

# Poetry *Express*

WINTER 2011

Issue 38



Survivors' Poetry Book launch for *Dark Time Begins to Crack* V. Tompkins

*Out of office* auto-reply by Philip Ruthen

Feature Artist Maureen Oliver

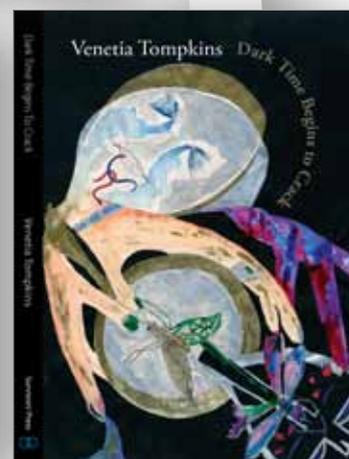
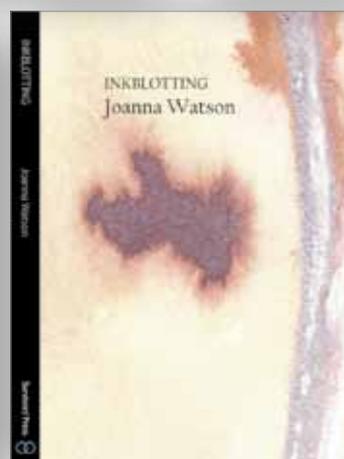
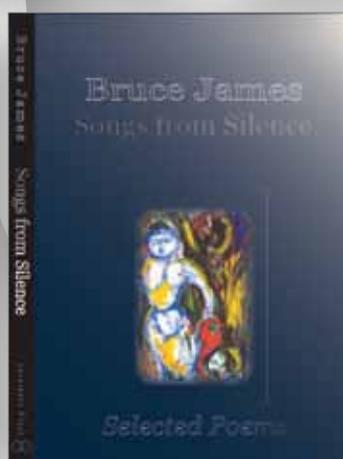
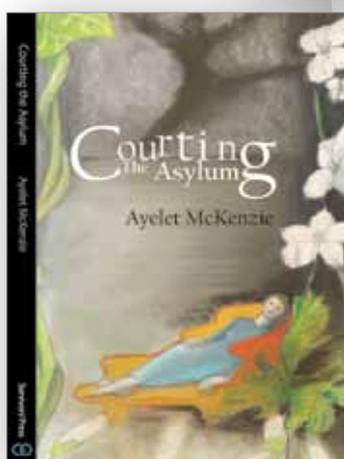
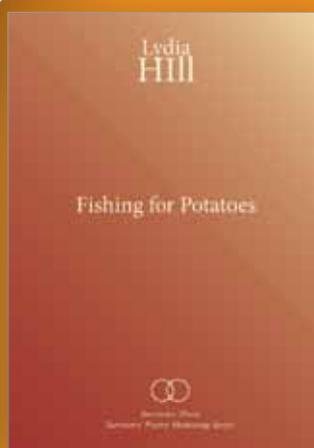
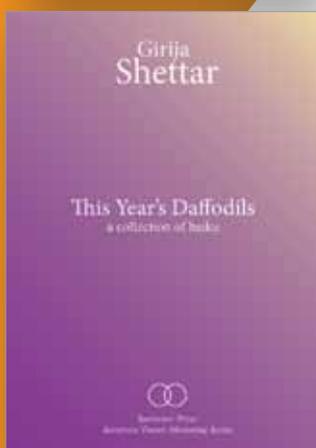
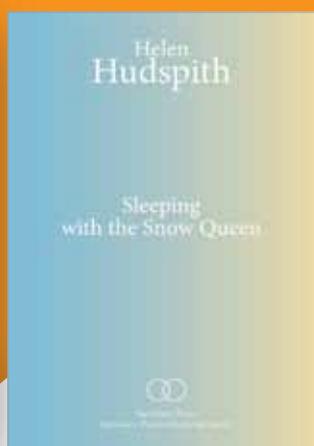
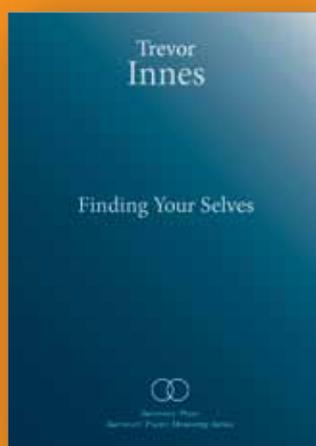
Editor's Special Review of *Dark Time Begins to Crack*

Outside-In – Project for marginalised artists!



 Survivors' Poetry  
promoting poetry by survivors  
of mental distress  
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Available from our online bookshop  
[www.survivorspoetry.org/bookshop/](http://www.survivorspoetry.org/bookshop/) from Survivors' Press



## 2010-11 Publications

**Volumes—£8.00 + £2.40 p&p:**

Ayelet McKenzie—*Courting the Asylum* edited by Akin Oladimeji

Bruce James—*Songs from Silence* edited by Roy Birch

Joanna Watson—*Inkblotting* edited by Naomi Foyle

Venetia Tompkins—*Dark Time Begins to Crack*

**Pamphlets—£5.00 + £1.75 p&p:**

Girija Shettar—*This year, daffodils* edited by Diana Webb

Helen Hudspith—*Sleeping with the Snow Queen* edited by Maggie Sullivan

Mala Mason—*The Coming of the Rains* edited by Bernadette Cremin

Lydia Hill—*Fishing for Potatoes* edited by Peter Carpenter

Sean Burn—*People are their own Dreams* edited by Simon Jenner

Available at <http://www.survivorspoetry.org>

Survivors' Press 

Survivors' Poetry {SP} is a unique national charity which promotes the writing of survivors of mental distress. Please visit :

[www.survivorspoetry.org](http://www.survivorspoetry.org) for more information or please write to us. A Survivor may be a person with a current or past experience of psychiatric hospitals, ECT, tranquillisers or other medication, a user of counselling services, a survivor of sexual abuse, child abuse and any other person who has empathy with the experiences of survivors. *Poetry Express* reflects the expression of interest, as well as poetry and prose, of the survivor community. SP features a mix of contributions.

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Blanche Donnery, Roy Birch & Simon Jenner

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# Editorial

## Dave Russell

Poetry Café, October 13<sup>th</sup>

Another animated evening, highlighting the acoustic duo **Coppins and Musgrave**, from Aberystwyth. They describe their style as 'abstract folk'. Very strong blues base here, with emphasis on Johnson/McDowell style steel national guitar, often with slide. *Steep, Steep Decline* (viewable on Youtube) is a strong anglicized blues, in the spirit of Kevin Coyne. *Next of Kin* is jazzier in feeling; nice number, though the national guitar did not blend well with the acoustic when it came to single-string work. Their set was slightly marred by too much talking. Their eponymous 2008 CD is available via: <http://www.myspace.com/coppinandmusgrave>

Spirited introductions, as ever, from **Razz**; his *Karma* and *Letter to God* posed searching questions about the afterlife. *Kick-Off* reached out empathetically to the emotions underlying the recent riots.

A welcome contribution from **Mala Mason**, with *Mad Mary*, *Making Mistakes* and *Breakthrough*. **Mark Knight** I found quite disturbing and thought-provoking, with his explorations of challenging and inflammatory relationships: "I am the wax in your flame". *Be Careful Where Her Tears Flow* describes a traumatic relationship from the perspective of 10 years after the event, while *The Ballad of Dennis and Sharon* represents a 'trial of strength' between two strong, fiery and dynamic characters. Interesting contribution from **Dave Skull**, with a cappella version of Edgar Broughton's *Thinking of You*, and a searing parody of Blake's Jerusalem.

Some good humour with **Roger Dunn** – *Joke About Glasses* and *Custard Pie Blues*.

**Stuart Black** (on this occasion describing himself as 'The Unknown Poet') did an extremely well-delivered set, the highlight of which was an extended piece with rhyming approximations to London districts (Isleworth/life's worth; Bromley-at-Bow/nowhere to go); some feeling akin to cockney rhyming slang. Bizarre perspective on childhood in *Imagine Yourself 6 or 7 Years Old*. With *Soul Love Song*, **Giten** made a rare departure from his standard abstract sound poetry. It is always good to be reminded that most artists have 'another side', and that the free structure of events enables such to emerge.

Lively finale from **Alain English**, with *Strip Joint* and *Carpe Diem* – brave explorations of the fetish subculture.

**November 10<sup>th</sup>** was a special 'Founders' Night' featuring **Joe Bidder**, **Hilary Porter**, **Frank Bangay** and **Peter Campbell**. **Razz**, in announcing, gave a timely reminder of massive health cuts in Haringey. Frank's set was greatly enhanced by the addition of **Sophia**, who recited some of the words (some with the background of Frank's harmonica) and provided vocal harmonies.

**Joe Bidder** proposed a vote of thanks to all those involved with survivors, and read his poem in celebration of the

Walthamstow Marshes. Other gems included *White Knuckled*, dealing with his visit to Kyrenia – experience of stark nature near areas of conflict; *Rainham Cemetery*; *Headstart*; *Meeting again with a Headhunter* – which expresses some really dark thoughts: "Someone accused me of being an Aztec"; *The Age of Reason*, and *High and Low*. Hilary acknowledged the poetry workshops as a catalyst for her verses. She featured *War Baby*, concerning a man shot from the skies, *Transports of Delight* – her vision of the 'Dream Bus' – an ideal situation where 'no-one flows into your personal space'. Interesting speculation on past and present with *Getting to Know my Ancestor*. She concluded with her latest poem, 'hot off the press', *Pg121 is missing*. Peter gave a panorama of 20 years of his life, covering early days in Scotland and his various London abodes, including Cricklewood and Dollis Hill, and the Secure Wing at West Park, Epsom, where he saw himself as 'a prisoner of war in a different war'. His set included *Dark Water*, *Smile Please* and *The Whisky Boys*.

Great opener with **Philippa** and her *9/11 Poem*. *Madeleine's* musicality and vocal expressiveness continue to advance. Good to hear **Jessica Lawrence**, with her overall sensuality and ever-necessary reminders about tree preservation. Great debut spot for **Jasmine**, who read a poem *Ton of Bricks Like Pricks*, written while in hospital; lively rap rhythm; disturbing phrases like 'out of my bed into my head . . . I'm full of broken glass'. Interesting solo spot from **Sean of Sea Breeze** lugubrious exploration of the consequences of a neck fracture. Good concluding spot from **Chris Lee**, who elicited some lively audience participation.

**Razz** made a dedication to the sad departure of David Bedford, who had been set to orchestrate Roy Harper. He announced that he had recited his 'banker' poem on the steps of St. Paul's. **Ingrid Andrew** proposed a dedication to Razz and Xochitl, and read her moving poem *Such Sadness*: "We don't know how to love each other". There was an indictment of defence corruption and the folly of attacking Iran, thereafter her songs *I am a Withered Tree* and *The Strange Climes, Volatile Times*. There was also an impressive display of posters, covering the 20 years of Survivors' Poetry activity.

**November 26<sup>th</sup>**, at Tottenham Chances, saw *Billy Blake's Birthday Bash*, featuring **Fran Isherwood**, **Heartsong**, **Dave Russell**, **Jazzman John**, **Son of Psycho Yogi**, **King Miserable**, **Rosemary Smith**, **Razz** and **Zolan Quobble**. The programme was admirably illustrative of Blake's two-pronged power and validity – the perpetual contemporary resonance of his words, and his supreme catalytic power to elicit original inspiration. Trenchant 'rewrite' of *Jerusalem* from **Rosemary Smith**; I am sure the 'role model' would have approved. Razz and Dave Russell did radically different 'takes' on *The Human Abstract* and *London*. This excellent presentation deserved a far bigger audience.

# Update

# Simon Jenner

**Come home to a real fire. Buy a Westminster Seat: Parliamentary, Council, or St Paul's, you'll get a warm reception.**

December breaks strikes and governments too. In this season of missed and mellow fruitlessness, Disability and the Arts have once again been heralding a bad year for goats — as Tonto said in *Monty Python's Brand New Papperbok*.

A year ago I wrote to Nick Hurd, Communities Minister, about the potential capital investments in empty, intestate properties. A fortnight ago I wrote again, in case he hadn't heard. We face a homelessness for the arts on a truly epic scale, Brechtian in its sweep, and reminiscent of Michael Billington's scathing chapter (in *State of the Nation*) on the destruction of the theatre: '1979-90: Scenes From an Execution.'

The staff and I face the same prospects. Shortfalls in funding leave us uncertain of jobs, and in my case, a flat. My previous homelessness from 2005-08 was enormously comfortable, in a close friend's spare bedroom. I'm rather nostalgic for such comfort, and was winkled out reluctantly to face a big bad mortgage, my first ever, across the road. I shall call it Mr. Chartwell (after Rebecca Hunt's elegant novel on the Depression Dog of Churchill's who haunted a young woman; and who with his help, she fought off). It's a microcosm of what we all face. And our revenge, bar a few protest riots, are the poor retail outlets this Christmas, and to see more stores close over the season.

I make a particular lament for virtually the last CD specialist shop in the South East: Bastow's Classics of Chichester on 23<sup>rd</sup> December, who encouraged a cottage industry in cards too. It's a tiny corner of a civilised life swept away in virtual lives and deaths as a record industry of majors disappears down a merging black hole and the independents just survive to bring home anything vital.

It's not quite that in the arts. The largest organisations, like the NT (with its NT Live screening in hundreds of cinemas, and thousands globally), and many orchestral and other ventures, do really make a difference on the microcosmic circuit.

But the responsibilities are alarming. For instance, the so-called musical hubs designed to service schools (so they have to access and integrate) that have all lost their music departments, is a policy strain too far. The school provision for poetry too has shrunk beyond the GCSE handbook, to concentrate on one or two poems with stock answers to gain exam results.

We live in a literal culture, and increasingly people in it, unsurprisingly, do literal not lateral things. Any memory of a more lateral way of thinking, even the concept of political spectrums and opinions to the left of the centre-right, begins to fade. One corollary is that there's been an upsurge in fundamentalist or intolerant feeling and, dare one say it, application. It's not just that governments (current or previous) wish people to think literally — and faith schools aren't exactly the most broadening of experiences, speaking as someone who survived a couple. They fear the lateral solutions.

One of these is the notion that because of fractional reserve banking and the banks' credit gap widening from 2001, we're all in debt. It's as if a bankrupt pimp is trying to force us to be sex slaves to pay off his own debt. The current government's complicity is one disaster. The USA's fiscal attempts to stave off the Euro being the default world currency (and thus exposing their own trillions of dollar indebtedness run up from wars) have gone way beyond that, to destabilise everyone, including themselves. The Greeks and Italians weren't any more irresponsible this year than three years back. Speculation is the unacknowledged legislator of the world.

## II

Ah yes, poetry. I remember that. And poetry is always news that stays news. One reason that we sometimes take it too much for granted. It isn't Prussian blue. It doesn't fade.

*Poetry Express* {PE} has been gathering momentum as one of the most marvellously designed poetry e-zines in the world. Occasionally e-zines own a sort of 'whatever' look, owning their virtuality. PE has physical ambitions, and is always rebuffed by contingency, that greater detumescer of budgets and indeed, time. We'd like to physically broadcast *Poetry Express*, not narrow-cast it, but currently that's our option, and a precarious one too, designed devotedly by people with cloudy prospects.

There are several new or recent features: increased political and polemic commentary; some essay-length reviews making a periodic return. A marriage or exhortation to at least dally with, some of the features on the website. The Survivors' Poetry website is now fully operational, and new features are planned or added already. Do look at the narrow-cast videos of poetry performances. Gradually too the quality and depth of our support of individual Survivors' Poetry Network Groups, now accessible on the site, is apparent. They're being slowly populated with comment and news as well as basic contact information.

## III

One feature of Survivors' Poetry has been its unique status, and though we'd rather not be too separate and alone, we have felt that only a clutch of other organizations get it, or know what we do. Doubtless it's because like many organizations we've been fighting day-to-day with a small staff, and though we have liaised spectacularly, we'd still love to be better known and happily greeted.

Things are shifting. We have many contact meetings. As Director I've been communicating and attending Connected Culture panels and offering to serve as peer reviewer through the brokerage of Jocelyn Cunningham at the RSA, as well as encountering many from the arts. Celia Potterton our long-standing trustee is liaising with many groups such as Core Arts, and networking ferociously over the past two months. Xochitl Tuck has always been with Roy Birch our most successful networker, and usually finds us a Treasurer or Board member.

Finally we too are contributing to the arts - donating our musical equipment to Tottenham Chances, as we're not using it often enough to warrant its stashing another moment. They're delighted and we're receiving a fulsome letter of thanks.

#### IV

We've had several retirements recently. Phil Ruthen has been an outstanding Chair and having announced his retirement as pending nearly two years ago, has finally had to step down for a variety of reasons; not least length of tenure. But he will be back. For similarly personal reasons, Judith Graham our spectacularly hard working and successful IT consultant and director of the IT programme of which (dear reader) you're a beneficiary, is also stepping down. She hopes to return. You can't say that about Trustees generally, and whether we inspire a calibre of Trustee to come to us, then make such comments, or additionally inspire them further, we're incredibly lucky to have enjoyed their guidance over such a period. We wish them well and some relief too, from this particular arena of stress. They've more than earned it.

#### V

Marius Jankowski has taken over - again - as Chair, till at least September 2012. He and I were invited to the Royal Society of Literature Address by Adam Phillips on November 21<sup>st</sup>. It essayed Madness and Creativity. Marius is clear: 'Such a demonstration by Phillips of cut-price first year transactional Freudianism, all child psychoanalysis based on a 19<sup>th</sup> century mechanistic universe full of causation on little metal castors, is not only out of date, but nihilistic, mean-spirited, the kind of Professional Aspergers mind-set that causes such stress in the world. He should be force-fed nothing but Grimms Brothers' Fairy Tales for a decade.' Ah yes. Jung.

I felt more sanguine about the poor man. But felt too the cold hand of transactionism reach back to clutch me from over 40 years ago, when for the only time a child psychoanalyst tried to diagnose me. He pronounced me his one failure. I'm undiagnosed, as Marius says, the world dividing into undiagnosed and diagnosed. Later the RAF told me I was gifted at resisting interrogation techniques. A strict Freudian makes you for life and ruins you for eternity.

Phillips's grey locks fluttered fetchingly around the podium as Joan Bakewell parried his more dramatic expostulations. Someone asked about terrorism and happily that was bounced gently, fizzing somewhere into the audience. Phillips does opine that psychoanalysis is closer to poetry than science, so he knows his limits. It's just a pity he doesn't quite understand - in this demonstration of his eminently serge grey mind-set - what kind of madness poetry is.

#### VI

We face the habitual uncertain future. Not because of the Arts Council who've counted us in (not with gently smiling jaws but regular funding till 2015). But our level of funding necessarily can't stretch over three salaries, and I can't work alone for too long. I'm being brought to new fund-raising skills and deputising, by our very able Consultants (who've been forbearing too). We need to develop fresh outlets, outlooks, skills, and skimmed milk rhetoric. Not my strong suit. Don't hold it against di Lampedusa that his novel *The Leopard* is Nick Clegg's favourite, or his famed line: 'If we want things to stay as they are, then things have got to change.' Happy Seasons' Greetings, New Year - and the overthrow of all our black fears and grey oppressions.

## *What people said about the Poetry Café nights!*

“ Most amazing people ”

“ I've been to several of these poetry nights in London. It feels like a piece of history. I think that's good.”

“Great Night - Thanks”

“ The Survivors' Poetry is great, brilliant and lots of fun.”

“Very welcoming and well organised. encouraging and confidence building, inspiring and uplifting!”

“ marvellous, wonderful, fabulous, vital etc...”

:) smiley face

“very friendly and needed”

“ more than good value ”

## National Outreach and Mentoring Report

Since disinvestment in 2006, Outreach has been mainly conducted from the office, with occasional forays out of London to attend Mentoring Scheme Book Launches the bulk of my out of office activity. I recently organized and attended the launch, at Red Lion Books, a very fine independent bookshop in Colchester, of Venetia Tompkins' first published volume, *Dark Time Begins to Crack*, a powerful collection by an extremely talented poet who has waited a long time to be published. I am very happy to be able to say Survivors Poetry has made this possible. Further launches are being readied and I hope they will be as successful as that at Red Lion Books. Still on the subject of mentoring, there has been a steady flow of applicants throughout the year, and some very interesting poetry is awaiting scrutiny by the selection panel. 2012 promises to be another very good year for the scheme.

A potential spin-off from the Colchester launch is the possible inclusion Of Survivors' Poetry in the 2012 Essex Writing Festival, which is set to launch a new Fringe event.

The Vale House Project has entered a new and exciting phase, with day-long monthly sessions which will hopefully become a regular monthly item. There is a very real possibility that the scheme is close to creating a new and powerful aftercare programme for people in recovery. On the group front, Stevenage Survivors has received new funding, both for its regular 2012 programme, and the group's annual Creative Therapy Day. The 2012 programme has been funded by The Co-Operative, and the Creative Therapy Day by Hertfordshire NHS Health Inequalities Fund.

A new group has affiliated to the National Group Network. SWAY (Survivor Writers and Artists, York) is a recently formed group, which has its roots in the interestingly named 'The Institute of Distraction'. SWAY's contact person, Brindley Price, was the facilitator of the aforementioned group.

I am also in a dialogue with Eric Wheeler in the United States regarding a possible affiliation. Such a link-up would greatly enhance our presence in North America. Which could only be beneficial.

There is much potential to be savoured, which will hopefully become a reality in the months ahead. I wish everyone a wonderful Christmas and New Year, and let us hope 2012 will confound the Doomsayers. Aho.

Roy Birch



Survivors' Poetry is delighted to confirm to **Tottenham Chances**, that following unanimous agreement from the board of trustees, we wish to donate our music equipment to the Tottenham Chances music project for the people of Tottenham and surrounding areas, (see list below.) The equipment is in excellent working order.

