

# Twelve River RIPPLES

## My Life in Poetry



If you have ever watched a game of cards that you do not know and tried to work out what on earth was going on, you will know it is just about impossible. This is much akin to my approach to poetry (and music). I never learned the rules, but try to join in anyway.

I began writing songs (i.e. trying) from the age of 11. I had heard little that I thought I could successfully perform myself, with the lyrics being the stumbling block for me. It never occurred to me that perhaps I was trying to write lyrics that were more poetic. Looking back at those attempts, I think that maybe I was.

I didn't consider writing poetry in its own right until a friend suggested that we go to an evening of people reading their own poetry. I expect a dire evening, but was very surprised at how good it was. I believe that was the first meeting of the Sudbury Poetry Café.

I began contributing my own 'poems', which were very light-hearted and hopefully comical. They seemed to be appreciated. They should perhaps be more properly categorised as rhymes rather than poems.

Over time I began to enjoy the freedom that writing with no intention to set the words to music gave. I asked questions and learned a little from here and there. I wrote more serious pieces, but found that I much preferred to write in form. I like to have structure. That probably applies to life as well. My home would deny this, but I like to know where things are and where I am going. Then I know when things are complete.

I don't always write in form, but do not eschew traditional notions of metre and rhyme: I do not throw the tools out of my toolbox that have served me well. But I do at least try to be more subtle with it than I once did.

So here I am, an untutored fraud amongst poets. I offer my apologies to all who have suffered at my hands. Perhaps I should learn from the warning someone gave me when I joined your merry band. They told me to be careful not to upset people, because they could make my life very difficult. In response I wrote this ditty:

## **Cosa Nostra, Poetry Stanza**

We sneak round in the dead of night  
dressed to kill in whitest of ties  
in search of the bard  
who has ruined our art  
by rhyming in couplets,  
something we gave up, yet  
we call ourselves poets  
and before we go it  
will be made plain to all  
why we've sprayed on his wall  
words that don't rhyme  
like "orange", a crime  
if they catch us red-handed  
and if they demanded  
we clean it all off,  
with an apologetic cough,  
we'll spray over blank verse.  
It just couldn't get worse.

So there it is, not so much 'My Life in Poetry' as 'My Lie in Poetry'.

*Colin Whyles*