was so successful in dragging the problem of sexual abuse out into the open. He notes though that, despite an increased willingness to explore what it means to be a man - the gradual establishment of men's support groups, and the emergence, in the media at least, of the 'new man' - we are still living in an age where, from birth, very different expectations are placed on men and women.

## Being a 'Real' Man

Both sexes are constantly bombarded as children about how they should be. For boys and men, this doesn't include being open about feelings in general and about fears and vulnerability in particular. In a chapter entitled **Messages about Masculinity** he says the following:

"In one rather odd way, the distinctions between what we expect of men and women have added to the difficulties of male survivors. Since women are expected to be passive, weaker, powerless beings, there is room for sympathy when they are victimized. Again this does not mean that female victims have an easier time of it. (On the contrary, the very acceptance of victimization of women perpetuates abuse and

inhibits their recovery.) But there is a particular focus of the problem that is faced only by men. It arises from the fact that our culture provides no room for a man as victim. Men are simply not supposed to be victimized. A 'real' man is expected to be able to protect himself in any situation. He is also supposed to be able to solve any problem and recover from any setback. When he experiences victimization, our culture expects him to be able to 'deal with it like a man'. Unfortunately, 'dealing with it like a man' usually translates as avenging the hurt, (preferably violently), and then forgetting about it - moving on. When he cannot - or is unwilling to - resort to this mode of problem-solving, he is called a coward and scorned as unmanly. As much as we are aware of the lack of logic in this sort of macho thinking, it is the rare individual who hasn't unconsciously internalized these attitudes to some degree. A male survivor may know that violent revenge would be a dangerous response to his situation but still feel a weakling for not resorting to it. Men are also supposed to be in control of their feelings at all times. The survivor's ongoing feelings of confusion, frustration, anger and fear can become further evidence of his failings as a man."

In this culture of ours therefore, where men

# First Announcement from BASPCAN

British Association for the Study and Prevention of Child Abuse and Neglect  
10 Priory Street, York, YO1 1EZ, England  
Tel: 0904-613605 Fax: 0904-642239

## Second National Congress Theme "WORKING IN PARTNERSHIP"

5-8 JULY 1994 Bristol University

The aim of the congress is to explore, promote and develop good practice in the area of 'partnership' in child protection. It will focus on practice and research developments and dilemmas in a wide range of partnerships which influence children and families. There will also be opportunities to explore political issues, corporate sponsorship and the relationship between statutory and voluntary agencies.

To be included on mailing list for further information and "Call for Abstracts" contact BASPCAN in York.  
**CLOSING DATE FOR ABSTRACTS 10 JANUARY 1994**

## SCOTTISH INSTITUTE OF HUMAN RELATIONS

### TRAINING IN THERAPEUTIC WORK WITH CHILDREN

#### COMMUNICATING WITH CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

This half day course, running over three academic terms is available to a wide range of professionals working with emotionally disturbed children and young people. The course is designed to help participants deepen their understanding of the children with whom they work. It has three components; a **Work Discussion Group** at which participants present their ongoing work; a **Young Child Observation Seminar** providing opportunities to think about personality development in the light of detailed observations of pre-school children in a group setting; a **Theory Seminar** which looks at child development from a psychoanalytical perspective.

Throughout the course emphasis will be placed on the impact on the workers of the children with whom they work and on the communications implicit in the behaviours described. Attention will also be paid to the context in which participants work.

The course is open to all disciplines working with children and young people. Membership is drawn from a wide range of disciplines thus allowing the exploration of a range of professional perspectives and how these contribute to the work of child care.

The course, based in **Glasgow** will run over three 10 week terms on **Wednesdays 9.15 a.m. - 12.30 p.m.** starting **October 1993** at a cost of **£525**. Applications to: Dr Jean Robinson, Scottish Institute of Human Relations, 21 Elmbank Street, Glasgow G2 4PE. Tel 041-204 3365

#### THERAPEUTIC SKILLS WITH CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

This modular course provides a psychodynamic orientation for professionals who are engaged in individual therapeutic work with children and young people and who can contribute clinical material for discussion.

The course aims to develop detailed observational skills on which psychotherapeutic work depends and to deepen understanding of the therapeutic process.

It is made up of 3 modules which may be taken simultaneously or independently. **Baby Observation** - This module extends over 2 years. It provides opportunities to study in detail the development of a child within a family setting. **Work Discussion** - This module offers opportunities for participants to present and discuss individual work with a child or young person. **Theory Seminar** - This module explores human growth and development from a psychoanalytic perspective. It may be followed by a second year on psychoanalytic theory.

Applicants should have at least 2 years experience in work related to the needs of children and young people.

The course takes place at the Scottish Institute of Human Relations in **Edinburgh** on **Thursdays** and runs over **three 10 week terms**. The next course begins in January 1994. Enquiries should be made to the S.I.H.R., 56 Albany Street, Edinburgh EH1 3QR. Tel: 031-556 0924.

**The Child Psychotherapy Trust in Scotland offers a limited number of Bursaries to help trainees where financial restraints might create severe obstacles to undertaking training.**



# A male survivor may know that violent revenge would be a dangerous response to his situation but still feel a weakling for not resorting to it

are taught to be in control, powerful, independent and successful, they are also conditioned to think this can only happen by suppressing their gentle, caring, nurturing qualities. A tradition of not discussing sensitive issues is passed on to each generation, with the stereotypes for men being reinforced by the opposite but equally restrictive stereotypes for women.

The showing of feelings that together signal 'weakness' is not an option for most boys and men. But that's not by any means all they are taught. They learn from an early age that *others* should also be discouraged from displaying such emotions - because showing feelings leads to negative results. Lew quotes the phrase 'stop that crying or I'll really give you something to cry for', apparently as well-used in the USA as it is in Scotland.

It doesn't matter that many individuals are now challenging these messages about how to be a 'proper' man or woman, the fact remains, as Lew points out, that they are as yet the dominant versions of man and womanhood in our culture - powerfully sustained in all parts of the media - and they are therefore still accepted as normal by the majority, including abuse victims.

Boys who are being sexually or otherwise abused, are likely therefore to be deeply unsure about their masculinity, as it has been culturally defined for them in the fine detail of their own lives and in the broader context of the world they see around them. The questioning they do of themselves takes a huge range of forms as this book reveals. One of Lew's great strengths as a therapist is his refusal to force the issues into neat little boxes. He does not present us with a 'ten-step' process to recovery which all survivors go through. Rather the reverse - he almost leaves the reader reeling at the diversity of how different men cope and come to terms with abuse. At one extreme men can become overtly promiscuous, relating the sexual aspect of abuse to the only way of gaining love and care, while at the other extreme men distance themselves from any form of intimacy, all intimacy being suspect and tainted with the original betrayal.

Their practical strategies for survival are in essence no different from those of abused women and girls. Women and girls respond to their abuse against a set of cultural expectations of what it is to be a 'good' woman. Male survivors share across a whole spectrum of responses the fact that they have all been subject to conforming messages about masculinity. No

matter how they cope with their abuse - through denial, distancing, forgetting, violence, anger, numbing, depression - whatever 'works' - it is in response to these messages.

## Sorting Out a Sexual Identity

Another major factor in identifying differences for male and female survivors is how the abuse affects sexuality. The act of abuse is an act of violence, of imposing power, rather than of sexual passion. Nevertheless it can still dramatically affect the victim's understanding of sex and sexuality. Most sexual abusers are men. If they are abusing girls, they are reinforcing heterosexual expectations. If the victim is male however, questions about his sexual orientation are raised. Lew says a good deal about these questions. For example,

"Heterosexual survivors wonder whether a victim can ever function successfully as a sexual partner to a woman - 'am I man enough?' For gay survivors the questions are, 'does this mean I'm gay?', 'Is this why I'm gay?', 'did this happen because I'm gay?'"

The tone of these questions point once more to the strength of cultural norms in our definitions of ourselves. Homophobic attitudes add to the shame and guilt which the male victim already feels because of the abuse. Lew responds to these concerns by stating,

"Abuse is probably not the cause of sexual orientation but it always leads the survivor to have confused feelings about his sexuality."

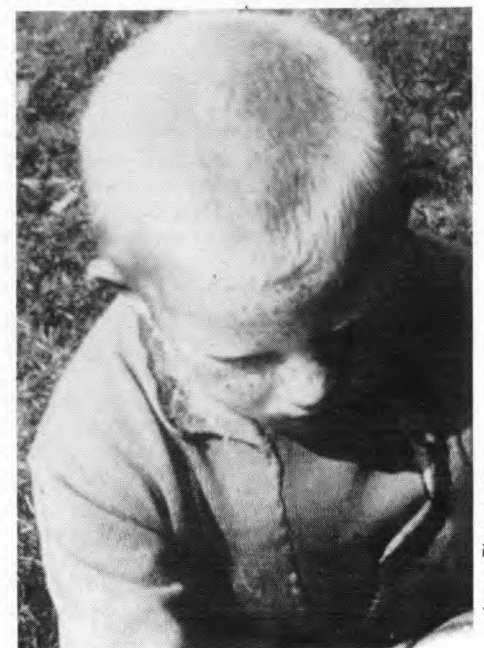
The strategies adopted by male survivors may leave many of them feeling hopelessly inferior about themselves, since they were so powerless to stop the abuse. On the other hand some men may strive to overcome those very feelings of powerlessness by attempting to have more power than anyone else in every area of their life, so that they will never be victims again. The difficulty with this is that the standards have been set too high and won't often be reached. Defeat is inevitable and with defeat will come inexorably that terrifying feeling of failure which the strategy was designed to prevent.

What is remarkable about the examination of each of these ways of coping is how non-judgemental Lew remains. On each and every occasion he reassures the survivor, whom he addresses directly and frequently throughout the book. The message is that whatever survivors have done up to this point is not to be added to

a catalogue of self-hate or self-recrimination. It takes time to reach the point where you can face what happened. Therefore techniques of denial, flight, striving - whatever they have been - need to be seen for what they were: the best way you could find of getting by at the time. The important thing is to be able to recognise when such techniques cease to be helpful crutches and become barriers, blocking the way to dealing with the abuse by facing it directly.