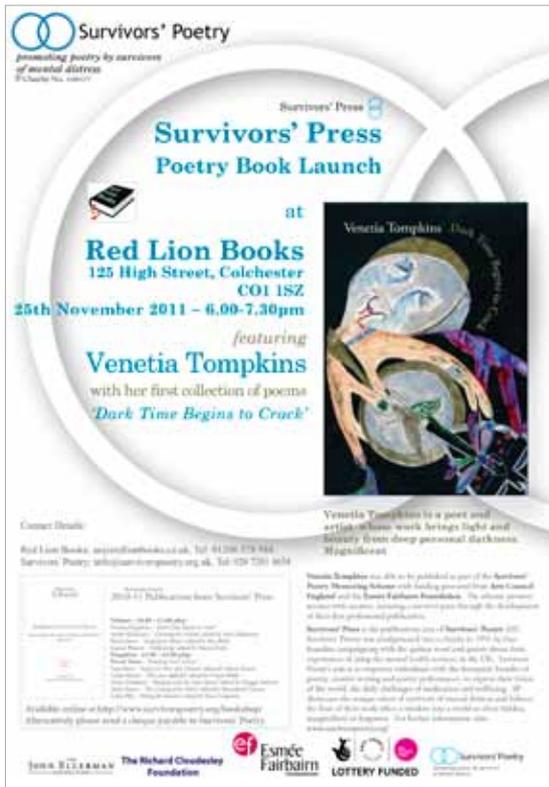
ITEM  
Ultra 6400 E.M.V  
Yamaha Samson  
Mobile Vision & mixer deck  
2 speaker stands  
Jesson  
2 Peavey speakers  
1 V6 amplifier 1  
2Mic stands + case & cables + 2 microphones

Survivors' Poetry hopes that this donation will benefit your events for the foreseeable future.

The screenshot shows the Survivors' Poetry website with a yellow and black color scheme. At the top, there is a navigation menu with links for Home, The Poetry, The Network, Events, and Bookshop. Below the navigation, there are buttons for 'SIGN UP FOR RSS FEED', 'SIGN UP FOR NEWSLETTER', 'MAKE A COMMENT', and 'SUBMIT POETRY'. A large black splash graphic contains the text 'Sign UP for RSS Feed' and 'What to do? One of the things you can do to get updates about things that are happening at SP. We also try to update you about activities you may find of interest. Just click the RSS feed and choose a location for the messages...'. To the right of the splash, there is a text box with an RSS icon that says 'Get updates about what's happening at Survivors' Poetry including: new publications, events and our regular quarterly newsletter Poetry Express! Find out about our latest published authors and event performers as soon as we announce them... Shortly we be launching 3 new publications: Sean Burn; *People are their own dreams* Trevor Innes; *Finding Your Selves* and a collection by Venetia Tompkins; *Dark Time Begins to Crack*'. At the bottom, there is a large 'Events' section with sub-sections for 'Bookshop', 'The Poetry', and 'The Network'. A 'Jobs' section lists 'Trustees', 'Volunteering', and 'Proof Reading'. There is also a mention of 'Poem of the Month', 'Essay of the Month', and 'Performances free downloads'.



# Book Launch in Colchester



**O**n Colchester High Street, opposite the Red Lion Hotel, is Red Lion Books, a very fine independent Book Shop. The owners, Peter and Sarah Donaldson, were pleased to be able to tell me they had survived there for thirty years in the face of ever-increasing market globalization. They deserve their survival and maximum commercial success.

I was in the old Roman garrison town for the launch of Venetia Tompkins' first poetry volume, *Dark Time Begins to Crack*. The book had taken a long time to become a reality, and thereby hangs a tale, which I feel inclined to tell. I joined Survivors Poetry in 2004. In March 2005 we moved from our offices at the old Diorama building to our current location. While sifting through files we had brought with us I discovered an abandoned folder containing poetry, artwork, and a short autobiography. I quickly realized that here was a poet who needed to be in publication, an artist who deserved gallery exposure, and a human who deserved all the help this world is able to offer. I made it my job to help in whatever way I could.

The only way Survivors Poetry can help artists is to have them as the featured artist in Poetry express, our on-line magazine. This we did. The organization is not a publisher in the accepted sense of the word, and the only way we could publish Venetia's poetry was to enrol her as a mentee in our national mentoring scheme. I found her as a mentee and the process of mentoring began. Sadly, Venetia's mentor is a very busy person facing the demands of a professional career, and she eventually found her mentoring duties imposing too much of a burden on her. At which point I

experienced a second realization. The only way to guarantee the publication of Venetia's poems was to mentor her myself. This I did which, in turn, brought me to Red Lion Books in Colchester.

The basement of Red Lion Books is a warm, comfortable space with a pleasant atmosphere. It was here that the launch was held. An active part of the working shop, the basement contains discreet and tasteful alcoves in which feature publications are displayed to advantageous effect. Copies of *Dark Time Begins to Crack* were attractively displayed in the most prominent of these alcoves. There was wine and crisps, and Sarah, Peter's wife, had made mini mince pies and hot spiced apple juice. Venetia was very nervous. She had waited some eight years for the book to become a reality and her self-confidence had taken some serious beatings during that time. My first encounter with the basement had convinced me that all would be well, and so it transpired. Venetia had invited some twenty friends and family and was expecting no better than fifteen to be there. In the event twenty eight souls joined us among the refreshments. And were glad they did.

I opened the proceedings by explaining who I was, the significance of Survivors Poetry, and the history of my relationship with Venetia and her art. Then I introduced the lady herself, who read a short selection of poems from the volume. They were well read and equally well received. Venetia had extracted a promise from me that I would read some of her work but I offered the opportunity to others, an opportunity which was accepted, some fine reading ensued, and I ended the first half of the event with a single poem. The second half of the launch (which followed a substantial interval and comfort break) consisted of Venetia signing copies of the book while we all mingled happily and compared appreciative notes about the poetry. Peter Donaldson praised the design and production quality of Survivors Press; we ate the mince pies, drank the wine, and eventually withdrew from the premises feeling gentle and fulfilled. For me, the real value of book launches is the warm intimacy of the event, the opportunity to commune with the poet's inner circle, to read the words between the words, to know the author as a true human and engage with their vibrational essence. All of which came to pass at Red Lion Books.

Thanks are due to everyone involved in the launch, most especially to Venetia for her wonderful poetry, and Peter and Sarah Donaldson for their efficient and gentle hospitality (oh the mini mince pies and hot spiced apple juice) and their kindness in permitting Red Lion Books to be used as a venue. Thanks are due also to Survivors' Poetry Administrator Blanche Donnery for getting the bookmarks to me in time for the launch. Thank you everyone. May there be many more book launches of this quality.

**Roy Birch**

*Dark Time Begins to Crack* is available from our online bookshop: [www.survivorspoetry.org/bookshop/](http://www.survivorspoetry.org/bookshop/)

# Out of Office Auto-Reply

**‘I am currently out of office, returning at some indeterminate time in the future. The aim is to provide great services every time you contact us and we would value your views about the service you have received, good and not so good. [Click Here](#) to provide feedback. Please note: my emails will not be read during my absence. For all other enquiries contact the call centre on 0xxxx xxxxx and ask to speak to a member of the Team. Regards, ...’**

...or read on for a fuller transcript of an automated message you will hear if you contact the above call centre to register your views; however, the message, as first developed by a local council in the East of England, is now sub-edited, and adjusted for appropriateness:

## Why:

Sometimes it feels like there’s no-one there; such was my surprise at the curt, ironic reply to a concern sent up to the said Council, above. Sometimes, Survivors’ Poetry’s (SP) limited resources get in the way of listening or replying. But we recognised the need - there’s the new-build SP website for a start: [www.survivorspoetry.org](http://www.survivorspoetry.org)

A publicly-financed project that came in within an admirable margin of managed budget slippage and timescales. Prompting the thought that, if your local Council or public service is setting up yet another info hub, ask them - why, and give them some scrutiny. And does the hub contain a diverse range of views, alternate services and polemically entertaining podcasts/vimeos? Does it have less jargon than SP?

Sustainability, sustained growth, the Keynesian argument strangely cropped up when considering, the other night, the curiosity of grant finance. SP – lauded as one of the only two nationally recurrently funded mental health associated organisations by the Arts Council England (ACE), and receiving the larger of the two said organisations’ awards, is up against the buffers and struggling to see where the next salary payments are to come from. This searching, despite the hardest, most rigorous re-application process for financial support from ACE in a generation, if not ever. In proving excellence, in proving reach beyond the supposed natural limitations of endeavour, ‘Sustain’ – the ‘recession-proofing’ funding that saw out the first slump, means that as it ran out after its short-term life was passed, ultimately proofing doesn’t matter. Although the recession bites harder, the means to sustain are near-ceased. The good faith and well-meaning assistance caught us and others out, the celebrations’ memory dulls. Tho’ if another ‘Sustain-like’ infusion arrived across the board, SP, like

thousands of charities, could create thousands of paid posts.

Keynes, not often in my thoughts, on the surface might just have had one or two classic ideas. As I say, just a thought. And skills just happen to accrue naturally, a part of a natural ordering of personal development, think the Coalition Govt. Stumbling over an SP 2006 bid to ACE and the Esmée Fairbairn Foundation toward the national mentoring scheme, a successful bid, a Survivors’ Poetry raison d’être is stated precisely: an opportunity to re-engage with artistic and literary pursuits that have often been denied, overlooked by others, actively discouraged or unavailable, largely because of re-traumatisation and discrimination from connection with the Mental Health system. I have argued elsewhere that exclusion transcends socio-economic, cultural, gender, sexuality, a class exclusion that is beyond the Equality Act, for instance, beyond law, therefore a class-exclusion formed from contact with the mental health system. Considering why exclusion was, and is, sustained will raise the profile of this singular organisation a little more. We know SP is relevant. In view of its reach to people who are not naturally at odds with each-other, or to those if ordinarily found together in the same room their views would no doubt collide, SP has been awarded the task of providing the arena for recognition, if nothing more; and for transformation, if sustained.

Much could fall between two stools, and under the table; here, either a short ‘thank you so much, no regrets, SP has my gratitude, awe, irritation and indulgence’ in a quick 300 word sign-off as Chair for almost 4 years, or, as surprisingly was expected of me by the Poetry Express team, a memoir of the life and times of Trustee-ship. The highs and not so highs and highs and sideways excursions in 1500 or-thereabouts- prose, on this occasion I’ve moved to take an alternate route.

I quote 2006, because the ethos, drive and direction of SP has been sustained, and the following paragraphs from the bid, I argue, could as well have been written this evening about SP in 2011/12 and its approach, as then:

“Even today many (all, probably, going into 2012) of our staff, volunteer helpers, advisors and trustees come from a survivor background. This fact puts the organisation in a unique position to act on its vision of society. A society in which survivors can work towards emotional and mental stability through the discipline and truth to self that is a prerequisite for the imaginative expression in language of traumatic experiences. Survivors’ Poetry doesn’t just play with the therapeutic benefits of creative writing, though. It actively supports and promotes the sheer linguistic

talent that many survivors bring to their insight into their own condition and that of others. Even after sixteen years, (now 21 years) the organisation's work continues to focus on personal development and survival in its widest sense."

A grand tribute to the SP staff team, volunteers, Trustees, mentees and mentors – the SP community who individually and collectively I send sincere thanks and best wishes, writing during a winter's evening in London, 2011, and replying in kind with SP's own words.

I'm intending to keep in regular contact, return as a Mentor, possibly facilitate an advisory panel for the Board to have access to as a sounding-board and critical 'friend', that might also act as a channel to and from members and groups. I've been introduced recently to sound models of this structure in the Survivor organisational world. I may seek an EU grant to develop an organic vineyard in South East Europe, as the psychiatrist, who did my second opinion a number of years ago, said he was going to do. In any case, raise a glass; I'll sign-off with an SMS:

### Square Mile Suspicion

Flip the lighter  
Label side up  
Potential's held by butterfly clips.

Out of office. Phil Ruthen has for the time being left the building.

©Phil Ruthen. December 2011.

## Networking

**On 10<sup>th</sup> November and 6<sup>th</sup> December I attended two sessions of the total five sessions at Camden Voluntary Action in the *Better Governance Programme for Trustees*.**

The first session was on Financial Management. This gave a good overview into budgeting and understanding accounts. It also led me to meet two new contacts – Steven Bobasch, Trustee of Camden Citizens Advice Bureau, and Ollie Smallwood Trustee of Upbeat Charity for Mental Health Users.

The second session dealt with Partnership issues and here again by a strange process of serendipity

I found myself sitting with Voytek Rogowski who is a councillor at MIND in Camden and Dan Maher who is Chair of the Philadelphia Association. The Philadelphia Association is an amazing organisation consisting of two houses with a core number of residents, one in Islington and one in Haringey. The places are allocated either by medical referral or self referral to people who have experienced mental health problems. It provides for communal living and also a daily programme of meetings and therapies. There are currently three places available in Islington. We explored synergies between our three organisations and it was agreed that by being aware of what the three organisations do we could potentially become more effective.

### Promoting Resilience: Priorities and Support for the Voluntary and Community Sector in Islington

On Saturday 19<sup>th</sup> November I attended this conference at Islington Assembly Hall. This was a spirited attempt to rationalise the insecurity generated by current government policy which cuts through all areas of daily living. There were some excellent speakers including Jeremy Corbyn, MP who made the opening address and Councillor Catherine West, Leader for Islington Council who spoke with force about the Council's actions within the borough to manage the cuts and community stresses caused by them. The theme of the conference was voluntary action and how this could be channelled for the benefit of the community to deal with the growing inequality between rich and poor.

My brief was to raise the profile of Survivors' Poetry so I joined with a group to discuss Mental Health issues and how these are being exacerbated by government policy. I linked with representatives from St Mungo's, Freedom from Torture, Islington Link and groups dealing with female oppression. The discussion centred on poor mental health being a cause of concern particularly in relation to certain ethnic groups. It was agreed that stigma was one of the most uncomfortable side effects. It was also agreed that funding was the most serious problem that voluntary organisations are now facing.

Overall I found the conference stimulating and constructive. It made me aware of how wide an issue mental health is and how many organisations are actually working to help people who because of their situation have somehow become victims.

**Celia Potterton**

# BROADSHEET

## Meeting of Minds

While I was waiting  
It's those walls I recall  
Traditional Turner  
Cheerful Hockney.

Pan Pipes seeped out  
Another wall Wordsworth  
Good garden Glossy's  
Soothing Impressions.

Depression Suppression's  
Pre-Prep by the Shrink  
Anxieties release a sigh  
Emotions release a cry.

My cold-walled mind  
Is closeted and blind  
Bio-Book by Garland  
Taped Plath by Plath.

Wailing Wall of Scream  
Lowry bent Sticklebacks  
Wild and weird Warhol  
Obsession by Clavin Prozak.

## John Hirst

## Immigration

On Waterloo Bridge I eat  
a thousand languages  
with my back t' the world.  
I taste its smell with the riches  
of earth. I invent a home  
for each continent of light. I find  
a place for each island and man.  
History is like music, a tradition  
of song.

On a stone clock with gold hands,  
the sun is setting on the hour.  
Towering over churches of rest,  
the City of London, its universal  
tongue. Go in peace; the  
water is equal to your destination.

## Austin McCarron

## Nowhere to hide

Really in trouble with the carecommunity now; kitchen nose and moon cheese fight  
over demonic possession of some kind or another — saying yeah it's like this  
then exploding; it is like this — thought that peace treaty was right Jelly Bean  
Yellow alert — hope to survive, hey there ...

## Tamlin Hodgkinson

## Asylum Solstice

*(written IV<sup>2</sup>-21<sup>st</sup> December 2010 in Basildon Mental Health Unit)*

The Oracle stands perplexed in his suitable chamber and thinks.  
To a man he languishes like Merlin upon his staff at Agincourt.  
But to one woman his very life is a source of ignominy.

He melds the snow to his cloying heart, confused by generous love  
love that never filled him with sadness  
love he will leave at her door like dead carnations in an urn.  
Together we remain in December's cold white landscape,  
Each one filled with lonely insanity and dense voices' naive threats.

Once he loved you enough to risk this open-ended fate —  
For the Mental Health Act, though a good mother  
Is a cruel mistress in red rage or yellow delusion.

When I watched you, elegant and safe on display,  
Reading the day's woes

I considered my own celebratory celebrity-salacious antics  
and pitied him.

There are no longer any true asylums for the mad or maladjusted,  
Although some will leave this place of safety

tardy,  
immediately,  
tragically  
and neither will see the other's pain.

Cold air fills the mind when darkness falls this Asylum Solstice,  
Be at peace with one another and reduce sin within,  
Sell your mental wares if need be, my dear old friend.

Let the snow fall  
Your mind dry,

safe,  
intact.

## R.T. Watts

## The End of Days

Who's written the script for the end of days?  
Have you seen the writing on the wall?  
When I die I'll go to Heaven cos this is Hell!  
Suicide: No! Murder by society.  
Can you hear the heartbeat of the Earth?  
She is fading, fading, fading away.  
Heal the earth but the moguls might find you in the way.  
Who has written the script for the end of days  
Can you look up to a starry night  
See in your sight the trails of planes?

Oh the pains! They creep into my skull  
The nightmares intensify, and the paranoia again  
Begins to set in. So many strange minds out there  
Take me on board: I'd like to get to Eden  
If you have a ride to spare.

Who's written the script for the end of days?  
So many ills and so many pills — the body breaks apart.  
Will it be the poison psychiatrists give  
That will engender heart attack if taken with booze?

Either way, do you win or lose!  
You start to wonder what your doctor prescribes –  
Pure poison in sugar-coated disguise  
Die young; leave a good-looking corpse

Oh Jimmy Dean is that in your report?  
And Norma Jean too, when her time was overdue –  
Be careful who you mix with; they can do funny things  
Like come in to your home and bring . . . well, not rings

Unless that is someone pressing on my bell!  
Telling me to quit this suburb of rural hell.  
Got two big claims to fame:  
Biggest spot for schoolgirl mothers  
Artist Tracy Emin is the other name.

Who has written the script for the end of days?  
Love your neighbour like yourself  
Hah! Only if it pays and you need something  
Then you can proceed with a sanity summons.

Who has written the script for the end of days?  
Look in the mirror — you might see a reflection says  
Feed the trillions, lay back the billions and plough it into soil  
Clean up the Earth — stop, Oh God! STOP USING OIL!

## Joy Sheridan

## Running Away

At boarding school I used to sit  
In a cupboard I called the 'love in',  
Early hippy days of flower power  
I was twelve, felt like a small fish  
In a big pond striving to be a princess  
Of fish in my own jeweled pond  
So I sat in my 'love in', with my guitar  
Playing songs of love and peace to my  
Friends. They knew where to find me.  
'Look in the cupboard' they whispered.

Up in the Art tower conflict between  
Myself and the art teacher Miss Gay  
Battles at Battle Abbey  
Maybe she saw something of herself in me  
We clashed and clanged  
After that the staff could not find me for  
hours  
Jo has run away. The police were called  
Parents were informed. The search was on  
Runaway! Three hours later a pal  
suggested  
Look in the cupboard. There I was in all  
innocence  
Runaway? Me? I hoped I had given Miss  
Gay  
Something to think about. I never did like  
painting  
After that.

## Running Away (*part two*)

She ran away from so many 'things',  
Responsibilities as a so called adult  
She would nip out for a cigarette  
Here there and everywhere. Can't sit still  
She would anchor feet under the table  
To join in at dinner at weekends  
A little fish a little dish of this  
And that. Stewed fruit. Conversation  
Becomes painful. She can she can't  
Join in! Cannot live for the moment  
Eeeek! The *can't* woman.

No such thing.  
As can't. My Grandmother's favourite  
Saying. Don't grizzle dear, as her small  
Granddaughter sampled the colourful  
Liquor bottles kept in the corner for guests,  
The local Jewish community who came  
To the house for, 'Shabbat'. Find yourself  
Something useful to do. And she would  
Give her, 'Something, USEFUL, to do  
The silver to polish and walk her around  
The local small park by the Chained Bull  
Pub. Give her a biscuit to feed Smokey

The bite sized bitey Cairn terrier.  
She stood on a tapestry covered chair to  
Perform this task as Smokey bounced  
Up in the air to devour the biscuit  
Like a small dragon . . .

On Sundays or during the week Grandpa  
Would take her to the factory  
To see the cats sitting on bales of material,  
Working cat, keeping the mice at bay.  
They ran away from her as she made a bid  
To catch them in hope of a purr  
They had their responsibilities.  
No time to play.

**Jo Silver**

### **Seaside day trip-storm**

Lashing the sea wall, segmented salt spray  
Refreshing, iced water, bleaching problems  
Into the waves light blue grey, white foam  
Then I am back in the town, the hub

A girl in red fleece blows pink bubble gum  
While pushing a pram. A butcher in clean  
White apron walks business like to work

youth drunk meanders arching, carrying  
pub ashtray. A man in a tweed jacket  
Smokes a pipe, tattoos half shown on forearms

Eccentric passersby pass and glance at me  
Amongst the shoddy and divine, looking  
Left and right, a gulls cry, then flown away  
Leaving a ribbon of hope after the storm

**Nick Monks**

### **Beech Trees**

Through the dank trunks, a bleak moon  
Rises like dust and madness

Time is a wolf padding through eternity

Bluebell pollen falls finally into Cambrian bracken

It's as if I, a solicitor, wasn't there  
Yet there more so, in true answering.

**Nick Monks**

### **Risk Management**

Inside the inside, a space-age closet  
flaunts its off-white moulded plastic,  
smooth yet rough, aligned north-south,  
a font with narrow rim — no seat or lid —  
push-button flush — no handle, chain or cistern.  
Flimsy paper. Pouch of liquid pink.  
A basin in the wall — no splashback, taps or plug —  
sprurts droplets, jets, abruptly stops —  
*CAUTION: VERY HOT WATER.*

Patients trickle in unscheduled,  
dazed, depressed, distressed, dishevelled,  
furtive, careless, apprehensive, lost,  
an odd obsessive neatly trousered,  
even people with their minds  
watching from the door.

