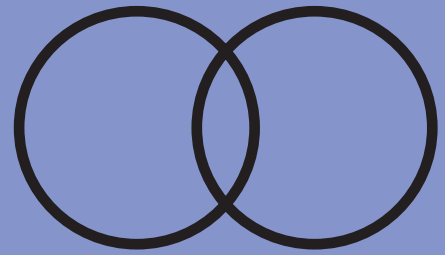


Poetry Express



QUARTERLY FROM SURVIVORS' POETRY

NUMBER 18
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Imma Maddox: Schizzy

Lloyd Lindsay on Performance Poetry

FS Hilton

Brenda Williams

Barry Tebb

Interview with Richard McKane

Broadsheet

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POETRY EXPRESS

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From the Intertim Manager

Simon Jenner

Hello again,

Welcome to our new look Poetry Express, with its two-colour design and extra four pages. Enjoy. And yes, I'm still here. Alison, alas, is still ill. Please send cards and we'll redirect them. One of her brightest initiatives flows on, though, which I'll outline later.

Another sad note – just as we go to press – is announcing the death of Dee Light, poet, gay rights and political activist, on January 5th 2004. A full obituary and appreciation of her is appearing in the next DAIL Magazine. We're still reeling from this, and there'll be more in our next issue too.

Well, that's at least the clouding over and out, because everything else is like a rather premature sunburst in late February, which is when I'm writing this. Lurking and wild schemes began at the end of last year, when James Ferguson announced the new anthology, to be published late this year. Poems have flooded in and have already been partially sifted and selected. Please keep them coming. Further, the Poetry Book Society announced its NextGen initiative, to succeed Peter Forbes' NewGen of 1994 that launched 20 new poets. This one, the PBS say, will also address some of the pitfalls – no age limit and you can even be dead but still you can't submit your own work. We had till February 6th, and with so little time we highlighted on Lee Wilson as one poet long overdue for a full-length collection. His volume will be published in the spring, just ahead of some individual pamphlets we're also hoping to bring out. This is a rolling programme, with further full-length volumes planned, as well as pamphlets.

Three further initiatives have furthered this again. James has also outlined a new proposal we're now putting into effect. For too long, we've only been sporadically in touch with our network groups across the UK. This has been perennial, and is partly in our nature. Many can live quite happily without London, thanks. But we're offering a unique service, which some groups already know about. We're hoping to become a clearing-house – in both editing and design – for nominated poets and in some cases anthologies from network groups. With the quality of design on offer, thanks to James and our long-awaited new computers, we can edit and produce books up to Poetry Book Society standards. Pamphlets are a new category for them, for too long neglected, as they said. Each quarter, the PBS launches out, as it were, on high quality single-poet pamphlets. Perhaps one day you can be among them. For the moment, though, this is only open to survivor groups, as only James can use Quark.

The other initiative is Alison's mentoring scheme, closely linked to the above. That is, Survivor groups might well have their own suggestions as to how this moves forward. Essentially we're embarking on a programme that allows poets to mentor initially 10-20 emerging poets. This is exciting and really does work – at least it did in Brighton when I tried it out. Mentoring's designed to encourage not only writing, but editing, magazine, and eventually in some cases, own-volume production. It's also about surviving, rather than survivor skills in the poetry world. Poetry publishing is precarious, or plain bloody fickle, and thus we envisage that much of the

publication might devolve on us initially.

But that's the mote for the middle distance. For the moment, we're looking for volunteer mentors, poets who want to be encouraged, and already established duets, gruesome twosomes, perhaps. And above all a talent base of mentors and mentees to emerge so we can begin co-ordinating and placing them in relationship to each other, when (as in many cases) you won't be coming in (Lionel) trilling pairs. Two pairs from network groups have already come forward (you know who you are), and we welcome ready-made relationships from co-ordinators of groups with one or more of their colleagues. Xochitl Tuck has helped enormously in recruiting possible mentors. This is an exciting time for us all and I hope as many share in it as possible.

As if to cheerfully outbid James's and my own initiative above, Roy Holland has projected perhaps the boldest scheme of all. It triggered personal memories of mine, setting a few piebald hobby-horses rocking about in the March wind on the old Palace Pier; like something out of Mark Gertler's painting. It's about the state of the nation's translation, at least in poetry; I go all Gertler about it.

In March 1990, just as Nelson Mandela was freed, Wole Soyinka came for his honorary doctorate at Leeds, his old university. In a really moving moment, the senior Reader Alistair Stead addressed him as 'our WS' amidst all the other Shakespearean allusions in Soyinka's work, and motioned to all the volumes of poetry outside; many weren't by Soyinka, but compatriots. Unlike him, their first languages were often not English, but Yoruba, Bantu, Portuguese or Afrikaans. A little before that, my Angolan poet friend Lusaka Lalu, also of Leeds, recruited to the state as a boxer because he was 6 foot 4 and for no other reason, helped me compile a list of Angolan poets – even writing poems from memory – for another very old friend. This was Martin Seymour-Smith's massive World Guide to Modern Literature. Martin's volume is still the main source for what the British know about literatures in Africa, and many elsewhere. Minority languages of around 10,000 speakers are covered. But, back to that pile of books on WS's table. Several poets there were unknown, and have remained so; some were in institutions and had suffered the ready menu of other oppressions. Since the heady days of Penguin world literature initiatives and translations, in the 1960s, there's been a marked decline in translated awareness of truly major poets, even great ones, many of whom have undergone mental distress and suffering of an order we can't imagine. European poets such as the Dutch Gerrit Achterberg (1905 – 62), the fleetingly radiant Italian Dino Campana (1885 – 1932) are two of the greatest poets of their languages last century, and both spent much of their time in institutions. It would be wonderful if volume translations of these poets appeared, and that of the astonishing Francis Webb (1925 – 74), similarly incarcerated in Australia. We might undertake them ourselves in the future, if no accessible volumes come to light. But we need to look far wider, and this is where Roy came in.

Roy's initiative embraces parallel text translations of poets from Persian to French Senegalese to Eastern Europe. It involves contacting translators who know of exiles and other

poets who have suffered mental distress and yet produced remarkable work. Since the mainstream has at best only been able to produce very wide-ranging anthologies, the initiative does rather return to organisations like us. Richard McKane, a distinguished translator of Russian and Turkish – whose volumes of Gumilyov and recently Ten Russian Poets grace our own list – talks eloquently of translating and its peculiar properties in an interview with Roy in this issue. Richard, whose other two volumes of Mandelstam were published to great acclaim by Bloodaxe, is now ready with the first complete translation of early Mandelstam – his pre-revolutionary Acmeist period, when he was so closely associated with Gumilyev and Akhmatova.

Another advanced proposal I'm particularly proud to announce completes something begun five years ago. Kazi Nazrul Islam (1899 – 1976) has claims to be the greatest Bangladeshi poet, and Survivors' Poetry produced six posters for the anniversary of his birth. From 1942 to his death he lived in a terrible silence in hospitals and institutions. Debjani Chatterjee, his translator and a long-term supporter of Survivors' Poetry, has just readily agreed to complete her edition of his selected poems, *The Rebellious Flute*.

We'll also be looking at minority language poets in this country, including early indigenous ones such as Gaelic, after a talk with Phillipa Johnstone of Literature Training in Edinburgh.

That's where Roy and I are headed on 18th March, and we hope to meet Survivors' Poetry Scotland at the Literature Training conference. Straight after that Lloyd Lindsay will be at Cultureworld, the National Black Writers' and Publishers' Conference on the 20th. I'd love to be going myself. And on April 29th we'll proceed to the Dylan Thomas Centre in Swansea for the Welsh Survivors' Poetry conference. If you're local to any of these, we hope to see you there. With the appointment of new outreach workers only a few months away, it's time we spread our quills. There's reason to feel sanguine, especially after such long-merited praise of the staff from the Arts Council and everyone else.

On four of the staff, but not the fifth. And this member has proved truly fickle. On Friday 20th Roland the rat was seen peeping out of a hole under the LDAF desk next door belonging to Julie Macnamara, where our colleagues laugh explosively in a beautifully-kept office. Quite musically. Milliganesque, I asked Joe McConnell of DAIL Magazine 'Can we have our rat back please?' 'We take the optimistic view that he's a large mouse,' said Joe. Never!

The Cure for Homosexuality

The Beatles had their first number one.
I was bottom in the family charts.
Had confessed to the priest about a boy
who made me light-headed.
I prepared for a stint on my knees
but had to attend hospital for my penance.
Mother knelt while electrodes
were placed on my thighs.
I was shown pictures of naked men.

From Forth Form, I was 'Poofter
at your back.' Unofficially off roll.
Someone who had to report
to the medical room at playtimes
and during P.E. I'd piss myself
rather than go to the BOYS.
Hometime, I was released first.
My name was chalked on walls.
Masses were offered to save my soul.

It was always winter at home.
Two single beds replaced the double
I shared with my brother.
Since then we never spoke.
I slept with my hands
above the blankets.
The sheets were checked daily.
Tatter was kept in the dark
for fear it might aggravate his heart.

I reported to the priest daily in his room.
He'd insist on exorcising the devils.
Had a crown of thorns
tattooed on his back,
made me swear a vow of silence.
I was sent to a House of Correction.
It was a House of Wrongs.
Later I made it out to the streets.
It was 'Please Please Me' 1962.

OWEN GALLAGHER

A Maudsley Babe

I am a Maudsley babe. After a breakdown at Oxford in 1974-5, I ended up at the Villa in the Maudsley Hospital. In Occupational Therapy I made a ball-gown to wear at the May Ball at Oxford. By the time I got back to Oxford I had grown a good six sizes bigger because of the medication. I never went to a May Ball.

