

# Poetry *Express*

Spring 2011

Issue 35

Survivors' Poetry awarded NPO status by ACE - Director's Update

Mentoring Scheme Mentees 2011 announced

Nick Hurd at the DSC

Mentee Angela Morkos - The banana and I

Anthony Moore - End of this road ...



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Bruce James 1939 - 2011

*To the memory of Bruce John James, poet, artist, philanthropist, Christian, human being. These words, with love and respect.*

Bruce James was born in Pembroke Dock, which is where he grew up. His mother died when he was seven years old, and he was largely brought up by his grandmother. He attended the local Grammar School, following which he enlisted in the RAF. Leaving the RAF as a Senior Instructor, he enjoyed a successful career in Technical Authorship and Technical Journalism.

Psychological difficulties led to his being prescribed the lethal medication, Diazepam, to which he eventually became addicted, an addiction from which he never fully recovered. The consequent critical damage to his faculties and his functionality caused him to retire from Technical Writing.

Technical Authorship's loss was Creative Art's gain, as it was now that he began to write poetry and songs, and to draw cartoons and paint his first canvases.

In the 1990's, following partial detoxification, he set up a number of Community Resource Centres for the mentally ill, and campaigned extensively for greater recognition of Global Warming and its attendant dangers, and greater funding for the Third World, the psychiatrically disabled, and other marginalized groups.

Until his death, he sponsored children in Africa, and gave generously to the needy in his own community. He was a founder-member of Stevenage Survivors, and his generous financial gifts were largely instrumental in keeping the group afloat during its impecunious inaugural year.

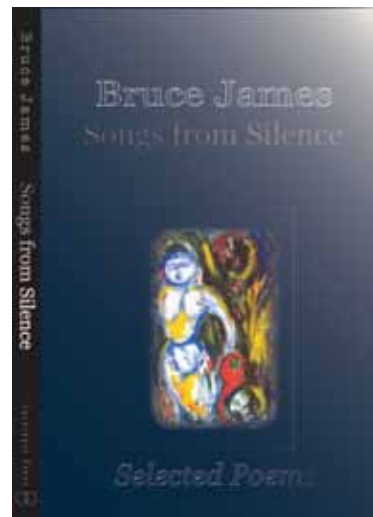
Bruce James wrote over 3500 poems and painted 250 pastels and acrylics. He also created a substantial number of cartoon line drawings.

He has been published in many of Britain's finest poetry magazines and his work has appeared alongside that of Seamus Heaney and R.S.Thomas.

In 2009, his first volume, **Songs from Silence**, was published by Survivors' Press. A commemorative volume is planned for later this year.

Philip Ruthen, himself a respected poet, and someone acquainted with the work of Bruce James over many years, has this to say of him:

*"In the telling of histories and the survival of ourselves in relation to the natural, built, and spiritual, joining with a nurturing heaven existing beyond what we have made*



*Songs from Silence* was published by Survivors' Press 2010

*of heaven, James shows the lived experience of the universe from the perspective of 'lights coming on once the applause has diminished...' he is a rare and gifted Poet."*

Bruce John James, 1939 – 2011. Thank you. Go with God, as God goes with you.

### Aphrodite

we knew her beauty  
as a silver wheel might turn

a golden carousel  
the rich candelabra

of her poised smile  
illuminating corridors

where dwarves and acrobats  
hid from serpents

hippopotami and panthers  
down the ranked aisles of dust

she stood and moved  
as if steel were tautened

to a scar on circe  
danced as though accelerating

around a rhenish cliff  
leaving the goats and eagles stunned

as one young hare alert and quivering  
or a hot mare around a grassy paddock

she fetched love upon us  
cantered through our hearts

the chase was frantically operatic  
recitative raised into aria

we hardly spoke or sang  
just affirmatively stared

she broke the whole pang of us tenderly  
as she happily laughed away our dread

by Bruce James

**Survivors' Poetry** is a unique national charity which promotes the writing of survivors of mental distress. Please visit [www.survivorspoetry.com](http://www.survivorspoetry.com) for more information or 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.