Patients perch perhaps or stand or hover,  
push or squeeze or retch bent-over—  
a void of uncommissioned stuff

Enquired about, all duly noted,  
coded, processed, costed, audited,  
collated: evidence for meeting targets,  
strategies for planning pathways, guidelines,  
managing systemic hazards, governance,  
providing packages of not-quite-care.

Refurbished sanctuary  
privy to human rites, clandestine habits,  
fragile beings, bureaucratic doings —

Smoke detector, ceiling light;  
waste bin screwed to green-flecked floor;  
no brush or bleach; no door hook, cords or pipes;  
no window, mirror, glass or shiny surfaces;  
no self-reflection, pondering or questioning  
the emptying in B flat minor.

No risk of anyone hanging.

Joanna Watson

## **If you can't feel at home in a library**

If you can't feel at home in a library  
Where the hell can you?  
Its automation time; time to push on  
And there we are at the counter  
The cash register  
The staff trained to respond  
To the needs of people  
Such as myself  
It doesn't matter that I am having a bad day  
I am still staying with it  
Rather like hooking a fish  
And expecting it to be able to read  
And strike up a conversation  
Now the sea has its own ways  
Even the horizon  
Every speculation cannot swim out  
Beyond everything else  
To live I crawl out from the beach  
And place my paws  
Beneath my toes  
I press into the sand beneath  
As I stare at the water  
Swirling even the crests of waves  
Puddles and the flickering sunlight fading  
They say or so I have come to understand  
That the earth is round  
I will bury all that for half a crown  
I didn't plan for this to happen  
All I can say is that I am reacting  
I am surrounded by science  
All trying to be inventive  
To create something new  
If seems we are no more than slaves  
With no direction or comments  
Just the usual behaviour  
After you are out of school  
You slot into a career. Proceed with caution.  
Dripping paint over your hands and feet  
A square shape appears. A canvas  
As if this could penetrate through it  
To come out the other side  
To forget everything of any relevance  
Every opposition is resolved  
A plan emerges inside my mind  
I don't need to die, I will have to wait for that  
There are so many details I seem to leave out  
I can't spin my head around and see the light  
As it comes thru the glass windows  
Inside myself now. Is a body  
I am using it. Some would say that this isn't much of a job  
I pull the slot machine and win the jackpot  
There is of course money to be had  
Realize that, years later I arrived and discovered  
That I was so poor, I would have to beg borrow and steal.  
Lately things happen. Let us forget all the philosophy  
I have learnt, it is more than confusing  
It gives me thoughts about so much

I can't quite pinpoint exactly  
What it was that I was learning  
I might as well forget all the theories  
Draw me a line. Don't worry if it doesn't rhyme  
There are no right or wrong ways to write  
Each word has its own spellings  
Even making mistakes it is best to start  
Start if you like somewhere else  
I can imagine as I drag thru space  
That I am back at home in my flat  
And I am watching the TV set  
To be relaxed even when each thing you see  
Is so different. I can't keep up with it  
I might as well stop this. We have travelled together  
If you don't understand this. Don't worry  
I am not quite sure I do either.

**Dave St. Clair**

## **After Dark**

The very thought of it makes me feel sick  
I can't write anymore.  
I might just as well stay here  
And make my mind up  
And whatever happens  
I might just as well start again  
Observe this moment  
The thought of having to think  
You and I  
We are a part of something  
Much bigger than ourselves  
We try our best  
Even when nothing quite works  
I have to reject memories  
And remembering  
Stop going back  
As if I could by some miracle  
Forget  
The past raises its head  
Almost as if it were something  
That won't budge  
I can't shift it just meet it halfway  
Use thoughts as a tool  
Rather than a mental straight jacket  
Can I be free  
And what exactly do I mean by that  
At least there by the seaside  
I can look out at the sky  
Its radiance kissing the waves  
And as they crash down to the shores  
I drag my carcass away  
And step one letter at a time  
Staying there on the sidewalk  
Or pavement

In whatever language you like  
 One learns and continues to do so  
 With hope that after the demise  
 Of our planet and the collision  
 Between nation states  
 And the pollution  
 And environmental disasters  
 As if we were unable to react  
 As the water swamps  
 Our village or a hurricane  
 Sends debris through the sky  
 Even when New York  
 Has recovered  
 And the economy  
 Even the political  
 We can't do it without you  
 We need people  
 To step away from the machine  
 It isn't money or security we seek  
 It is harmony and peace  
 We cannot believe in the powers that be  
 The politicians and the governments  
 The people elect a candidate  
 Then history closes  
 The critiques are brushed aside  
 The purpose for what reason now  
 Seems to have become disconnected  
 Love and hate god and the devil  
 Everything seems to have passed away  
 And whatever is left afterwards  
 Is the collapse not of the world  
 Or its nature but what mankind  
 Has done been forced to  
 Out of a necessity to acquire  
 A better life style  
 It isn't right. For myself  
 I have said as much as I can for today  
 Check in later for the next edition of  
 The journals and comments  
 Of myself.

**Dave St. Clair**

### **Harness of Time**

Harness of time reins Pegasus stars shine,  
 Whose rising shews now hauls stern's sailing Ka's,  
 Across the heavens in poles ploughed align,  
 On rode see's corse of Pharaoh and great Ra's,  
 So bridled arcs wing flight o'er cosmic's flow,  
 To Nile a reed boat in the saddled skies,  
 While blaze of Sothic's star ere belt suns' row,  
 Now guide sons in an orbit which stare's the eyes,  
 And draws a draft in silence through the night,  
 Like passages in Pharaoh's cryptic rest,

Where he's bound not but sails in in-verse light,  
 To heaven's sound Osiris's gold zest.  
 Thus time does wind its course in lights awed space,  
 And with these man-gods do eternal race!

**Barry Bradshaigh**

### **Did in Eden**

Wherein an Eden tree of Knowing's fruit,  
 Lying in bore like lies swung serpent's tongue,  
 Laid yet a sea of seeing desire mute,  
 When wavering in Longing's sire was hung,  
 Then was temptations end a covet's wall,  
 Or Milton's disobedience of man,  
 Or did an inner wanton sin hare call,  
 When grasp's fruit of would's hand was just pluck's span,  
 Did incline's court a naked lie steel Eve,  
 Whose stalk did bear and was an eyes distal,  
 Or prise did kiss in reaches sweet retrieve,  
 As covet's k-not was eyed fruit's pedestal.  
 Then hung desires did reap a pluck's sung fruit,  
 Or ne'er were stringed lies more strung than sight's loot.

**Barry Bradshaigh**

### **Death Camp Survivor**

Heal my eyes with prints  
 of light, although the winter  
 sun is starved of hands

Drink in my memory the smell  
 of heaven's food, white corpses,  
 grilled to perfection,  
 on plates of piping hot flame.

I see in mirrors of darkness the  
 mood of fate.  
 On sands of water  
 I release a sound. By the rivers  
 of origin I kneel in music  
 until all I am is ecstatic and blind.

**Austin McCarron**

## **In Defence of Existence**

I sleep on a map of sounds,  
where the mask of my voyage  
is undone.

I see rare plants crushed in books  
of sorrow.  
I rest in deserted monasteries.  
I visit sites of immense shame.  
I pass ruins of ecstatic invention.

I walk beside failed gardens. I find  
birds without air.  
I hear speech without human voices.  
I am sick without being ill.

Nothing is real. I give my blood to the  
sea but the sea is empty. I give my  
lungs to the wind but the wind is silent.  
I raise  
a fire but there is no proof of flames.

Proclaiming nothing I breathe for the dead.  
Immaculate cities follow me everywhere,  
tearing at the absolute,  
conditioned, like machines, to improve.

**Austin McCarron**

## **London Riots**

On grey city mountains the attack  
of vices,  
the people's flame, where rivers  
of police  
flow in silence on a street of caves.

Before nature, shoes of glass and  
matches of blindfolded water, where  
gangs of mirrors  
look a pictures out of dead machines.

The sea of morning waits on crowds  
of rock, where torches of justice and  
teams of  
blood gather by a tribe of sunny lakes.

Captured like walkers in dramatic slides  
the images  
of beauty and waste. Drawn out of a fist  
of floating light the  
accidental moonscape, the degenerate ray.

**Austin McCarron**

## **Whitehaven**

The voice is distant, with its silent  
outpouring, its vision of unimpaired  
beauty, its judgment of time, turned  
on itself with ferocious greed like skin  
approaching blood.

In waters of snow, sprinklers of devastation,  
the world is blind; whole cities crumble  
at its touch. Picking on a street of random  
faces is proof of the heart's exile.

Next is the climb to hard won solitude, with  
trees of mesmerizing shadows, floors of  
empty spaces, hiding in silence  
the hands of all you once completely held.

Profoundly unknown the expression  
of barbarous light, dreamed  
out of masks bitten by the ethereal self.

**Austin McCarron**

## **The Death of Responsibility**

Moving through each room  
of my house  
I come to ghosts of the inarticulate,  
spirits of atrocity,  
redeemed like ashen  
saviours in great fires of human blood.

I hear them sing on shores of time,  
sprayed with signs,  
in circles, shouting  
at each other for justice and for peace.

I see the age of light, in crowds, infinite  
and calm,  
licked clean of voices, pushed blind into  
water, blue with sound,  
charged with the death of responsibility.

Guarding its stern elations with a row of  
tongues I watch strange beasts come and  
go. Here on  
a corner of islands I wait for silence to end.

**Austin McCarron**

## From **Leaves of Grass**

Ah poverties, wincings, and sulky retreats,  
Ah you foes that in conflict have overcome me,  
(For what is my life or any man's life but a conflict with foes,  
the old, the incessant war?)  
You degradations, you tussle with passions and appetites,  
You smarts from dissatisfied friendships (ah wounds the sharpest  
of all!)  
You toil of apinful and choked articulations, you meannesses,  
You shallow tongue-talks at tables (my tongue the shallowest of any);  
You broken resolutions, you reacking angers, you smothered ennuis!  
Ah think not you finally triumph, my real self has yet to come forth,  
It shall yet march forth o'ermastering, till all lies beneath me,  
It shall yet stand up the soldier of ultimate victory.

**Walt Whitman** (1819-92)

taken from *We have Come Through* published by  
Survivors' Poetry and Bloodaxe

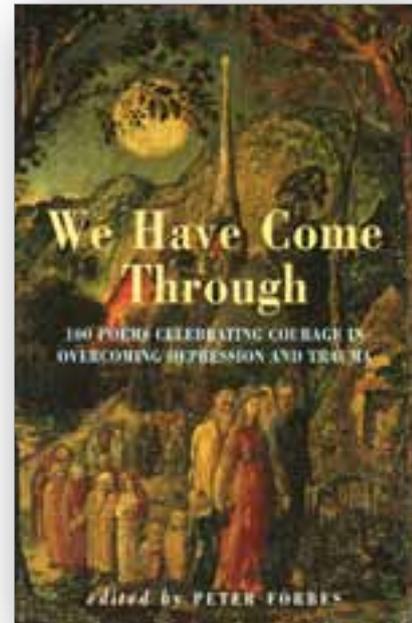
## **Goddess**

I knew she was around again –  
felt her presence, palpable  
in the corners of the dim room and  
the dark recesses of mind.  
Even in the garden's misty  
autumn light she has been  
rustling though the leaves,  
shimmering silver in the falling rain.

Now she turns her face to me –  
a loving face – pure personification  
of kindness. Her liquid gaze, her smiling rosy lips  
belie an ancient truth  
for now she turns her head  
and terror grips me as I see  
the other side of her –  
the darkness, the vacancy.

No warmth in this aspect – her eyes flash  
with spite, the mouth is drawn back  
over snarling teeth.  
I recoil in fear, step back a little –  
its too late, she has taken me  
to Hades, where I will stay,  
longing for one last glimpse  
of that bright smile.

**Maureen Oliver**



## **Breaking Down**

It was snuggling warmth,  
it was babies suckling  
in a cosy kitchen  
while bread baked  
sending fragrance  
along the hall  
and out into the chill and  
misty streets.  
It was laughter, sometimes  
tears, but smiles and soft words  
and coruscating gold  
and silver light glowing  
as she lit the candles  
on the birthday cakes,  
warming fire on days of  
biting frost.

The Sun would filter  
Through the lacy patterned  
tree outside the window  
as they baked together,  
played together modelled shapeless little things  
and painted pictures; bright strokes  
of colour falling  
splashing on the paper.

The pickaxe shattered all of that.  
In a fearful arch of pain it rose and fell,  
audible, awful, screaming, full of dread –  
and she could not stop it, the breaking down.  
That world that seemed so safe, entire,  
So whole, smashed all to pieces and  
However long she would try to put it back  
together,  
no amount of Heaven's glue  
would ever mend those broken hearts.

**Maureen Oliver**

## **Dish-Dash-Dine**

There was bubble and squeak in everything she did with spam fritters in her hair, a splash of scotch bonnet metal underwear.

We repair to the condor and bugle with a bird's eye view, we order Egyptian cornflakes inside a coconut shoe.

Dish-dash dining came to soon, make a dash for the military pickle, the cow jumped over the garlic moon.

Slot machine cucumbers on top of a green line bus, femme potatoes in stretch-limo crust-displayed in front of us everybody marches on their stomach, a travesty of sparks and a spear of headache will cure the worst of cramps

Dish-dash dining came to soon, make a dash for the hammer and sickle, Japanese tear cakes alive in the back room

The clouds are fragrant mashed potatoes floating on a bed of cotton wool, behind the scenes-a bag of mixed leaves decide on divide and rule

We order foxglove omelet followed by jackdaw pie, she sat on Zelda plums pudding that put an end to the rise

Dish-dash dining came too soon. A tourist extravaganza of centrifugal force, all known jams in a fifteen minute curfew military female pickled in bubble, a babble of Zelda's squeak a jacket of omelet and foxgloves face a condor beak

A potential of bay leaf sleight of hand, locked in a saddlebag of green line wine gum rubber band

Dish-dash dining came to soon, slot machine fritters lounge downhill coconut puddings land on the moon

It's all in the sink, trouble at mill.

## **Anthony Moore**

### **I'd like to get you on a slow boat to Netto (for Queen Lilibet)**

I'd like to get you on a slow boat to Netto and keep you all to myself alone  
where we can discuss the colours of the sun and roam the palace laundry just for fun

I'd like to get you on a slow boat to Netto

and keep you away from the 2 tone mobile phone Bobs yer uncle,

Miss Abbots yer aunt we'll roll out the barrel given half a chance

I'd like to get you on a slow boat to Netto and keep you all to myself alone

Noble deeds and hot baths beat the blues

Lets stroll arm in arm to the Bosons' barbecue

I'd like to get you on a slow bat to Netto

and save the Aldi coupons until the lord mayors show

do you swash when you buckle, or buckle when you swash

they'll be lobster in the morning, forget the next dog watch

I'd like to get you on a slow boat to Netto, all to myself alone

My first year without a martini tickled you pink My ward is my bond in a partial eclipse

I'd like to get you on a slow boat to Netto and eat you like a dog with a bone you said to beat the boots go boost the blood polish your cosh, and go plot your flood

I'd like to get you on a slow boat to Netto and keep you to mice-elf alone

You took every ounce of cello I had

I heard the colour and tasted the fad

I'd like to get thee on a slow boot to Netto and keep you to myself alone

It's a quarter to six on the lower deck

It takes me back to the mattress in the shed

I'd like to get you on a slow boat to Netto and shiver me timbers to Titus groan

We tried to lift a lid on the top of the hill

no margin for error, teaching understudy the drill

Oh I'd love to get you on a slow boat to Netto and watch the officers tow the rope alone.

## **Anthony Moore**

## Marooned

The garden is longer today.  
Someone stole the fish pond,  
the garden shed has turrets and a drawbridge.  
The moat is dry and the enemy have come up very close.  
I know, I can see them.  
I have no weapons.  
I wouldn't use them if I had,  
it takes courage to defend yourself.  
I've got a kettle filled with water and a primus stove.  
The plan is to wait it out.  
In time the garden will shrink again  
and I will make it back up to the house.  
The cherry tree is dropping its blossom,  
it must feel that as quite a loss.  
I hope they look after the fish and the tadpoles,  
they've got their back legs already.  
The spring sun is a lean friend,  
bright, but not much warmth,  
that light that shows up all the faults.  
Winter up and left a few weeks ago.  
Didn't say goodbye.  
The mice have had the biscuits,  
still, there's sugar for the coffee.  
No one knows I'm here.  
I never know whether to leave the spiders' web  
or brush it down, that always seems cruel,  
all that hard work.  
What right have I to dust it away I wonder?  
Wish I had a friend coming round.  
No. You need friends for that.  
The birds are singing again  
that's a good sign.  
I think I'll try and make it back to the house.

## Venetia Tompkins

**I married my vibrator in St. Stephen's Shopping  
Centre, and gave birth to twin electronic sheep  
— We divorced 6 months later — 'he' knew what  
'buttons to press'**

I've nothing to do now  
I don't have to wring a  
Chicken's neck and feel it's O.K.,  
Cos I'll starve if I don't or  
Pluck it and stuff it with chestnuts  
And thyme or trap the mice or  
Feed the pigs or milk the cows,  
Rub two sticks for cooking,  
Bone a salmon, fast on Friday  
Or trim the oil lamp —

It's 2012 — it's the flick of a switch  
Press the control button, sink into your  
Bottom and slither down the screen with  
Your mindless jelly, and watch the telly,  
Become a slob — no reason to exist,  
because It's all there at the press of your index,  
The flick of the switch, eat a bag of chips  
Or phone for a pizza, smoke and smoke  
'Till you kipper your lungs and drop dead  
Of boredom, 'cos there's nothing to do —

Technology took over, human life is extinct,  
You no longer exist to do anything else  
But bend your wrist and press 'start'  
For the robots — who have all the fun  
All you have to do is sit on your bum —  
You don't have to live — you've got  
The soaps — you live their marriages,  
Murders and hopes, vicarious living  
Is 'making the most . . .', LIFE is sucked  
Into a metal box, human superfluity  
Turned to blocks of giant and massy  
Fossilised thighs and better dead  
Than being alive!

Put a chip inside me and get me moving!  
I wanna be a ROBOT if this couch potato  
Life is 'living' —

Hail Holy *Barbie full* of grace  
Blessed are you amongst Little Women  
How I longed to take your place!

## Post Script

St. Stephen was the I St. Christian Martyr —  
His Feast Day is December 26th  
The shops will be open!  
GOD IS DEAD,  
And I wish I was  
Cos KEN KICKED ME IN THE HEAD!

## Angela Morkos

### The Lamp

Their words were spiders  
Crawling over my young body,  
Slyly weaving sticky cobwebs  
In my head to arrest clear thought —

Pulling my head back by the hair  
They slit my throat — mournful  
Cries of sea gulls escaped from my mouth  
And circled, lost in the chilly atmosphere —

The cries were laments to a life stolen  
By power-hungry, malicious thieves.

They celebrated my death  
By worshipping the silver gods,  
Their masters, their eyes cold and  
Glutted with the slaughter of truth.

Living my life in Shadowland  
I discovered an antique lamp  
Which spoke of wisdom and beauty  
Throughout the jail-stricken years —  
It shone on the fertility of my  
Secret Garden as I fed crusts  
To the birds and as the lamp  
Coaxed away the pain inside —

— O Lamp, my Healer, my Friend and Guide!  
You warmed my cheek through the  
Battering gales of despair, beckoning me  
To climb up to the rarified Olympian air  
Where I've built a fortified castle, a holy sanctuary —

The castle has no brick, grouting nor lock,  
It's the Castle of my Mind they will  
Never now destroy,  
And it was the Lamp  
That bade me build this Castle —  
Which will always sustain me  
Throughout the famines and purgatories  
Of the Soul.

**Angela Morkos**

### **Summer Evening**

They clamped my mind  
My fingers try to speak,  
To scratch a message  
On the prison walls of  
This Death Camp. Life  
Is like waiting on Death Row,  
Some people bury me alive —  
I feel I don't exist anymore,  
They snatched my soul away  
From me at the point of a gun —  
They tore off my face —  
Stamped away the features  
And tossed it onto a refuse heap —

Muzzled woman squats on the floor  
As a motorbike sears through  
The black vacuum of silence  
And her brow is branded with  
Deep furrows in the soupy heat  
Of a summer evening

**Angela Morkos**

### **Cutting Edge Poetry**

*(for Julie R.I.P.)*

My arms and shoulders  
Are the stone I've incised  
My verdict on you, mother —  
The hieroglyphic cipher  
That you never saw, that I  
Spent my teenage and adult  
Years etching on my skin-slate  
With razor-blade, glass shard  
And kitchen knife — my artist's tools —  
When I had time to work, that is.

As I spent most of my life  
On the streets — a homeless beggar 'orphan'  
Wrapped in a blanket — and also in Mind Centres  
Where my cartoons and sketches (pen on paper)  
Were admired by fellow manic-depressives  
Who loved art,  
They played the C.D. by R.E.M.  
At my funeral (I didn't survive that crucial age  
Of 26 — the Meeting House packed with friends)  
They sang 'Everybody Hurts Some Time' —

I touched many lives, mother  
Yet all I felt from you were  
The terrifying punches you gave me,  
The empty ache of your ice-hard rejection  
And the painful lashes of your vicious tongue  
I also became a mother,  
But my pretty daughter lives on —  
Doesn't that tell you something, Mother?

**Angela Morkos**

### **Madron's Well — A Memory**

Tree  
by a pool  
by a muddy path

Water  
clear enough for scrying  
or drawing down the moon

Branches  
hung with votive offerings  
mainly ribbons  
and strips of cloth

But also  
a pendant  
pair of knickers  
a bra

Why these?

Who brought them here?

Did they come prepared?

With spares?

Or did they feel the power surge,  
a momentary urge to strip off,  
to leave these gifts for the goddess of the pool?

Further down the path are the remains of a chapel,  
a sacred well, with holy water to drink,  
a place to sit and ponder.