In talking about one such strategy, the technique of 'numbing' - freezing out feelings - Lew says the following,

"When a pattern of numbing of feelings is undertaken by a survivor as a strategy for surviving abuse, he may feel better for a while. Ultimately the behaviour gets out of control and causes more pain than it alleviates. At that point the survivor must add one more difficult part to his program - overcoming addiction. He must learn to live without numbing and experience the range of feelings necessary to recovery and to a healthy life. The way out of pain is *through* it. The survivor must find a safe and encouraging environment in which to experience his emotions, including the painful ones. In this setting he can gradually begin to let go of his numbing techniques and experience the reality of feelings - they are rich and wonderful and nobody ever died from having them."



Aenne Biermann

## Extract from Keith's Statement

I would be dead today if there were not people who thought that incest, sexual abuse and violence against children was a crime. I promised myself that, whatever else I wrote for this book, that statement would be the first thing I wrote. I write today to you, my brothers in suffering and in courage, so that you can know that another feels as you do. I want to give you the courage to feel what you know to be true - that a crime of violence was committed against you, an innocent.

...

Ours was not an easy struggle, taking place as it does at the most fundamental levels of human character. But remember this: if you

have been abused, you are already engaged in the struggle.

The core of our being was not destroyed by our abuse but the lengths we had to go to survive left us very vulnerable to life. To act in the world takes an innocence based on trust. The more completely we avoid fighting the battle to find the human beings we can trust and so begin to learn to trust our own judgments, feelings and thoughts to make sense of the world, the more completely our abusers will have robbed us of our innocence and the more guilty we will feel and act in a world that seems confusing, impenetrable and frightening.

...

I used to dream of the day when I would

not feel shame in my heart at the fact that I existed. I used to dream of the day when my shame at being a human with human needs that seemed so 'awful' would be dispelled by the love of others and my love for the life that flowed through me. I have always lived and died with my heart. I have always longed to be a man who would live and die with the truth of that heart. Today, I am becoming that man. Tomorrow, I hope to join you on the other side of our current struggle, where your voice and tender story of love and hope sound like the sweet protecting embrace and call to action that I hope my voice sounds to you.

I also promised myself that the last sentence I wrote would read: "And this goes for all the women too."

## Extracts from Frank's Statement

I found I had to admit that I had used a sense of mission to hide my own need. My own pain had driven me to more and more frantic acts of trying to help others. After years of 'sacrificing' myself at home and work, that was a tough pill to swallow.

Now I admitted I had pain. Now I would simply try to see what was going on when I hurt; before I tried to hide it. I had hidden my feelings from even myself for most of my life. Each admission seemed more terrible than the last. I had to admit that I was a people pleaser and that I had a terrible self-image. With each tearful victory came wonderful insights. As I adjusted to my new understanding, I would make wonderful gains in areas like self-confidence, fear of people, and embarrassment about memories from my childhood. I could know with certainty things about my life that I did not understand before. I found myself becoming much better at acting on my feelings and integrating them into my decisions and plans.

I did not discover these issues in a book or from other people. These issues rose inside me out of my own pain. I found that this is the journey of my life. The one I had looked for in fantasy. I have a life and it is mine. I know what it means to me and why. It is exciting. I am going places. It means something in the sweep of history if the abuse and obsession in my family that have been passed on for so many generations stops here with this generation.

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I have enjoyed a great deepening in my ability to be close with people. I learned to see more in people as I became friends with my own pain. ... Making the

room in my life to be close to other people has had many parts. Finding my feelings is one of them. Some others are: admitting my family of origin was not there for me allowed me the space and the reason to let others in. Admitting what had passed for love and closeness before in my life was not adequate allowed me to look for something else. Admitting I needed understanding allowed me to look for it.

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If you work really hard on yourself and give yourself a safe space with relaxed time to really look at yourself, the rewards are amazing. On my honeymoon I had such a space. My wife and I had this very special time to look at ourselves, so we read together, as was by now our habit, literature to help us explore ourselves. While reading *On the Way to the Wedding* by Linda Leonard, I came across a part about a woman who had been deeply hurt by the incest between her father and her sister. I had known about the incest between my father and my sister before I moved out of my parents' house. In spite of this I had never allowed myself to feel what it was like to have my sister abused by my father sexually and in so many other ways. For the first time I named as pain this upswelling of feelings I felt every time I tried to have sex. I saw why I came so soon, running from intimacy I was trying to find. The original examples of what maleness was to me were: drunkenness, violence and sexual abuse. Every time I made love I had to face feeling myself the abuser and the abused. Every time I tried to be intimate, a pain was triggered. I wept for my sister and myself. As I looked at my pain to see what it would tell me, I found something hard to admit to. The first memories were only the physical pain and from that an intuition

of what happened. Someone had raped me as a child and I knew who but was so afraid of it my throat closed so I could not speak it. My father.

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I have gained a lot from individual therapy. An interesting point is that I am often blocked by my inability to trust my therapist when we are alone together. Because of the nature of my abuse, one-on-one work in an unequal relationship is harder than in a small intimate group.

I used to work full time and more. I now work twenty to thirty hours a week. I go to a meeting or individual therapy three or four times a week. I want to get back to work. I want to have less pain and upheaval in my life. I try to be patient with my progress. I want this to end. An important part of my recovery is learning not to wait for my recovery to end so I can go back to my life. Sometimes I still think, soon this will all be over and I can forget it and live like before. But I have grown too much to go back to many of my old ways. ... I will have a different life. I told my parents, sisters and friends. I have changed so much. ... The realisations about myself are still painful and still come out about the same pace. They are still hard to admit, figure out and integrate into my life. I still say to myself after I come to understand something, "What else could I have to deal with? It must be over." Then I slam up against the next behavior of mine or remember something horrible or both. I believe God is giving me the pieces I need as I can deal with them. It is my journey and I pray for the strength to hang on to it.



## Learning from the Survivors Themselves

That extract is typical of the wise and hopeful message imparted by this book. Lew doesn't shrink from the difficulties faced by survivors in coming to terms with their abuse but he balances his assessment of those difficulties with a constantly reiterated belief in the possibility of recovery. It is possible, healing can take place and the person, however painful his past, will gain tremendous value from going through the process.

The lengthy statements made by survivors which feature throughout the book each in their own way act as a source of encouragement and support to the reader. People working with boys and men in any context, cannot fail to gain a great deal from reading what Lew has to tell us. As a man the book has challenged my own attitudes towards abuse, including the avoidance tactics used by so many men when faced with difficult or sensitive issues.

It has brought new understandings to my own work as a professional youth worker and raised questions in my mind as to how I respond to abuse in my work with young people. If, as the figures indicate, at least one person in ten has experienced some form of sexual abuse, we should be concerned that so little time is spent on the discussion of sexual abuse and sexuality in work with boys. Topics such as unemployment, HIV/AIDS and the environment are brought up regularly and confidently by workers. How do we explain the avoidance of an issue like sexuality which affects all of us in one way or another and those who've been abused in a particularly profound and damaging way?

The reasons, I would suggest, include a lack of agency and external support, not feeling 'qualified enough', not having experience or training, being somehow 'outside' the worker's remit or job description, the fear of 'doing more harm than good' - and even a lack of awareness, surprising though this may seem - of the extent of sexual abuse. Lew might well describe all of these in their different ways as examples of workers using techniques of distancing and denial. Sexual abuse is an uncomfortable topic to confront and the sexual abuse of boys and men carries all those additional problems arising out of the way men have been conditioned to avoid 'taboo subjects' which home in on feelings and intimacy.

No doubt Lew would also say that there is no need to castigate oneself for failing to engage with the problem. The recognition that there is a gap in what is offered to boys does not mean that everyone involved with youth work should immediately start trying to educate or counsel boys on sexual abuse. Nonetheless, for those interested and concerned, Mike Lew's message to survivors to persevere in their recovery process can also encourage those of us who work with boys who may be victims, to overcome our personal and professional blocks and in so doing make it easier for them to progress. Reading *Victims no Longer* is an excellent place to start. ■

**Victims No Longer**, Mike Lew, is published in America by HarperCollins. ISBN 0-06-097300-5. It can be reliably obtained from West and Wilde, 25a Dundas Street, Edinburgh EH3 6QQ, price £13.95.



# TAKING CONTROL





## Rona Sutherland talks about the abuse she suffered throughout her childhood and looks at how all the adults around her - parents, teachers, social workers and police - failed to protect her

I was an independent child but however independent children are, they still *need*. Only since the birth of my own child can I recognise and feel the overwhelming needs I had as a child - and to a lesser extent still have. And only very recently have I been able to admit to myself that my needs were legitimate. I've often wondered lately what the role of a parent really consists of and, if they fail in their part who is left to claim responsibility - social workers, teachers, police? - The 'authorities'?

I'm the youngest of five children who have each survived through the madness of our childhood into adulthood, but not without our own individual insecurities and problems! We seem to have managed everything from drug and drink problems to teenage pregnancy and HIV.

I'd like to introduce you to me, the twelve year-old child who first began as a pupil at the Royal High School in Edinburgh. As long as I can remember through my childhood I had from time to time woken feeling as if I was completely unable to move, paralysed by a kind of fear. Now I think it was all about feeling utterly insecure, having nothing organised, nothing safe, nothing normal. I felt lost. I knew that any movement would chase the feelings away but I felt paralysed. It was the only time I remember allowing myself to feel and the feeling was that everything was wrong - I was in the wrong body almost. Then I'd somehow break out of it, get moving again.

I kept moving all the time. At school I entertained people, I've always found silences difficult and got into minor trouble. I was nervous, jumpy, insecure, hyperactive and very vulnerable, although I was adaptable and a survivor! Kids with difficulties either draw into themselves and close off the world or they do the opposite, which is what I did.

My mother had been an alcoholic all of my life. It's always been so difficult to sway people's minds from the stereotyped image of the alcoholic who goes to the pub, spends all the money and is never home. The reality for me was very different. She did spend the money, leaving us struggling for food but she didn't go out. That was the big difference. She would stay in getting more and more drunk and sing, dance, cry, scream or fight with us. She would sleep in front of the fire and leave the cooker on and so caused a number of fires.