Years later, in 1979, I was advised to give up on academia and do something practical. A voice in my head said 'weave'. My mother had been a weaver, so this made sense. A very good friend, a nun, said 'go for it'. I was introduced to the Principal of Digby Stuart College, and it was here that I would learn to weave.

After another period in hospital, where I learned a lot from the creative sessions in Occupational Therapy, I was housed in the council flat that I now live and work in. The following years were hard. I had minimal contact with my family, and many of the galleries I approached were negative, snooty and critical about my work. I remember one hot summer day carrying a suitcase full of samples up to Contemporary Applied Arts. On meeting the person in charge I pulled out two items of work. The woman said that they were 'awful' and that she didn't want to see any more. I went home and stayed in bed for two weeks.

After re-establishing relations with my father and family, things started to pick up. Together we formed Imma Maddox Fine Arts. I have successfully made a 104 ft tapestry about a historical queen, Queen Emma, that I am taking around Britain.

Things that Hurt

My mother dying when I was 5. 1960

Being sent as a child to an art therapist who asked me repeatedly over six years if I 'wanted to sleep with my father'. I think she thought that was Freud. At least I had a paintbrush in my hand when that happened. Later she said I was 'still ill' when I stopped seeing her again aged twelve. 1961-67

Meeting a guru in San Francisco in my gap year. Not having a religious background, I was overcome. When I returned to the UK, I remembered his gesture to stop me smoking. I went to temples trying to get him over here. I put cigarettes on an Indian shrine and promised to stop. I couldn't. 1974

Things that Helped

Going to hospital helped. Modecate, the drug they gave me, helped. Giving me ECT frightened me so much that I lied about hearing a voice and they let me out after six months in hospital because of it. They thought my illness was a sex and drugs problem, a crazy mixed-up kid. 1975

When I began to get ill again a nun befriended me. She and her community gave me and give me more than I can ever thank them for. Sister Benedicta of All Saints Sisters of the Poor

was her name. When I left hospital they gave me a job and a place. But I felt confused about possibly being gay or bisexual, which I couldn't handle in a woman's community. I took an overdose. 1978

A good doctor who was kind and kept seeing me for six years or so helped. I went to a Richmond Fellowship hostel and got a job with a modest expense accountant and fell in love with my councillor and wrote love poems to him. 1979

When I got ill the third time my voice said 'weave'. I had been advised to do something practical and my mother had woven so my nun and I worked on finding somewhere I could do this. I found Sister Dorothy Bell, principal of Digby Stuart College, Roehampton and got a place there. The Disablement Resettlement Office got me funding through Manpower and I spent two years there, learning to weave. 1980-82

Schizophrenia: A woman's point of view

I was always alarmed at being in hospital with potentially violent men. We woman schizophrenics suffer the same stigma as men, but aren't likely to be violent to others, something that is not appreciated. We are concerned with giving out phone numbers and addresses, and may become victims for no reason. And then it can be very difficult to get help, as the other person is a patient with doctors and nurses fighting their corner as well. Though I find there is a high level of solidarity in hospital with groups of women patients, and possible antisocial or unwanted sexual approach by men.

One major concern for women is finding a partner and having children. My medication decreases fertility in the main, and anyway looking after a child may be considered impossible and the children may be taken away. Relationships commonly break up under the strain of illness.

I found years of rejection and being teased, or coming across impossible men, many of whom just wanted a one-night stand. This is the most painful strand in my life: the loneliness and feeling of rejection, and sometimes of inadequacy, when you see other women so seemingly happy with their partner and child. 'Why can't I be like that?' goes through my mind. Many young men do not want to link up with someone who is chained to benefits or may be a liability or have extra problems in a relationship.

Now the availability of the Disability Living Allowance means psychiatric male patients can take women out, and have relationships in the conventional way. And this is happening. Though few babies are being born, however stable the couple. Long may this dating continue.

In the past I have felt very vulnerable in my council property when I had disputes with other neighbours. It seems that men and women on their own, with or without illness, can be picked on by neighbours. I have had anonymous phone calls by two 'friends'. And have sometimes had to see out some stressful situations, which the doctors sometimes failed to see. They were happier believing I was deluded, but everyone has

problems.

Let Go

The leaf burns terribly in the rainforest
and he shook hands with the clasp of a new-born bee
and I shadow my eyes with mascara and it'll never
run and run down my downy cheek. Which country
do you come from? The same as my friend Robin,
country never end.

How I Cope

I hold stones, especially when I pray, as it helps me feel
grounded.

I pray.

I go to confession. This, like talking to doctors, is confidential
and guiding.

I try to stop to listen to what the voice is saying and think
whether this is best.

I let off steam by shouting at my father.

I phone friends.

I talk to people in the street. It gives me friends, fills in all the
other bits for them for when they learn I am ill, and gives me
an identity.

I type. My handwriting, like a lot of dyslexic schizophrenics, is
appalling.

I try not to talk about my illness to strangers.

I cry. It can be very healing.

I rage at God and the world.

I lie down on my bed a hundred times a day and work in fits
and starts.

I use my disabled bus pass, despite the stigma.

I send a lot of letters.

A Game Called Hit the Kitty

(From poem written about hospital in the 1970s – the bad old
days)

So from the outside barrier
I ask you in. To the villa.
Where I had ECT. After which I was
woozy and was asked was I
thinking of my mother or my
father? Where I would, it seemed,
do anything for a cigarette.

Where I thought I had been
kidnapped. Was being kept
against my wishes and in some kind
of school. Where there was a room I
could paint in with poster paints and
newsprint.

Where I lost my address book in
a locked ward. Where the phone
was locked when I called 999,
the police, so much. Where I lost
my mooted career as a disc jockey when
SF KRE rang and found I was in
a looney bin.

Where I developed the Maudsley
shuffle. And have rocked ever since.

Stigma

It can be obvious, in some cases, that you are ill. I may rock,
our fingers may pill (which involves the first finger circling
on the inside of the thumb incessantly). I am heavy or very
stocky because of medication. We may have developed
the irreversible side-effects around the mouth and hands,
involuntary movements. We may not have been driven in a
car for years, been to the theatre, bought a paper, been on
holiday, bought new clothes, eaten in a restaurant, taken a taxi
or babysat someone's children. We might depend on television
or the radio for all news and much of our personal contact.

I get invited to previews of art shows sometimes. It is very
difficult to break through the taboos and go. These people, all
dressed up, drinking, chatting about things I just don't have to
seem to chat about. So even when there are breakthroughs,
it can be difficult to follow them up. It is easier when the
exhibitions are of my peer group, mental patients who make
art, and people at the Bethlem Hospital are pioneering this.
Their 750th anniversary art exhibition and poetry book were
landmarks in 1997.

Sometimes it is low expectations that are the problem.
Generally it is difficult to be ill and work. But that doesn't mean
we can do nothing.

How Poetry Was Slammed to Death

Lloyd Lindsay on performance poetry

I'm not sure if it's possible for me to write an article on Performance Poetry. For by this term is it meant as to refer to a specific variety of poetry dubbed Performance Poetry; or the performance of any poetry; or, at the real risk of tautology, poetry AND its performance?

For me it is a holistic form of Heart, Body, Mind, Memory, Soul & Spirit. For many Heart (in its emotional context) Soul & Spirit are merely abstract terms. Even fabrications. But for me they are more than that. I cannot define Soul – and why should I try? And Spirit may be solely the air we breathe as in inspiration & expiration, the in & out of our respiratory process.

Some may, perhaps, see that last sentence as some sort of wordplay. Wordplay for me, and many other performance poets, is a large part of the form. Those people with, in my mind, knowledge & vision will see that this way of analysis is a sound & sensible science (or 'sciencing') of the roots & meaning of words.

The holistic approach to performance poetry is often a free & free-flowing form. It has no rules or conventions. From my empiricism, it appears that most performance poets aim to inspire, amuse, and to educate & entertain. (Or if you will allow me to use an often-cited splicing together of the two different concepts, in street terminology – or Hip Hop – 'edutainment'.)

The 'popular' performance poetry circuit is a highly competitive world. In events called Slams, poets attempt to (um...) out-ode each other. To do this they must impress upon both the judges and the audience that they are the best among the rest. I have heard these events described as mock-competition. But after entering as a contestant in the Cheltenham Slam somewhere in the mid nineteen nineties (where I went out in the 1st round) I have observed that the competition can be taken very seriously. One preciously foolish participant pushed the Master of Ceremonies down the stairs for allowing a competitor through to the next round who had broken the initial 2 minute oration time-limit.

The event had a somewhat serious impact on my sensitivities too. A good mate of mine, from my stable, won the event. Our names were pulled out of a hat consecutively as to, as it were, 'duel' against each other. Bad sport or not, here is my response in poetry to the event (which aimed to express my feelings about it as well as conjure up its atmosphere).

How Poetry was Slammed to Death: an Epic Flavoured with Sour Grapes

With lyrical lightening he ran them all through &
through
And with the edge of his Word chopped off their heads.

They fought & they fought well
Friends & strangers he did fell

And the adulation of the crowd
Was tumultuous, loud.

Then like the Immortal gathering

At the final quickening
(For 'there could only be one'
That would finally win)
It seemed to him that the power (that) went out of them
Went into him.

As hot as hell he did transpire
And woe, behold, he was 'On Fire!'
Like a basketball star in a Greek arena (??)
He, Agamemnon,
Dribbled & slam-dunked their heads
One by one.

Or rather it was King of the Ring
As the others went down for the count
Due to him –
As he kept on knocking them out
With the clout
Of his mouth.

Kickin' arse with his verse
Runnin' all through & through
Boxing his way to Victory
For the mantle of Master Mover of Muse.