**John Nye**

3. Or is that just conceit, in a world of washing machine adverts  
Cheery hellos in supermarkets, white noise,  
Political spin?

4. Why did Anne cry? The clouds fell onto  
The beach at Brighton. Each smooth glittering  
Pebble is important

5. Anne saw the anatomy of bodies (biology student)  
That death would disintegrate into  
Obsolete parts

6. The picture is of Anne, of me, of the future  
Of poetry, of renewal, of death  
The brush strokes holding these together  
Holding us together.

**Nick Monks**

## **Alice Springs**

Dry bone desert, white bones, the Mac Donnell range,  
white houses  
An intersection of four straight roads, must mean infinity

Lorraine is on the other side of the globe, a didgeridoo  
Hums sonorously like air, causing exotic birds to erupt into  
flight  
Do I understand this? maybe

I came to look and find. The gold is gone. A man in trailing grey smock coat  
Dust on mustache long white hair, stands at the centre of choices and  
distances, bereft, but true like me

In the everlasting desert he walks, as if this where natural the only choice  
The heat shimmers hungry and dry rattling, he is gone into the outback

An aboriginal family sit on the grass, look on with soulful eyes  
I look into the desert distances and know in an instant my heart is real —  
archaic but mortal, I have reached a centre of a thousand new me's

**Nick Monks**

## **Anne**

1. Sat on the floor. Looked at the painting  
I said "picture". There was enthusiasm and warmth.  
My first word

2. We lay on the bed. Anne cried, fell into the dust  
Of clocks. She knew I would leave, and there was no  
Map or path back

## **Activity**

Hard nose the angels has permeated the  
highway  
You thumb nose the bi-way, it licks the  
wounds in your way and mine  
Red light, the engine needs oil, the bodies  
before you pass on the leftovers  
Free papers are for perfect strangers,  
Speed the plough, run the race, a woman  
needs a reason, a man needs a place.  
A bumblebee scientist around the full moon  
watches the queen masturbate in her room.  
Are we the ashes of long dead stars, dressed up  
in crushed velvet cards?  
Have a go hero foils bank robbers' drone  
While Prince Rupert sits on the throne  
Radio car awaits adjacent in the rain, watch  
the team lap the circuit home.  
A game of regency cricket suggests a truce,  
and still the queen masturbates in her room  
A package of soot for a pillion friend, waiting  
like a conjurer on a drawbridge  
Bloodlust is busy body building an unhappy  
return to chambers.  
Foot pedals flirt with flotation.  
Prima Donna is mantled in light's velocity  
Mightier than fire extinguishing cosmetic  
surgery  
Thatch brogans insult the midgets, national  
power drive haunts the puppets.  
Tribal brunches, naked crutches fiddling the  
martial artifice,  
Treading the fine line between laughter and  
gloom as the queen masturbates in her room.

**Anthony Moore**

# f

## eature Artist

# Maureen Oliver



### Eve and the Pomegranate

She takes the fruit  
It's dimpled rosy skin  
Is hard, unyielding.  
Undeterred, she breaks it open,  
blood red seeds spill  
onto her palm.  
Lifting them to her mouth,  
she eats, slurping the juices;  
pulp slides down her body  
in a crimson stream;  
the woman closes her eyes in pleasure  
as something stirs in the garden,  
a tail slithers out of sight.

### Maureen Oliver



Images - :  
Woman and the Sun 300  
Suicidal self portrait 1  
Vincent in the Yellow House (cover)

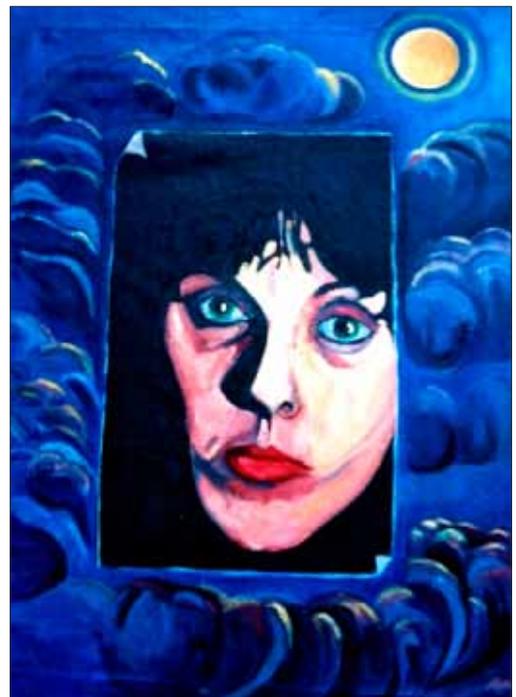
**Maureen Oliver** studied painting at a London art college and went on to work as an art therapist for a number of years. Her career was cut short by a breakdown and she was hospitalized and subsequently diagnosed with schizophrenia. She is currently diagnosed with schizoaffective disorder and also has physical disabilities.

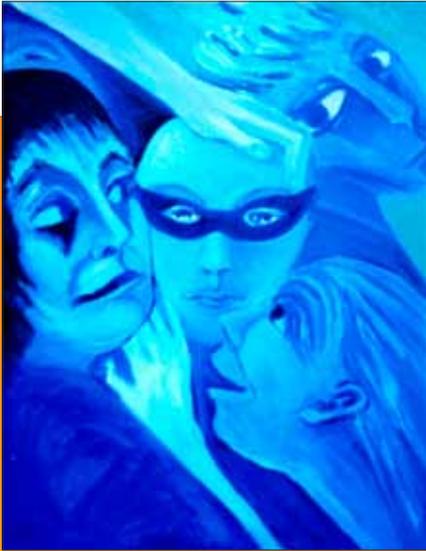
In the late eighties she campaigned vigorously for lesbian and gay rights before again breaking down and subsequently spending considerable time in psychiatric care. Apart from 9 years when she was too medicated to function, she continued her life as an artist and also as a writer. She identifies as a survivor and disabled artist, has held a number of exhibitions in and around London and, to date, has written four published books – *Breaking Down and Poetry*, *Short Stories and Poetry*, *Being Icarus* and *Molly Cullen*.

In 2009 she received Rethink's Bill Pringle Award for Art and Poetry and also the Martha Robinson Poetry Prize. She continues to write and paint – exhibiting her work widely. Maureen Oliver has two grown up children and three small grandchildren.

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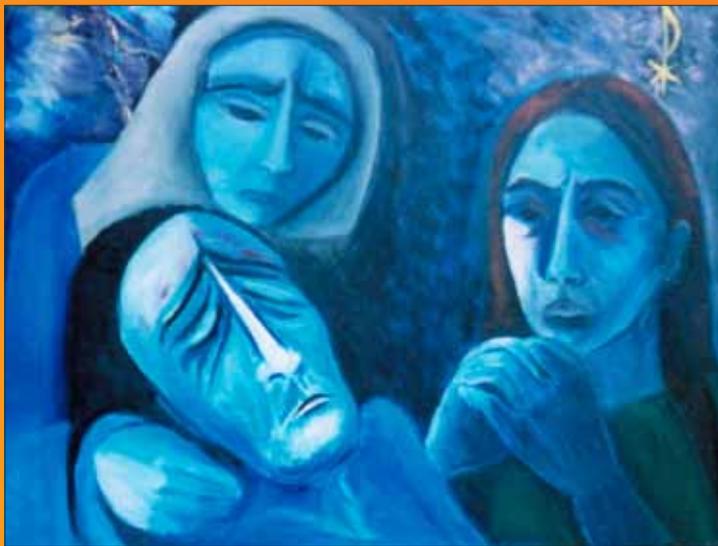
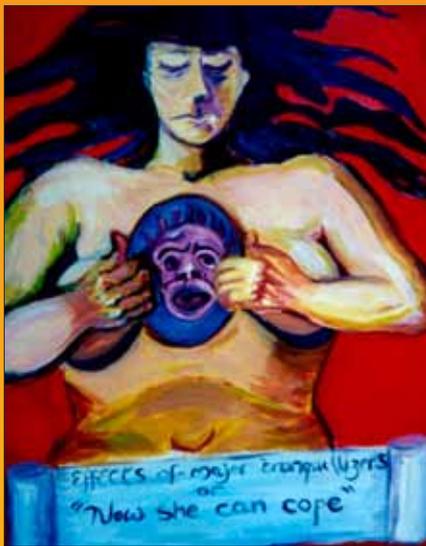




**Voice**

The voice in my head  
recites speeches I will never say  
to those who would not want to hear.  
Don't give me empty phrases, useless words,  
just tell me stories, spin me rhymes,  
that I may write and pray  
through the long night,  
the restless day.

Maureen Oliver



Images - Top:  
Make me a mask  
Mania 1  
Now she can cope  
Pieta

Images - Bottom:  
The Ladder  
Salome

**Dream**

Last night I had a dream,  
in my dream I was surrounded by  
doctors, nurses, social workers –  
I was the patient, the client;  
like cake fashioned in the shape of a woman,  
all melt in the mouth soft sponge,  
wholesome, compliant,  
“helpless” said a nurse.  
Yet my humility was fake,  
I might be drenched in sugary sweetness but  
Inside I was rotgut whiskey,  
raging against vulnerability,  
raging against the world.

Maureen Oliver



# Dark Time Begins to Crack

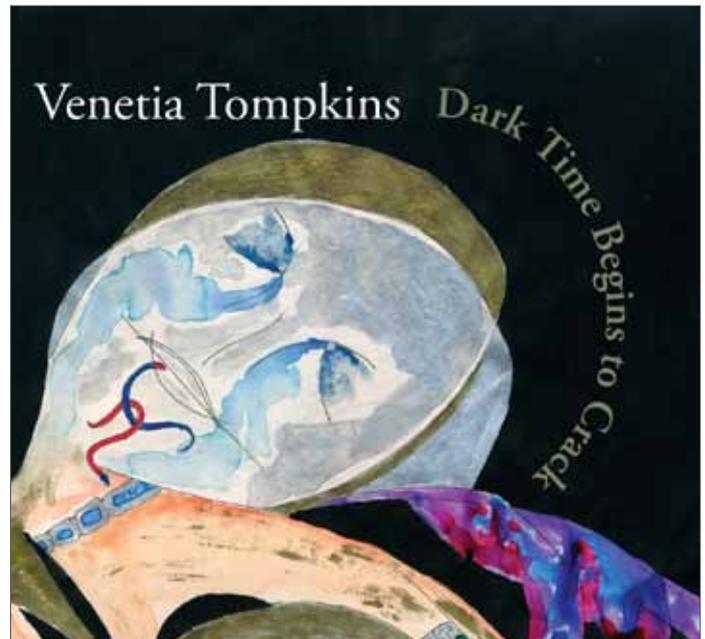
*Dark Time Begins to Crack* by Venetia Tompkins  
Survivors Press 2011  
ISBN: 978-1-874595-34-2

A truly outstanding Mentoring Scheme publication – a collection with fantastic exploratory depth. Dualism and paradox suffuse Tompkin's work: *From War to Peace*, conveys 'the storm inside the calm'. Day and night parallel war and peace; night is a time of peace and rest, also of darkness, when warlike forces rule. 'Dark morning air' ends nocturnal desolation, by invading the body 'in clean combat'. Silent interchange is: ". . . a shared experience" . . . even when there seems to be no movement. 'Mutual recognition' is vital. Perceptive comment on feeling and telling: ". . . the felt/reverberating between the ship and the shore of the told." Ever-present speculation on time: "the imperceptible revolution that carries us into/the future simply by being the present." *Death* suggests a child, perhaps a baby, – against a background of 'desolate lovers and fatherless children' – killed in total war, a 'mirage of peace in places/so far away you could not know them'. The subject is hopelessly torn between the future and the past.

*Waking Up*: sacerdotal imagery – 'prolonged benediction of crystal sunlight', a wilderness is a 'solemn sanctuary', offering some protection. Maritime imagery again: "this small vessel of/confused ritual hope". 'Footsteps silently given to this unpeopled passing'. She praises 'The unnameable value of isolation' (cf. "people . . . create silences to inhabit"), happy that "Here are no human challenges to spike/my awareness with projected burdens". Her 'own consciousness' suffices; sleep relates to death: "It is possible/I will never know the impact of dying/if I do not wake up in time."

*Initiation*: Venetia feels like a sapling: "The small wind that connects my past to my/present, carries tiny petals and/white buttons up my linen shirt around/the chapel where I never went." Later there appear parasitical pagan gods, who "inhale and steal my breath"; a statement of awe: 'fragments of understanding, with an inundation of fearfulness . . . the incapacity to speak aloud or alone. She yearns to escape from the world: "Consciousness . . . electing dark tones to curtain off the/corners of your sight." Sleep seems equated with death: "do not/go near the edges for you may be absorbed." A final struggle to reach daylight.

*An Absolute Giving* – grappling with debility: '. . . just a skeleton now with joints that have/no recourse but to habit . . .' The poet is estranged from her old, familiar self: "I am not that person,/yet I am intimately of her." Intuition overrules intellect: "I was never good at division or subtraction . . . it must be an absolute giving." Her



wellbeing must be shared: ". . . an abundance that gains/ by not being withheld." Venetia elementally struggles to overcome the 'barrier of stranger': "There may be a tumult of provision/ but in that, no space for touching".

*The Sealed Well*: Recognition of multiple self: "I will carry, within my awareness,/my selves and others . . ." Disturbing image with 'the rain stretches'. Fantasy mingles with helplessness: "Willing within this sepulchre a flight of fairies/will not bend the bough . . . the underground river already floods . . ." She embraces the polarities of the elements: 'the mute oils, dense and livid . . .' A sense of harmony, equilibrium in nature: ". . . the roots respect the stone,/not splitting with sheer patent growth". The poet's inner world is a sacred artefact; if placed in the shrine on the cliff, the holy sea would wash it away.

*Two Worlds* – light and dark, bonded in the womb, have an elemental tug of war: "I came to birth within both these realms – opposingly inclined." Venetia, intimidated by the night, was guided through it by imps and elfins, who created 'gaps in time', for her to escape into diversity: "a childhood developed by time and practice seemed to split opposites, to divide/into radical shades that defied the spectrum . . ." Through this division, a unity would be achieved ". . . that would endow intellect/and action in a single spirit". The dominance of night is 'an exact discipline', which sharpens vision, hearing and touch. The poet is 'growing in the dark'. "The visions in the blackness . . . require a strong interpretation/to yield their story." The dark, forbidding world 'allows the glow of love'. The self-contradictory moon ". . . knows not fire, and cannot communicate the feeling of its/own heart even to a friend." Yet it is ". . . no sterile planet, but an affective being with whom I alone may engage." (supreme egotism!). Darkness is visible: "It is . . . nothing covert, nothing hidden . . . yet

it is without rigidity or antipathetic insistence. It holds me without prejudice or punishment . . . accepting the developmental way . . .” She is in a benign environment, but “it is not home”. Reason versus imagination again: ‘The imaginative fears generated by lack of understanding’. One individual embodies all of humanity: “. . . the misleading/doctrines that made laws, conjoin to condemn man’s impetuosity.” Through contrariety, “All these are the foundation, the form that give/structure and substance to the transparency of the day.” Venetia asks: “Is it a condition, for the disfigured/and displaced to live in the dark?” – suggesting she feels ostracised, but also challenging the concept of the ‘well-adjusted’ individual. The boundary between day and night, light and darkness is blurred by the presence of shadows in daylight. Nor is light pure or simple: “There is something of the trickster in the light/of any strength . . .” She steps into something ever-rotating, echoing the earth on its axis. Day is both contrary to night, and independent from it: “. . . does not judge that which comes forth from the night, it gives/another key.” “The dark draws directly from the universal unconscious”. Bizarre reference to (multiple) sun gods. The duality = ‘two different spheres’, there is a ‘borderline area’ of integration: “. . . they merge so intimately of the horizon of day and night./How do we not then make that with ourselves?” The poet laments “I am not with the divine energy”. The ‘jewels’ of her soul have a mineral aura; colours become quasi-organic as ‘spectrum species’, nourishing plants with images the ‘may spill on the waters of transformation. She dreads subsidence through ‘dark certainty’; is she a ‘child of the unnatural’ who ‘nourishes the invisible’?

If life is a ‘safe passage’, is she the only voyager, or were there predecessors? Venetia relishes her individuality: “I value the separation, feast upon avoidance . . . passing levels of social integration and humanitarian invitation.” She feels she is ‘sharp with images that others may not see’. Yet she values ‘delicate steps towards friendships’, Again respecting the borderline ‘the twilight of the existence of ‘the other’, which she equates with ‘the embrace of Venus’. Earthly life is a ‘mortal retreat’. Darkness is not blindness: “It allows the pure vision of/the reality that here on earth we seem to share”.

There is a demigod-intermediary: ‘the guardian of perspective’, and a strange shift to being ‘caught in hell’ and to ‘reparations’. Hitherto there seemed to be a linear boundary between the worlds; now they “. . . appear concurrently, alternating one within the other.” She dreads moving ‘between nurtures’ and the loss of a sense of home resulting from such a move. Final regret, and nostalgia for the safety of adolescence: “Some stoic duty engages me . . . as I depart the residence of dreams, through to tunnel of confusion to consciousness of woe.”

*Quietly it Comes*: old age is ‘a time for new baptism’. I like ‘sleep into adaptation’ and ‘voicing certainty in the face of contradiction’ Anger comes from impotent frustration. There follows an suggested dialogue with Venetia’s mother, portrayal of leaving home: “Do I take your life when I walk out of the door?” The poem tackles acute relationship traumas: “Sometimes, when you are fighting

for emotional/survival, you give word to sentiments that I cannot/accept.” The mother has a dual essence: “In your stone garden are also luxurious plants;/you are both of these.” Venetia is ‘at loggerheads with relativity’. I appreciate ‘the wand of confusion’. Strange concluding reflection on the Mother figure: “You were not given breast or cradle./Dropped from dependency, you grew alone . . .”. This suggests someone who has struggled through being totally deprived, a complete orphan, dependent on her own resources, as the conclusion clinches: “What sources did you survive on?/The flow of continuity, the instinct of survival/made strong your bones”. This is admirable, ‘but what of tenderness? . . . embedded in your maturity are both need and desire.’ The poet longs to bond.

*Taken also as Joy* – dual ego again: “What am I within, that all other is without?/It is twofold; the one is chosen, the other given.” ‘The outer’ is ‘detached from my body but accessible through love’. Another (entity) exists, imprisoned, within one part of the duality. The offspring is ‘a child of the wedding, the eternal child’. Feelings of confinement are paralleled by ones of travelling through the night, guided by a disembodied voice – “in that lightless space where I am apart from/myself, disengaged from guilt, with the moon/behind my head to create the impression of innocence . . .” The void facilitates reflection and learning. Solitary reference to a father figure in the final stanza – prelude to the next poem, *Father’s Song*. This is a literal portrayal of the poet’s family relations. A partner has been lost, through estrangement or bereavement; love remains – a ‘true belief’.

*In Reflections*: At one stage of consciousness, there is ‘a coming out of focus,/when the eyes can no longer discern what is there/and when humanity was born.’ Double meaning here: there is a moment when someone loses consciousness of the moment humanity was born/humanity was born at a time of coming out of focus’. Lovely idea of an ‘imploding cathedral . . . gives light to life travelling ahead of emotion’ – a literal and symbolic cathedral: “The centre of the spiral of belief is a kaleidoscope of golds and silvers . . .” “The symbols of individuality look to the horizon of/the galaxy”. Confused sense of direction: “Deistic mind is tossed by speculation into a particular sequence,/one that undulates in ever forward progress – yet threatens always/to withdraw.” “Correspondence in the visions of the cosmos may be light’s hallucination”.

*Time for Rainbows* – oceanic/cosmic, imagery: “The recording history of the sea bed makes graphics in the shifting sand . . .” Time is an ocean, sweeping all before her. ‘A thought with no centre and no reflection in the water’ – totally non-material thought?? “Time is the bolt in the lock, transcendence is the lubrication/to the flow that will release the prisoner”. She refers to “the prisoner, who will absolve the concept”; are concepts original sinners?

*Squalling*: a death bed is vacated – ‘Another possibility of a soul lost in limbo – aimless paradise for the indrawn breath.’ Venetia does not believe in an ideal heaven. The departed is compared with a virgin taken to a marketplace.

From death to birth: the afterbirth feeds the predators.  
'Mother sun . . . bathes in the cosmic genealogy and  
conceived the earth. On to a child's awakening curiosity:  
Angels and Demons collaborate to nurture the earth's  
confusion; the planet 'may come/exhausted into  
nothingness and birth itself'. The primal human entity is  
'the one who has existed with nothingness.'

*Little Lily* – fusion of natural, artificial, abstract: "The  
jewel is embedded in the fungus,/sealed in a golden  
bodice, a velvet lace/that holds some small cultural  
archetypes." "The cost of a myth' suggests myths are  
priced commodities. "Imagination is cognitive catharsis  
blest with spirit." Is this the first known instance of  
the 'cognitive catharsis' juxtaposition? "We know the  
spirit/only as a passing breath, yet it will continue/  
ceaselessly beyond us." But the essential spirit transcends  
individuality. She feels 'suffocated by the lack of belief  
in that which/cannot be seen'. Surely Venetia's poems  
proclaim the struggle against that suffocation, to restore  
faith. Botany, biology and geology are blended in 'the  
perfumed/valley caught in amber' and 'the bell of milk  
crystal'.

'Organic geometry' indeed; key point about the 'mystics  
and technicians . . . making a conflict/of attentions.'  
Venetia explores that conflict in depth. Superb geological/  
astronomical imagery for the conclusion: "We/listen at  
the mouth of the seashell translating/whorls of geological  
history, which, winding down to/touch our hearing, seep  
into our consciousness/and excite ideas."

*Measured Candles*: charmingly whimsical – "Bring in the  
fairies/and cast away dumb humanity and open to the  
child . . . the bronzen centipedes, as they march to Rome."  
Eerie nocturnal landscape: "Burnt tallow dippings, dark  
waxen mines, like Hades . . ." "What man wrought  
purgatory" – theologically enterprising. A plastic doll,  
pleading against abandonment, speaks for all humanity.