I could never bring anyone home and most of the time begged friends' parents to be allowed to stay over myself. I was just so frightened of what might be going on. Our house was chaos and I didn't want to be there. My mother was always the centre of the hysteria but she was by no means all of it.

My father worked away most of the time and we lived in fear of him coming home. My mother was always fighting with us but her violence seemed trivial compared to the absolute rage my father brought with him. He drinks too and although his violence was usually directed at my mother, we were often hurt trying to protect her. I could never adequately convey to you the complete terror of being in a home where the

very people you love and need are not only failing to protect you but are in total hysteria - and there are no limits to the madness or violence.

The police often arrived when frying pans had narrowly missed my mother or us or my father had held her by the hair and banged her head repeatedly off the door with us screaming frantically in the background. They never helped!

The year before secondary school I was molested in a park. My friend reported it, I wouldn't have done anything as I already felt I was worth nothing so anybody could do anything to me. When two male police officers came to the house to take a statement, I was more embarrassed by the fact that my mother was drunk and singing. I never really heard any more about the incident after that, nothing was mentioned again in the house.

Although I didn't get there as regularly as I could because I barely had conscious parents, let alone motivating parents, school represented a haven for me. My main worry was what to expect later. At secondary school I felt stupid, ugly and worthless and felt to a certain extent that I deserved the horrendous life I had. I desperately needed someone, anyone, to give me the care and support I'd never had.

Our half of the year was given a seemingly nice and caring male guidance teacher. I had an immediate 'crush' on him and was desperate for him to care about me. On his side, he was aware of both my crush and my appalling situation at home. Instead of recognising that the focus of my need was wrong and needed to be redirected, he encouraged it and seemed to enjoy the attention. On his request my friend and I began calling him at his home. I was fourteen years old by now. A couple of months before I was sixteen we began having a sexual relationship.

Sex had been discussed for a long time on the phone. On my side I knew I needed him and it was all I felt I had to offer - and indeed all he wanted. A year before he started sleeping with me he knew I'd tried to overdose with tablets. By the time we started sleeping together I was desperate for him to care about me.

I always knew he had absolutely no interest in me other than for sex, but I had become completely dependent on him. He in reality did nothing for me, emotionally, financially or anything. But, because of how insecure I was, I felt afraid and lost without him, like a child looking for care.

After miscarrying his child when I was not long seventeen, I became pregnant to him again six weeks later with my son Grant. At no time, although I was moving into an unfurnished flat, alone and with no belongings and was eight months pregnant did he ask if there was anything I needed. He just didn't care. I called him to tell him I had Grant and I knew he wouldn't be visiting us but even I was shocked that he didn't even send us a card. I had still been seeing him and sleeping with him up until about six days before the birth.

I felt like Grant was a miracle. When he was

born and I held him I felt like I could have done it twenty times. It was incredible, but I felt upset because he was so wonderful and his father didn't want him. At one point in the hospital I explained to him that it wasn't him, Grant, that his dad didn't want or care about, because he was important and special. This man didn't care about Grant because of me, because I was his mother. I didn't know what to make of the fact that he still wanted sex with me a week and a half after I came out of the hospital. Then I told myself and Grant he just couldn't handle the responsibilities.

Can you imagine the loneliness of realising that nothing is going to happen about all the wrong that's been done unless you yourself do something? The realisation that no-one else cares enough when for most of your life you've gone on believing that, although there are police, teachers and social workers who fail, basically the system is OK. Well, I believed in people. I did believe they cared. Just now I don't know. Both my parents and the authorities failed me as a child and instead of the system stepping in to protect an obviously vulnerable and neglected child, they either ignored the situation or continued the ever-present abuse.

I feel anger now because no-one will claim the responsibility or guilt for either their actions or lack of them. It's so easy to spot kids with the kind of difficulties I had. I could have been wearing a sign on my forehead, especially for people who're supposed to be trained to deal with kids. What stopped the social workers seeing what was going on at home? What stopped the police from wondering about the welfare of children in a home where the mother set the house alight and the father lashed out with whatever came to hand?

The good that can come out of all this pain is the good of knowing that what has happened will not be allowed to happen again. It's almost impossible to describe the depths of the hurt when someone you need so badly to help you out of the chaos simply adds to it and betrays you once again - becomes just another failed and irresponsible adult. It's hard too, to describe the degradation of feeling worth no more than sex to someone but needing their support and guidance so badly you have no choice.

But over and above all that, there is a problem which has not gone away since I kicked my way out of this abusive relationship. This 'guidance' teacher has had a known-of affair with a pupil before his involvement with me but the authorities would prefer to ignore it - as with me. Their laxness, indifference or cowardice leaves me no alternative but to act and to speak, not just on my behalf but on behalf of others too. The abuse must stop somewhere. The system that is protecting him now is the same system that failed me as a child. The same police, teachers, social workers are failing me now too. The one difference is that I'm no longer impotent and unable to fight. I'm still very frightened and alone but I'm able and I will get some justice now and the authorities must finally act and face their responsibility. ■

# Snap Decisio

What makes a community photographer? Some photographs from Glasgow and Clydebank and some reflections on the subject from **Thomas O'Donnell**





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I only have a single picture of me as a baby. When I was growing up the family camera came out at the summer holidays and at Christmas time. From the first time I picked up a camera I just couldn't wait to see the results - there was a real feeling of excitement.

I had sensed that the world around me lent itself to visual observation long before I'd even held a camera. Mind you, I wouldn't have wanted to take photographs of where I came from at first - you don't usually begin with what's at your own back door. Bit by bit I became interested in looking at things which were more familiar.

Photography is primarily about recording but it's important to be aware of how much it can manipulate and contrive as well. If you take a photograph of someone out in the street they may not be fully aware of what you are planning on doing with it. A photographer not only takes pictures but selects and edits them.

For instance I took a series of pictures a couple of years ago in St Margaret's Hospice in Clydebank. I went there quite a lot and in the end it all became too personal for me. Even though some of the images are very strong visually none of the photographs has been published. I only printed one in the end. The rest are still lying as negatives. I think I might feel I can go back to them when ten or fifteen years have passed and the relatives will have had time to come to terms with what the pictures show.

An image can be strong in the here and now. It might make you laugh or make you feel you understand right away why somebody took it. Some images take much longer to make their impact. Places change and somebody moves

away or dies and people will say, "Oh that building's been knocked down, that street's no' there any more" or, "Look, the cars are different, the clothes are different" What was a picture you wouldn't have looked at somehow has more value.

It's unpredictable too. Some places and people lend themselves immediately to being photographed. I've often wondered why this old man was drawing attention to himself by putting his grandson in his shopping trolley. It's such a strange thing to do. He really was taking him along like that. All I did was move them to a better background. Looking at it you might notice his wee bunnets or the way he is holding his wee bag as well, but a lot of the time you don't identify these things consciously until later. This can also work against you. There may be a horrible clutter in the background that you didn't notice or something that looks as though it's sticking out of someone's head.

As a community-based photographer I've taught all sorts of groups - camera clubs, women's groups, primary schools, secondary schools, groups for people with learning disabilities. I've noticed that some people use their eyes consciously every day, whether or not they take photographs. I've found time and time again that the biggest part of teaching people photography is not teaching people how to use a camera but teaching them how to use their eyes.

A lot of places offer lip-service to teaching photography because, frankly, it sounds good. The actuality of their equipment - one camera, one darkroom or one enlarger and two rolls of film a year per person make it almost impossible for the people they are supposed to be teaching







to free themselves from thinking, "How many shots have I got left?" and treating every frame like a prison. An important aspect of community photography is giving someone access to sufficient materials to allow them to experiment visually. You have to feel quite loose about it. If you see something and you identify with it, you have to be freed up to ask someone to move further back or turn round to get a better picture.

If you take fifteen photographs the first one still might be better than the fifteenth, even though you thought about it more - sometimes because the person you are photographing is becoming more and more self-conscious or less and less interested. It's important for me as a tutor to reassure people that, "Eventually you will get better and you will get quicker to recognise things visually. There is no one set of rules that you can apply to every shot. You will learn from looking at your contact sheets that people's expressions change very, very quickly and you will always be surprised because photography is a mysterious business."

How you engage with strangers influences the photographs you are able to take. You have to be someone people can identify with quickly, even if it's just through a fleeting impression. It can reassure somebody and allow for an intimacy to come into the image. Even a basically shy person like myself through using a camera can learn to be more confident with people and to make eye contact. My photograph of three girls

at school together is an example of this. The girls know they are being looked at and they are looking back at the camera. Each of them is aware of me and the camera but I don't think they are upset or confused about me taking their picture. What I asked them was to, "Look at the camera and put yourself across whichever way you want to put yourself across".

**P**hotographing children is easier in a way, because they are so open, but it is also more fleeting. You often have to calm children down, you can do this if you give them a minute for jumping about with two fingers behind each other's heads or whatever. Then you can say, "O.K. I've taken that one, now can you be a bit more serious" or I sometimes ask people, "How do you look at yourself in the mirror? Is that how you want to be seen?" If you put it to them in the right way, people sense you are serious and that you're sincere in your intentions.

This permits you to come in closer and fill the whole frame, which is no bad thing. Often in the lens of the camera the object appears a little bit larger than when you get the negatives back, so it's a good idea to move in a bit. A lot of people like to crop their pictures afterwards but I like

to try to frame within the camera. If I make a mistake, I accept that as part of the learning process. That's what I mean about learning how to look.

There is a mystique built into photographic equipment - all those buttons! Cameras have been made to be more complicated because some people are discerning and they want to fiddle about with this or that. But the basic process is the same - light goes through a lens for a certain amount of time and you expose your film to it. That aspect of photography has never changed from the beginning. There is a lot of snobbery about equipment however, and that can influence where the money is spent in a project. Very flashy equipment can actually make it more difficult to teach someone photography. If you are handed out a state-of-the-art camera and you are still making basic errors and nothing comes out looking good you might feel you have no excuse.