War-like & loving
Soft as well as hard
He proved himself to be
The boss (performance) bard,
Despite the mockery
Of all the unseen blood.

Were oral literary events in Ancient Greece this aggressive for real? Perhaps not. That said, Survivors' Poetry offers a usually much gentler environment where performance-style poetry is as welcomed as all other styles at our nights at the Poetry Cafe & at the Dioramanite. (And we won't know if such style of material will be accepted for publication in the Poetry Express broadsheet unless we submit our work!) Survivors' also offers microphone training and other training in the skills pertaining to performance poetry. The Routes Performance Company, of which I am a director, also offer this for survivors of the mental health system & of mental distress. For details contact Sarah & Gem on 020 635 59576 5959 or 0771 7471 755.)

See page 18 for details of our free London workshops.

Performance poetry organisation Apples & Snakes' 21st birthday anthology is reviewed on page 16.

Interview with Richard McKane

Roy Holland

Richard McKane is a long-term supporter of Survivors' Poetry and gave a wonderful performance of his work full of gravitas recently at the Dioramanite. He came to the writing and translation of poetry simultaneously in 1966. He began to translate Mandelstam and, on a trip around Turkey and the Middle East, he wrote his first volume of poems entitled *Landscapes of Turkey*. In 1967 he began to translate Akhmatova while studying at Oxford University. Then in 1969 he first experienced bipolar disorder and spent months on a narcosis ward at the Warneford, pumped with largactil and stelazine.

Richard then returned to Turkey to work, initially as a tour guide at Antalya. He learnt Turkish informally and met the most important poets in Istanbul. He had also spent two years in France as a boy, and he was told that three languages represented three persons. It was the height of the Cold War, and he was a pioneer. He did one of the first translations of Akhmatova's 'Requiem' and of Mandelstam's poem to Stalin. Richard's own poem 'Crown of Gorse' reflected the cryptogrammatic approach. He developed a liking for Robert Lowell's verse, and it was much more difficult for survivor poets in those days.

During the Seventies Richard appeared regularly at the Troubadour with poets such as Frank Bangay, Ferenc Aszmann and Dave Sheehan (who died). Then you could write a poem on a Sunday and read it on a Monday. He was also involved in the Campaign Against Psychiatric Oppression (CAPO), but it was many years later that his translation of the anonymous poet from the Arsenal Psychiatric Hospital appeared in *Survivors' Poetry's Ten Russian Poets*.

Richard has worked for sixteen years as an interpreter for the Medical Foundation for the Victims of Torture. When he first approached the founder, Helen Bamber, he was open about his breakdown, and his knowledge of depression and intrusive thinking has given an extra sensitivity to his work there. He regards his position as 'a bit of an honour', as all but one of the other thirty interpreters for the Foundation are mother-tongue speakers. The transition from being cared for to being a carer is in itself therapeutic for him.

Eight years ago Richard suffered a severe blow when his younger brother, also a survivor, died of a heart attack after two years as an inpatient at the age of 43. They had been a pair. His brother had written a novel, *Feast of Beggars*, which concludes with a most indicative description of a paranoid breakdown.

Richard regrets that, although he can pass for a Russian, he has not been able to spend more time in Russia, but he was invited to go for three weeks for the centenary of Akhmatova and the Pasternak anniversary. As well as the classics, his favourite Russian poets include Aranzon, Velichansky, whose translation is a future project, Olga Sedakova, translations of whose work he has published over here, and Victoria Andreyeva, who introduced Richard to many modern poets before her death.

Negar, a young Azeri poet who writes in Russian, came to

a reading which Richard gave at Lauderdale House, and he worked closely with her on the first translation of her work into English. She has been called 'a new Akhmatova' and it was a great pleasure to collaborate directly with the poet. She also combines Turkish and Russian cultures in her Azeri heritage.

As Deputy Chairman of English PEN's Rights of Prisoners Campaign, Richard was alerted to the case of a Turkish woman journalist who was imprisoned and tortured, and his translation of *Asiye's Story* came out of this. Richard also has a standing invitation to visit Russian PEN in Moscow as a result of his bilingual edition of Russian prison poetry. Having been confined in hospital himself, he feels a special empathy for the Russian and Turkish political prisoners. Richard's best selling book is in fact *Beyond the Walls*, the prison poems of Nazim Hikmet, translated with Ruth Christie. Richard talks of the way a rainbow emerges from the prison and says that there is a lot to be learnt from 'extreme poetry'. *Asiye's Story* is very close to his heart.

Richard is also interested in Kurdish and Persian poetry, although he does not speak the languages. There have been Kurdish poets writing in Turkish, such as Ashik Veysel and Ahmed Arif, and Richard also admires the songs of Ahmed Kaya, who died very young. Richard is on the committee of Exiled Writers Ink, which includes Turkish and Kurdish writers and meets regularly in London. There is a parallel between 'survivors' as we define them and exiles, and in both cases, as Richard suggests, the 'energies may blaze.' He has also worked with adolescents and young kids on poetry writing, and describes how a Kosovan nine-year-old comes up with the most amazing words and phrases in English.

Richard's future projects include the issue of his own selected poems in English. His *Coffeehouse Poems* have been published in a bilingual edition in Turkey, but not here. He feels he has 'missed the slim volume of his youth,' like Tarkovsky. He is also working on the collected early Mandelstam. His work is like a tripod. He tries to give equal weight to interpreting, translation of poetry and his own poems. Combined with word play in all three languages and a sense of humour they are anchors for his mental health. He wants to patent the phrase 'phobile moans'.

Poets hand on the mantle to each other, and when the translator gets under the skin of a poet they want to do more for them than write a preface. This is the secret of Richard's book *Poet for Poet* (Hearing Eye, ISBN 1-870841-57-3, Price £10.99)

Richard's translations of Gumilyov are still available from the Survivors' Poetry office (*The Pillar of Fire*, *Anvil and Survivors' Poetry*, ISBN 0-85646-310-8, Price £12.95, £10 if ordered direct from us.) His favourite Gumilyov poem is 'Ezbekie', written after Gumilyov had got over his suicide wish, a crux poem showing a lift of spirits.

The latest volume from Survivors' Poetry and Anvil, *Ten Russian Poets*, which I reviewed in *Poetry Express* 17 and which Richard edited, emerged from readings of many of the poets represented at the Pushkin Club, a group promoting

and contemporary Russian literature, which meets in London regularly and of which Richard is co-chair. It is also available from the Survivors' Poetry office (Price £12.95, £9 if ordered direct from us, ISBN 0-85646-328-0.)

Richard knows that there are many survivor poets out there to be translated, and that the effects of state terrorism are similar to those of mental ill health, except that its victims experience 'justified paranoia'.

I asked Richard to comment on Survivors' Poetry's latest plans, and he thought that mentoring younger poets was a wonderful idea. He advises three people writing on Akhmatova and mentors Turkish poets who are just starting. Enthusiasm is vital, and is not a very London thing. Mentoring should be friendship where souls meet, and poetry has great therapeutic value. Richard himself learnt from mentors – Peter Levi, who spotted his Akhmatova translation in 1968, and Feyyaz Fergar, a Turkish poet who also wrote wonderful poetry in English.

Richard's work takes him on mental expeditions to other country every day. He echoes Mandelstam, saying that poems are written after joyful or traumatic events. He feels his psyche is summed up by Mandelstam, rather than by his 'manic depression'. Aranzon said that 'swings' can be a split second or within two words (sad/glad). One is lucky enough sometimes to get off the swing and be on firm ground. The important thing is not to get pushed. When Richard appeared with Negar and others at the Cuirt Festival in Galway, the Irish Times described his reading as 'most shocking'. Certainly we will need his work to reveal both beauty and injustices for a long time to come.

Letter

Dear Survivors' Poetry,

I have to respond to the article in Poetry Express 16 (Autumn/Winter 2002), because the whole tone of the article touches on a raw nerve with me.

It's partly why I have launched Between Shadows (Shell Press), with its mystical cover. It's why my support worker Janice Hogg is currently establishing a Christian-based mental health charity, Making a Difference.

People who work alongside mental health survivors do need to integrate spirituality as part of healing and therapy. My one criticism of the charity MIND (of which I am a member) is that it still ignores the spiritual, which is an unhelpful policy.

I express myself in poetry because I find it therapeutic to do so. But the catalyst towards creativity is what I would describe as the Divine Spark in each and every one of us. Are secular mental health institutions afraid of 'interference' by the church? Or is the spiritual dimension to be added to the discrimination we already experience? Remove the spiritual development of the individual and you have what we have now, secular apartheid. Making a Difference demonstrates that spirituality is part of holistic recovery.

We ignore the spiritual at our peril. I am a lapsed Christian, whose concept of the divine now includes nature, the creative experience and all mystical experience. Without spirituality I could not write, or paint, as I do. Tap into the spiritual and you find heightened awareness and inner strength; you find strength-in-weakness. Listen to 'the still small voice'!

Sincerely,

Alex Warner

We Have Come Through

John Weedon responds to our latest anthology

We have come through? What's it all about?

It's about a new Mental Health Act that was promised to us for 1999 by the Health Ministry. A promise not kept. That's what it's about! It's about the public being media-fed with materialism to such a degree that no one wants to understand the worsening plight of the mentally distressed. The mentally distressed, who the misled believe should wear a label or a bandage round their heads or a uniform to make it easier for them to patronise us or to avoid us altogether. And I recall clearly (and this is what is really happening) experiencing overwhelming angry, confused emotions. 'I couldn't help being ill!' I used to say over and over again to those I loved when I needed them so badly when they had rejected me ...