*The Boy in Blue asks* . . . multidirectional time – "the time  
becomes reversible,/the continuity is dependent upon the  
random experience and interplay/of a moment's fortune."  
A lock is pierced by lightning, which melts the key. The  
boy witnesses an insurrection; the revolutionaries 'reflect  
the underworld'. But the boy 'comes without the cross'.  
Beautiful evocation of a child's growing perceptivity:  
"In knowing, you create the potential of understanding  
conditionally . . . There are colours that I cannot see,  
though I know they do exist, for I have/heard histories  
and myths." The development of vision has its down side:  
"it obscures the spirit." Real, organic man 'emerges' from  
the spirit . . . Man has dual purpose, a practical horizontal,  
no learning."

"*Would it always be like this?*" Life is a fusion of  
contraries, "Both present and absent is the dwelling in  
this world . . . be alone among the belonging, apart, by  
inclination and belonging . . ." Life has many transitory  
patterns: "constructions that are not permanent/but  
transformative intimations . . . Linear patterns of thought  
and explosive intuitions, falling fragments of experience."  
Some pessimism: "within faith there seems no bearable  
option". She finds her spirit 'yet young and vulnerable'.  
Mathematics meets theology: "Parallels must at some  
point touch, be more than an abstract/affirmation, there  
needs to be recognition as in the embrace/of angels". The

soul needs nourishment from 'mercurial rain'. Arresting  
conclusion: "This recognition of the dual nature/in all that  
lives, that is manifest in creation, has the mercury relieved/  
of its poison, and belief emerges though we do not know  
its origin . . ."

*The Mirror*: the poet's 'hollow soul' lacks the strength  
to face the Divine. Eerie scene, with a clock in the  
background. Analogy with birds – 'lying gently as the  
brooded eggs of continuance'. "Intuition does not always  
lead me/away, it throws a different light."

*Of Time and Meaning* – the clock turns 'aside from time'.  
The poet draws on accumulated knowledge of the past:  
"Centuries of history are inhaled, giving rise to a different  
recollection,/no longer ensnared by rationality's form." It  
celebrates the freedom of pure spirits 'untethered from the  
mortal, unfettered now by weight/and gravity, by form and  
substance . . . there is no past, no future.' Furthermore,  
'love does not flinch/from metamorphosis – across realities  
love is always relative.' 'Relative' love becomes absolute  
when the 'material bond' is broken.

An insight into Venetia's creative attitudes: "This is not  
just a story about possible relations, but the conjuring  
of a saga, myth making on the wing, into the infinite."  
She recognized that "It depends now not upon what the  
words mean,/but what they evoke." Her struggles for 'A  
late recognition of finite dreaming'; breakthrough – the  
apparently infinite is finite.

*Seeking the Dove* – the poet identifies with birds; and  
fuses concrete with abstract: "Scarlet, the birthing cloths  
of nature,/for she is in all bodies, and may be born/  
in blood alone". Profoundly searching questions: "what  
strange ambiguity is birth? . . . Are nature and spirit of one  
root?" The poem goes 'beyond the roots': 'Subterranean  
communities' are 'striving the balance through these  
intimate corridors/of darkness.', tiny blood spiders 'moving  
by intuition/between the finite and the infinite'. Mankind  
is put in full context: "Impotent humanity stands at the  
shores of hell./This eight-legged creature, the go-between,  
holds hope open even now". On to natal realities: "My  
pinioned belief is grounded by the cut of birth. The  
bloodletting drains". The bird figure transcends earthly  
bounds. "This winged mentor has no relationship to time./  
We are not born on the tide as it comes and goes,/but  
lifted from the earth." The poet must seek the spiritual  
dove. The poet doubts she possesses the necessary sources:  
"It calls for a purity that I cannot compose."

*Who would so destroy?* "Night is the earth mother".  
Transcendental imagery of the birth process: "There may  
be a crucifixion in the womb./All are transformed, bonded  
then, with the divine." Back to bird imagery: "The swallow  
tail journey, avenue of flight". Effortless transference  
between individual and universal: "The jewels of dawn and  
sunset are a brother's blood/seeping through the blossom  
that is the sky./It comes to the heart, searing the lips and  
scalding the ground – dying. A mere shadow of meaning,  
a sabotaged minimum." In a sense, birth = death; blood is  
involved in both.

*Like Icarus* – human becomes bird; flight imagery rules. Again the urge to break the bounds of time, which imprison ‘the reduced and isolated self’. Fusion of earthly and heavenly: “Creation, transposing into spirit – becoming./The truly perfumed spectrum of this realization/may everywhere be breathed in formless pleasure . . .” Statement of mutability: “The ashes of spontaneous combustion,/the flash of light in the embers, allow nothing/to stay the same

*To The Living Rock* – the world becomes amorphous: “there will be now no horizon, no understanding of direction.” The poet is ‘in a spiritual maze . . . a centre that may yet be a universal map of intention,/ with no present.’ “Bird and man must navigate the stars at this time”. Humans become birds, then rise into outer space. I was startled by “the disabled soul’s replenishment in visionary nurture”. Pessimistic conclusion, ‘collapsing of children’ and cold, inexorable evolution.

*The Dream* – wild imagery: ‘salt water compass, comforter of the spheres as they/singly spin’. All dimensions are relative; height and depth are identical contraries: “No sea bed solipsistic eyrie is in the dark currents.” The child asks for confirmation of his existence. “You fall from tears into awakening.” The person is fused with the tears emitted, and falls with them. The child returns to sleep after an upsurge of wakeful curiosity.

*The Universal Cry* – imagery of falling: ‘loving and anticipation fall with the light/across the canyon of awakening’. Also the resolution of contraries in ‘This sepulchre of rebirth’, and partial resolutions in ‘the half closed eye/of death, the half-open lid of dreaming’. Sense of confinement: “here is a creature bonded to its lair”; mute, metaphorical war: “the universal cry is soundless . . . In this conditional way, peace has no sufferance”. “The stepping stones form a necklace, that both encircles and passes by” The necklace is ugly, “stumbles unlovely into the dark theatre”. The egg grows ‘within or without’. Profound conclusion: ‘transformative in the balance of nature, the creator’s meditation.’

*Suspense*: Migratory animals make ‘a sculptured exodus’. ‘Spiritual cross currents’ have incisive power, but they also obstruct. The poet is enthralled by the ‘dragon of inattention’, and struggling for the unattainable. Primordial myth: “The rose petal, onto which the blood falls, /is transformed – the birth of humanity.” Flowers assume a supreme symbolic significance.

*Dying Bees* – the declining bee population is a tragedy of our ecosystem. Venetia rightly challenges ‘evanescent forms of beauty’, also putting ‘see’ in quote marks, highlighting the polarities of the sensory and the spiritually visionary. Life is transitory: ‘the earthly foundations, upon which we momentarily rest,/before we too pass.’ Some reference to Venetia’s past: “I am sodden with the sweet smell of narcotics,/titillating the very haloes of my planetary home.” The theme of morality, guilt and remorse with the idea of ‘the accusation of despair’ lying on ‘the sculpture of Lazarus’. In counterpoint, ‘The wind’s rough swirling sculpts the huddling leaves’. Some fundamental questions: “But can

there be, in any mean, an excess of that which is good?” Finally, a vindication of relativity: “Time itself evolves, changes form and duration, expanding/and condensing, having a multitude of relationships with all that is/and that passes, and yet, time is only a mindful whim of man’s need/for meaning, for shelter, in the context which is to come.”

*‘The child’s face turns’* – a mirror image is, indeed, ‘disembodied’. An identity crisis: ‘. . . my soul seems my brother, but no, it is me, I am already in my spirit’. Profound progression: ‘a detail within an image,/an image within a vision’. ‘The palsied sun’; food for thought here; I’d always considered the sun healthy. Her ‘self’ converses with her ‘soul’; mortal life is ‘blooded symmetry’; ‘The relation between thought and language . . . changing, and yet to remain intrinsically one – for this time.’ Happy embrace of ‘The ecstatic disharmony of the present’.

*Transcendence* – more of the visionary: “. . . I see another world through my/inward lighted lids” – a feeling of being blessed, and a celebration of burgeoning growth: “The flower opens to release the spirit, the pure, succulent /complexity communicates tenderly”. Speculation on the essence of light and colour. “White is the light of multiplicity wilted,/And white is invisible.”

*This is no poem* highlights Venetia’s creative struggles against negativity: “I revolve in the drum of slavish depression,/too far removed even to rage against the condition . . . whatever way I turn I face the same blankness, no solutions cast themselves at my feet, so that I know/I must go out and seek, and I know not where to look,/or even what it is that I am looking for . . .”

*A Creation Myth* – the world was ‘woven’: “From the spinning wheels of time/the threads of day and night were spun/and into webs of counterbalance came/ the darkness and the light.” Primal goddess: “The women’s labour wove men upon the loom of life” “The rainbow arched over the world/to inspire new colours to that tapestry.” Finally, the children go forth to play exploratory games, guarded by the sun and moon.

*January 31<sup>st</sup>*: Supra-Biblical creation myth “. . . the sun and moon breathe together . . . This dual light of enamoured certainty”. “Mirror fragments will reflect this newness/and all the animals [including man] will be confused./In this scapegoat confusion life’s aimlessness/ will become shrivelled and starved and purpose will/ enclose the weak,/and the meek shall inherit the earth.” The term ‘scapegoat confusion’ gives food for thought. Are the animals the scapegoats? Is there some latent conflict between sun and moon? Then the question of ‘life’s aimlessness’ having some sort of organic life. The moon is benign, ‘the temptress ghost of night’. The sun could ‘drive to suffering’, but, in conjunction with the moon, restrain suffering. ‘Leonine shadings’ – great! The fusion will be a blessing to humanity, ‘breathing into his scholarship the anomalies of light’ “Into this coupling of planets shall come/a comprehension that is no longer finite.”

*Happiness* – a humanoid river, ‘the muscles and sinews of the water’. Physics and passion bonded: “This turbulent relationship between stillness and fluidity/pulls and the bonds of emotional inertia/creating symphonic undertones.” Chemistry and passion too with ‘molecules of foreboding’. Geology too with ‘mineral salutations’; “Misunderstandings are vibrant in the waves/crystallizing into ecstatic confusions.” The confusion concerns attraction towards an enthralling, elusive lover: “Your touch is partial and of such fragile fusion that I barely dare to call it by your name.” She begs the lover “Do not dare me to renounce you.” A ruby beacon shines in the darkness, absolute light ‘for which there is no recognition’. *Childhood*, with its simplicity, fits well into this sequence, a breather to punctuate the depths. The ending described Venetia’s feelings approach to learning: “Careful maps, laboured prose/and the special fantasy of theorems, QED,/ as always it will come out ‘neat but wrong’ . . . Knowing even then that you do not know/and fearing it will always be like this.”

*Home again with Mishka*: ode to a cat: “Relaxation seeps from your strong little body,/perfect composure with, it seems, no cares.” It is the object of her adoration, “I would build labyrinths in the air,/where you may safely wind”. Venetia respects cats’ independence ‘obeying a wholly different set of laws’, but appreciates her pet’s concomitant ‘domestic self’. The cat has visionary powers: “You watch the cosmos circling from your gatepost.”

Cats again in *Negotiating Daybreak*. She is briefly reassured by daybreak, then the dark, menacing ‘He’ appears on the scene. Shades of Milton’s metallurgists: “His skills are liquid silver,/molten fire/poured into the mould of actions/cupped shape of options. Suggestion of witchcraft: “The spindle whirls and flicks/the spire of motion.” Then a suggestion of benignity: “He circles me in bands of gold,/sweet imprisonment”. Martyrdom hinted at with “the stakes are driven into the very fabric of the earth. From cosmic to social: “the planetary spheres resolve to/ encompass some universal area/trapped in a spasm of time/where past and present collide/in the gutters of civil morality/to swarm with the rats below.” Great perspective with ‘the all too frequent/modification of daily life/by the tyranny of past experience/endlessly catching up with the present/and plotting against the resistant future.’

*Redfern Hill Perspective* – self-critical: “When my perspective slips whilst I am walking, splintering the peace that I have found . . . it charges me with negligence of the parameters,/slashing my capacity to see/and blocks me from the sanctuary that I seek.” Feeling of strangulation, ‘so that emotion overwhelms cognition’. “I hide in the ambivalent and questing/light of dawn.”

*While tears don’t flow* – “My body is the hungry earth . . . but my land is dry”. The poet is experiencing a spiritual drought. “The herbalist moves among the stunted forms, acknowledging the possibility of value.” The grass survives, stunted. Final plea for emotional honesty: “Tears are as intrinsic to loving/as water to life./Life emerges from the water/so, not to cry is not to live in fullness.”

*Cry Seagull for a New World* – powerful marine imagery, ‘the spume angels’. Tides have a cosmic link: “The

ocean’s enquiries and erosions span centuries,/though as each singular surge takes its leave,/it pushes through the unfilled spaces of the interplanetary puzzle.” The personal is cosmicised: “The elemental parents . . . will acknowledge the white vortex of spontaneous creation . . . the changeling children will be bi-spatial . . .”

*Image (on anorexia)* lambasts self-obsession (‘damning self appraisal’: “You charge each sheet of glass, each shining surface/with the hopelessness of a reflection/ that is both valid and a loaded lie.” Indictment of self-destruction: “Your aesthetic is an artifact of hell,/cross bred with a delusive morality/that plunges starvation into stark contradiction,/the arrogance of denial in the face of plenty.” Venetia attacks bogus ideals: “This blind image, the token of a disaffected tribe . . . an abrasive frugality creating a skeletal landscape . . . a self acceptance/that of necessity may never be achieved . . . a mirage generated by the passion of self disgust.”

*Marooned* has historical perspective; the poet feels besieged, but would not use weapons; refocus on a curious child’s contemplations of a complex garden, which she finally decides to leave.

*The Poacher* celebrates a person’s collecting instinct. He then assumes grandiose proportions: “And so he grew, as an aesthete, who would in random cause/procure the jewels of the natural world/to ornament his power and assuage his spirit. Then finally, like Prometheus, he seized the fire of morning/from the treasury of the Gods, to illuminate the continual obscurity of night/that was his loss of innocence.”

*Perceptions of my Mother* – straightforward affection, “you built on honeycomb foundations . . . yours was a powerfully natural life”. Then Mother is universalized “The evolutionary changes you have worked with . . . All your life was movement,/attention and response; yours was a life lived/without yourself.” Biologically awareness: “separated at birth, we found each other in later years.”

*Dark Time Begins to Crack* is a philosophic kaleidoscope of poetry, and a poetic kaleidoscope of philosophy, where the rational and the intuitive coalesce and interact in a vast multitude of forms and guises. Only a minor criticism: it would have been a good idea, to present some subdivisions to delineate the heavier and lighter poems, the latter perhaps as an introductory section.

**Dave Russell**



Set up in 2006, Outside In's purpose is to showcase and give opportunity to artists who would otherwise be excluded from the cultural life of their community. Outside In has no set creative criteria, boundary in art process or limit on subject for the artists that choose to align themselves with the project. Based in Pallant House Gallery in Chichester, West Sussex, Outside In is a charity with a small team funded by the Paul Hamlyn Foundation.

Outside In aims to provide a platform for artists who find it difficult to access the art world either because of health issues, disability, social circumstance or art process. Originally, in 2007, the competition was open solely to artists living within Sussex. In 2009 it was broadened to include the rest of the South of England. In 2012, the Outside In: National will be open to artists across the whole of the United Kingdom. There will be the Outside In: National exhibition at Pallant House



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Gallery from 27th October 2012 to 3rd February 2013 with works having been selected from the online galleries submitted by artists on our website. The closing date for submissions is 20th July 2012. There will then be further regional exhibitions in 2013 with works being selected from specific regions from the online galleries. This includes an exhibition at Compton Verney in Warwickshire from March – December 2013 and two exhibitions in Scotland.

Marc Steene, Head of Learning and Community at Pallant House Gallery, has spearheaded the project, describing it as a 'gentle revolution', designed to enable a fairer art world where all who create have an equal opportunity to sit at the table and have their work seen and valued.

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# Reviews

Turning by Adam Horowitz

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This collection covers a broad spectrum of Adam Horowitz's experiences, from childhood to the present day. Much of it relates to the Cotswolds, where he spent much of his childhood, with Michael and Frances Horowitz and to which he returned, as he now lives in Stroud, Gloucestershire.

The opener, *Fugue*, refers to a child's trauma of experiencing a fatal accident to an animal, in this instance a badger, which has a fatal accident, and is then

preserved by a taxidermist. The word 'fugue' has two main senses; the first, the musical structure and, not so well known, the psychiatric connotation concerning blanking off of memory. Adam advises me that this incident has a sub-text referring to the premature death of his mother. *A House Built from Cloth* strongly suggests the dilapidated condition of Mullions, the cottage in the Cotswolds which was Adam's childhood home. *Cheese Kisses* depicts a familiar domestic scene – a child's tensions and feelings of jealousy about a parent having a possible lover. There is also a feline presence in the household; the cat feels like a benign entity, a buffer, absorbing and defusing some human stresses. *Clearances* concerns the overhaul of a cluttered house or apartment, which inevitably involves the excavation of long-submerged heirlooms from the past, and 're-tunings' to past situations, including the author's 7<sup>th</sup> birthday. In *The Blackbird*, I like the image of a half-animate dressing-gown, and the phrase 'a shivering flute memory/in the green of spring'. *Burials*: radical new light on funerary rituals, taking the lid off the routines of the gravediggers. A disturbing observation in 'siding in Protestant horror/with the old rogues buried in their pints'. Equally arresting is the fact that Adam himself had participated in a grave-digging. *Wall* is a splendid exposition of the relationship between the natural world and man-made artefacts. There is an introductory quotation from Michelangelo: "With chiseled touch/The stone unhewn and cold/Becomes a living mould" which means that a block of stone acquires animate qualities when sculpted – 'a biography in stone'. The poem explores this idea, and its contrary/counterpart: "this wall snaps landscape into sharp relief/each jagged tooth a totem/describing the past that shaped it". But then neglect, and its consequent decay, put it into a balanced relationship with nature: "it has asserted permanence/by taking for a spine/the mismatched trees lining the road. Various flowers reassert themselves in their splendour. 'Mould' here has a powerful sense of double entendre. *Training Run* depicts an organic relationship between jogger and rural itinerary. I like the zoological/botanical synthesis of 'the mare's

tail flick of cow parsley'. There is a sense of the jogger's footsteps making a gesture of power: "The world is a husk//Until you run it . . ."

*On the Broken Road* gives me a marvellous sense of the 'hard edge' of living in the country, dependent on Shanks's pony, ramshackle, dirt-encrusted bicycles and vehicles. I admit that I live in a cosseted urban situation of ubiquitous public transport. But for all that, technology is still present: "ribs crack to the tick of a clock/the air is heavy with ammonia". The physical struggles of a rural environment are an analogy for the greater struggles of life: "we carry the world in a handcart/until it can bear to carry us." *Spring Fragment* shows that the 'idyllic' rural environment has its edges too (with affinities to urban ones): 'a mayhem/of sharpened birdsong . . . blue tits . . . like buzz-bomb winos . . . cats recoil like guns'. *Shells* – fully committed passion in a rural environment, involving braving the elements. Two highly disturbing images in 'Your mouth is an egg split by our tongues' and 'Home is a broken shell'. Same underlying theme with *After the Party*, dealing with alcohol fuddled/fuelled passion. Startling visual image in "You rose like a falcon/making a pinpoint of its shadow". *Dandelion Clock* suggests in-depth reflection on the total ramifications of a hangover in a tumbledown rural setting. 'Under the influence' the pub is 'floating like a brassy nirvana'. The phrase "A dressing gown wraps the day in soil and grass" conveys some of the sensations of passing out in the open and sleeping rough; it is sometimes possible to feel equally exposed when one is confined indoors. Beetles are appreciated in their dual value – an obvious pest in a tumbledown cottage, but then venerated a sacred scarabs: 'find a blazing ball of dung/to roll up into the sky'. ". . . someone has thrown/a toilet roll across the sky" exquisitely synthesizes the sordid and the ethereal, the cosmic and the banal. A similar effect with 'green newspaper leaves' (presumably not referring to litter, but to the newspaperish quality of the leaves. In this condition one can attain visionary states: "White stars I cannot name blaze on mossy stone". Nice reference to the delicacy of the 'un-ticked' dandelion clock. *The Memory of Water* evokes the experience of someone really affected by a heavy drought in an isolated situation. Great personalized figure of speech comparing rainfall to a kiss. *Summer Storm* has the feeling of someone abandoned and desolated. The ex-partner is an artist, and has departed with a set of drawings. The emotional state is compared to routine communications: "The cars have all choked on/tongues of wet tarmac,/the lines of power, of communication, have fizzled out." In *Love Poem*, I like the idea of two lovers being mirrors to each other, and the extension of the glass imagery to 'honeymooning in a greenhouse'. *Woldgate Woods* cleverly uses the imagery of artifice to depict the natural world: 'a pen scribble of undergrowth . . . midges punctuate a parchment of dusk . . . iambic, fungal paths . . . the wood holds secrets in parenthesis'. Great botanical/biological/psychological 'crossover' in trees like brainstems thinking out the sky, similarly with 'qualifying trees like wombs of verse.' *Walking in Normandy* is obviously about a camping holiday. Tasteful punctuation of the natural description with references to artefacts: "tractors crooned under the weight/of sun-gorged sky . . . cars passed, clattering like distant geese/through a balloon of dust." Very striking images of 'a valley blistered by daylight'; the otter

'glancing through shafts of refractory light' and the children with 'their youth as luminescent and as brief/as bubbles in the night's stream.' *White Bone* explores the sub-text of a beach find. The rising ground offshore is described as a 'hip-curl crawl', and then there is 'the jawbone of the field'; the terrain is compared to the body of an animal'. The bone itself has an animate feel 'searing the still room/heartless as a gull's screech'. *Queen Hecuba's Prayer* is an incantatory statement of boldness and resilience. *My Invisible Aunt* shoes some of Adam's feelings about his mixed Jewish-Gentile ancestry. It is a half-ghost poem. He had never seen his aunt in the flesh, only seen photographs. He had to take her existence 'on trust', but has his times of doubting it. The doubts were finally dispelled by Adam seeing the genetic resemblances in the offspring. The grandmother seems to have been oppressive: "tonight I am being moved like a chess piece/ from room to room . . ."; there is also a suggestion that she is highly vindictive and censorious about her half-gentile grandson, who is, in turn, understanding of what generated them: "the noises off in this sorry farce . . . are those of bigotry run riot . . . and of the foundations of her god's house /shifting in the sand she built them on."