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# Editorial

Dave Russell

The January 13<sup>th</sup> and February 10<sup>th</sup> Poetry Café events attracted capacity audiences. This is now, happily, becoming the rule.

## Great start to the new year.

Among the floor spots was another great Karaoke/mime/sign language spot from Karen Sparks with her recorded backing tracks: spirited renditions of Let's Get Physical, Bette Midler's The Rose, and Kate Bush's Wuthering Heights. Among other things, an excellent example of tasteful, modest volume electrics in an acoustic setting. Buddy Holly echoes and good finger-picking from Nick Snodgrass. A really eclectic evening, embracing some tasteful classical guitar from John Onslow, including Villa Lobos's Prelude. Chris Goodchild's work keeps on developing in confidence and polish. Some highly impassioned verses from poet Serena Black. Her Vesuvius - comparing a lover to a volcano, was highly outspoken, with a reference to 'your erect mountain'. This, together with the reference to the sensual lips of The Trumpeter, left some of the audience recommending a cold shower! Similarly with If I'm Dead and Ugly Valentine. More from Acoustic Clampdown and Alastair Murray. 'Relaxation session' with Mama B, including joining in the chorus on Lennon's Imagine. Interesting sounds from Masque (guitar, recorder and flute). A beautiful Irish air; The Butterfly Flew By was reminiscent of Dave Brubeck's Take Five - great slap-tonguing and double-register harmonics on the flute. I sometimes wonder if a 'jam session' on occasion, would be a good way to end an event.

An ever-robust set from Nigel Burch, radiating the spirit of George Formby and so much more. His banjolele can always prevail against the most unfavourable acoustics. I sometimes feel his act could be enhanced by a bassist or a trad jazz band. His numbers reflected his black humour - such The Worst is Yet to Come, Secretly Sorry Arse (reminiscent of the jazz standard Willy the Weeper), and The Bastard Who's Doing You Now - punch lines like "Death is nature's way of saying you should slow down . . . all lovebirds should be shot." I always find a sense of warm benignity radiates through his cynicism.

As a diametric opposite of Nigel, came the sensual lyricism of Heart Song. January's Gift celebrated the excitement of rebirth. Bluebellwood eulogises a beautiful quasi goddess coming out of the sea. Ingrid Andrew is a person of many talents - in the visual area too: the excellent artwork for the monthly events, with all the mermaids and other exotic mythical figures, are her creations. She also works with Creative Routes, for whom she organizes a venue at the Joiners arms, in Camberwell.

One headliner of the February event was the electropop duo Lovers Electric (David Turley and Eden Boucher) originally from Australia. They had previously headlined at Tottenham Chances. It was refreshing to be introduced to them as an acoustic act. I found this highly meaningful and communicative. Their album is a highly polished 'crossover' of acoustic and disco - they describe themselves as 'Acousmatic'. Their track record is impressive indeed: MTV used a number of their songs, including "Closer" in the hit TV series The Hills. At the beginning of 2007, they toured in the United States, playing residencies in New York, Los Angeles and Nashville. A local Nashville website wrote, "Lovers Electric deliver 80s influenced alternative dance pop. After touring the United States, they toured Europe from May-July 2007 as support for re-formed 80s band Orchestral Manoeuvres in the Dark (OMD) playing to packed venues. They signed with Sony in 2008 and released their debut album that August. I would agree with the comment made in one review: "precisely the right amount of sentimentality and musical fireworks from Turley, proving that pop ballads can exist without the cheese and whine that usually accompany them." Great to have distinguished 'names' so accessible in this intimate setting, intermingling freely with 'amateurs' who are struggling to develop their self-expression - a true leveller.