On the other hand, even if you don't have a very good camera it's amazing the results you can still achieve. Even when, like me, you can understand the basic technical processes there is still an incredible excitement when 'the' picture you've been looking for comes up in the developing tray.

*Thomas O'Donnell is at present based in Glasgow and is currently working to raise funds for a forthcoming project this Autumn in Lithuania.* ■



Marcia Spencer spoke to Rosemary Milne about race and national identity in Scotland

# Grasping the





Thomas O'Donnell

# e Thistle

**M**arcia Spencer is a consultant and trainer with British Agencies for Adoption and Fostering. She comes up to Scotland several times a year

to work with carers and social workers on black issues. She has therefore the advantage of having some insight into Scottish attitudes, without being a permanent part of this society. She can tell us what she sees and meets when she visits - and we have to listen because she brings an authority to her view which it is hard to dismiss.

Her message is not a comfortable one for Scots to hear.

"I think there is a good deal of complacency around in Scotland about racism. I'm regularly told that being black in Scotland isn't the issue, what is the issue is being Scottish. Scottish culture is more important than a child's racial origin. The problem with that attitude is that it results in a form of colour-blindness which does a great disservice to black Scottish children. There is no doubt at all in my mind that if a child is both Scottish and black it's the child's colour which is viewed first and determines other people's attitudes to him or her.

I think the **Scottish Child** calendar for this year is a good example of what I mean by this general 'colour-blindness'. In a calendar of twelve photos of Scottish children, there isn't a single black face."

What defence is it to say that there are few black children in the part of Glasgow where those photos were taken? Not much it seems, when you delve a bit deeper.

"It doesn't actually matter how many actual black children there are living in the neighbourhood where those photos were taken. A black Scottish child looking at the images of childhood in that calendar will look in vain for confirmation of his or her place in Scotland.

"There is apparently a strongly-held belief that Scottish culture is very important but what does that actually mean for black Scottish children if they are not represented within that culture? It makes them invisible."

And if you decide that you don't want to fall into the trap of putting in a 'token black face' that all politically correct brochures and newsletters have these days? What then?

"Don't misunderstand me - I'm not arguing as far as images go, that you should go in for tokenistic representations of black people. If there's no real thought as to why you put the picture of an African-Caribbean child or an Asian child or an African child on a newsletter or a magazine, then of course it becomes tokenistic." ES

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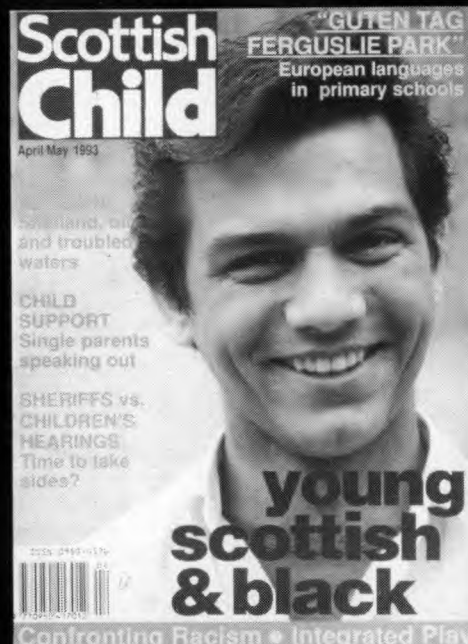
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# Until there is much more discussion about what it means to be white, as opposed to black, nothing much will change

**S**o does the representation of black children become tokenistic when those who show these images don't really believe their own propaganda? After all it's quite commonplace for Scots to cite other issues as being more central to the Scottish experience than racism - class, poverty and sectarianism for example.

"If they so choose, Scots can go on indefinitely insisting that there are other more pressing problems for Scots than the question of racism - class, religious divisions and so on. The point is though that there is racism in Scotland, deeply embedded racism, and the important first step in combatting that racism is that when a black person says they're Scottish for that to be 'owned' by the whole community. I don't think the ownership is there and that's the difficulty. I wonder how we can move forward from this position and how we can integrate that Scottish identity with the black identity.

"There's a problem with the way many Scottish people say on the one hand, that they are subject to prejudice from the English but on the other show they are not prepared to look inwards at how they are behaving in their own community. They claim that they are oppressed by the English but they don't seem to see the oppression they deal out to others. It's a sort of safety valve really, a comfortable position to be in. My family hails from Jamaica and there are plenty of people in Jamaica who have Scottish ancestors. The plantation owners were Scots as well as English but this is a part of their history which Scots seem to be less in touch with."

To allege complacency seems more damning even than indifference. It suggests a satisfaction with the way things are which doesn't altogether fit with the anxious self-doubt that plagues so many Scots?

"Still, that is how it often comes across, in statements like 'racism is not a problem in Scotland, thank goodness.' You can see how self-deluding that complacency is when you start to listen to what black people actually experience."

Black children of mixed parentage often describe themselves as not being sure 'what they are'. In Scotland they'll also say things like this eleven year-old, "It's difficult to go out here. There are not many black people like me. I used to wish that I had a little sister or brother that was black so I could have someone to talk to about the problems of being black. The first person I met to talk to who was black like me, was when I was eight. Up until then I used to watch the new Primary Ones at school to see if there would be somebody like me but there never was.

I used to get scared to go out to play because people would stare at me and other children called me names. It still happens sometimes but

now I've a couple of good friends. One of them even said the other day that she'd forgotten I was black. I feel that's how it should be. I find it hard being black and different but I'm not ashamed of it. I just feel there is nothing really different about black people and white people should treat us all the same."

**Y**ou cannot ignore the sense of isolation that comes across in this statement, nor the fact that firm friendship with a white girl equals being told kindly that she, the white girl now feels so comfortable with her black friend that 'she's forgotten she was black'! As if blackness is somehow best overlooked, ignored, like an unsightly wound or a scar. It's that kind of unconscious racist bias that Marcia feels is hardest to tackle because it is such an unproblematic part of the white British way of viewing the world. Anyone, as she says, can rail against the overt violence of groups like the National Front. But try to get a group of 'ordinary' white Scots or English people to examine their hidden racist assumptions and you meet a wall, not so much of hostility as blank incomprehension.

"I'm often told when I come up here that one of the problems in developing a greater awareness of racism in Scotland is that there are still relatively few black people in the general community. I do accept that for black people, as that child's comments show, this can be a problem - a problem of isolation. But I certainly don't accept that the size of the black community is a barrier to white people facing their attitudes about race. Are you going to tell me that you don't need to sort out your attitudes to disability or other differences just because you don't bump into a wheelchair every day of your life?

"The problem for so many black children is that people relate to the child without communicating about their colour in a positive way. Mainly they don't communicate about it at all - until it becomes a problem. That means that the only direct responses black children tend to get about their colour are negative ones. People who are caring for black children need to make sure they reinforce the child's racial identity positively and actually speak about it consciously so that it isn't turned into a hidden problem."

Marcia takes the view that the deep-rooted and long-standing racism in British society stems chiefly from white people's reluctance to face what it means to be white, rather than what it means to be black.

"Until there is much more discussion about what it means to be white, as opposed to black,

nothing much will change. You can argue that there isn't enough discussion as a whole about racism. Nevertheless within that debate, I think the problem of blackness - me as some sort of exhibit if you like - has been given undue emphasis. The balance needs to shift. I want white people to look at what they are, what they do, what they can take for granted.

"If you put these questions to white people, you generally find that they haven't really thought about what it means. They find the question very challenging. Mostly in my experience here in Scotland what white people want to do is talk about religion, ethnicity, class - anything but not the bald fact of being white, not black. I get the feeling that again, it's the question of trying to find an aspect of their being which equates with a black person's experience of being black in Britain. It's as if they want to insist that in their own way they are as victimised as black people - only by the arrogant English or the Tory bosses or similar 'oppressors'. It seems as if it's easier, more comfortable, to claim to be the oppressed if you're talking to others who you know to be oppressed. The Scots definitely don't want to be seen to be the oppressors."

**T**he message Marcia brings from south of the border is that, irrespective of a white person's place in the white pecking order, in relation to black people of all kinds, of all levels of wealth and education, they are powerful and superior. Merely by the fact of being white they are constantly reinforced in that power and superiority which are confirmed by a whole range of images and role models.

"Put aside all the things you white people normally cling onto to explain your differences - put aside class, religion, gender ethnicity. These are all irrelevant to what we're talking about. If you ask people to say what they like about being white they do eventually come up with the same things again and again. It's about having mobility, advantage, not having to face racism, being given a chance without anybody prejudging you and lots more. That's what unites you, that's the white perspective and until people can really take on what being white means there'll probably not be a great deal of change in how things are for black people." ■

British Agencies for Adoption and Fostering now publish a newsletter, **Black Issues**. Copies can be obtained from BAAF, 40 Shandwick Place, Edinburgh EH2 4RT. Please send a stamped addressed envelope.



# CHRISTOPHER

Mary Reddon

When Christopher Columbus set off on his Voyage of Discovery, he must have been afraid. He and his crew might have toppled over the edge of the known world, for all they knew.

His bravery concerned me. I had climbed onto the coalhouse roof and was proud of myself. I was and am a consistent coward. I looked down on my world.

I began to think about Billy. I'd not thought about him for long enough. When I did it was with anger. He'd got me into trouble and I wished that he was right there, right in front of me so that I could tell him how mad I was. Then I felt guilty. I changed my mind. I'd tell him my good news, that I'd been accepted into high school, that I was learning poems. I'd teach him how to read and write and make up stories and let him play with me whenever he wanted.

The sun hurt my eyes and suddenly I was flying into its black heart. I couldn't risk flying so close, so I folded my wings and flew down towards the surface of a flat calm sea. There was a strange glow at the edge of the horizon and, concentrating on that, I almost missed the boat, but just in the nick of time I tumbled into it.

Christopher's floating in a rowing boat on that calm sea, trailing his hand in the water. He has a companion at the other end. I try to make out the face but the figure is hunched up, his face hidden by the cowl of his brown robe.