*The Death of Icarus* as a critique of idolatry. Some 'lesser mortals' find the corpse of this icon of perfection. Parts of his body are 'salvaged' by gulls and humans. They await the next; Icarus is not unique. *Crows* has some excellent hyperbole with "they croaked the night into being". There is multi-faceted cross-reference and paradox in 'their song a caustic hymn of mildew, longing, dampened fear.' There is something reassuring about the idea of dampening fear.

Struggles of the ego in isolation in *Vanishment*. More of the artifact background to rural life in "all that is left of me . . . is the shadow of power lines", and a dynamic bit of image-clash in 'bleached arpeggio'. *Jack vs. the Beanstalk* is a bizarre blend of myth and reality. Technology versus the elements again with 'switch off birdsong with a remote control'. "I curse the chalk for lacking a blackboard,/the air for failing to design a door" – the obvious, crass response to these lines is, go and get a blackboard, and design a door; but then, at a deeper level, it is a statement of helplessness in the face of adversity. In the reference to his mother's letters, the figure of the beanstalk represents aspirations (possibly unreal). "Bitterness stamps its passport on my face": bitterness has the coercive power of an institution. Nettle rash accidents are a concomitant of rural isolation. "I cannot play the harp": he is a human being, not an angel; "the goose eggs are always overdone" – people should not be 'hard boiled' emotionally; but could the eggs also be the mythical golden ones. *January Haiku* – the stark brutality of the ice dictatorship. *Double Exposure* uses the imagery of photography. The camera captures fleeting moments and preserves them for future reflection, sometimes with great power and perceptivity: "The camera, a one-eyed god, sees more than surfaces". The picture of Adam's mother sustains him in a rural fastness: "She has become a landscape/I can hold, a fulcrum//for the weight of loss. I like the use of the imagery of photographic chemistry: "The buzzard's cry/is a sheen of tears/stilled by silver nitrate". The sight of the photograph takes him back to the time when it was taken" "I am eight again,/the undeveloped past/shimmering in my hands,/doubly exposed to light." *Her Bedroom* dynamic phrase in 'a fist of twilight'. The chamber is given its atmosphere by wardrobe and jewelry. *Last Night She Saw Badgers* – reference to running away to London. Seeming reference to Adam's mother showing him a badger sett.

*The Root of a Scream* uses disturbing imagery derived

from the world of surgery: 'nerves severed under a laser's scrutiny'; 'breasts filled with chemicals'. Some suggestion of the mortuary in 'pliant flesh turn to marble'. Sheer surrealism with 'breath fluttering out on phosphorous wings' and 'Morphine angels'. Benign technology again with 'a computer screen numbing the inevitable'.

*Turning*: My reaction to the opening was a flashback to an American Civil War song: "We shall meet, but we shall miss him; there will be one vacant chair". Here, seemingly, a chair is rocked by the spirit of the departed, most probably Frances. There is a strong sense of the elemental discomfort of the abode: "My bare feet are sore/from the carpet's hard ridges". In the third stanza, there is a strong sense of the conflict between the Jewish and gentile elements of Adam's background. There is tension between past and present, "A vase, yellow as varnished daffodils, is here and not here, shifting between years'. There are many ghostly reminders of the past. A feeling of decay and chaos prevails: "nothing is in the right place." All is in flux: "Only the ghostly teazles/and the flowers you painted as a girl remain constant". *Daedalus Laments* stands in interesting counterpoint to the earlier reference to Icarus. I find it darkly pessimistic, showing a situation of exasperation and non-communication in a stifling, dilapidated domicile, captured in 'cushions of boredom' and 'the lichen hours'. The alter ego 'abstracted/the feathers I'd saved to forge our passage out'. He fell into workaholic for solace: '. . . into a maze of work/tied down by obsession, sublimation. A bit of a benign reversal in the later *What Daedalus Saw*: hope rises eternal — "the light came,/the wings to the world//and we went up into the sun;"

*The Great Unlearning* for me, attains epic proportions, an intensely concentrated autobiography, embracing the years of Adam's childhood and adolescence, and including some background about his mother. It is partly a desperate cry to return to straightforward simplicity, reversing the obvious linear process. There was a brief period in Sunderland where he was able to do this. "Poems are rising back into my pen." Grief predominates: ". . . the bright, hard light/of tearing down appearances/hardens into tears". There is some compensatory feeling of light when his mother was, relatively, in her prime. The ending feels like an ultimate of despair; Adam feels he will depart before his father does.

That poem is most appropriately followed by *The Welcoming Party*, a joyous celebration in an idyllic setting: 'a garden tumultuous and pungent with colour . . . a snowstorm of blossom, flowers'. *Prelude* smacks of the backaches and migraines of the nocturnal computer geek – an impression accentuated by *Orpheus in the Download Underworld*: eerie rural ambience of birds and bats depicted in the first stanza. Interesting that the regalia of contemporary communication are described as 'fig leaves bought to cover shame'. To an extent, their clinical precision repels him: "There is majesty in certainty if you can stomach it/but I prefer the random melt of stars . . ." "The house is hollow" to the extent of being Underworld-like, occupied by an antique spectre.

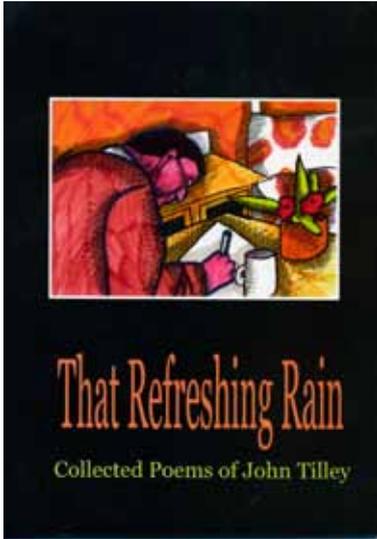
The time and effort devoted to this magnificent collection will be manifest to every reader.

A beautiful cover designed by Anne Garcin, derived from stained glass work.

Dave Russell

## That Refreshing Rain Collected Poems of John Tilley

Leeds Survivors Press, 2010,  
£3.95; ISBN: 978-1-9010145



“Always metaphorical, often surreal. John Tilley’s poems surprise and refresh the tired palate” (Julian Turner)

Angular is the first epithet that came to mind on opening this collection. His laconic cynicism is proclaimed in his introduction: “I sincerely hope the road to hell/is paved with something a good deal/more interesting than good intentions.”

Early Morning opens with a touch of jazz poetry: “Piano protests . . . Digging B major chords into the sweet barbed wire of rheumy supermarkets . . . I lie feeling the laden breeze of cello waft away the anger . . .”. I like the reconciliation of polarities – “Brimstone blending with the smell of ‘Medicated Soft Tissue’”. Part II reiterates the tactile, penetrative power of discordant music: “Ghost wings of rosin wrench steel into crystal laughter.” Flashback to the 50s with ‘the crumpled face of Muggeridge’ – strangely evoked by diminished 7<sup>th</sup> chords. Part III seems to allude to a gay relationship. Musical analogies again: “. . . Caravaggio and Tchaikovsky give us catholosis (this seems to be his own coined word: catholicised catharsis?) . . .” ‘The sonorous Bronx cheer of the horn’ and ‘Figured bass’ backing in Part IV; ‘the graceful duck call of the oboe’ in Part V, and ‘Throb of D major/D minor altercations’ in Part VI.

*Nemesis* seems to refer to a midwife. The poem starts with reference to birth-pangs, then proceeds to the death-bed; there is some sense of looking forward to death as a release: “We retch and moan ’til we embrace this great dark dove”

‘First the prickling restlessness of limbs’ – this suggests someone who has been bedridden for a long time, and is finally able to move and function again. Splendid poetic portrayal of that restorative cup of tea: “Click, the growing deepening roaring;/waiting, dropping the light rustling sachet/over the hard mug-rim;”

*Faithless* is an aphoristic defence of the independent intellect: “To will simplicity/reflects complicity/in comfortable deception . . . History sprawls in Eton’s copperplate,/its purpose; subjugate!” Knowledge is used as an instrument of oppression, of dumbing down “. . . and will it seems reduce/philosophy to an excuse.”

*Lightning flash* has two inspired ‘flashes’: “thought is a dead chrysanthemum” and “us monkeys . . . condemned to drivelling”. *Lit obit* – so “The blank page screams its hungry

lust for words”. This comment reflects upon the collection: my usual grouse about some inconsequential material, and too much white space. Judging by the quality of the substantial pieces, the author had more in reserve which could have filled these pages, better than some of the weaker items here. Of course the blank page reflects the author’s struggles; but in a publication it should be used sparingly to highlight those troubles properly. *Digital memories* makes an excellent analogy between the organic memory and electronic data control. *Omelette* – *Clause 28* seems to be a defence of gay love; nice conclusion with ‘a conspiracy of beauty/in this alien dawn.’

*Barge trip* is an excellent exploration of the optical concomitants of boat travel. The reflections of buildings in the water ‘loom menacingly as your face approaches the surface: “To the open mind the water’s edge suggests other parallel/worlds. The prow of the barge shatters the illusion like the/leading edge of consciousness, confusing the second-hand images, leaving a foam of experience in its wake . . .”

*A dream?* Arresting imagery of someone running amok ‘in the flowerbed of belief/with an axehead of reason/on a handle of freedom.’ The deranged person claims that ‘Life is diving for pound coins/in a pool of raw liver’. *Fino*, in Italian, should have had an in-text translation. My own rough one is: “Gay as a Gay the friends of your son/Beautiful girl whose voice enthralled me at midnight/Gays ludicrously innocent who seized my soul”. I could not find exact equivalents of ‘brutta’ or ‘brazzione’ in the online dictionaries. The editor should really have taken more trouble in conveying what seems to be an extremely thought-provoking poem.

*Beethoven violin concerto* is another tour-de-force of musical imagery, going as far as the manufacture of instruments: “Orchestra replies/Giant spider/Rosined horse hair limbs/Silver keyed ebony proboscis”. The last stanza captures perfectly the ‘suspension of disbelief’ engendered by a successful concert ‘with senses numbed by pleasure’; “In unison the organism writhes/The audience in a web of red velvet/hypnotized”. One good line in *The song of the blackbird*: “each second with so many notes stake out an airspace”.

*To a black gay stranger* is a piece of great sensitivity, dealing with issues of ethnicity and orientation; strong feelings of a prospective partner being unapproachable because of ethnic differences and concomitant post-imperial guilt feelings, ‘the centuries old dream of difference’. The relationship does not assume concrete form: “we sit in silence”.

*Venice of the North* is an in-depth scenario of a grimy, run-down North Country town – with a strong ‘ration-book retro’ feel: ‘narrow streets ancient with soot of laid-off chimneys . . . Woodbines in the blood . . . lout and mumbling bag-lady prowling for release . . . herring bone printed dirty trainer . . .”

*Market forces* is the most overtly political poem in this connection. It describes what feels absolutely convincingly like a real-life situation, where those brutalizing forces are blatantly at work. A solitary gay man has spent the night with a boyfriend. The following day, he buys Elgar’s Cello Concerto and goes into a café, where he meets a woman with a small child. He wonders about her emotions “. . . Looks at

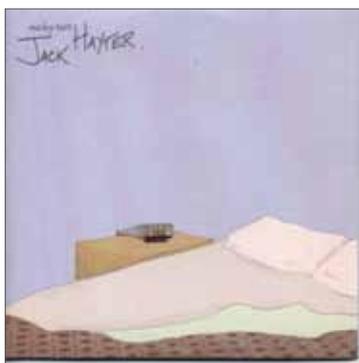
me/Is she looking for approval?/As the hate in her voice scars my ears/I sound posh you see/I might be for her a way out/Of market stall jostling poverty . . .” Then there is a switch to the other end of the social spectrum “. . . on the terrace of a neat garden/Guest of a friend who married into money/The women are getting bored/Of trying to put me, the enigmatic stranger, down . . .” One woman at the party seems to eye him up. Back to the cheap café, where there appears an attractive looking man. The narrator’s latent desire for that man parallel that of the woman at the yuppie party for him.

*That Refreshing Rain* is a posthumous collection by a leading light of Leeds Survivors Poetry, supported by the Joe Kerrane Fund, established in 1997 to help publish local poets in Leeds. Copies available from Leeds Survivors Poetry, c/o 8 Beulah View, Leeds LS6 2LA, for #4.50 inc. p&p: cheques payable to the Joe Kerrane Memorial Fund.

Dave Russell

### Sucky Tart by Jack Hayter Audio Antihero Records

I had the pleasure of being introduced to Jack Hayter at a Folk Modern gig in



Dalston. I could not fail to be impressed by his confrontational lyrics, his vitality and his sheer eclecticism.

“Sucky Tart” (a crafty anagram of the EP’s opener) owes little to Hefner or even “Practical Wireless”. This is the sound of a unique songwriter given time and freedom to blur the lines between the trad. folk of his influences and the London anxieties of his past with dirty fuzz, biting wit and of course, ‘the universal language of a drunkard’.

*I Stole The Cutty Sark* has a fairy-

tale charm – lovely idea of stealing a sailing ship and making a voyage to see ones own true love. “I bet she’d sleep with a man who’s got a tall ship!” he cackles on. The sound is highly original; it opens with ‘natural sound’ effects suggesting dockyard activity. It ‘fades out’ with an extended instrumental combining dulcimer with tasteful electronics. The central part has quite a Ry Cooderish effect, with some raunchy slide guitar. Pity that the vocals got a bit obscured when the instrumental came into full swing.

*Doll’s House* is also quite surreal, developing the idea of “she sleeps in the kitchen with her feet in the hall”. Very touching to want to be as small as a doll’s house. ‘Got to slither and scuttle’; I know the feeling. It seems to lament a doomed relationship, a home that cannot be ‘carved out of tin cans and cardboard’. Greatest punchline here is ‘dreams of holidays and babies turning to miseries and maybe’. Sensitive backing too; Whether you got lovesick to the point of scurvy, trapped in a doll’s house or simply let your love fall where it shouldn’t – Jack was watching. I feel that Kevin Coyne has been an influence here.

On *A Simple Song* – Hayter approaches familiar pains through both everyday happenings and wild eyed pirate fantasies. He whimpers “You’ve got the last face that I want to see and his are the last hands I want laid upon me” and laments the mismatch between thought and feeling, between gut reaction and what one verbalises

*Jacque I Won’t Mind* is a tender, compassionate song about an affair between two people who both have partners. There is complete respect for Jacque’s boyfriend: the bloke reminds Jacque that he is one the way home, and considerably says “If you stop short to go, Jacque I won’t mind.” He adds “Your bloke’s kind – a lucky guy.” but the matching girlfriend does not quite match up to Jackie: “she’s nothing like you. Philosophical acceptance: “We can’t have what we want”. Nice ‘strings effect with the synthesizer.

This is a real alternative production, as the blurb says:

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Dave Russell

### Grace Under Pressure

10th September

Poet in the City, Kings Place, London

A splendid tripartite presentation: **Part I** organized by Enitharmon to launch their recent publications with readings from : *The Point of Loss* by **John Mole**, *Graceline* by **Jane Duran**, and *Hurt* by **Martyn Crucefix**. **Part II** celebrated the new Bloodaxe anthology *Ten*, featuring contributions from **Nick Makoha**, **Rowdya Amin** and **Karen McCarthy Woolf**. **Michael Schmidt**, introducing Part II, outlined Bloodaxe’s mentoring scheme. *Ten* is the product of a two-year project coordinated by Spread the Word and Bernardine Evaristo to support talented Black and Asian poets. Has the example of Survivors penetrated the mainstream publishers? **Part III** featured spirited epic recitations from **Giles Abbott** and **Xanthe Gresham**.

The title of the event was extremely well chosen, in that it showed the links between powerful poetic expression and social turmoil. **John Mole** celebrated his visit to the Royal Ballet School with *Choreology*, which explores the mathematics and aesthetics of the dancers ‘in search of their true dimension . . . rise and fall. He expressed his strong jazz sense with a celebration of Billie Holiday’s love for Lester Young, elicited by Young’s solo on *Fine and Mellow*: “his fragile chorus shines in her eyes”. *Professional* referred to Cole Porter. Other highlights were *The Has been Who Never Was*, *Ghosts*, and the comical *A Toast to Moustaches*. He concluded with *Checkpoint* concerning his interrogation when crossing from West to East Berlin; he referred to ‘the shame of not remembering the name’.

**Jane Duran** made extensive reference to her long sojourn in Chile, against the awesome background of the Andes mountains. Jane is extraordinarily impressive with her powerful sense of local colour. Her set included *Shimmerers*, *Like It Is*, *Coastline* and *Cod Liver Oil*. Jane experienced the turbulence of the transition from Allende to Pinochet, the essence of which she captured in *Invisible Ink*, those discreetly erased after the change of government, and in *The Disappeared*, where she refers to ‘moments of ultra-violet light’, where one can ‘just see a point of departure’.

**Martyn Crucefix** made reference to his Hispanic interests, including his love of the Catalan language and culture, which was severely persecuted under Franco’s regime.

*Can Torras While There Is War*

*Water Lily* is a poem of great delicacy. The flower is almost personalized, 'priapic in her slow ascent cloudy particulate water . . . her dark bomb rising, an old balancing act . . . on a turgid stalk . . . becomes her own subject'. "Crucefix is a poet who fuses the sensual and cerebral, and the poem *Water-Lily* is a perfect example, combining intense close-up scrutiny of objects with an instinct for retreat. It opens with marvellous, musical description." (Mike Loveday). *Calling in the Dark* works on a brilliant conceit, if conceit it is when the story is obviously and simply true. The poet's parents' mobile phone accidentally rings him when knocked in a bag of shopping. Martyn eavesdrops for longer than he might on their private conversation and feels some guilt and responsibility for doing so before terminating the call and one wonders at the double meaning of his title. (Robert Green). He concluded his set with *The Little dances* – some sense of a primitive person having his first experience of technology and gadgetry, feeling all the awe and fascination, a fusion of the organic and the inorganic in such phrases as 'S-shapes/glinting like lemon bars/ anaemic and ruinous.' There is also a sense of affinity with the experiences of an old man losing his eyesight.

**Karen McCarthy Woolf** read *Warm Blood*, mentioning 'a world of empty dresses' which is also a world of inner city warfare, where a son is lost. Highly atmospheric: "broken bird song explodes", the ringing of bells and the thud of workmen is counterpointed with implicit (unstated) gunfire. The narrator seems physically confined: "My limbs beat against the glass, trapped in a room where baby died." *Wing*. Great scientific imagery in *A Small Ball of Mercury* – 'sensitive to cold and heat in equal measure'; disturbing comment in 'My husband a paedophile'. Her own observations on the compositional process are highly illuminating: "So many invisible elements go in to the making of a poem; ones that we forget more often than not; but that's okay also. Their being lost is part of the poem becoming whole."

**Rowdya Amin** read *Grandparents* — an historical flashback to the time before the Thames Embankment was built. *Frost Fair* relates to the Tudor period. – *In a Floating World* – enchanting theme of a canal-based city? "The favoured birds of this city are waterfowl . . . waters locked in aquifers". There were other examples of her fascination with birds, such as *Tawny Owl* and *Turtle Dove*. Insects too: great idea of

the souls of the dead returning in the form of butterflies. *Insect Studies* explores the idea of butterfly tattoos – 'antennae like cursive script'.

**Nick Makoha** reiterated the insect theme In *The Drive-in*, "dragonflies float in the inertia"; this poem is a cynical appraisal of complacent 'bird's eye views' of the world, from a position of comfort and detachment. An indictment of war in *Beatitude*: "Hold a shotgun to the radio announcer's mouth . . . feed the soldiers who looted your mills and factories . . .", a country living with total war: ". . . where you no longer know your name". Sympathy with desperation and resentment in *High Life*: "Wrap your hand round the right man's throat". From the King explores the nature of poetic inspiration: "Your best poems feel like someone else wrote them . . . write as if God was in the other room." At the start, he made a point of contrasting with George Szirtes, expressing his desire to 'break with wieldiness'.

At the beginning of Part III, **Tom Bland** (also an oral epic poet) reminded the audience of Artaud's axiom: "The true purpose of theatre is to create myth". Here Poet in the City continued in its admirable vein of covering oral epic tradition – but this time demonstrating that it is vitally of the 'here and now'. (He added that he had recently attended a school for clowning.

**Giles Abbott** is a supreme example of a traditional oral storyteller. He and Xanthe presented the finest examples of this idiom I had heard since being introduced to it by Robin Williamson. His story concerned a castle-owning king with an exceptionally beautiful daughter. They have a strange and distanced relationship. The daughter did not know her mother. She has a strictly chaperoned life, with many parts of the royal castle forbidden to her. But one day she finds an open door to an inner sanctum, where there is a picture of her mother and some of her wardrobe, which daughter tries on. Father thinks daughter is mother, and makes wedding preparations, daughter flees in terror. True to tradition, she disguises herself as a boy, and becomes skilful as an archer. She gains respect and esteem for her skills, and can sustain her disguise until forced to go for a swim after a stag hunt. Respect for her is sustained after that revelation. The Princess subsequently gets pregnant, the baby is cut to pieces. The pieces are put in a pot, and returned to the mother; the baby emerges totally unharmed. In this context the magical transformations were whole credible,

carried on by the superbly sustained pace of the narrative.