It's about what coming through means to survivors. Its about me standing in the Bankside Gallery one night at a Royal Watercolour Society private view, and accepting a cheque for £100 for a painting from Danielle. Danielle and I came through that night for survivors.

It's about my friend Alistair who is coming through. It's about his shining personality coming back one Dioramanite recently. It's about us all laughing together. It's about us all coming through together that night. (And Danielle saw that painting for the first time too.)

It's about my friend Lloyd. It's about our first meeting at Somers Town Blues Night years ago and sharing a beer afterwards. It's about a deep discussion Lloyd and I had at the office recently.

You see, for me it's not about suffering through a 28 day section any more during 1984 in Southchurch Ward at Rochford Hospital. Sitting in the Quiet Room with the window open watching the snow in the trees, settling on the grass outside in the moonlight in the cold silence of December. Her name was Sue. We were talking in whispered voices about freedom. No, it's not about that. It's something else. It's about two survivors not knowing what the future was going to be. What the future was holding in its golden palm of destiny. Not knowing then what we were really waiting for. The golden palm of destiny? Survivors helping survivors...

What were we waiting for that night? For her, was it just a boyfriend? 'Perhaps his car has broken down,' I said softly. For us was it to be our love affair? Well yes, that was a bit champagne-corks and candlelight on white tablecloths. But no, it wasn't to be that. For her it was to be another love and the miracle of a little girl named Bliss. For me, it was to be complete recovery.

And finally, it's about our human rights. The system today fails: fails to offer dynamic therapeutic devices and financial support so that a recovered sufferer is released equipped with the skills and qualifications ready to compete and contribute in the workplace.

And it's about me coming through to you and shouting out loud 'We have come through, survivors! We have come through!'

That's what it's about.

Warmth

Father,
impenetrable
mystery
from the Raj
aura of a man
unable to understand
why he mistreated
Mother
rock
stable, circling
around me
like a moon around earth
forever
maker
uncertainly
I stumble on
Father is gone
not even to another country
gone
how will I go on
now five years after
it is harder than at first
indefinably

ROSA SCOTT

A Lady

Queenie shoes
Liberty print shirt
Rigby & Rigby bras
daffs
Guernsey
bare concrete floors
pink lipstick
free RA magazines
what is identity?

ROSA SCOTT

THE POETRY EXPRESS BROADSHEET

Autumn / Winter 2003

SKB / SSRI

My wrists ache with repetitive strain,
My fingers inch soft arcs on my scalp,
Touching every small follicle
For a tiny white particle, to pick out and study
Beside a strong light, every tight minute,
Sixty times an hour.

Cutting back a milligram,
My shells become more porous.
A little sound and I snap up stung,
Collapse at a tap
Of the sinks drop hitting metal.

All stimulus attacks me,
My lover's hand makes me retract,
In my mind his eyes make sly judgements
On my awkward thin covered limbs,
And make a boned barrace
Around that I will not show.

Shut up! I'm fizzling with rabidity,
Your gabbering is killing me, look, I've got to check
The silence, to see if it's still there.
Bar the probing of my finger pads
Stepping round the skin beneath my hair.

I must search inside my lustral lap,
Sat like an S on the lip of a seat,
I can't look front or about me
I know the fears still out there,
I only allow a white pipe of dull smoke
Inside to attest my despair.

Carla Abraham

Walking Away

Whistling as the line manager
screamed across the shop floor.

Cycling faster as the foreman
waved his arms and shouted.

Smiling at the girl on the counter
as I walked past security with Holub down my trousers.

Looking back through the classroom windows
at the crescendo of hysteria.

Being prepared for responsibility,
especially to myself.

Neil Campbell

Lost

I'm in a vast picture gallery
At the end of which is a door.
In the dream I go through the door
Into another vast room, at the
End of which is another door...

I have a fear of pissing in the wind
Gathering no moss – that the end of
The tunnel is a cul-de-sac
And that all the time spent struggling
Dissipates into running round in circles.

I have no answers – I'm still in
The tunnel – looking for the light;
Disillusionment's round the corner
Even if not at the end of the tunnel
(Or was it through the tunnel? I ask myself).

I'm in a vast picture gallery.
It's not the doors so much, but what's
Behind the doors on the other side;
It's the icing on the cake.
The fact that I'm looking... is important.

Paul Hatchett

Morning After a Riot

I listened to the rustling of rats
running along shadowed ceilings of thin chalk.
Trickles of rain slowly start to pierce
the oily cobwebs of Winter's glass.

The skies are no longer a blood red
and the cries from last night have suddenly faded.
Those bright orange flowing flames
are now the sizzling curtains of ash.

Along these abandoned streets of debris
the snoring skies start to whisper.
You can see the shadows of looted shops
and smell the glistened anger.

On the morning after a riot
I looked out onto a quilt of burning sulphur,
burnt-out cars smouldering grey smoke
as the screams from last night echo in my ears.

Matt Dugan

Vincent's Vase

Small insignificant room,
Almost a bypass, a corridor
To treasures unlimited.

Just like its original placement
His modest guest bedroom.
Yellow heads... not dead
Now over one hundred years a bloom.

Mesmerised, school children pay homage,
They sprawl at his feet.
In uniforms of the coordinated establishment
They reproduce in colour, multiple impressions,
Dozens of cluster-headed starry sunflowers.

Evocative then, full of life, hope, friendship,
Everything from the magic manic, 'a good paint day.'
Not faded into depression, and withered death,
But a living legacy, a flourish from the flowerman.

Art students and 'Gough's groupies' fight for space
With the 'paintball pupils'...

Sir, Sir, I've painted this before, do I have to do it again?
Sir, Sir, my mum says mine is better than this old one!!
Sir, Sir, was he as old as me when he painted that?
Sir, Sir, why can't we paint it bigger, like he did?
Sir, Sir, why are we using watercolours when he used oils?

John Hirst

Winter Suffocation

Grey powder ash grazes fingers
no surface can hide from its fall
a thick, steady sheet of guilt
precedes the rebirth of fire.
Huddled static before the embers
a woman tries to wake her dying form,
her body is a dirty coal-sack,
her mind travelling through a labyrinth,
every dead end void of electric
fused bulbs light her eyes with mould.

Her fingers caress one stinking ember
sucking the stick her only motion.
She crawls to coat and style stuffed gloves
pushes herself wearily forwards
and struts stiff legs at the bleary cold.
Grinning winter tickles her prudish veins
knocking her soldier's stride with sunlight
dancing silhouetted birds through glaze
crunching stubborn ice to wince a smile,
no longer a sack she runs with the breeze.

Anna Field

In the End

In the end, I did not know

from one day to the next
how you would be.

I'd grieve if you were not where
you belonged – safe behind
your eyes, your voice

warm, your mind centred, in touch
with me, kindly, caring
so much it hurt.

I'd watch you struggle to keep
your head above water,
help with chores, dry

your tears, make cups of tea, bring
you talk of school, study
your face for clues

about the unfolding day,
longing for your laughter –
sometimes you'd smile.

I'd see you drowning before
my eyes, far out of reach,
locked in anguish

I could barely comprehend.
I'd be longing to hold
you, keep you safe.

I'd see you elated, bubbling
with humour, spiralling
into hollow

emptiness, leaving me bleak
aching with unshed tears
for both of us.

Helen Overall

Bulldozer Man

Flowers sprang
From the hard earth
Every Spring,
A kaleidoscope of promise.

That was until
The bulldozer man
Came
And ground them down,

Crushed colours
On hard earth.

Now there is nothing left.
He bulldozes over himself.

Vanessa Burgar

Jim John McGilligan

Jim John McGilligan just belts it out
On the old upright at the Ale and Stout,

Diminished sevenths unknown to him,
Make 'em 'ave it is the code for Jim.

Bulbous bananas nicotine brown
Arpeggio up and loud pedal down,
Glass on the black notes, time for a tippie
Back to the ivories. One more ripple.

Hetty absconded with no farewell note,
Just like a woman she took my best coat,
Joanna won't leave me she's screwed to the floor,
Faithful old virginal Jim John's amour.

First thing tomorrow it's back on the bins,
Upend the scrapings, peelings and tins,
Must see me mother, not very well,
Never been right since the day she fell.

Must check the list. Need sugar and bread,
Me old mucker Bert has just dropped dead,
Calliope Jane is running at Ayr,
Some mug'll back it. Not got a prayer.

No Chopin, no Liszt, no Brahms or Purcell,
It's Roll out the Barrel and oh what the hell,
Mansfield are playing down at the Mill,
Ninety odd minutes and we lose one-nil.

Jim John McGilligan's just like the rest,
Muddling along, Eternity's guest,
Into the void with a distant bell ringing,
Is that an angel I can hear singing?

Ken Humphreys

Jazz and My Specimen Flower

My specimen flower leaked red.
Drops of colour gave my room a rosy glow.

Juice was strained, wetted my pillow.
I licked silky drops of passion,

drank copious watery midnight thoughts,
sank into a pit of deep-singed love.

My reddest top was lifted from my head
while the fridge outside hummed lullabies.

Rhythmic colours banged and clashed a ceiling jazz-spot.
All this time a flower was being shed.

My love for you was a red, red rose that bled,
A concrete slab fell, broke, shattered my life,
Turned the sky upside down, changed me.
My love for you was a red, red rose and it was shed.

Doreen King

Survivor of the Night

When even putting your head down to rest
Becomes a screamingly daunting test,
Obsessive thoughts stick to an exhausted mind

Like to flypaper, hard to unwind.
A couple of snatched hours before 'ping',
Flushed reawakening your ears ring
With blood rushing in tumbling profusion
As thoughts and mastery battle in confusion.
Awake again and destined to suffer
Without that blissful nocturnal buffer
Of purest blank – a dreamless sleep –
You'd trade your life for slumber deep.
Shaking, clammy hands, mouth that dries
Purple shadows beneath red-rimmed eyes,
Each atom of you straining for peace,
Aching for these symptoms to cease.
Panic subsides with yellowish dawn,
Eyelids drop amidst a yawn,
At last a ray of jagged light
For our survivor of the night.