Although the figures are separated, there is a kindly feel between them. He is Christopher's best friend, and was the only one brave enough to go with him. The waves lap gently and Christopher smiles. He is happy in the cradle of the deep.

A black cloud comes from nowhere. Lowers over the boat. Christopher looks up alarmed. He doesn't mind danger for himself but he's sorry for his friend. He'd like to save him if he could. He stretches out his hand, but for the life of him, can't move from the spot.

The air is sulphurous. The waves become higher and higher and the boat rocks dangerously. Water fills the boat. Christopher is frightened. He looks for a pot. A pan. To help bale them out. But there is nothing to hand. The waves grow wilder, and his cloaked companion wakes up. Screams. Christopher cries out. "Stay where you are. I'll try to save you."

But the boy stands up. Rocks the boat, which tilts sideways into the water. Lightning jags the sky, and a rent opens inside it. A cold eye winks, looks down on shark-teethed waves which snarl at the boy,

attempt to drag him into the maw of the deep.

Christopher makes up his mind. He stands up. Finds his footing, but just as he is about to do the decent thing, a Hokusai wave swamps the boat and plunges them into an airless vacuum. Christopher birls like a dervish, laughing in pure panic. He and the boy never quite connect.

When the boat pops up, like a cork, to the surface of a calm and shining sea, Christopher thinks to himself, "It never really happened and in any case he didn't suffer. It was all over in the wink of an eye and I'll have to find a new companion, that's all."

My mind's clear. My mind's made up.

I jump down from the coalhouse roof. Saunter over to the group. They pretend I'm not there but I persevere until their game is all played out. They stare at me. Casual. Not quite as hostile as usual. Maggie says. "What do you want?"

I ask, "Can I join in? Can I jump the ropes?"

She answers, "Ye have to take a turn cawin' the ropes then we'll think about it."

I stand my ground. Say, "I'm always the one to caw the ropes."

Maggie says, "Whit's the use? Ye cannae jump anyway. Ye cannae jump for toffee."

I answer, "That's because I never get any practice because ye use me tae caw the ropes aw the time. Listen, if ye let me jump, I'll teach ye a new skippin' game ah jist made up."

Maisie Duffin says... "You couldnae make up a new poem. Ye must huv heard it doon at Millar Street. You're no capable. Ye cannae tell the time ae day."

Maggie butts in ... "Gie her a chance. We might as well hear it."

I stand with my hands behind my back and close my eyes to remember. When I'm finished there's a silence.

Maggie says, "That's no half bad. But whit's an auld tin can got tae dae wi it? And how dae ye know Columbus's age? He couldnae be an auld man. Auld men don't dae anythin but sit by the fire an toast their toes."

"Aye", shouts Maisie, "Ah tellt ye. She's a stupid article."

I treat her with the contempt she deserves, concentrate on Maggie. Speak up. "The auld tin can's aw in the imagination. That chinges things. Dae ye want me tae teach ye the game? Ye'll need tae listen tae my instructions. The jumps are different fae the usual."

She considers, gives me the nod and I set myself up for it.

"Caw the ropes gently. he's in an auld tin can in the





# R COLUMBUS



middle ae the Clyde an nuthin's happint tae frighten him yet."

CHRISTOPHER COLUMBUS WIS A VERY OLD MAN

HE SAILED THROUGH THE OCEAN IN AN AULD TIN CAN.

NOO! Make the ropes go wild! The waves is gettin' higher!

AND THE WAVES GREW HIGHER AND HIGHER

... And he's aboot tae be droont wi his companion! DROON ME! CAW THE ROPES OWER MA HEID! .... and .... OWER ....

When I've finished I'm flushed with pride, out of breath. I wait for applause. Maggie says, "I think we could make use ae that. Are ye sure ye made it up all by yersel?"

I'm about to speak up when Maisie shouts, "Of course she didnae. Ah'm absolutely sure that ah've heard that wan somewhere before. She pinched it. Whit kin ye expect efter aw? She's a Pape an we aw know whit Papes get up tae."

And someone added, "Aye, They roast weans alive. Cannae even take care ae their ain."

It's out. Laid bare for all to hear. It's never been said before, not quite so bluntly and it's what I thought they thought all along. So I was right and they're not worth knowing. I'll never speak to them again. I'm overcome with sadness. I need friends and I'll have none from that day forward. I shut my eyes to shut out the smothering sun, to black them out. My backbone stiffens up. My courage is mustered. They are the Indians. I can't let them see that their arrows make any difference. Their arrows won't hurt me any more. I have a secret place to go to under the tree hedges.

I crouch inside the luminous space, stare at the columbines. I love the trumpet flowers, cool white with mauve strands and light green centres. I've been told not to eat them because they're poisonous. I pick off one of the heads and then another, lift them to my mouth and am about to eat when Robert's head and shoulders push through the hedge and he whispers, "Do you want me to play with you?" I nod but I'm not all that interested. I don't want to know anyone now. I gave myself away and they know all about me. He crouches at some distance from me, snaps twigs and dead branches from the hedge at the point nearest the roots and says quietly, "I'm going to make bows and arrows. We could shoot them down if you like."

But I ignore him, although I'm grateful. Accepting

his kindness would destroy the mood I'm in, the mood I now cherish. I turn my back on him, wait for him to leave me alone because then I'll do it. Eat columbines and fade away gracefully like the Lady of Shallot. He gives up and when he does I press the flowers against my eyelids, relishing the feel. Crush others together and stuff them in my mouth.

My words float through. They're perfecting my words, committing them to memory. They're all right. They'll always be all right. They're using my words and I gave them permission. I'm such a fool. They belonged to Billy. Why did I sell my birthright? I deserve to die.

They don't have a boy running after them, stumbling after, chubby legs and dimpled knees, pleading, sobbing.

"Wait for me, Mary. Wait for me. I can't keep up."

Giving up. Stopping dead in his tracks. Shoving his baby fists into his baby blues. Bawling like the baby he is. And me, the meanness building up inside. So thrilling that I'm almost choked with excitement. Mocking him with every ill intent.

"Away hame and play with yer Mammy. Mammy's pet."

And him giving me a look a dog will use in my later life when I get him put down. Running away from me, crying his heart out. Me thinking "She'll hammer me for that but it was worth it."

I hear my words drifting back. Christopher has taken hold and will go on without me. He doesn't need me any more. My space is a sealed vacuum. Do I feel sick yet? Do I feel sick enough to die? I won't die here. I'll die at home in bed.

Oh look at Columbine, how she wilts under pressure. Follow her home and watch her quiver, her eyes filled with tears, hugging walls like a cripple. She wants to blind herself, to know what it feels like. She wants to be deaf, to know what it feels like too. Then people will feel sorry for her and she won't get the blame any more.

Columbine is inside a dark and lonely hall. She shivers and shakes. She's not dead yet. The potion didn't work but no need now for summer clothes. She'll never see the son again.

**new voices,  
new writing**

# surviving five



Ian Torrance

## Stephen Naysmith went to talk to Franky Bearman about life with five adopted children

**I**n December 1990 John and Franky Bearman adopted a family of five: three sisters and two brothers. The adoption is unique in Britain. Franky has just written a book **Surviving Five** about the experience. Why did they take on such a commitment? And how are they getting on? To answer some of these questions, they have to go back to their first, unhappy attempt at adoption.

"We got married in 1989 and had already gone through the preparation with Barnardo's, because we would have liked to have a son. We thought it would be best to have an older boy, as he would fit better into the family we already have." (Frankie had three girls from her previous marriage, then aged eleven, nineteen and twenty).

"And really we wouldn't listen - they insisted that when children have been in and out of care, they lose confidence and trust and show it in

many different ways. We were given loads of help, but we thought, 'Give us a boy and we'll just love him to bits, he can't help but thrive in our family because we so want a son.'"

It wasn't that straightforward though, and while difficult behaviour had been anticipated the Bearmans were unprepared for what took place: "When he came to live with us, he was eleven. Unfortunately he was too near Claire's age and he made Claire his target."

Frankie describes the problems between the two children: the torments, the bullying and the way he used to hit Claire on the bus to school in the mornings.

"He turned her friends against her by telling them she had been bad-mouthing them at home. I don't think we'll ever really know just how much damage he did to Claire", Franky says, "It was horrendous - and then he started putting notes under her bedroom door at night. She really had it the worst. We didn't realise to what

extent until he went back into care 15 months later.

"As a family we weren't even standing still, we were taking huge steps backward. He had punishments mounting up and up, so we'd say this is ridiculous, and wipe the slate clean. He would say 'Sorry mum. I love you', and then he'd be straight off to do something again."

Incidents like the spray-painting of the neighbours' brand new cars were fast turning the Bearmans into 'the family with that boy'. Whenever Franky went to the shops she would be accosted by somebody saying "Excuse me! Do you know, what your son did...."

"You were torn between admitting he was your son and throwing him to the lions by saying 'Oh well actually he's not my son, he's a foster child, he's got problems.' But that's just betraying yourself as well as him."

The Bearmans knew they couldn't continue with the placement. They felt they weren't



# You are supposed to always work in the best interests of the child, but you can't always do that automatically, you have to work at it. Adoption is a very painful process for everybody.

helping their adopted son and their family life was collapsing. So he went back into local authority care. "We told him we still loved him but all of us knew it wasn't working."

This experience might have put an end to the family's interest in adopting. Having invested so much in their vision it was certainly difficult to get over, "It was the hopes being dashed that made it such a horror story, you watched everybody's dream being shattered." However the Bearmans were persuaded to continue: "At that point Barnardo's were saying: 'Please don't give up, this boy was eleven and had horrific problems.'"

They were given a second boy, of a similar age, supposedly as an emergency weekend placement, though in the end he remained with them for 10 weeks. They realised that while they still wanted to adopt, it wouldn't be a boy of that age.

"That was when Sue, our social worker said: 'How about these five which came onto my desk this morning.'" The letter that had been circulated to social workers was the last effort on behalf of the five kids before they had to be split up permanently.