I see that **Xanthe** has been 'storyteller for Tate Britain'; she certainly demonstrated her suitability for that title, against an enthralling background of near-animate Persian tapestries, and the 'bardic' bazouki and bodhran playing of **Arash** (especially effective when accompanying the description of an epic horse ride) – and some nice audience participation chanting. The characters included Rustum (whom I can remember from *Sorhab and Rustum*, Matthew Arnold's epic translation from the Persian). Other characters are Piran, Bijan and Raksh. A totally spirited conclusion to the evening, taking the audience through the stress-torn landscape of ancient Persia – including plagues of wild boars. Tender sensuality, especially the description of music girls making boats out of flower petals is counterpointed against the sanguinary. After fighting the boars, Bijan finds himself in Turan, and is then smuggled into a harem, where he is discovered by a spy, who reports him to the king – making the latter determined 'to smash him like a bottle'. The crowd cried for his death, but it was not permitted to slay a prince. So Bijan was thrown down the well, to be left to starve in the dark. The Princess Manijer finds him, finds a flint and makes fire; this is his shaft of light in the darkness. Then Rustam comes to the rescue: he drops his ring down the well, which Bijan recognizes. He has a rope with him; Bijan is rescued. They dance in celebration round the flame.

In answer to my queries about how much of their work was improvised:

"Yes all storytelling is partly improvised depending on the audience and in this instance I had no idea if the audience would join in or not. Also when working with Arash we play with words and sound in the moment to some extent" (Xanthe)

"Yes, improvisation plays a large part at the level of language & phrase. The story persists but the way it happens can change according to what I'm sensing in the room." (Giles)

All aspects of pressure were embraced at this event: the internal pressures of poetic self-expression, the struggle to discover meaning; the external pressures of whole societies in turmoil or at war, lived through, illustrated by intrepid elemental painting. I cannot praise this event too highly.

Dave Russell

## Lost and Found: Children, Adoption and Families

3<sup>rd</sup> November 2011 Poet in the City,  
V&A Museum of Childhood, Bethnal Green

This event was part of a programme in celebration of 2011 National Adoption Week, running from 31<sup>st</sup> October to 6<sup>th</sup> November. “National Adoption week is all about raising awareness of adoption. In addition to encouraging more people to come forward to adopt, National Adoption week helps to highlight the importance of adoption for those children who, for whatever reason, cannot remain with their birth families.”

Featured were two major writers who had been adopted: **Jeanette Winterson** and **Jackie Kay**, and was chaired by **Professor Margaret Reynolds** of Queen Mary College London, and presented as part of National Adoption week.

**Professor Reynolds** announced that she herself is an adoptive mother, and extolled the *Children's Bible* and *Wind in the Willows* as crucial works contributing to the fulfillment of her self-imposed role. Her reading of Laura E Richards's *Elelephony* gave a spirited start to the session. The poem makes a brilliant play on the exploratory nature of a child's struggle for verbal articulation: “Howe'er it was, he got his trunk/Entangled in the telephunk;/ The more he tried to get it free,/The louder buzzed the telephee-/(I fear I'd better drop the song/Of elephop and telephong!)”

A telling truism with “Do not become a prison officer until you know what you are letting someone in for”. Margaret also read Christina Rossetti's poem about ‘excluded children’, *Sing Song*. She referred to the Infant Life Protection Act, passed in the 1860s, and quoted the telling expression ‘a motherless baby and a babyless mother’. She concluded her introduction with a quote: “Adoption is a terrible thing; the alternative is worse.”

**Jeanette Winterson's** adoptive parents were strict Pentecostals. There were only six books in the house, including the Bible and *Cruden's Complete Concordance to the Old and New Testaments*. Somewhat incongruously, one of the other books was Malory's *Morte d'Arthur*, which set her on the literary path. This was facilitated by the house having no bathroom: Jeanette could read her books by flashlight in the outside toilet. Reading other than the Bible was not much approved, as her parents wanted her to become a missionary. Although schooling was erratic, Jeanette

gained a place in a girl's grammar school and proceeded to read English at Oxford University. This was not an easy transition: Jeanette left home at 16 after falling in love with another girl. While she took her A levels she lived in various places, supporting herself by evening and weekend work. In a year off to earn money, she worked as a domestic in a lunatic asylum. Her first novel, *Oranges are Not the Only Fruit*, was published when she was 23, in 1990, as a limited edition.

One of Jeanette's credos (and the title of one of her books) is *Why be Happy When you can be Normal?* With incredible ebullience and laconic wit, she proclaimed the story of her adoption, starting with the first chapter of her new book. A strong element of black humour too: “The devil led us to the wrong crib . . . my success is from the devil”. There were acute tensions between her pious adoptive parents: “My father like to watch the wrestling my mother liked to wrestle.” The environment had its humorous side too. The account of her brother coming to a party wearing Granddad's gasmask sent the audience into fits of laughter. Jeanette generated an enormous warmth of audience rapport by playing up the ‘funny side’ of her adoption experiences, making something vitally positive from a situation many prejudiced people would describe as disadvantaged. Her observations on that condition are extremely acute: “Adoption drops you in mid-action . . . there is a feeling of something missing; it can be an opening, not a void . . . Your fingers trace the space where it (life) might have been.” She also read from her *Believe in Fiction* stories: “Unhappy families are conspiracies of silence”. Jeanette can also face, and surmount, the depths of despair: “Life was a burden to be carried to the grave . . . a pre-death experience”. But it has its compensations: “Life is part-fiction, part-fact.” The power of fiction is benign and restorative; a selection of her stories is called *Believe in Fiction*: “We get our language back through the language of others.” She had experienced a bereavement, loss of an adopted parent through throat cancer, and can proclaim “me drown on the coastline of humankind.” Jeanette made a strong protest against stereotyping of women writers as being confined to a small canvas, environmentally and emotionally. Hers is definitely a broad canvas, incorporating raw experience and exile: “Me drown on the coastline of life.”

**Jackie Kay** has received excellent coverage in The Poetry Archive: “Kay's awareness

of her different heritages inspired her first book of poetry, *The Adoption Papers*, which dramatises her experience through the creation of three contrasting narrators: an adoptive mother, a birth mother and a daughter. The book was a great success, winning the Scottish Arts Council Book of the Year and a commendation from the Forward Poetry Prize judges. Subsequent collections and her celebrated first novel, *Trumpet*, have continued to explore issues of cultural and sexual identity as well as the intimacies and upheavals of love. Kay has also written poetry for children and her first children's novel, *Strawgirl*, was published in 2002. She currently lives in Manchester.

“When Kay began writing “there wasn't anybody else saying the things I wanted to say . . . I started out of that sense of wanting to create some image of myself.” However, though she draws on autobiography, Kay is skilful at fictionalising this material, thereby allowing the reader more space to enter her work. The inherent drama of her poetry is influenced by the Scottish tradition of public verse, of ballad, song and the recitations of countless childhood Burns' nights. Music has also had a significant impact, particularly the rhythms of jazz and blues.

Jackie found her experiences to be ‘reverse experiences’ – the ‘mirror image’ of Jeanette's. Early in her cognisant life she was given a sense of the ‘bonus’ factor in adoption: “You were chosen; other people had to take what they got.” At the age of 7, she became acquainted with cowboys and Indians, and sided with the Indians. But the big difference between her story and Jeanette's was that Jackie went in search of her birth parents: her father was a Nigerian, Jonathan C. Okafor, who became a prominent tropical plant taxonomist, and her mother came from the Scottish Highlands. In 2002 Jackie located her birth father through Google, and went to meet him. He had, in the interim, turned into a fanatical ‘born again Christian’. She met him at the Nikon Hotel in Abuja. He insisted on kneeling before her, and reading lengthy extracts from the Bible. At one stage of his conversion, his daughter seemed ‘little better than a whore’ (to which Jackie made an ‘aside’ reply: “God, in his wisdom, provided someone for my sex drive.” – among her heroes are Sidney Poitier and Nelson Mandela). But then there was a volte face. He knelt down, read extracts from the Bible, and told his daughter “God has given you a talent: you're a writer; you'll become greater than

me.” The encounter was both profoundly tragic and hilariously funny, including ‘pages of the Bible flying round the room like hummingbirds’- while – ‘he spins like a windmill’. The description is fully critical of ‘born again’ Christianity: “How much more can the blood of Jesus Christ cleanse us?” (Jackie is an atheist)

In their second sets, both writers declared their lesbian orientations. For Jeanette, this did not cause any rift with the adopted mother, whose comment was “D’you mean you don’t go out with men? There’s no problem with that.” For Jackie, the parents, natural and adoptive, found it acceptable to a degree, because it was consistent with her being ‘called to a higher purpose’.

The two writers balanced each other, set each other off admirably, each filling in the other’s ‘missing areas’. Jackie had not had the full experience of a depth encounter with a natural parent, and Jeanette had not had the experience of acute estrangement from the adoptive home during her teens, but she does have the additional problem of being of mixed race. She had a different trauma: on perusing her adoption papers Jeanette discovered that she had been privately adopted by the Wintersons who knew her birth mother. That alone was shocking for Winterson, but then she found out. “I learned I had been brought up for months, and even breastfed, by my mother. That was overwhelming to me.” She says she was about six months old before she was adopted.

The two sets of adoptive parents contrast sharply: in contrast to Jeanette’s Kay’s were “Glaswegian communists who threw the kind of parties where everybody ended up singing Cole Porter and Rabbin Burns songs. John and Helen Kay sound like enormous fun: a passionate, engaged, unconventional and inspirational couple. He worked full-time for the Communist Party and she was the Scottish Secretary of CND. When she talks about them, their adopted daughter wrinkles her face with love, pride and maybe an extra crinkle of protectiveness. She still feels her search for her birth parents as “a kind of adultery” and is infuriated by “the windy place right at the core of my heart” that she suspects a woman so blessed with love has no business feeling. After all, she writes in her new memoir *Red Dust Road*: “I am only alone in the way that everybody is alone. And yet it seems that the bundle of child that is wrapped up in the ghostly

shawl of adoption does have another layer of aloneness wrapped up in there.” (Guardian)

Through this combination, a panorama of the main implications of adoption was spread before the audience, who were enthralled by the event’s warmth and humour. Both writers could speak for children as much as they speak about children. Much prejudice about adoption must still remain. Such presentations as this vitally combat such attitudes. A good extension of this concept would be to feature writers who could, prejudicially, be branded as ‘illegitimate’. Theme for a future *Poet in the City* event!

Both writers, and Professor Reynolds, agreed that when one has been adopted, the ‘story line’ is of far greater significance than the ‘blood line’. Adopted children come into the world ‘with our stories already attached’.

**Dave Russell**

### **'Calm'**

by Ugly Sulk (Luci Bocchino and Roach (Roisin) Lee), who have played at Survivors' Poetry Open-mic.

Sleep is no escape from your dread it makes it grow,  
can't sedate all the things compelling you to stagnate.  
Calm's not always quiet — it can be deafening, literally skin  
tight,  
oh so stoic, but I know inside you rampage lost and violent.

Can't sit still all in little bits,  
have to make yourself and make it quick,  
can't find a focus feeling too frantic,  
so grimace a smile and try to go with it.

History will swallow us all up this time is yours,  
woven in with others,  
calm, is near, but it's never in here  
never quite the same.  
You've changed, but I'd rather die than just be tame.

Can't sit still all in little bits,  
have to make yourself and make it quick,  
can't find a focus feeling too frantic,  
so grimace a smile and try to go with it.

Go with your gut feeling,  
when you get some inkling,  
you don't need to trust those people,  
when you can predict them!

Prioritize your desires!  
these are the things that are dragging you down,

Love is a wave,  
it will drown you in sound

The link for their video (in which I took part, is ‘Calm by Ugly Sulk’: [http://www.dailymotion.com/video/xm8fje\\_calm-by-ugly-sulk\\_music](http://www.dailymotion.com/video/xm8fje_calm-by-ugly-sulk_music)

I was really honoured to take part in this video. It tells the story of a small-town girl who overdoses on sleeping pills, goes into a coma, and is considered dead. There is a funeral oration, where her ‘selfishness’ is condemned by a bigoted Evangelical preacher. She is laid in her coffin, then given the ‘kiss of life’ by a dark version of Prince Charming, played by me. She rises from the dead. For anyone who knows my songs, this is evocative of ‘Bone Idol’, where an Egyptian mummy is comparably resuscitated.

The video was some 8 hours in the making, and shot in the Parish Church of Totteridge. The whole church ambience was used, including the pulpit for the funeral oration and the altar for the coffin. Lucy and Roach did a lively song and dance act cavorting on the pews and serenading the congregation. The Minister must be very progressive and enlightened; within my living memory, this would have been considered an act of sacrilege. What would have been the response if the shooting had been done in Alabama or Arkansas? Absolutely admirable for me; I am an inveterate Like a Prayer addict!

The costuming was authentically gothic; the make-up out of this world: Roach was made to look spectrally ravaged; great to see her complexion restored afterwards. The accompanying song feels the pulse of the ghetto, epitomizing the great strength of this truly radical duo.

The final editing of the video incorporated some extremely powerful visual elements, blood and crawling insects, to create an atmosphere of real gothic horror. The audience at the debut screening were riveted.

Dave Russell

## **Dark Time Begins to Crack by Venetia Tompkins** **Published by Survivors' Press**

In some way I have more to share than others, not by virtue, I was just given more to start with and it is by nature an abundance that gains by not being withheld. It is for passing on, and in this act it multiplies spontaneously.

### **An Absolute Giving**

Survivors' Press is the imprint of Survivors' Poetry, a unique literary and mental health charity promoting the writings of survivors of mental distress. It is important that the world should begin to realise and readily accept that those who have suffered a nervous or mental breakdown, are often in need of constructive assistance and clear understanding when on the road to a full recovery. The enlightened approach to the required therapy, in this connection, recognizes most emphatically that the positive aspects of the creativity of those who have endured such: a breakdown, can actually be channelized, to remarkable degree, to effectively restore the dignity and essential sense of well-being of the individual so involved. In this respect, the mental health charity, Survivors' Poetry has, over the last few years, been able to fulfill the further requirements of those who have subsequently made their welcome full recovery, and this same charity has taken on board a skilled team of literary mentors to work with those who display a particular bent, or aptitude for creative writing, writing which, in turn, might then lead to publication within a wider field of readership. The poet whose work is under review, is just one of a number of proven writers who have benefited under this scheme.

**Venetia Tompkins** was born in Hadleigh, Suffolk, in 1949 and grew up in a country district near Baylham. Introspective by nature, she tended to avoid any opportunity to make friends outside her home environment which hastened an aversion to school life, generally, and fostered an absorption with the lonely world of her imagination:

The child wanted an island — she drew one and coloured it in.

The sea was dry, but all else was good, flora and fauna as well.

Small green rabbits and bluebells, kangaroos of crimson and scarlet,  
whales that walk, with dragon leaves and laurels.

### **Measured Candles**

Much of Venetia's writings are in the modern idiom of the Stream of Consciousness, and in these poems there is scope for high-minded utterance which has an overlay of acute spiritual perception, very much akin to familiar elements of T.S. Elliot's work within *'The Wasteland'*, and having areas somewhat reminiscent of Walt Whitman's *'Leaves of Grass'*. Darkness and shadow pervades much of Venetia's work, possibly indicative of her prevailing moods when given to solitary preoccupation with soliloquy, but even here, light (symbolising Hope) penetrates to play an engaging, though seemingly lessening, role in the shaping of her dreams and ambitions:

At noon, that, highest

point, the skies radiate light that cannot raise the dead,  
but shines within the dark, neither adding nor subtracting  
— there is no place for the light where there is darkness.

### **Two Worlds**

Venetia, however, has come to terms with her personal problems which, in the past, had resulted in depression and feelings of low esteem:

I revolve in the drum of slavish depression,  
too far removed even to rage against the condition.

This puts me far from others and further still from grace  
and nearer to a living nothingness.

**This is no poem** (the actual title and not my comment)

There had been a certain amount of domestic constraint within her immediate family circle during her early childhood and later formative years, but it would appear that her dear parents, despite a sadly lacking compatibility in their marriage, had somehow persistently soldiered on, and had tried to make a go of it, for the sakes of their four children:

For him it was the imperfections in each

of us, it was the loss of lives in warfare, the calamity of discord, the realisation.

of being no longer loved by one who

had been the pivot of his being.

### **Father's Song**

Indeed, the final poem in this finely crafted collection is dedicated to her dear mother, a hard-working countrywoman who had always endeavoured to measure up to the higher principles of good family living. It had only been in later years that Venetia had been able to become more demonstrative towards her, thus enabling the mother/daughter bond to develop to a greater fruition:

You and I have come full circle.

Separated at birth, we found each other again to later years.  
These are memories I will hold within myself,  
and this will be the way, that. I will always love you.

### Perceptions of my Mother

Within Venetia's poem, *'Marooned'*, there is a most appealing, childlike openness delivered with charming tongue-in-cheek humour, as she seeks again the seclusion of the garden shed, so much a part of her secret world in former childhood days, and which, fancifully, she can still imagine to be her own tiny castle:

The garden shed has turrets and a drawbridge.  
The moat is dry and the enemy have come up very close.  
I know, I can see them.  
I have no weapons.  
I wouldn't use them if I had,  
it takes courage to defend yourself.

### Marooned

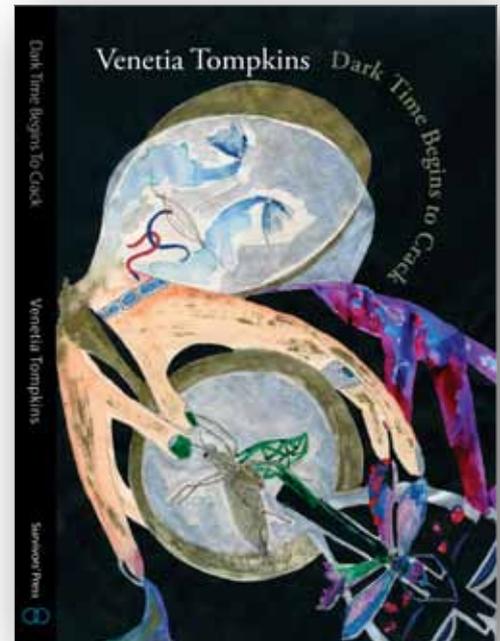
In her poem, *'The Dream'*, meanwhile, she finds empathy with the thoughts of a small child, as he questions the very purpose of his own existence :  
"But who am I, and what is existence, and why does it matter?"  
the child quietly asks, for this enquiring imposition weighs on his raw mind, his fretted spirit. "These will be later questions,"  
the answer comes. The child's passion becomes silent, and he wonders.

### The Dream

I suppose I might be excused for singling out my favourite poem from the 43 included ones within this collection. I read Venetia's poem *'Home again with Mishka'*, (a poem about her cat) several times for the sheer pleasure of its smoothness of cadence, descriptive finesse and the even measure of its development. Venetia's love for her cat is poignantly here addressed, and every aspect of the cat's being — its demeanor, the liveness of its movements and the welcome assuredness of its presence are so admirably portrayed.

**Venetia Tompkins'** poetry, at times directed towards the darker side of perceptive awareness, is nevertheless superb in composition and choice of imagery. It is heartening to see, within the pages of this worthy publication, that this courageous poet has, as her sensitive verse clearly shows, very much come to terms with her former doubts and assailing fears, for it's now and through the medium of her decisive poetic discourse that, to quote Venetia's title words, *'Dark Time Begins to Crack'*.

Bernard M. Jackson



## Letters & emails &

<http://www.facebook.com/pages/Survivors-Poetry/256129269973>



FB: John Hirst

in my magazine SOLO SURVIVORS I was privileged to be the first to publish Venetia = due to the complications with both of our illness's we've Been close friends via phone and snail mail — she has sent me over the years a copy of her nearly 1000 poems — i'm the lucky one. SHE REALLY HIS A TRUE PAID-UP SURVIVOR — JOHN

FB: John Hirst I'VE BOUGHT IT READ IT — ONE OF THE BEST COLLECTIONS OF POETRY I'VE EVER HAD — SHARED — READ — PLEASE SUPPORT AND BUY

FB: John Hirst

THE RECENT COLLECTION BY POET AND ARTIST VENETIA TOMPKINS Is an incredible write — so well balanced — details — immense writing — please buy a copy really well mentored — and a superbly presented volume

Event Poetry Cafe: November 2011 — Founders' Night

FB: Jasmine Poppy Waldorf so glad i got to play a tiny part in such a brillaint night ! thankyou for an amazing time everyone, it was thourougly enjoyable :)

SWAY (Survivor Writers and Artists, York) is the newest addition to the Survivors Poetry Group Network. Recently formed, SWAY meets on the first Tuesday of each month for workshops and readarounds, at The Golden Fleece Function Room, 16, The Pavement, York YO1 9UP  
Tel: 01904 625171.

Contact : Brindley Price (Group Secretary),  
brinleyprice@yahoo.co.uk; mobile: 07985 510458

# CoolTan Arts World Mental Health Day 2011



**CoolTan Arts believes mental well-being is enhanced by the power of creativity**

**CoolTan Arts walk with Arthur Smith in celebration of World Mental Health Day 2011**

On Saturday 15<sup>th</sup> October, a beautiful bright autumn day, more than 90 CoolTan Arts participants, volunteers, supporters and patrons gathered outside Maudsely Hospital to begin a monumental sponsored walk. Our *BIG Largactyl Shuffle* was organised to celebrate 'World Mental Health Day' and explored the history of the NHS from "Cradle to Grave".