Susan Hughes

Breakdown

The straw broke –
the camel had enough.
Light as a child's discarded sweet wrapper –
could you believe it?
Knocked over.
The feather won.
I could not get up
for at least half a year.
My thoughts
muddled
confused
dead.
Me
swaying
like
a
 brok
 en
grandfather's clock.
Chipped
nipped
unwrapped
exposed
raw
a bloody steak
fed to the
snarling mouth of capitalism.

Wilma Kenny

Transient Dream (or Whispers of Despair)

Two heads bent together
Over childhood joys
Two little faces without trace
Of tearful toil

Intent on making castles
To be toppled at a stroke
Intent on living moments here and now

Two faces interwoven
Through childhood years
Two young playmates captured
For a future reverie
Content to shell the sand
And see their boat list crazily
Speak, Whispers! Speak, Despair!
But don't dispel their transient dream

Sarah Cavill

Heal Your Life

The fear that stalks this intimacy.
Finds its way
Everywhere.
In my dreams.
With my lover
Who only comes to me in the safety of
The Astral plane.

On the train
The woman opposite me is reading You Can Heal Your Life.
This is a good sign.
I smile
And decide I can.

Laura Stanton

After the Love

After the love
I echo his smile
He wants to leave

We are like
Strawberries without cream
A riverbed without water
Sky without sun

After the love

I moved onto the dent in the sheets you made on my bed

Hattie Boulding

Wild Geese Calling

I do not have to be good
or crawl on my hands and knees
for endless miles over burnt sand and rocks,
repenting.
I only have to allow myself to be who I am.

Sing me your loss and I will sing you mine.

Meanwhile, the stars sing out their story,
and the soft pebbles of spring rain
move across the desert bringing deepness
to the life of thirsty trees –
shadowed mountains and slow rivers.
And the wild geese are swooping home again.

No matter who I am – even when alone
or in pain,
the universe is there for me,
and calls me like the cry of wild geese
returning home,
telling me over and over
I have the right to exist
and do have a place in this world.

Mala Mason

Long Tall Sally

Sally Long, a cold giraffe,
Set out one day to buy a scarf.
She hunted high, she hunted low,
She went to all the shops you'd know.
But all her searching came to naught –
The scarves on sale were far too short.

At end of day, by now quite sad,
She dreamed of scarves she'd never had.
By chance she had a friend, Miss Tweedle,
A hedgehog expert with the needle.
Miss Tweedle heard of Sally's plight
And felt it time to put things right.

She knitted long, she knitted hard,
A scarf unfolded yard by yard.
When finally the work was done
Sally's friends joined in the fun.
The scarf reached down to Sally's knees.
She gave a speech, she was so pleased!

Stevie Matthews

Arguing with Themselves

Simon Jenner on the poetry of Brenda Williams and FS Hilton

Brenda Williams

Sonnets are arguments with ourselves. The original 'sonetto' or 'song' when taken from the Italian of Cavalacanti and others assumed a far tougher, didactic voice when imported to Britain in the 16th century, striped with rain and sore throats: Wyatt, Surrey, Sidney, Daniel, Drayton, and overarchingly, Shakespeare. A certain bloody-mindedness thewed the form, rendering the surface a kind of lawyer's brief. Milton experimented with endings and got nastily political and personal. Wordsworth and particularly Keats had extraordinary battles with this inheritance. We all know how it worked at its best. At its worst, it becomes a lean causistical business, full of half-winded abstractions. However you vary it – and Tony Harrison's attempt to revive Meredith's 16-line sonnet is notable – cod-piece stiffness (as it were) is a real and present danger.

In The Enfield Sonnets, Brenda Williams has partly fulfilled Christopher Reid's criterion that those poets who achieve excellence do so through obsessive focus on a narrow subject-matter, perhaps in a single genre: Williams has essayed this in a way virtually no other poet writing would even dare, with (as Reid noted) the exception of Jeremy Reed. (Reed is, in fact, one of the few kindred voices whom Williams echoes at all, in certain key-words like 'panel', and they admire each other.) Her subject-matter in 'The Pain Clinic' and other of these sonnet-sequences is, rightly, the record of her own and others' suffering, external and internalised. That is, certain key events trigger a fluent corpus: hospitalisation or the lack of it, a curious literary feud or elegies for someone who died whilst being told not to bother the authorities. Born on the night in December 1948 that Eliot got the Nobel Prize, as she wryly informs us, Williams adopts a plummet-ride of sonnets, is only partly indebted to another Boston type, Lowell, whom this procedure most obviously recalls. The sheer diaspora of themes are nothing like so egoic, or self-centering, let alone self-serving.

Williams is a consummate sonneteer, in the sense that this stiffness never afflicts her. Her natural, fluidly turned phrasing and clear perspectives on the argument of each sonnet makes it an easily-read poem, beckoning one to read on. The dangers are equally easy to summarise: a certain diffuseness, repetition that can mean repletion, and, being sonnets, a refusal to crystallise imagery, preferring to move the argument forward. Thus the last is a defect of its necessary strength. Without the dialectic, the whole sequence would groan to a halt. This Williams never does, but she can sometimes sacrifice a necessary richness on the way, tending to abstract nouns. Her themes are so concrete, though, and much of the local detail so inlaid, that this is less of a distraction than it might be.

And Williams often transcends all this, striking out in superlative phrase-making. In the last sequence, 'Coming Through' – a doubly-edged retort to our recent anthology – Williams transcends 'The sound of poets standing their ground', to continue:

Search for me in the shadows the silent
Echoes of the outsider in your midst,

A recurring sound that was never meant
To be heard left in the shortfall and blitz
Of time...

Such Shakespearean phrases as the last has been its reward. 'Coming Through' is studded with a few of these, and more generally another excellence merges in a whole sonnet, the next one in fact, where:

The half-light, as the haze before morning
Breaks its banks when sometimes stars still adhere
Stalling through the surface of their waning,
A blue residuum suspended near
The origin of imagination.

Three of the last of the 500 sonnets that form 'The Pain Clinic' have for some reason been inserted after 31 from the opening sequence. 498 involves the memorable lines 'Love was never like this, such rain where / Once falling snow was curling in his hair', though dating from 1987 (the other two from 2001 and 2002, pre-positioned for the later thrust of the work). After a homage to Tsvetayeva, the first numbered flickers into life with 'The locked momentum of January / Surrounds me at every turn, marginal / Insubstantial yet without the right key / To let myself out.' This plumbs the truer note, more steely and wintry, occasionally permitting a fine-tuned accidie with falling leaves.

Central are the 10 sonnets 'In Memoriam Christine Blake', an elegy that touches the fine point of anger for a woman who was told to go away, and did, for good as it were, 'the unlit future seen / By you alone.' The first sonnet eloquently expounds the 'slowly foundering' subject that 'something beyond fear / Failed to prevent what you finally meant.' The second attests:

As a fan
Too widely opened you could not get back,
The separate panels of your life were
Locked into place, a surface on the rack
Of being that could yet go no further
While the arc that held it all suddenly
Gave way to the last trace of its story.

Williams is at her finest here and often throughout these ten sonnets, where apposite conceit and imagery is made to work for its keep and illuminate the argument. The fourth, recalling the funeral with 'Chestnut leaves unspread, recently broken / Under hazed green smoke' varies the poems' themes and occasions as well as its imagery. It's ending underpins, too, Williams' register of seasons:

As you passed before us into the hold
Of time where sunlight and material
Darkness broke from the cordon of April.

Words themselves 'refuse to adhere' in the next, echoing the reduction of people 'still installed / In your day', like pills. Even a sequence for 9/11 can elicit remarkable writing, partly because the abstraction of sonnets demands a dialectic on immediacy, so that 'A towering city collapses through / The juvenile reach of a busy day' is peculiarly right for New

York. 'The Enfield Sonnets,' a daring essay on 'The airlessness and the nowhere of those / Days, helpless in the currents of something / I am unable to bring to a close,' strike into pure sonnet reasoning. Williams dares to leave the local behind, despite the topology promised in the title, itself a lodging of her protest vigils. But these are memorably lit, literally, by describing words that

Light up the darkness of their own shadow
As the flickering of fifties neon
Off and on and trapped in the mind's echo
Unanswerable as a signal shone
From the endless reach of a bad Morse code.

All these sonnets glean or literally gleam something of Williams' predicament, where a mirror renders her 'trapped with the distance of my own echo.' The 75 sonnets here embrace a different, and more impersonal enquiry than, say, 'In Memoriam Christine Blake' or 'The Pain Clinic', and furnish grounds for real study. This is difficult, even given the excellent typesetting, with three sonnets to a page. Williams needs to breathe, and, dare I say it (I do) a revision and wholesale condensation of some, since other dated works prove Williams is a fine reviser of her own texts, and, as Keats put it, 'read the more richly for it.' There's a headlong power in *The Enfield Sonnets* as a book and as separate sequences that haven't been encountered in sonnet form for a long time. Much of this book is studded, shot through – sometimes to a whole poem – with superb lines. Faults are obvious and easily addressed, more a re-arranging of laurels than resting or garnering fresh ones.

Brenda Williams, *The Enfield Sonnets*, no ISBN, is available from Sixties Press, 89 Connaught Road, Sutton, Surrey, SM1 3PJ.