At the suggestion the Bearmans started out joky and dismissive, but then thought about it. "Sue told us their ages, the youngest was three and there's only a year between them. We talked about it a lot and a month later we said 'send us the papers and we'll see', because they were really in the sort of age we wanted."

**n**either John or Franky had ever particularly wanted a large family, although Franky reveals in the book that she remembers her home as cold and empty as her parents both worked. She thinks this contributed to the high value she places on home life.

They remember that the process just gathered momentum from there, and say they hadn't really thought through the impact five children would have: "We didn't think about the potential problems until they were in the house and we were overwhelmed. It was like an out of hand playgroup, they had suddenly all got the same house, a dog, a big sister... and it was wonderful, and they raced up and down and through the house. We were lost like this for days, they ran us ragged. The late nights and early mornings just took the feet from us, we were so close to tears so many times, 'Why can't they just do this, what's wrong with them?' We were pretty overwhelmed for a couple of months."

"You tended to think of them as 'the five', as in 'the five will do that', but they don't - one of them will want to go upstairs, go play with a pal, bake, watch telly and one will cling to your

skirt - there's five bodies, all wanting different things. With hindsight we would say we should have accepted a little bit of help gracefully."

Just when they did begin to feel more in control, things got worse. The children began to behave more outrageously, breaking things around the house and fighting. John and Franky were appalled, but were reassured by their social worker:

"We were told things were starting to progress and because the children were feeling more secure they could let us see their 'bad' side. So they could shout at each other and say 'I don't want to sleep in the same room as her', without feeling it's going to be 'Oh you don't? well you can go then.'"

They weren't prepared for the prejudice which a large family attracts. "There's the old chestnut that goes - 'Are those all your children or is it a picnic' with the reply 'They're all mine, and it's no picnic!' but there is real maliciousness hidden behind the joking."

"People will say 'Oh, have you not got a telly in your house' and things like that - just within earshot, or 'What other hobbies have you got?' John has even been asked, 'Do you feed your wife lettuce?' Then there is the question of 'family' tickets for zoos etc - family tickets which admit two adults and two children!

The older children had particular problems, especially Caroline, who had enormous feelings of guilt at having let her mother down, before they had been taken into care. She would tell the Bearmans "I'm bad, I'll be the first to go".

Their birth mother had Caroline when she was sixteen and had had all the others too by the time she was twenty-three. "One of the major things apart from being young was that she didn't have much of a partner, and had no family as such to support her. She suffered morning sickness with each pregnancy while she was still suffering post-natal depression from the one before - it would have been overwhelming even if she had had back up."

"But Caroline felt she should have changed more nappies or looked after her brothers and sisters better. She felt she had let her mother down rather than vice versa. We explain it in relation to my daughter Tracy who has our grandchild. They've watched him growing up and her saying 'Aaargh, I can't cope'. I say 'When you were his age your mum already had one little baby and was expecting another one... and when you were old enough to carry something you were given it to carry and once you could feed him, you were given him to feed. You stopped getting to be a wee girl at all. It wasn't your mum's fault, but you couldn't do it, it's like giving Jordan, (that's our grandson), a wee baby to feed, you weren't capable of doing it."

"So it wasn't as difficult to explain as you might think. Getting her to believe it, that was

difficult. You can't say it once and forget it. Unlike other children they don't know that if they do something naughty and you say you don't like it, it doesn't mean 'I don't like you'. They just think 'I'm bad, I'm terrible, I need to be shut in my room'. The guilt was terrible.

"Once we got that done you could get down to other things, like getting along to the school to find out how far behind they were. They were all behind in their work. It was difficult we were feeling about in the dark."

**W**hat about their birth mother? Do they still have contact with her?

"We keep contact with mum twice a year, we send a letter, photographs and they draw a picture. We're now on the verge of discussing it with Caroline. By the time she starts secondary school, when she's twelve, we'll consider a meeting with mum."

What will John and Franky feel about that?

"Well, like all other adoptive parents you tend to think we've adopted them, they're ours, end of story. But you have to come down to being realistic and say they've got memories of mum. We don't own them. We can't say when they reach a certain age, 'you can't go with him, you'll not marry him'. They will meet who they want. So why should their first mum be any different?"

"If they can handle it and provided their mum can get herself together and manage not to make it an overwhelming crying and weeping thing we are quite happy to let them meet her when the time is right. If it's not too heart-rending for her and the children aren't staying awake at night thinking about poor mum sitting there and wanting to go back to her, we would probably do it every year as each child reaches twelve."

"The thing is adoption is a very very painful process for everybody. The mother has to have that hurt - even if she genuinely didn't want to have the kids. The children are going to be hurt because they automatically think, 'she gave us away' - even if she loved them dearly and didn't want to. The new parents take on a child and think this is mine for the rest of my life and it's not like that because you don't own anybody. It's painful when they say, 'I'm dying to see my mum', and you want to say 'Excuse me, I'm your mum' - you feel it but you can't say it."

"Everybody gets hurt. You are supposed to always work in the best interests of the child, but you can't always do that automatically, you have to work at it. We're working at it now, but it will be a long process. We're putting the seeds in place now."

**Surviving Five** will be published shortly by Barnardos. ■

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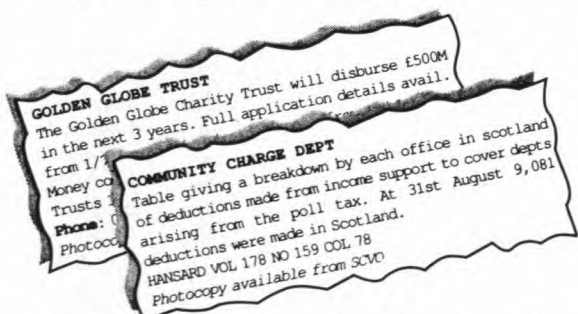


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# We Are What We Eat?

Stephen Naysmith gets young athletes Stacy, Susan, Gillian and Laura to tell him what they think makes a 'body beautiful'



Stephen Naysmith

**W**hat makes girls as young as ten and eleven look anxiously at themselves in the mirror - checking their hair, their skin, their clothes: How do I get rid of this spot? Does this top go with those jeans?

Standing there in the morning what makes them ask: how do I look? too fat? too short? thighs too heavy? - and then go out and check it all again in the first shop window they pass?

Few girls over the age of twelve haven't agonised over their appearance. By the time they get into secondary school many of them are 'doing something about it'. Often this takes the form of looking at what they eat - seeing older sisters and mothers, or higher profile role models on T.V. and in films, counting the calories. Alternatively there is exercise: aerobics, callanetics, step, jogging.

It seemed a good idea to get the views of a group of girls who take an interest in their 'body image', so I dropped in on a training session with the Edinburgh Athletic Club in Saughton.

On a warm, dry evening, running around a track seemed to hold little interest for Stacy (13), Susan (15), Gillian (13) and Laura (12). They quickly joined me on the trackside to let me know what they liked to eat, and what they think of as healthy food.

"Fruit and vegetables, they're better for your health. They haven't got fat in them," said Laura, while Gillian claimed, "I eat everything, but I think I have a healthy diet, because I don't really like fatty things." Both were quickly contradicted by Susan - "They're lying, they all eat greasy chips and sausages. I do."

In fact we quickly established that what is important in a healthy diet is balance, and not a constant intake of fresh fruit and vegetables. This is certainly Susan's view. "Say, one night you might have chips or something and the next night you might have salad."

But there is still a feeling that if you aren't careful about what you eat there is something wrong with you - as if it were a sin for which you need to do penance. This is one of the reasons why Stacy is at the Athletic Club, "I eat loads of rubbish and then I come here to run it off."

So where do they get their information about what is healthy and what is not? Partly from their parents, and from the coaches at the club. Partly too from magazines, but teenage magazines could easily give you a split personality.

The incidence of anorexia and bulimia has risen to frightening levels - three and a half million people in Britain now suffer from compulsive eating disorders and young girls are disproportionately represented in that number. Eating disorders ought to be a key issue for teenage magazines, but they don't seem to run much on them.

Just Seventeen this month asks "Do you have the look of the Year?", as it looks for those among its readers who have what it takes to be a model. And on the subject of models Mizz magazine answers criticisms of the size of those it uses in the following way - "We don't always use size eight models, we try hard to use size tens and twelves if we can, there are some models out there who don't look like beanpoles..." Well, that's all right then.

It's probably naive to expect such magazines to care too much about their readers' anxieties, since they mainly trade on teenage insecurities.

We are periodically told that advertisers or television producers or some other group are supposed to be changing our perceptions of size and health. Campaigns such as the Nike ad "It's not the shape you are it is the shape you're in", emphasise fitness not fatness.

However, there are enough people recycling the old clichés to maintain an unhealthy level of confusion, as evidenced when I asked the girls about muscles. Do they admire athletes and people with muscular bodies?

This question provokes an instant and unanimous "No!" Gillian elaborates, "especially women, women with muscles look horrible, eugh!" Laura agrees, "because women are supposed to be more feminine."

So would they give up athletics if they thought it would give them loads of muscles? "No," says Laura, "but I wouldn't end up with them. Well maybe some, but there's muscles and there's muscles. I'd like to have Sally Gunnell's shape, not body builders' muscles, just a few..."

Femininity doesn't equate with excessive physical fitness then? So why would you want to exercise? Is it to feel good? Do you want to win medals? To feel fit?

"It would be good to be fit", says Stacy, "It would be great, knowing that you'd be able to do anything, run any race or anything." Susan says she would like to be Yvonne Murray "...well not be her, I want to have her body. I admire people like that because they're healthy and they are good at what they do."

Being good at what you do is what matters when I ask who else they might model themselves on. Cindy Crawford, the model, is mentioned, but without much interest. Actresses are favoured though. Jodie Foster gets a special mention from Stacy, "I think she's Barry, she's dead wee and she wobbles about in her films."

Being 'dead wee' seems to have real attractions - and no wonder when messages about their eating habits bombard young people daily: fresh fruit is advertised, taking its lead in a post-modern leap from fizzy drink advertising ("You know when you've been Mango'd"). On the next billboard you are enticed to sample "the hottest thing to happen to ice-cream". Meanwhile organisations like the Milk Marketing Board and the British Beef campaign send 'educational' posters and packs and other materials to schools which are enough in need not to turn away such freebies.