Sharing the main set was Jazzman John Clark, with his ever-ebullient conducted tours of the jazz canon and the Beat era - Charlie Parker and Jack Kerouac for example. He always catalyses me to refresh my memory of those two vital cultural areas. So far, I have only seen him do a solo 'spoken word' act at Survivors events. As with Nigel Burch, I feel that he could be enhanced by other musicians (as he is when performing elsewhere). This would be in harmony with the free-form jazz efforts of Hugh Metcalf, who recently graced a Tottenham Chances event. More mentoring scheme pamphlets have emerged; more again are imminent. After a few technical and personnel problems, the website is now nearing completion.

The March 10th Poetry Café event highlighted Ingrid Andrew's Heart Song, and Licorice Fish. Main guest on April 14th was Michael Horovitz, who read from his main publications, as well as doing some jazz poetry, singing and 'anglo-saxophone' playing. Outstanding among the floorspots was the raunchy punk protest of Lucy and Roche, and some hypnotic verse delivered with great drama by 'CiTi' organizer of Raw Poetry. The evening included a great jam session. The most recent events at Tottenham Chances and the Poetry Café have seen the welcome return of Stuart Black, who manifests an emerging multiple talent - as a sensitive musician and a powerful protester. His song Bloody Normals captured the heart of April 14th's audience.

# Update Simon Jenner

I

Until March 30<sup>th</sup> it was Welcome to Purgatory, or more properly Judgment Day, that precedes it. 1340 arts organisations, 800 regularly funded by the Arts Council, awaited their fate. Only around 695 retained their funding. 110 new ones were also taken on. Those who'd been regularly funded might feel sore about losing out to those who haven't. We came through. Other colleagues lost out, particularly the Poetry Book Society, and crucially the publishers Enitharmon (who publish the likes of SP patron Mario Petrucci and Jeremy Reed) Arc, and Flambard. These constitute the next tier of publishing after Faber, Picador - as well as Carcanet and Bloodaxe who've both been shaved a little. Good news? The Poetry Society (PS) was enhanced by almost the same amount that was cut from the PBS (£110,000). Well, anything to encourage the PS out of their current lock-up in Betterton Street! Faber secured a small £40,000 grant to pursue not-for-profit mentoring, akin to Survivor Poetry's. But that was the amount Enitharmon was wholly funded by. Surely the whole of Enitharmon is worth more than a venture of a big publisher, who might just fund it themselves. ACE's agenda is clear: Nurture new talent, particularly young talent. Encourage diversity. This is excellent news. What's not so good is that mentees are paying for it. And the futures of mentored poets remains uncertain. They can't all be bottlenecked by the majors, as Mario Petrucci put it in a magnificent defence of Enitharmon. The sustenance of poets, who thrive on the next volume getting them their residency or creative writing position, are abandoned. Certainly it reads like 'to them that hath'. It narrows down the 'significant poet' list further to a media view of 'one of three'; and if they're funded poetry is healthy. It's a self-fixating argument.

The cutting of three extremely prestigious publishing houses will not only prove disastrous for the presses and poets, but place undue pressure on the remaining publishers. If pressed, they will give preference for established over new names. I write as an ACE-funded publisher (of two separate presses) systemically committed to new or neglected talent, and I know the pressures. So where will the mentored poets go? The hive of Faber itself, despite its small mentoring school, can't hollow out homes even for all its own new talent. It's a fly-away world. The PBS too focuses on broadcasting new volumes, from Faber through Enitharmon to the small pamphlets that make up Pamphlet Choice. Their goal is readership, and nurturing it. Their axing is incomprehensible at either level of the Arts Council's criteria: Stage 1 (efficacy and governance) or later at the Stage 2 ('balancing the Portfolio' - aka the National Portfolio juggling act, and who shrink-fits. See section II). How can poetry presses flourish, particularly in this byte-size climate, without advocacy? The PBS nurtures readers with over twenty consultancy teams. Which brings us to where twenty consultancy teams are funded. Most of all, there's to be £1M spent on Poetry Olympics. What this amorphous names describes, and what its legacy is, few can tell. Whatever the money's spent on - no-one knows, but consultancy reportedly rears itself; a Boris Rap Wrap? - it's certainly not comparable with the cutting of the alternative: the vast heritage of poetry lists axed. This orphans the true stream of poetry, including translations and American poetry. Boris's passion for the sonnet however is well-known. Or as he'd add with a laugh: 'actually I prefer the Pantoum.