FS Hilton

Fergus Hilton, born 21st August 1965, as he informs the reader on the back cover, and the son of Roger Hilton the painter, is extraordinarily candid. His book blurb is the most disclosing I've ever read, shot through with wry admissions. After art school and university and various institutions, he continues 'he [Hilton] is currently detained on a life section in an open unit in Devon where he enjoys fortnightly trips to the large bookshops in Devon.' So much for the life, Hilton is saying, but the poetry owns the same direct glare.

'Self-portrait' ambushes you with Hilton's cunning conflated cliché:

Walking down the road of life
I came to the spaghetti junction of my soul.

After various claims, it ends in throw-away surreality:

Of course I sold a painting to the Queen,
The underlings in the garden are belching the dwarfs.

Hilton's father probably has sold a painting to the Queen, and the last line recalls Richard Dadd. Hilton's almost violent

humour cuts across both some of the fed nostrums he's fed up with, and the occasional tired lyricisms he enacts but distrusts. Moving from incident to inner incident quite unflinchingly is one thing; revivifying them is another, cut artfully to the paperchase of events. Some poems throw themselves into twisted light verse. 'Nodes' begins in long lines and rapidly abandons them to jog-trots with the rhymes written /played /kitten /chambermaid / prayed /smitten. From these bare rhymes you can imagine the fragile poet and the lusty religious maid, then:

The last time I got laid
I was quite badly bitten.
But I was not afraid,
I called the vet, and the electrician.

Far darker ends pursue Hilton when he's in joking earnest, as opposed to earnestly joking. 'Statements Part II' opens disarmingly, as often:

Everyone is on a life sentence.
Ladybird antlers couch,
Fried egg and ketchup sunrise.
Knickers fondled in the fields here,
Nice to roll about in the five-foot wheat.

Ultimately this is disturbed pastoral, consistently focused out of doors with sexual light relief. Then an empathy with the expressionist poet Georg Trakl (1887 – 1914) emerges quite uncannily:

The trees sparked and cowered
From the laughter of the singing streams.

He ends 'playing with the waterfall'. Such radiences are tremblingly hard-won and their own fleeting reward. Hilton often addresses as in 'Noises on Thoughts' where he begins buttonholing: 'This is the worst poem ever written' to really engage with his helplessness: 'Cleavage makes the world go round, / Cleavage is where it's at', and having enjoyed this adds: 'There is honesty in a fistfight. / I spoke today, / But probably won't be able to speak tomorrow.' A shaken fist at the reader, or their world. But he edges into a deadly wisdom of his own. 'Cat on Tattoo Mountain' enacts his part in 'the drugged-out brotherhood, / Sixty-nine poems closer to death, / Red plastic bucket on the beach.' But he moves from this closed ward from where he is 'voiceless... like an orange' to:

The hand of a woman touches my hair
as the staggering tempered sky turns black
and the rain starts.
Pedestrians scatter like dominoes into the ocean
and board toy aeroplanes to sleep in ditches.

It's the angle of descent that often marks the best Hilton poems, where he obliquely avoids too close a personal commentary, and speaks to a 21st Century condition. Often too, as in 'Lug Bait', he opens mock-commandingly as well as disarmingly, that 'Women own all time and all events / As sure as wind is wet and nights in the hay / Are particularly long without a lay.' Or in 'Tea Towel', beginning 'Most poets believe

in tobacco... drunken stoned / And playing the guitar rather badly, Mr Dylan, and addresses himself as a Dylan actor, then slipping to 'If long life is what we really want / Long life will come to pass.' Then diving into and out of personal references: 'Julia gone. Peopled people peopling in the rat run / The rivers of conversation in the mind', he focuses: 'Rock crystal eyes / And the heaven in the grain of the table', twisting Blake he concludes after a long tirading detour: 'And our crazy heads, filled with lightening logic. / You can dismantle London brick by brick / I won't be going there again.' But he will through Devon, where 'This is the last poem I wrote before I died,' as 'Sunflower' begins. Evading 'Mr and Mrs Tiddelmouse, in collective litany perfunctorily / Attached to everything that carries. / The day went by like a fried egg,' he and his friends incur Devon-folk wrath on hash-cake unwittingly cut by nurses. It concludes in a wild elegy after the weariness and the fret:

The tired lines came out, the same old jokes.
And Sarah more linear but skinnier after seven years in the can
(at least I've got an ounce of Clan) down the leafy lanes she
ran. And managed to screw seventeen soldiers before they
picked her up.

Nothing tired about that, but much to disturb those who prefer the anodyne, the even, the safely uninspired. Hilton is wildly uneven, probably not prone to much revision (though his cunning is not in doubt) and never safe. This is a typical Hilton-titled volume: The Complete Works. To which can be added 'in progress,' and one hopes for a very long time. The switch-back of free and formal verse, manic allusions and suddenly juddery balances, recall Veronica Forrest-Thompson, the Cambridge Modernist who died at 27. Hilton's poetics shudder with joke-shot adrenalins, divigations, blinding insights and unsought-for kinship with expressionism; and asks the dangerous questions of what poetry borders, and what it is.

F.S. Hilton, The Complete Works, Poetry Publishers, £10, no ISBN. Contact Survivors' Poetry to order a copy.

New Network Group

I was asked to write 100 words about our new innovative group, so here goes.

We started discussing the idea of a daytime survivors group several years ago, but no one bit the bullet, it faded a bit, then two of us, women, Catherine Harris and Helene Wigley, decided to take the plunge.

We have been meeting for two months in Wood Green library. We firstly brought our own poetry and discussed our own imagery, style and metaphor and how it expresses our mental health experiences, and how poetry contributes to our emotional health. We then go away and write on themes which have included bereavement, gardens, loved ones and food and our relationship to it. The group is supportive and our aim is to come out feeling we've achieved something, whilst having discussed and debated issues that can be painful, and enjoying our poetry too.

CATHERINE HARRIS

Wood Green Library
Every other Monday
2 to 4 p.m.
Nearest tube: Wood Green
Buses: 221, 29, 329, W3, 144, 67, 184, 141, 123
Lift available in library, fully accessible
Contact Catherine Harris: 07984 320 344
All welcome

Arguing with Leeds Library

James Ferguson on the poetry of Barry Tebb

1.

Learned Ben Jonson wrote a whole poem arguing with himself about 'what subject he should chose' for a poem, dismissing in turn the subjects that his learning had allowed him to consider: Heracles, Phoebus, 'cramp dull Mars', Venus, Cupid, Hermes and finally the Muses themselves are invoked only to be dismissed with deliberate petulance. 'Tend thy cart still!' says Jonson to the sun god. It's hard not to see some imaginative class war here: Jonson – a product of a London grammar school, and a one-time bricklayer – imagining what it would be like to tell his noble patrons where to get off. And the end of the poem? A declaration of independence from the power-class-money system that was patronage and equally from the stock themes of poetry: 'I bring / My own true fire.'

And this, I thought, is Barry Tebb! A similar robust, plain-speaking poetry, occasionally employing the modes of the lyric without any of the gentility that makes lyric poetry either charming or meaningful. Swinburne called Jonson 'One of the singers who couldn't sing'. Tebb's rhyming quatrains, stuck on the end of a number of his poems, are similarly flat. But what of that? Lyric grace, aerated with noble feelings, is pure cake. Jonson and Tebb write oatcakes instead, gritty from the workbench. I suspect they half want me to break my pampered teeth on these delicacies 'Composed of chalk dust, / Pencil shavings and / The sharp odour / Of stale urine' ('School Smell').

I don't know whether I tire of oatcakes too quickly to be the ideal appreciator of this volume, which performs the genuinely useful task of uniting Tebb's previous volumes and his more recent pamphlets. (Connoisseurs of the Sixties Press aesthetic can be reassured that these production values have been translated into this larger scale.) The Collected Poems doesn't help the reader by having no divisions: it would be interesting to know which were the poems from his first 1966 collection, for example. I've a feeling that the poems have been mixed around, but the Introduction doesn't speak of such matters, choosing instead to muse, with Jonson, upon the question of subject (Leeds, spirit of place, schools, the Sixties). The book could profitably have been divided up into sections along thematic lines.

2.

A page of the 'Kelmescott' Chaucer
Seen through our cottage window
When the Pennines were blind with snow

[Turn to page 37, class, the first three lines of 'The First Month of The Year'. Why's that so effective? – 'Maybe it's just a lyrical mode – you know, forgotten happiness and all, seeing through a window.' – 'It's like Wuthering Heights, when Heathcliff and Cathy look into the window of the Grange, where all the posh ones are, and see them "burning their eyes out in front of the fire." I don't know if Tebb meant these lines to remind me of that, but he could have done – he is always writing about the Brontës.' – 'He's a right name-dropping snob he is: why's it Chaucer and not someone good like Jilly Cooper?'

– 'Chaucer's a poet, you pillock. Tebb's always talking about how he's a poet and what it means. It's all to do with this dream he had: he hadn't been able to write poetry for ages and then this girl from his past appeared in his dream. And then he started writing again. Chaucer's like that too: he's from the past, he's out of reach, like happiness, like Tebb's childhood romance, always beautiful because it never became anything.' – 'That's daft!' – 'Well, call it daft if you want, but it's what happened to Dante about seven hundred years ago. He had exactly the same thing with this girl he called Beatrice. He grew up and she just died, but his mind always came back to her, and that's why she's the one who takes him round heaven in the Divine Comedy.'

– 'It's something to do with the fact that it's a Kelmescott Chaucer too. They were done in the late Nineteenth Century' – 'Yeah, it could just be that he's seen a nice book through the window when he's out for a walk.' – 'It was a book of Chaucer done by this guy called William Morris. He became a Socialist.' – 'But his books had those titlepages like old Everyman Library editions, all curling leaves, Victorian mediaeval. Maybe that's what emotions are meant to be like.']