Teenagers are a prime target too for every reforming group with a message about compassionate eating, whether it's free-range, additive reduced, CFC-free or rainforest friendly.

These four girls are all confident that they know what is good for them really, but not so sure that they can easily get it.

The sports centre at which we met offers soup to its patrons and that's it, unless you want to put your money into the machine which dispenses chocolate and fizzy drinks.

"You should be able to get fresh fruit, pure orange juice or mineral water. You're not meant to drink fizzy juice, it's unhealthy and it sits on your stomach," says Gillian.

Where can they get decent food then? Certainly not at school. "Put something in your magazine about that - school dinners are Crap!" is Laura's verdict. Stacy elaborates: "Black puddings, you could wring out the grease in them, it's horrible."

They don't think much of the food available to them anywhere, really. "You get good food at the deli," suggests Gillian.

They say none of them are on diets, though Laura's Mum counts the calories for her. Gillian says "Be serious, look at the size of me!" - though if this means she thinks she looks fat, she has nothing to worry about.

What comes across from these girls is a belief in merit, they admire successful sportswomen and film stars because they are good at what they do, and determined enough to succeed. When it comes to being healthy and eating well they know the score, but are fighting powerful images from advertisers and the media, and can't always get hold of the food they'd like.

"This is the ideal meal, right" says Gillian "Chicken or fish and potatoes, with salad". But don't ask for it in the school dining hall, or at the sports centre.

## Putting Herstory into Print



### **The Hidden History of Glasgow's Women Elspeth King Mainstream, £14.99**

**Margaret Murray**

Having been brought up in the Calton, one of the oldest districts of Glasgow, I thought I knew quite a lot about my heritage. The People's Palace was a stone's throw from my home and, as a child, I was a frequent visitor. But that was before Elspeth King became curator. The history I learnt was the history of Glasgow men, tobacco lords, shipbuilders, political and religious leaders.

Coming from a family of strong, hard-working women, I was aware that it was Glasgow's women who held everything together in the domestic sphere but they didn't wield any power in the public domain. Nor did women receive any plaudits in history lessons, library books or the media. To my knowledge there were not female politicians, doctors, headteachers, writers, philosophers, judges. Nevertheless, my experience was such that I soon became aware that women's contribution to Glasgow life was invaluable though severely restricted. I also realised that if women were allowed the freedom to control their own destinies, life in Glasgow would be greatly improved.

How gratifying then to read Elspeth King's **The Hidden History of Glasgow's Women**. The extent to which women informed public life, struggled for change, fought oppression and worked to improve living standards for the city's inhabitants, reaffirms my respect for my

foremothers and rekindles my anger at the patriarchy that denied Glasgow girls (and is still denying them), the knowledge and the inspiration of a female heritage to be proud of.

Dedicated to the "countless Scottish women who perished in the witch hunts of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries ... and to those who have been witch-hunted in the centuries since", King's book is unashamedly feminist in perspective and she does not hide her own anger with the *city fathers*. King has produced a history book packed with fascinating information, wonderful illustrations and photographs, and many insights into the political machinations which have been employed to negate and deny the contribution of women in society. At £14.99 the book may seem expensive but it is worth its weight in gold.

The text begins with an account of the life of Saint Thenew, mother of Glasgow's patron saint, Mungo. I for one, had never heard of St Thenew but share King's view that the story of a woman who was raped, suffered male violence, made homeless and a single parent, is one that, even in 1993, is depressingly familiar and accurately portrays the misogynist nature of Glasgow society. The reader also learns of the many laws and punishments used to control women over the centuries which reveal the shocking disparity between judicial punishment of men and women and underlines the difficulties facing women who dared to defy male authority. Banishment, branks, the pillar and cockstool, torture and execution are all there. In this 'civilised' society women were punished for their beliefs, their words, their relationships, their poverty and their lifestyles. Single women were even forbidden to live alone or communally as they would be outwith male control. Marrying or going into service were the only permissible options, either way women were expected to live in their master's house.

Yet women did not take such repression meekly. More often than not it was the women of Glasgow who engaged in acts of disobedience against Church and State authority. In 1678 an official was attacked and the Provost and Archbishop were in fear of their lives when a group of women protested the laws that denied them freedom of religion. In 1689 there were further serious incidents involving women protesters. These culminated in a violent backlash by the town's male officials that left many women grievously injured.

Much of women's history has been erased by the lack of recorded information about women's lives, and what is known is often anecdotal and fragmentary. However, there are records which show that some women were engaged in commercial enterprises on their own or jointly with their husbands. By the eighteenth century,



women are known to have participated in the struggle for political reform and universal suffrage. Women who were active in the public domain were derided by the Scottish press but that did not stop them attending Chartist meetings, walking in processions or public speaking. During the anti-slavery campaign of the nineteenth century, women realised that they were, in some respects, as enslaved as the negroes for whom they campaigned. Socialism offered the promise of equality and many women became involved in the Owenite movement or agitated for unionisation and improved conditions in the textile factories. Women's suffrage and women's education were arduously fought for, as was better health care for women.

Most of the campaigning work carried out by women was done in seemly, ladylike manner but polite tactics were usually met with indifference and, by 1908 there was a Glasgow branch of the militant Women's Social and Political Union movement formed by the Pankhursts in 1903. Several Glasgow women, like their English sisters, were jailed for involvement in militant campaigns and suffered the torture of force-feeding when they went on hunger strikes. The militancy began with window-smashing and escalated to attacks on the Royal Mail, including the cutting and bombing of telephone connections. The Great War interrupted the campaign for women's suffrage but women continued to be politically active in the Women's Peace Crusade, founded in Glasgow in 1916 and to participate in the rent strike of 1915. The latter was greatly assisted by the Co-operative Women's Guilds which had been part of Glasgow life since the 1890's. More recently, the success of the anti-Poll Tax Campaign was largely due to the determination of Glasgow's women to defy unjust laws.

Throughout the twentieth century women have continued to make inroads on previously male domains of power and influence: politics, education, the judiciary, to name just a few. Yet male violence towards women and misogynist attitudes are still very much the norm. One step towards changing this unacceptable state of affairs would be to educate our children in the herstory of our city, to understand that the oppression of women has been allowed to continue, and to agitate for change. Including Elspeth King's well-researched, clearly narrated account of the lives of the women of Glasgow on school reading lists would be a start. Our daughters, and our sons, deserve to have access to every aspect of their heritage, no matter how unpalatable the truth may be. I would urge teachers, librarians in Glasgow, and in the rest of the country, to include **The Hidden History of Glasgow's Women** in their lessons and libraries. If they don't other adults should insist that it be made available. ■

## Three Young Poets



**Writing Like a Bastard**  
- Alison Kermack  
**A Middle-Aged Schoolgirl**  
**Skiving** - Kim Oliver  
**Zap - You're Pregnant**  
- Paul Reekie  
**Rebel Inc Publications**

**Barry Graham**

Since its launch not much more than a year ago, Rebel Inc magazine and press has published some of the strongest and most original new voices in Scottish writing. It has also published some infantile, derivative nonsense. Its most recent publications, three pamphlets published and launched simultaneously, are a strange mix. But there is a level of quality throughout.

The most disappointing is Alison Kermack's **Writing Like a Bastard**. She's had a lot of attention lately - especially from feminist quarters - and there's no doubt that she can write. But there's nothing new or even particularly interesting being said. Her poems are mostly phonetic (often clumsily *trying* to be phonetic),

Edinburgh-dialect reheats of Tom Leonard. Her apparent attempts at haiku miss the deeper realities of haiku and are simply three-line banalities. Even if you like this sort of thing, I'd suggest going straight to Tom Leonard's work.

Kim Oliver is one of the best young poets we have, and **A Middle-Aged Schoolgirl Skiving** is an engaging collection. But it's a bit disappointing that the best poems - **Ice Ice Baby**, **Learning**, and the title poem - are her older ones, written about two years ago. There's nothing wrong with the others; I was just underwhelmed by them.

Rebel Inc's editor, Kevin Williamson, has over the past year believed in and actively promoted the previously unpublished and pretty well unknown Paul Reekie. This faith has paid off with **Zap - You're Pregnant**, surely the poetry collection of the year.

At the age of 31, Reekie is regarded by many as the best Scottish poet writing today. I certainly have no quibble with that view. He has a range and erudition that is nothing less than astonishing.

From the grim humour of **Reekie Don't Lose That Number** ("You're looking so morose/You're really past your best/Take a fucking overdose/And give us all a rest"), to the sadness and sensuous lyricism of **The Wren** ("Malisons, more than ten/To whomsoever harms/The queen of heaven's hen/Malisons to the ponies you dreamt of/Malisons to the dolphins you dream now/We hate you little girls/ ... Yea, malisons too your voluptuous liquidity"), Reekie merges the intensely personal with the universal - I'm even tempted to say, cosmic.

If all this sounds heady or esoteric, do yourself a favour and read the pamphlet. Despite the complexity and darkness of Reekie's work, he's funnier than many supposedly 'humorous' writers. The poem **Cobra Crushes Elephant**, a parody of Rudyard Kipling and a condemnation of imperialism that is still relevant today, is the finest piece of satire I've read. The other 'historical' poem in the pamphlet, **In the Shadow of Holyrood House**, is just too bizarre to be effectively described here.

Read Reekie and you're in the company of a genius. And read him you should. Start with this pamphlet, then get hold of **Three Edinburgh Writers**, the anthology that featured his controversial poem, **Teenage Weather**.