II

In truth the Arts Council, who at the end of 2010 were happy with the balance of organisations struck in 2007, and would have continued with them (in the way they didn't in 2007), had to decide. It's not something ACE sought. It's what we live with, via those politicians who arrive with a little wind at tough decisions whilst sailing very sadly on the Riviera. It's a 'balanced portfolio', ACE's CEO Moira Sinclair first stated with grimly purposeful optimism. At that point in the meeting I helpfully suggested what this meant, and was edgily confirmed in my dire suspicions. 'Balanced portfolio' means like against like, colleague against colleague. Like the Ark, only instead of a breeding pair, each organisation is an aphid and breeds by itself, a lonely, arid and joyless occupation. In short, when there's a choice between two organisations doing a very similar thing in the same area, ACE choose one over the other. This won't affect - surprise - the Royal Opera House and English National Opera. They each boast other USPs like sector leadership.

But it affected people like us. Chipmunka, the mental health publisher, likewise survived, albeit with a significant, not disastrous reduction. Nevertheless the poetry publishing world has been dealt a crushing blow. Bar the PBS, one big-name player axed, it's the biodiversity of the most interesting poetry lists have suffered. This centralises things, as if one or two conduits for poetry are enough. For survivors and those marginalised, it isn't a healthy place to grow up in. We can only be grateful SP has been found important and grateful to those who championed us.

### III

It's difficult to forge ahead - to invoke purposeful optimism again; how well old Marxist terms describe our newly wasted world; Jameson's late capitalism anyone? But we do, in some of the most extraordinary ways I've seen in my eighth year here. Most of all, the new website, about to be launched, will change our relationship with you, the readers and users. Everything previously on it will return enhanced. From the *Poetry Express* pages through Forum to Shop, via Events and all articles now queuing for readership. Beyond that the more interactive pages, including one each for each area group. These will be populated over the coming months, though there might be a small time lag in realizing this. When I arrived in 2003 I realized we had a potential service to offer our groups, and in a limited way it was taken up. Various survivor groups nominated mentee poets and indeed mentors; via us too, some of their own publications were advertised on our website or in PE. This still felt *ad hoc* and patchy. Now we'll have a regularised service that each group can access and operate, as well as update, in their own tempo: choice of news, slant of aesthetic. We'll moderate where necessary, provide on-line and indeed phone and other advice. SP is never faceless and prides itself on its openness. Key to this are three people: Blanche, our Administrator, who has designed and co-ordinated the varying pulls and demands of a newly visioned website. The look of the site, from colour and template choice, to preferences for menu lists, as well as most of the artwork, is down to Blanche, who has also to upload all information sent by those who populate the site. Jonathan Carruthers-Jones designed the architecture, advised as to templates and worked his way around each demand. He's shown outstanding flexibility, resource, flair and patience in what proved more protracted developments than any envisaged. Directing the project, Trustee Judith Graham designed the designing as it were, so each designated key stage can be signed off, deferred, or developed occasionally, to something else.

### IV

This is the shape of SP to come. The new site will define how SP is able to continue, thrive, and serve a remarkable, talented community. Another development has been that of Hugh Ellacott's vide of various survivor artists. He's already shot several four minute films and as I write is in the throes of some more. This is just one of those many new features long promised, that SP is now finally realizing with the new technology and freelance personnel at its disposal. Finally too our reel-to-reel digitiser to render old archive material (particularly P. J. Fahy) is back from repairs, and ready to be used. Co Wright, our original website designer, has, now from his happy editing grounds in the BBC, volunteered to take this to a stage he only dreamed of earlier. And as he nobly put it: 'Now the BBC are paying me well I can volunteer for this.' It's testimony to his loyalty, and perhaps to the way that SP