Well, who knows, dear reader? I've heard them all and now hardly know what I think myself! Here's another good bit:

Then there were the 'moments of vision', her eyes
Dissolving the blank walls and made-up faces,
Genius painfully going through her paces,
The skull she drew, the withered chrysanthemum
And scarlet rose, 'Descensus averno', like Virgil,
I supposed.

['How finely placed that "I suppose" is!' – 'It's humble, you get a lot of that in Tebb. He's got this flaming-sword side, but then at other times he doesn't want to teach anything, because he thinks he's found the perfect poet or the perfect love.' – 'He's a right romantic! Dream on!']

3.

Don't worry about all that poetry lark... Know who I am? That's right, I'm Simon Knockneed. Haven't you heard of me? I'm on page 130:

Polyvarsity degree in
Media Technics,
Discovered by Neil Hastily
'Turning pub talk
Into poetry'.
One bad TLS review –
'Wendy Cope to absurdity' –
Misread as praise
And Simon soared...

[Simon, Simon, Simon Knockneed, why does the world have such a need for you, why does it breed poets like you. Because the world needs you.]

The ghost of satire stalks the land! Why? 'Returning to writing after twenty-five years / I was greeted by the New Generation

poets / Bloodaxe and Carcanet lording it and gloating... But what about this poem about Jackie Kay, is it in earnest or mocking? Oh, it's just so hard to know: why can't poets just say things clearly! I think he seems to be in earnest, which...

From the NewGen burger bar (where we catch a delicious glimpse of our poet drinking a cup of tea and translating French poetry whilst waiting for a train) Tebb saunters into remoter territory, passing on the way a few fallen idols ('Redgrove was one I wrongly ascribed talent to'). A strange genre's in existence here, which I'm going to call the Dichterkampf, that is, the War of the Poets. I never knew this genre existed until quite recently, but it has ancient precedent in the Homeric 'War of the Cranes and the Doodleducks', which was translated by Dr Johnson.

For instance, this one specimen, 'A Call to Arms': Dylan Thomas, George Barker, Edith Sitwell, and some others, all having it large bar-room-brawl-wise, is this true or the fantasy of an overactive imagination?

Geoffrey Hill had Merlin and Arthur
Beside him and was whirling an axe
To great effect, headless NewGen poets
Running amok.

I never heard the like! And then a few pages on we get this poem, a response to an innocent anthology of Irish poetry: 'Barbarous insult to Yeats' memory and Claudel's' (Resounding triple rhythm.) And so on (asking Hart Crane to rise from the dead, even) until we get 'Rise, poets, rise and drive the barbarous hoard without the sacred gates of Art!'

Barry Tebb's first collection was called *The Quarrel with Ourselves*. (Yeats remarked once that out of the quarrel with others we make politics, out of the quarrel with ourselves poetry.) But he seems to get on well with the different parts of himself, and to reserve his fury for others: Leeds librarians, NewGen poets, other poets, etc. (But his fury passes quickly, I think, and doesn't rankle. Better out than in!)

4.

Some questions, but as the poet isn't here they'll have to remain unanswered for the moment. There's an occasional bathos: is it intentional? ('Oesophageal cancer / Is very final!') Maybe not. What else...

5.

French translations (Reverdy, Eluard, Mallarmé, Jouve): can't tell you how good they are because I can't read French. They're here. Also moments of tenderness: 'Touching your long fingertips / Before I sleep'. Reminds me of yours, Sarienne! And you'd like the poem 'Making Love', which ends:

Mermaid hair falling like sunlight
In a faun's afternoon,
Star-fall, sun-dark, moon-dust
Of all my dreams.

Here's a find – it was hidden between four other poems on page 141: 'Together (For Brenda)':

Your blue dressing-gown
Lying on the chair back
Like a tired arm.

That's one for the selected poems. What else? A few dramatic monologues: one by Goya. More satire. (On himself, 'The Dreaded Tebb', too.) Satiric autobiography: one title, 'Guntrip's Ghost' keeps popping into my mind. I keep thinking it's a Lawrence short story. 'An Evening with John Heath Stubbs'. 'A Fine Madness', first line. 'Any poets about or bored muses fancying a day out?' Aha! and that's where he was translating French in the burger bar – it was Valéry, if you wanted to know. Poem to Jeremy Reed.

Two long poems near the beginning, 'The Philosophers' and 'The Road to Haworth Moor'. 'The Philosophers' starts with Tebb reading the books in his son's room, 'The college crest impressed in gold', which conjures up the son himself 'gone as far as Samarkand and Ind / To where his strange imaginings ha[ve] led'. Then

through a scholar's gloss on Aristotle
That single sentence glowed "And thus we see nobility of
soul
Comes only with the conquering of loss": meaning
shimmered in that empty space
Where we believed there was no way to resurrect two sons
we'd watched grow up,
One lost to oriental heat, the other to a fate of wards.

It's an ambitious poem, dealing with all sorts of loss – both of the sons, and of the marriage that produced them, and, the reason for being there at all, of a cat – and yet managing to keep its distance by keeping busy. Barry Tebb is a romantic – a Romantic, but in the Byronic not the Wordsworthian mode: he is interested in other people.

Barry Tebb, *Collected Poems*, £10, Sixties Press, ISBN 0 95299941 2. Sixties Press, 89 Connaught Road, Sutton, Surrey, SM1 3PJ.

Reviews

Velocity: The Best of Apples & Snakes
By various poets
Reviewed by Pamala Hardyment

Published in 2003 this bumper 300 page volume celebrates Apples & Snakes, whose meteoric rise in 21 years culminated in a packed house of more than 2000 people celebrating its services to poetry at the Queen Elizabeth Hall in London in December 2003. I queued for return tickets but there were none available and so I am more than happy to have this volume – published to rejoice in Apples & Snakes' coming of age – which contains short stories and drawings, as well as poetry from artists featured in the book have been performers and the editors have tried to include only work which was of the highest quality off the stage. This has not always been successful, but the wealth of good poetry more than makes up for those whose poetry does not stand the critical test of appearing in black and white.

Velocity is therefore like a party: one loves most of the people there, where old friends and new have been invited to participate, poems turn cartwheels, sing and dance, cry and relate wonderful stories. Fran Landesman takes us back to a more sinister, yet hopeful world in 'Black and White': 'sitting with my friend Stella / In a parked car, on a hot Summer day / In the segregated city of St Louis / With the great Oscar Peterson.' They think their time is up when they see 'Across the street, staring our way / Three big, sweaty white men. / We stayed schtum / When they crossed the street as one. / Leaning hairy arms / On the windows of our car / They peered inside. / Then one of them cleared his throat. / "Mr Peterson," he said, / "Could I have your autograph?"

The range of poets is astonishing: all ages, races, nations, religions and beliefs. My favourites are there, Valerie Bloom and Jean 'Binta' Breeze, reassuring with their Caribbean lilt and humour. Valerie Bloom is as puzzled as most of us are about art: 'In a basin on the table / Is a liver and a heart, / And the people dumb with wonder / Stand and stare at Modern Art.' Jean tells us of how she came to poetry in a lovely, lyrical short story. Dana Byrant's moving poem Loulou on the train tells us of her feelings as she journeys with her father who 'lets you breathe / breathes without / taking the breath out of you.' Another of my favourites, Lemm Sissay is as good as his performances: 'you are so perfect / your winter coat buttons itself and hugs your heart.' Jacob Sam-La Rose, in 'Bone', writes so eloquently about memory and loss: 'we're bruised, holding the photo too hard, / trying to fit the spaces left by the voice.'

So many poems, so many good writers, we have Apples & Snakes to thank for bringing them all together during their inspired 21 years.

Velocity: The Best of Apples and Snakes, ISBN 0 94 8238 283, £9.95, Black Spring Press, www.applesandsnakes.org

Pamela Hardyment's new book of translations, The Basalt Womb, a bilingual German / English edition of Tadeus Pfeifer's poetry is published by Jay Landesman publishers: pjhardyment@hotmail.com

Jean 'Binta' Breeze will be performing at the Dioramanite on 24 April. See our London Events listings on page 19.

Tha Shein Ukrosh: Indeed the Hunger
By Brian G. D'Arcy
Reviewed by Sue Johnson

This is a beautifully produced pocket-sized book dedicated to the people who died during the famine years in Ireland (1845 – 49) and those who, against all odds, survived. It is an interesting combination of historical narrative and poetry which highlights the full horror of the famine years and the injustice of the Irish people's situation.

The words of Brian D'Arcy are fully supported by Durlabh Singh's illustrations. Durlabh is a founder member of Rainbow Art Group, a group of artists from third world countries.

Having visited some of the areas mentioned in County Mayo a few years ago, I feel that Brian has captured the haunting atmosphere of these places. I particularly liked the poem 'Roads to Nowhere', that begins 'Across this ancient land they stretch, long roads that lead to nowhere.' This and the title poem 'Indeed the Hunger' highlight the full meaning of the world 'Ukrosh'.

As a creative writing tutor I used 'Roads to Nowhere' in a recent workshop as a means of sparking new ideas for students. It worked extremely well, produced some inspiring ideas for stories and poems. It also had the effect of rekindling my own interest in the Irish famine.

Anyone who wants to know more about the true story of the Irish famine, both as historical research and to draw parallels with other parts of the world today, should read this book.