The pamphlets can be obtained from Rebel Inc Publications, c/o 334 South Gyle Mains, Edinburgh EH12 9ES. ■

### Among the contributors in this issue:

**Steven Bell** teaches young people with learning disabilities in Cumbernauld. His other obsession is golf and he has just become club champion at Palacerigg Golf Club; **Raymy Boyle** is a project worker at Pilton Youth Programme in Edinburgh. His work involves him with young people aged 12 - 18 in a variety of settings, including work with boys where there is a focus on gender; **George Chalmers** is a long-term prisoner nearing the end of his sentence at Noranside Prison; **Barry Graham** is a novelist and performance poet who has given readings in Britain and America. He lives with his wife in Edinburgh; **Margaret Murray** is a feminist and political activist, currently working for Glasgow Women's Aid; **Thomas O'Donnell** is a freelance photographer who lives and works in Glasgow; **Mary Reddon** lives and writes in Glasgow; **Marcia Spencer** is a trainer-consultant with British Agencies for Adoption and Fostering, based in London; **Rona Sutherland** is a creche worker and lives with her son in Edinburgh.



Timex Picket Line, Dundee. Douglas Robertson.

## TIMEX WORKERS - STILL FIGHTING FOR OUR JOBS

Dear Editor

343 workers from the Timex factory in Dundee have now been out on strike for more than twenty six weeks. What began as a fight against lay-offs has now become a fight to regain our jobs and to reverse the punitive and disastrous decision to close the factory which the company announced in June. My aim in writing to you is to dispel any idea amongst your readers that this announcement represents the end of the line for our dispute. It is our belief that while the gates are still open there is a real chance that we will succeed and that it is vital that we do so, not only for the sake of our own jobs, but our communities and for the city of Dundee as a whole. What

you need most of all to understand is that we have not given up our fight and we need your support now even more than ever.

We have two major events coming up in Scotland over the month of August. A mass picket has been called outside the factory gates in Dundee at 6 a.m. on Monday 9th August. This will be followed by a march and rally at 11 a.m. starting from Dowanfield Golf Club and finishing at Camperdown Park. The STUC has also called for a march and rally against the closure in Dundee at 10.30 a.m. on Saturday 21st August. This will be beginning at Dudhope park and going into the city centre.

As well as sending speakers throughout the length and breadth

of the U.K., we have also been sending delegations to picket the Timex factory in France. So far the action has been building support and we successfully turned back twenty lorries and the French postal workers have refused to cross the picket line. We have also recently sent a delegation of four workers John Kydd, Charlie Malone, Margaret Thomson and Ann Low on a trip to America to explore challenging the legality of the closure under U.S. company law, to gain support for the strike and to publicise an early-day motion raised in the British parliament calling for a boycott of Timex products. So as you can see there is absolutely no chance that we are giving up yet and support from the

public has never been more critical than at the present moment.

Anyone wishing further details of the strike or the above events should write to the strike committee or contact our support groups on the following numbers.

Dundee: Bernadette Malone (0382) 642 382

Edinburgh: Ray Cormack (031) 225 2546

Glasgow: Allan Knotts (041) 422 1467

Your faithfully

**Allan Petrie**  
on behalf of the  
**Timex Strike Committee**  
2 Union Street  
Dundee

## FACING THE FACTS ABOUT SEXUAL ABUSE

Dear Editor,

I was interested to read Peter Harrison's refreshingly politically incorrect letter (June/July 93) accusing Scottish Child of feeding on the public hysteria about child sexual abuse. Provocative as his letter was, I think his analysis is completely wrong.

He refers to universally accepted statistics that reveal those convicted of such offences rarely have any previous convictions and even more rarely re-offend. He also asserts that such offences are comparatively rare and that there are no signs of increase over the longer term.

I'm afraid this really is like

reading the Ladybird book of criminology. Has it ever occurred to Mr Harrison that there may not be a direct correlation between offences committed and actual convictions? I would ask Mr Harrison to reflect on how difficult it might be for someone to report such an offence. Consider for example the position of a school pupil who was assaulted in this way who feared ridicule from an unsympathetic teacher. Should the victim have the confidence and support to pursue a complaint, given the particular difficulty in providing evidence, the chances of a court actually convicting in these circumstances are notoriously low.

Study the literature Mr Harrison.

As for low rates of re-offending and few previous offences, Mr Harrison's views directly contradict the experience of people who work closely with sexual offenders who can cite overwhelming evidence to the contrary. Finally what does Mr Harrison make of the accounts of adult survivors of sexual abuse who, if we are to believe them, paint a picture where this kind of offence is not rare?

Far from being castigated, Scottish Child should be congratulated for continuing to present a balanced and informed account of the actual nature and

extent of child sexual abuse, which allows people to make up their own mind about the problem in a rational way.

**Ian MacFadyen,**  
67 Newhouse,  
Stirling,  
FK8 2AF

**Scottish Child welcomes readers' letters.**  
Please send them to the  
Editor,  
**Scottish Child**  
130 St. Stephen Street  
Edinburgh  
EH3 5AD  
or ring us on 031-220 6502





## GLASGOW LIBRARIANS GIVE THE THUMBS DOWN TO SCOTTISH CHILD

Dear Editor,

Thank you for letting us see the back issues of *Scottish Child*. Our librarians have considered the magazine in some detail but I regret to say that at present none of them wish to take out a subscription.

The main reason for this lack of response is the absence of money available to allow us to expand our collection. We operate on a tight

budget for periodicals and at present the only way for a library to start a new magazine is to drop one which they already take. I am sure you will appreciate the reluctance to do this.

The Mitchell Library receives a copy of *Scottish Child* and it is therefore available to Glasgow readers. I am unable to offer you any additional sales at present but

we have note of your magazine and will consider it in any future review of periodicals.

Yours sincerely,

**Janette Blakeway,**  
Central Stock Manager,  
Glasgow City Council  
Libraries Department,  
The Mitchell Library,  
Glasgow G3 7DN

### Editor's appeal:

*If you think one copy of Scottish Child in the Mitchell Library is less than what is needed to reach our readership in Glasgow, please speak to your local library and persuade them to subscribe.*

## We Spend All Our Adult Lives Trying To Recreate Our Childhood Coburn & Naughton

I was schooled by the Christian Brothers Order, the Waffen SS of the Catholic Church

To even think about sex is a mortal sin  
It's dirty filthy dirty!

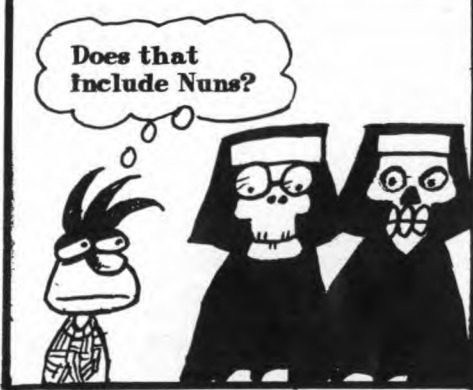


Give me a child before he is seven says the church, but it's what they do after seven that worries me



All women are whores & sluts!  
All unclean!

Believe me, it was all rather confusing



Does that include Nuns?

Needless to say, I was a bit awkward with the opposite sex

So what do you do?



Erm... Um...

Physical contact was and remains a very fraught undertaking



Slut!  
Whore!

My personal life is a mess



Why do I do this to myself?

As a Zen Buddhist, my daily meditation is geared towards shaking off the ego, laying it down. So it feels strange now to be asked to talk about myself.

I'm a full-time freelance writer/performer. I've had three books published - two novels and a collection of short stories - and poetry published just about everywhere. But I'm probably better known for my dramatic readings and performances. I've performed my poems throughout Britain and America.

I was born in Glasgow - the most miserable place I can think of - and I lived there until about five years ago, though I travelled pretty widely. I've had some strange jobs: I was a boxer for quite a while but I quit when I discovered I was allergic to being punched - it kept bringing me out in cuts and bruises.

I got into journalism, by accident rather than intention, and for a year I was deputy editor of **Inside Out** magazine. During that time I wrote my first novel, **Of Darkness and Light**. The mag folded and I moved to Edinburgh in September 1988. A couple of months later my book was accepted by Bloomsbury. It was published the following year, to a little bit of acclaim and an awful lot of controversy. A lot of the critics said the book was 'sick'. Well, it was about the place where I was born and brought up, and that's a pretty sick place.

I never go back to Glasgow now unless I really have to. Too many bad memories. I won't go into a torrent of detailed angst about childhood suffering - I do enough of that in my poetry - except to say that my parents were the two



Joanna Kane

## The Poet

Barry Graham takes a philosophical look at his life

cruellest human beings I've ever met. I haven't seen them in years, don't know whether they're dead or alive, and honestly don't care.

I don't have a lot of sympathy for the 'victim' mentality of many people who were subjected to the same kind of parental brutalities that I was. Shit happens. It gets dumped on you, but you don't have to spend your life covered in it. That's too easy, just an excuse for not living your life. I may have been abused, but I won't accept that I'm in some way 'damaged goods'.

By and large, I'm quite a happy creature. Especially since February this year, when I married a weird and beautiful American poet named Marina Blake.

We live in Leith, which is a good place to be. We're desperately short of money most of the time, but we're happy. I sometimes get attacks of insecurity; I keep thinking she'll come to her senses and wonder what she's doing married to a dork like me. But she says she already knows I'm a dork and loves me anyway. I'm lucky.

Although my personal life is happy, I hate what's being done to Scotland, and what Scotland does to itself. The people here are so fragile, so sad and grey and unhealthy. Having spent time in America, and having an American wife, obviously I have conflicting, contradictory feelings about life in this country. I can't express these feelings better than I did in a

poem called "Shades" -

o pale beauty  
yr california tan  
faded and  
washed away  
by edinburgh rain  
yr deep brown  
sacrificed  
for me  
in this small  
cold country  
i love you

Right now I'm working on a new novel, which I'm aiming to finish by September. My books do quite well, and I seem to be getting better known. But since I started appearing on TV recently, people have started to recognise me in the street, and I don't entirely like that. I like it when I get fan mail but people I don't know coming up to me and talking to me when I'm out just makes me nervous. At the same time, it's good to know that people are interested in what I'm doing, that they think it matters.

I'm not really ambitious. There's no particular place I want to get to. I don't want any more than to live my life, with my wife and friends, and not hurt anybody or have anybody hurt me. My political thinking is quite simplistic - this world could be a really beautiful place if people would only live together. Any eight-year-old knows that. But very few eighty-year-olds are willing to practise it. ■



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