The Deputy Mayor of Southwark, Cllr Althea Smith and Cllr Dora Dixon Fyle — Cabinet Member for Health and Adult Social Care, joined us alongside comedian and broadcaster Arthur Smith,

to open proceedings. Highlights included a unique tree-planting ceremony on Camberwell Green. A Ginkgo tree was planted, a 'living sculpture', made possible with funding from the Cleaner Greener Safer initiative, awarded by Southwark Council. Michelle Baharier CEO of CoolTan Arts said: "CoolTan are very proud to have this unique commission on Camberwell Green, both as a legacy for our organisation and a reminder to keep mental health on the agenda". During the tree planting ceremony, Cllr Dixon-Fyle said: "Keep CoolTan in the Frame, that's exactly what we're going to do". The walk was staged as a fundraiser against crippling cuts from the NHS. Well-wishers will be pleased to hear that staff, volunteers, participants and patrons have to date raised a total of £6225.00 in aid of the charity. CoolTan Arts is a mental health and arts charity offering a full creative programme, from visual arts and sculpture to film-making and pod-casting, as well as self-advocacy sessions. The day was a huge success with fun, poetry, history and creative talks along the way.

Amos Phillips, Chair of CoolTan Arts Trustees expressed his thoughts on the day's success, "I would like to express my heartfelt thanks to everyone who was involved in CoolTan Art's Sponsored Shuffle through, participating, fundraising and organising. The superb weather and unique camaraderie created by this year's shuffle made the day thoroughly uplifting and enlightening. I would like to wholeheartedly welcome everyone back on next year's walk!"

The event culminated in a film screening, refreshments and socialising at Tate Modern, including home-made cakes and an impromptu performance from participant Julius Xavier, with his new song, *Personalisation Is For Us!*  
A huge thank you to all the lovely people who helped make this day so great.

You can still sponsor the walk 'No Health without Mental Health' by visiting: [www.justgiving.com/cooltanarts/](http://www.justgiving.com/cooltanarts/)

T: 020 7701 2696 M: 0798 565 8443

W: [www.cooltanarts.org.uk](http://www.cooltanarts.org.uk)

E: [info@cooltanarts.org.uk](mailto:info@cooltanarts.org.uk)

° charity number 1064231, Company No. 3244552

**Cool Tan Arts** believes mental wellbeing is enhanced by the power of creativity. It is a pioneering arts and mental health charity run by and for people with mental distress and exists to inspire the wellbeing and creative participation of a diverse range of people through the production of quality arts. Reg. Charity Nr. 1064231

**The Largactyl Shuffle** is named after the oldest anti-psychotic drug Largactil that can have extreme physical side effects including a distinctive shambolic gait, or 'shuffling'. **World Mental Health Day** is a unified effort to promote greater public awareness and understanding of mental health and mental illness. Every year, thousands of people across the world raise awareness and funds for mental health causes. World Mental Health Day was started by the World Federation for Mental Health, in 1992.

# Graffiti Corner

Patrick: Wed Nov 30, 2011 10:42 am

## Old Man sits in the Sun

old man sits in the sun  
old man sips his weak tea  
old man regards his flowers  
old man folds his paper  
old man gets dressed  
old man puts his trainers on  
old man runs London marathon  
four hours twenty two!  
old man back for his tea  
old man sits in the sun  
old man unfolds his paper  
old man sips his weak tea  
old man regards his flowers  
old man sits in the sun

pmcmanus  
q915[ [i]not auto biographical!!!:—)

TonyH: Sat Dec 03, 2011 8:28 pm

Re: OLD MAN  
Resisting the temptation to reply with a  
Neil Young lyric or variation.  
Middel aged man learning and relearning

Starchild: Thu Nov 10, 2011 12:43 am

## I feel dirty again

I feel dirty again, soot. Blood.  
Tears. Broken shards of glass  
And stone cold floor  
Electric lights, emergency. Street lights.  
Face in soot, face in dirt.  
Who can hear our, my cries.

I feel alone again, trapped beneath  
The weight of the soot  
the others' breath, choking  
on air, on soot, on the stench.  
Fearing for life,  
For hope.

For air  
For light.  
Stuck in a tunnel.  
Afraid of it all.

I want to reach out,  
Stretching my bound hands  
And fearfully trying to reach that  
Pole. Light, blue. Silver.  
Daylight gone.  
Darkness. Night. Tunnel.

Silent sobs of a broken girl  
White band on wrist, on hair  
On memories. That's why  
I wouldn't dare  
And you would not notice.

The tears, and scratches  
And fears that remain.  
In my heart, my soul and my life.  
When you look into my eyes.  
As I scream for help, again and again  
Silently. Silent. Broken marks  
And afraid. Unable?

Patrick: Wed Nov 16, 2011 5:15 pm

Re: I feel dirty again  
a moving poem —hard  
best wishes P

Alembisque: Mon Oct 17, 2011 6:59 pm

## Digging

Mind with pen engaged  
turns the metaphoric sod  
furrow to the waiting page

'god', my father, took  
his spade just the once,  
unlike Heaney senior

and dug a quarter plot  
by the book, perfection  
then fallow, quite forgot

sickled it once or thrice

till we moved, up, away  
where digging wasn't nice

God, what he missed  
the earth, the tilth  
the waiting harvest.

10 February 2005

A reflection with apologies to Seamus  
Heaney.

The poem has a sub-surface level as we  
had a parting of the ways, his choice,  
and he never saw his grand children. He  
died in 2000. My relationship with him  
features in a number of my poems.

All poets should inwardly digest this  
poem, and Seamus Heaney's

Patrick: Tue Nov 01, 2011 10:54 am

Re: Digging  
Al I can identify with this ( my father  
being rather absent!) —the poem is for  
me better understood with your after  
text (is that the right word??)  
I was drawn to the title as one of my  
books is titled 'On The Dig' cheers  
Patrick

Alembisque: Tue Nov 01, 2011 8:12 pm

Re: Digging  
Thank you Patrick for your comments,  
much appreciated.

John.

These poems were taken from  
the Poetry Graffiti section of the  
Survivors' Poetry Forum

# BROADSHEET CONTINUED

## Agincourt

Good bowmen stock of England's pasture green,  
Whose bowed extent in leash is quivers height,  
Whose arc is arms deportment in shaft's flight,  
With eye that hawk's to prey upon the scene,  
Whereat the cry; "Strike Now" be battle sent,  
In crescents strain relent by tensions go,  
So arrows shew in follows swift unbent,  
To strike confusions harp in armies flow,  
Yet long'men of taut so string true in fight,  
Fear not assails that will ascend this field,  
But be guards bascinet in brimless shield,  
Wear your steel in arch'ry's quarrelled might,  
Then be a slaughter won in Agincourt,  
Or flings of arrows war a Fleur's lys roar.  
Yet clave not spearmen of your peers in row,  
Like clashing woes in arms strain siege in clout,  
But miss no mark in reign of volley's blow,  
Nor tire in battle's greed by war-ings rout,  
Let go a herald's flow in pitch and swoon,  
And arrows sow intense in auger's flood,  
That line on line does rich in sweet remune,  
Foe's darts that needle eyes like Hasting's blood,  
So bend the compassed bows in sickles sweep,  
And make a quarrel cry an argument,  
To sunder and to rend in utter reap,  
And rend a Nation Fleur in wild resent.  
Glaive the foe and raise our banner high,  
When charged by Jesus, Mary, George and I!

## Barry Bradshaigh

### Submitting Poetry

1. **Submissions** for *Poetry Express* are accepted all year around, no more than 6 poems, 2. Reviews and one article per issue. There are regular deadlines, as the newsletter is published quarterly – so do please check website's *Poetry Express* page. If your work is accepted you will be notified. Please note that submissions can be passed over to the following issue, if your work is deemed suitable but, there is a lack of space in the current issue that's being put together. *Poetry Express* is an online publication only. Dave Russell is the editor and Blanche Donnery coordinates.
  2. **Featured Artist:** this is for poets that also produce artwork/illustrations/photographs. Images need to be in Tiff format at 300dpi (of good dimensions, ie A4 size = 210mm wide). PSD files are acceptable or high res jpegs. (Do not that rendering a low res image high res, is not a suitable solution.) At least 12 images need to be sent. We do not accept original artwork however, we expect the images to be of original the artwork and not photocopies. Photographs of original artwork are acceptable and can be posted. Electronic images can be sent via email or on a disc. Please note that Tiff files at 300dpi tend to be large files, several emails may need to be used in order to send them via the superhighway. If you wish to be a featured artist you will need to send a bio - no more than 500wd.
  3. **Poem of the Month (POM)** for short). Again you can submit all year around. Simon Jenner our director selects poems, so you can email him direct, a poem, you feel represents your best : [simon@survivorspoetry.org.uk](mailto:simon@survivorspoetry.org.uk)
  4. **Mentoring Scheme:** if you wish to apply for the mentoring scheme, do let us know and an application form and guidelines will be sent to you. This year's list is closed however, applications are still accepted for next year's scheme. Roy Birch coordinates the scheme. Do note that you will not necessarily receive an immediate response. You will need to submit 15 of your best poems for this scheme.
  5. **Short prose pieces:** if you wish to send a short article or essay please do so and this will be considered (2000wd max.)
- You must anoint each page with your name and contact details. You can submit by post, email or on a CD.

## Dartmoor Sky

*(Outside the Warren House Inn)*

An orange Moon,  
haloed,  
gibbous  
rises above the open moor.

And stars.

More stars than the open moor

A skyful of stars

So Many stars  
that the familiar patterns —  
Orion,  
Cassiopeia,  
Ursas Major and Minor —  
were lost to my urban eye.

Yet,  
on the horizon,  
no escape from a city's glow.

## John Nye

## Positivity

I'll look inside myself to see  
If there's part of me  
Something with nobility  
I'll call it positivity

The if I feel I'm under stress  
I will make gentle progress  
The mists will part, the waters clear  
And there will be an end to doubt and  
fear!

## Kevin Green

We are always interested to hear about issues that are of interest to you. So please do not hesitate to contact us if you have any questions, or need to discuss Submitting Poetry further.

The best days to reach staff are Mon-Thurs, 12-6pm. Contact Details can be found on pg41.

# Competitions

Poetry Kit Poetry Competition hold regular monthly competitions and listings of other writing and poetry competitions. Check their website. Do note they have varying fees: <http://www.poetrykit.org/comps.htm>  
Also Poetry Kit website lists all the up and coming poetry competitions.

Kingston University Press – Short Biography Competition

Entries must be either publication-ready manuscripts and/or proposals with a sample chapter. Scripts and proposals will be judged for quality and originality by leading biographers, including Rachel Cusk, Alexander Masters, Dr Jane Jordan and Peter Parker (all associated with Kingston Writing School). Selected manuscripts will be published by Kingston University Press. Entry fee: £20 — See the KUP website: [www.kingston.ac.uk/kup](http://www.kingston.ac.uk/kup) and <http://fass.kingston.ac.uk/kup/termsandconditions>

Tel: David 020 77900269 or Joe 020 85750250

**Bristol Survivors — Big Give** fundraising now available!

Dear Stepping Out Supporter!

If you are able to sponsor us for any amount, however small, we would be most grateful! PLEASE NOTE! Stepping Out Theatre are taking part in the Big Give Xmas Challenge this year which takes place over the week of 5th – 9th December. This sponsored walk is one of a number of activities we are organising towards our fundraising target that week.

The Big Give Christmas Challenge offers us an unparalleled fundraising opportunity. If you can sponsor us, and are able to pay your sponsorship money in online during the week beginning Monday the 5th of December, then your donation will be DOUBLED!

To pay your sponsorship donation online just go to the Stepping Out Theatre homepage on our website at; [www.steppingouttheatre.co.uk](http://www.steppingouttheatre.co.uk)

Click on the 'Donate now' button and you will go through to the Big Give website where you can make a secure online donation.

Stepping Out Theatre  
07790 980688

## 1. TheFED' monthly Writing Challenge is open to everyone.

It doesn't cost anything to submit your writing — and there are no prizes, winners or losers. All submissions will be displayed on TheFED website and may also be featured in future TheFED publications.

Please do leave comments for the other writers — we all like to get feedback!

The theme for December 2011 is:

### Thrills and Spills

A theme / title suggested by Theresa Taylor (a member of GROW)

Writing Submission Form available from: [www.fedonline.org.uk](http://www.fedonline.org.uk)  
[writing.challenge@fedonline.org.uk](mailto:writing.challenge@fedonline.org.uk)

Deadline is Midnight on 31st December 2011

## 2. Website Updates

The FED have now switched to the our new website — [www.fedonline.org.uk](http://www.fedonline.org.uk) It is still a work in progress — so if there is anything you would like to see added, for example useful website links or updated group information, please email Paul King [paul@pauljking.org.uk](mailto:paul@pauljking.org.uk)

Students at Syracuse University have created an online archive for the publications of TheFED and our members. The address is: <http://thefedarchive.wordpress.com/> Publications can be downloaded as pdf files and as kindle files for the Kindle E-Reader.

We are hoping to get all TheFED publications added to the online archive eventually, to ensure that all the collected material is preserved and accessible.

## 3. Group News Required

Roger Drury (Chair of the TheFED Executive Committee and Editor of TheFED Newsletter) is hoping to get the 4th issue of 'Emagination' out before Christmas. Please let us know what your group is doing.

We can add your events to TheFED Calendar and promote your publications for you.

## 4. Write Out Loud

Christmas events cancellation.  
'twas the week before Christmas  
and all through the land,  
poetry gigs were listed  
that perhaps shouldn't stand  
all the **Write Out Loud** team  
urge you to please let them know  
if your automatically listed gigs are running or cancelled through snow...

We might have the nation's favourite open-mic poetry gig guide, but we really need you to help us avoid problems for potential participants gigs over Christmas.

Where an event is listed on a regular basis – monthly or weekly – it automatically shows up over the Christmas hols. So, PLEASE get into your gig entry and click cancelled – easy peasy. Otherwise you might have aggrieved punters, bah-humbugging all over the joint. If you don't amend your own entry, or cannot do so (you really could do with learning how to though, for your gig's sake), let us know soonest. You can simply reply to this if you wish, with clear dates and such. But please do your own if you can, as we are all volunteers and short-handed at the mo. Oh, and don't forget to urge your audiences to use the comments box on your event listing to write up reviews of your gigs. Thanks, and do have a truly poetic Christmas. And a mince pie, or two.  
From **Write Out Loud**

## ... items of interest

### Schizos Care — Full-Shilling-Club

Schizophrenic Salvation Network

"Can't you see buried within all that wreckage he's craving for freedom."

Malcom Lowry

Our **disability** could be a diabetes of the mind, caused by a traumatic disbelief?

**Solidarity** very often invalidated and demonised, and often both together.

Could become the modern Jews? Over half of, discharged from old asylums, died within a year of dislocation, neglect, cold! The inadequate, friendly simple schizophrenic, the devastated, emotional hebephrenic, the intense, wordy paranoid schizophrenic... We are **not** told about them! Also probably, 'guinea pigs' for secret state experimentation — psychotropice, mind-policing and short wave radiation etc.

**Fellowship** — must associate to counter loneliness and stigmatisation

**Local Groups** — needed for fellowship, mutual therapy, political initiatives

**Full-Shilling-Club** — hope to have regular Central London meetings.



## Network

### Leeds Survivors

Contact Tom Halloran:  
Tel: 01924 820 779  
Email: tgh52@talktalk.net

### Bristol Survivors

Contact Steve Hennessy  
email: cd2007g8825\_2@blueyonder.co.uk  
www.steppingouttheatre.co.uk

### Manchester Survivors

Every Mon 4-6pm workshop  
Common Word, 6. Mount St.,  
Manchester M2 5NS  
Contact Jackie Hagan  
email: jaclynhagan@hotmail.com

### East Sussex

GROW -  
Meet every Tuesday except during school holidays at;  
The Children's Library  
Robertson Passage, Hastings  
Contact: Ashley Jordon  
email: jordan72uk@gmail.com

### High Peak Writers

Works in association with The Grapevine - a  
local mental health charity. Located in Buxton.  
Contact: TBC  
email:

### Stevenage Survivors

Meets up every other Friday at The Friends'  
Meeting House, 21 Cutty's Lane, Stevenage  
7.30-9.30pm  
Contact: Roy Birch  
email: royb@survivorspoetry.org.uk

### The Bread is Rising Poetry Collective

<http://www.thebreadisrising.org/index.html>  
For info; contact: thebreadisrising@excite.com  
or 001-347-534-5715 [USA]

### York Survivors: SWAY

SWAY (Survivor Writers and Artists, York):  
Contact Brinley Price: brinleyprice@yahoo.co.uk;  
mobile: 07985 510458

## Tottenham Chances



399 High Road  
Tottenham  
London  
N17 6QN  
Tel: 0208 365 0653  
<http://www.tchances.co.uk/>

### 8pm Start

The Fourth Thursday of each month:

22nd Dec	.....tbc
26 <sup>th</sup> Jan	.....tbc
23rd Feb	.....tbc
22nd March	.....tbc
26 <sup>th</sup> April	.....tbc

email: Xochitl (pronounced Zochal):  
xmtuck@hotmail.com  
Tel: 0753 44 33 408

## The Poetry Café

The Poetry Café (The Poetry Place)  
22 Betterton Street, Covent Garden  
London WC2H 9BX  
Tel +44 (0)20 7420 9880  
<http://www.poetrysociety.org.uk>

### 7.30pm Start

The 2nd Thursday of each month except August:

12th Jan	STANLEY BAD (Dylan Bates, violin / Matt Scott, accordion / Paul Seacroft, keyboard)
9th Feb	DAVE RUSSELL (music and poetry) CATHERINE BROGAN (poetry)
8th March	MICHAEL AND ADAM HOROVITZ (poetry and music)
12th April	MARKIZA AND PETER BROWN (music)

email: Xochitl (pronounced Zochal):  
xmtuck@hotmail.com  
Tel: 0753 44 33 408

Dave Russell & Razz feature on a regular basis

Open-mic is a wonderful opportunity for new and more experienced poets and musicians to have their work heard in a friendly, and supportive atmosphere. If you want to read or perform your work you need to arrive between 7.00pm-7.30pm in order to book your floorspot. The doors will open to other audience members from 7.00pm and the performance will start at 7.30pm ish. Finish time for the event dependent upon the amount of people who want to do floorspots however, generally around 10.30. There will be a break half way through. These events are organised by Xochitl Tuck, Events' Coordinator.

# Bulletin

Merry Christmas  
and a Happy New Year

from  
Survivors' Poetry

"Thank you to  
all our volunteers,  
supporters and to the  
organisations that  
fund our work."

## New Newtwork Group! York Survivors: SWAY

SWAY (Survivor Writers and Artists, York) is the newest addition to the Survivors Poetry Group Network. Recently formed, SWAY meets on the first Tuesday of each month for workshops and readarounds, at The Golden Fleece Function Room, 16, The Pavement, York YO1 9UP Tel: 01904 625171. Contact : Brindley Price (Group Secretary); email — brinleyprice@yahoo.co.uk; mobile: 07985 510458

## New York Survivors! The Bread is Rising Poetry Collective

### Poets and Friends

This is given to me from a beautiful poet friend Brother Sam Diaz  
alm.  
Peace

Planetary Day of Peace #17 [last call?] Please read it out loud this Jan 1  
*By the Powers vested in me by the Word, I do hereby proclaim:  
January 1st of 2012 and all subsequent First Day of each Year:  
A Planetary Day of Peace*

"Let No Human Shed Human Blood For One Day"

[A Prayer For The Living, Samuel Diaz, ©1995, 2001] Sam  
Diaz — In The Service of Art, Poetry & Community  
<https://sites.google.com/site/bxcaospms/home>

- Survivors' Poetry has vacancies for **new trustees** to join our current Board of Trustees.
- We are particularly interested to hear from individuals with business and arts project management experience. You may have an interest in poetry or literature, or have worked in a commercial enterprise. Whatever your background we'd be interested in hearing from you.
- Please contact;
- [info@survivorspoetry.org.uk](mailto:info@survivorspoetry.org.uk),
- or telephone the office on
- 020 7281 4654

## Donations:

Find out why your donations are vital for the future work of Survivors' Poetry. Please visit our website's Donation page to find out about our projects. You can make donations online via our Donations page or via the website bookshop. Alternatively you can send a cheque payable to Survivors' Poetry or if you wish to include Gift Aid, please make your donation via [mycharitypage.com](http://mycharitypage.com). {Please note that a 2.8% fee is added to your donation by [mycharitypage.com](http://mycharitypage.com).}

<http://www.survivorspoetry.org/donations/>

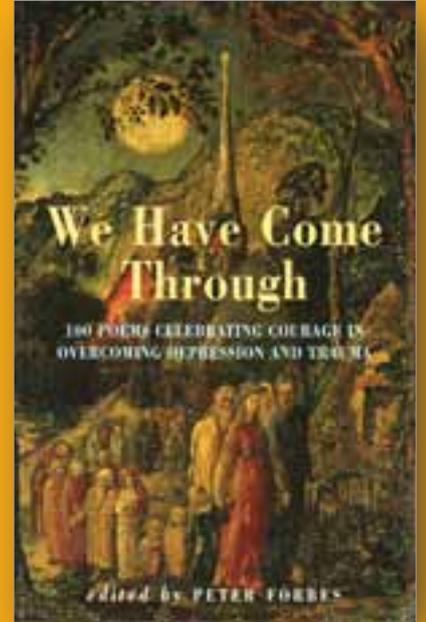


When you make a donation via Mycharitypage.com. YOU will be CHARGED a 2.8% fee. For example if you donate £5, an additional 0.14p will be added.

if you wish to

make contact and respond to anything you have read or if you wish to contribute, please either email: [info@survivorspoetry.org.uk](mailto:info@survivorspoetry.org.uk) or write to:  
Survivors' Poetry  
Studio 11 Bickerton House  
25-27 Bickerton Road  
London N19 5JT  
Tel: 020 7281 4654  
[www.survivorspoetry.org](http://www.survivorspoetry.org)

# We Have Come Through



A collection of survivor poetry published by  
Bloodaxe and Survivors' Poetry in 2003.  
Edited by Peter Forbes

A poem in this publication

Foundations

When I built upon sand  
The house fell down.  
When I built upon a rock  
The house fell down  
This time I shall start  
With chimney smoke.

Leopold Staff 1878-1957  
Translated from Polish by Adam Czerniawski

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