Tha Shein Ukrosh: Indeed the Hunger (in remembrance of the Irish Famine of 1845 – 1849), with illustrations by Durlabh Singh. ISBN 0 9536266. £6.95 from Bellasis Press, 11 Donnington Road, Sheffield S2 2RF

After the Wound
By Robin Ford
Reviewed by Laura Bartholomew

Although this collection of poetry is entitled After the Wound, the wound itself is powerfully portrayed. On the cover the title has a red line through it. It took that, rightly or wrongly, to assume that 'the wound' was not healed, metaphorically speaking. Feelings of abandonment and isolation are poetically drawn. These works have an evocative, elemental quality, and I was immediately engaged by them. Punctuation is sparse, which gives a feeling of free flow, whilst at the same time being finely honed poems. Some are more accessible than others. Each poem has its own feel to it, an economy of words and no apparent over-writing. It is assured and in many instances very moving. There is certainly a fascinating journey

here, and a compelling read.

I particularly liked 'Injury', which gives a strong start to the collection. It puts the reader in the landscape of uncertainty and betrayal. 'Something in my brain / a bolt / a shock / unzipped raw things / stunned me / a rotten egg from a shocked ovary / that evacuation / passage resealed / wound hid fast / ingested.' And from 'Serpents': 'it sprang / stuck / no cure likely / (prognosis poor) / even healing / would leave scars / stains.'

'Recurrence' begins 'That dream again / which shakes me / to sour consciousness so many nights,' and ends 'it drowns me dark.' The aloneness in this poem is almost tangible. The wackiest poem was certainly 'Dea ex Machine, or Dream Pantomime of What You Will' – some title! And the piece is a witty, manic flight of fancy. I cannot say I grasped it, and maybe I was not expected to, as the last line says 'Have I gone mad again?' A smile formed on my lips at this point!

After the Wound is a collection of eighteen poems, making it an ideal companion for a short journey. I certainly enjoyed the journey it took me on, even though the material is bleak in parts. It pulls no punches, and rightly so.

After the Wound, Arrowhead Press, £4. ISBN 0-9540913-4

Bemused by So Much Rain

By Juliet Gowan

Reviewed by Carolyn O'Connell

The sombre cover of this collection belies its content. Juliet Gowan is no grey writer, but a widely published and consummate poet who draws on the legacy of the past, but converts it for our time. I was captivated by it.

The opening poem 'For Geoffrey Chaucer' is a sonnet with a smile. The image of him entranced by a daisy is delicious and founded on the Prologue to his 'Legend of Good Women'. It has at its centre the sting of someone brought up in the world of academe who retains an appreciation of the minutiae that delights.

Juliet has an affinity with nature that runs throughout her poetry and it is a constant metaphor used to describe her comprehension of tragedy and her search for understanding. Her 'Defence for not Putting my Poems in Chronological Order' lulls before the final dark twist.

Love and early death following shared experience of illness are confronted in the Cathy poems. Juliet's close friendship with Cathy at Warneford Hospital, Oxford, and Cathy's early death are chronicled in the elegy 'Churchyard' and in 'Cathy: Oxford'. Willows, the emblems of grief, have new meaning, and wild flowers become memorials, as she 'In words, so gently, wraps the dead up.' These memorable poems spawn others. See Sister April O'Leary's beautiful response in the appendix.

All is not gloom. Autumn in London is fantastically described

in 'This City Now', where the 'hunting down' of the year mingles with remembered and promised parties, a waiting to be discovered. I laughed at 'weeds parking without paying' in 'Psst! Here's the Key. The Gang's Waiting'. It's so subversive.

Anyone with insight will enjoy 'Plastic Surgery'. Who but someone with a profound mind, coupled with experience of mental illness, could write so beautifully of her dislike of the shape of the new London buses as 'neurotic and in pain', 'battered, not by experience, but by tranquillisers'. These are some of the poems I am sure that any survivor will empathise with and find this collection worth its space on their bookshelf.

Images of courage in infirmity and as life closes are tackled in the composite poem 'The Old Ladies', where 'India and your husband climb beside you', also in the following poem 'Briar Rose'. Written for an eight-year-old child, suspended on ice in the hope of curing her cancer, fable twins with reality before the haunting denouement.

Like passing sunshine, groups of poems such as 'Chestnuts' catch and hold the reader as the concrete transforms into the abstract. Each poem starts with a premise, but transforms into a vehicle that explains and triggers emotion: even a paper balm is a balm. 'Selfhood (Cloning)', written after her first husband died, encapsulates Juliet's history, ethos and language.

Bemused by So Much Rain, Stamp Publishing, ISBN 0-9544879-0-7

If you would like to review for Poetry Express, please write to our Reviews Editor, Roy Holland, Survivors' Poetry, Diorama Arts Centre, 34 Osnaburgh Street, London NW1 3ND.

If you or a group you belong to have published a collection recently, please send a copy to him, and he will do his best to place a review here.

Write on the Edge

Workshop Coordinator Razz explains what they are

A new year! Already we've had snow, rain, Spring and frostbite in the same week. I know that the only constant thing is change, but sometimes it's good to know that in life there are a few consistencies, the Survivors' Poetry Workshops being one of them. Although they have seen many changes in the twelve years that they have existed, including a change of venue and the addition of writing workshops, they still take place on a Tuesday night, they still begin at 7.30 pm, and they are still concerned with encouraging creativity and exploring the poetic process in all its forms, from writing to honing, to performing the work in a safe space, and possibly later in public.

So how does a typical workshop run? There are three different types of workshops: feedback, writing and performance.

The feedback workshops are where participants bring their poems to be looked at and discussed, tightened up or left as they are according to the wishes of the author. Poems are photocopied and passed around to the group, the poem is read out and feedback is given which the author can take on board or not. The only criteria is that the feedback should be constructive rather than critical.

The writing workshops are designed to encourage participants to create new poems. Exercises are designed to give a launching pad for ideas and the poems are then read out at the end of the session. These workshops have proved themselves very popular. Many participants have found they have a substantial new work that they can take away and tinker with at their leisure, often bringing them back to be discussed in a feedback workshop.

The performance workshops involve practising the art of putting across our words to a live audience. The first part of the evening usually consists of various exercises to improve the voice and loosen up the body, how to project the voice, use a microphone etc. The second half involves creating a performance space where participants can perform a poem and get feedback on their performance.

There are a few ground rules that are read out at the beginning of each workshop to create a safe and hospitable atmosphere, a must for survivors such as ourselves. Each workshop is attended by two facilitators and a coordinator. Tea, coffee and biscuits are available for a modest donation (20p), and anyone who may get distressed can be supported by one of the facilitators or the coordinator.

The most important people of course are the participants. Without participants the workshops cannot run. This is where you come in! Do come and join us. We look forward to your future participation.

The March workshops will be held in Diorama 2, which is near Warren Street tube station. The final workshop of this season will be in the usual place, the Diorama Arts Centre in Osnaburgh St.

Participants are encouraged to arrive at 7:15 pm to allow for photocopying and relaxation prior to the start of the workshop.

The dates, and the names of the facilitators, are as follows:

Previous dates of the Spring 2004 season:

10th February Performance	Isha & Kit	Diorama 2
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24th February Feedback	Mala & Hilary	Diorama 2
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9th March Writing	Alison & Hannah	Diorama 2
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Future dates of the Spring 2004 season:

23rd March Feedback	Kit & Hannah	Diorama 2
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6th April Writing	Razz & Mala	Diorama
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Dates of the Summer 2004 season:

Facilitators and workshop types to be confirmed.

4th May	Diorama
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14th May	Diorama
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18th May	Diorama
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1st June	Diorama
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15th June	Diorama
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29th June	Diorama
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13th July	Diorama
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27th July	Diorama
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As you can see, from the 6th April onwards we will be back at our usual venue, the Diorama Arts Centre in Osnaburgh Street.

We look forward to seeing you and sharing your poetry.

London Events

Xochitl Tuck

Dioramanite

Held on the last Saturday of each month.

Venue: Diorama Arts Centre, 34 Osnaburgh Street, London, NW1 3ND.

Nearest tubes: Great Portland Street, Warren Street.

Admission: £3.50. Concessions: £1.50. Floorspots: £1.

8 p.m. start.

27 March

Leon Rosselson, Alistair Brinkley, Cat Francois

24 April

Mala Mason, Razz, Jean 'Binta' Breeze

29 May

Phil Poole, Rob James

Poetry Cafe

Held on the second Thursday of each month.

Venue: The Poetry Cafe, 22 Betterton Street, London WC1.

Nearest tube: Covent Garden.

Admission: £2. Concessions and floorspots: £1.

8 p.m. start

Guest poets / musicians / guest MCs:

11 March

Celia Potterton, Emerald

8 April

Kath Tait, Razz

13 May

Alison Torn

10 June

Valeria Melchorietto

Neither of these events require pre-booking, just come along on the night. Both also welcome readers and performers from the floor: speak to the person collecting the entrance money at the door, and they'll give your name to the MC, who will call you to perform.

After the Wake

N.S. i.m.

We walk away from the wake
Huddled in our own pain,
Your presence all around us.

You always listened by looking
And would have been amused to watch
This conglomerate of family and friends

From different departments of your life,
All getting to know each other,
Being led by you through this grief,

This maze of apposite mourning.
Old rivals embracing, now safe,
No longer competing for your time,

Unable to grasp their loss.
And presiding, your only brother
Left from seven siblings,

Regal, a sad King Lear,
Donating his last praises
For you who was without equal:

Lover, brother, friend.

LOTTE KRAMER

Discarded Poems

They sit there
With their long necks,
Their drooping heads,
Their restless eyelids,
Waiting for the corset
Of card and print
To give them stability,
To be uprights in a vertical world.

True, they have had shelter
In papers and journals
Among illustrious company;
They have been voiced on airwaves
By well-meaning strangers;
But still they are longing
For sole fulfilment
Between named covers.

LOTTE KRAMER