inspires it. No praise can adequately describe what we all owe to the staff and some trustees of SP, as well as to the volunteers who have kept SP developing, and indeed, going. This applies to the dire period of 2005-07 when we had little money; and at other times when we still had a thinly populous office. They're bored with this praise but I need to put it on record, even if briefly, in what we all hope aren't chronicles of wasted time. It won't be; SP will survive. It would be preferable that those who keep it going can also, naturally, survive in their current life-form too. SP can become more virtual at will, and for periods of fund-immersed time - that underwater period we all tread inversely, with a virtual snorkel. But staff haven't found away round this one. Happily, ACE have also offered more routes to funding beyond even our Portfolio status.

### V

Dave Russell elsewhere will record the real impact of all this. Suicide rates are now up. This is, as Cavafy would say, some kind of a solution for a government that wants to cut down, on the revered principles of Malthus.

### VI

I said I'd eschew too many political meetings this year. Indeed Nick Hurd MP has been eschewing them too, so that our Chair Phil Ruthen, the next SP member to confront the Minister for Communities, was left with a wilted set of papers as the meeting was cancelled. And Nick's office clearly don't think emails constitute the same legal response that formal letters do, despite it being invited. So I'll revert to a carbon footprint right up to bloody Westminster. My affable meeting with him (Nick Hurd) can be read elsewhere on page 6. But ministerial follow-through has been, as often, lacking. Nevertheless, we are becoming adept with ministers. Keep writing to Nick, everyone. Tell him what you think of the Big Society. He's in the firing line and possesses a chink of conscience. He even thinks he met me in his club.

Mental health, we're told, is a priority. But remember which school, college or club, these people come from. I was, incidentally, at college with Young Nick (erstwhile-Liberal Protégé of Old Nick), Deputy Leader. He was then a Libertarian, college friends told me; a left-Tory think tank who kept on trying to recruit me in the Library. Everyone can do what they like, but so can trade. It's difficult to recall quite how censorious and yet confused the 1980s government was, with regard to personal freedom, which it didn't much like yet nominally espoused (so long as it was rapacious and mercantile). In those days, revocation of Clause 28 seemed quite enlightened, for instance; but 'classical liberal free-trade' wasn't Liberal from 1906. Basically, 'we'll no longer burn gays but they're still shoved homeless in the gutter like all unprofitable scum' sums up this Libertarian enlightened policy - which was enlightened for 1991. I'm sure this other Nick, a decent man, would like to know that. And his party. And Labour; and what's left of the Lib-Dems.

# Outreach Roy Birch

To repeat a phrase I have used far too often since April 2006, Outreach these days is conducted mainly from the office. I am, however, in touch with a contact in Newcastle regarding the possibility of creating a survivor writing group in the North-East - which will hopefully get me out into the Spring sunshine, and that heady mix of blue-bells and industrial pollution so distinctly characteristic of the English landscape at this time of year. And which, all things being equal, will also increase the SP network by yet another group.

The Vale House Project, which currently constitutes the bulk of SP's active outreach, has led me to a dynamic process which possesses - if used correctly - the potential to completely revolutionize drug recovery practice. I am currently training to use this procedure, as are the team I work with at Vale House. I would like to be able to say more but at this moment in time it is not possible to do so.

Quite frankly, I would not know what to say that would make a great deal of sense to anyone, except that the process itself and the prospects attendant upon it are very exciting. My thanks to Survivors Poetry for allowing me to work in an area and a medium which lie outside the organization's normal and natural territory, but which may well yet serve to enhance its reputation.

On the cusp of Outreach and Mentoring update, I am searching for venues for a number of forthcoming book launches.

The Mentoring Scheme itself has entered a new era. For the first time, we have comprehensive guidelines, application forms (both mentor and mentee) and paid mentors. This gives me a great deal of satisfaction, as it means that a number of our former volunteer mentors are now being paid for their efforts, and rightly so: theirs is not always the easiest or most comfortable of commissions.

There have been minor teething troubles, as one would expect, but as of this moment the scheme is running well, and I anticipate the creation of some of our strongest mentoring publications yet.

Here is this year's Mentee/Mentor list as it presently stands.

## Mentee

Helen Akers  
Joanna Butler  
Tony Hurford  
Ally Gardner  
Clare Hill  
Paul Howroyd  
Claire McLaughlin  
Luke Roger

## Mentor

Alan Morrison  
Alison Clayburn  
Dr. Simon Jenner  
Akin Oladimeji  
Naomi Foyle  
Peter Street  
Debjani Chatterjee MBE  
David Russell

Mentors are signing up; late submissions continue to trickle in and some, hopefully, will become early acceptances for next year. Looking good.

Financially and socially, times in England's green and pleasant land are hard, with the poor (as ever) being trodden down to maintain the wealthy in their booted opulence, but, even so, to quote the immortal words of Leonard Cohen, 'God is alive, Magic is afoot.' This ship is definitely NOT the Titanic.

*Until next time...*

# Comment

## Simon Jenner

**Nick Hurd MP at the Directory of Social Change, Stevenson Way, October 27<sup>th</sup>, 2010**

Some assembling at the disarmingly rich banquet the Directory of Social Change had spread, had met Nick Hurd MP, Minister for Civil Society. Others contemplated another identikit Dave with the same nasty mantras delivered with a smile.

But DSC staff - hardly advocates of the Coalition - deemed him the most effective MP in this arena for some time, one who'd unusually kept his shadow brief of two years on assuming a government portfolio. More effective, one said, than Ed Milliband in a similar role. Extremely personable, he made a point of shaking hands with all and when I greeted him as Nick he automatically said we'd met.

So it's fitting a fourth generation patrician MP - his father was Douglas - should sound off differently. He stood, delivered - and answered - without notes; was fluent, often engaged very effectively, only less happily in knottier questions. Even his direct admission of ignorance was disarmingly delivered.

Hurd - introduced by Patrick Butler DSC Trustee and *Guardian* journalist - launched into a well-rehearsed re-thinking: Civil Society, necessary cuts. He deferred humorously to the boss upstairs - Cameron holds his father's old seat - suggesting however distantly, the thunder of slight difference.

The Voluntary Sector is key to the new order, yet government is to withdraw more funding whilst encouraging that chimera, business input. Again, localism, the new weasel word, ensures communities will see greater transparency/accountability; local councils are to have greater flexibility in delivering key services. So the voluntary sector will engage more. But local councils and their czars ignore the voluntary sector, opt for cuts. Within this impossible noose you'd need to employ a further tier of sacked Big Society (very ex Third Sector) workers to pursue this. Here there were chinks for dialogue, a possibility that Hurd would tackle the contradictions of the new system, and impenetrables of the old. He warned us he'd speak less, listen more as a division was imminent and his time was cut. No change there then.

Other points were pressed home. The DSC transcript (or mine at SP) records them fully. I had a Mr Deeds proposal. **Reversion of Intestate Properties.** We have 155,000 homeless (including hostels and shelters, 380,000); many charities pay vast rents, fuelling the property spiral. We have 1M empty houses. Much property reverts to the Crown thence Treasury each year from intestate wills. These could be donated to arts and voluntary organizations, Housing Associations, communities,

with a proviso they be never sold on. Even given recent Crown property sales which might make this suggestion seem naive. Since these spring up even in Kensington, some might blink. The Treasury loses a little fluctuating revenue to solve longer problems that cost it more. Empty council houses litter the North. This could resolve much for little. Is this too big an idea for a Big Society? Thinking in the box now is watching something empty buckle under water pressure.

I added, guardedly (in view of Community chain-gang proposals): Incentives to opt to work for an arts organization/charity - whilst drawing benefit/disability benefit - as vocational experience; exempt from harassment, providing hosts continue happy with such involvement, though renewable anyway. This was taken up by the DSS in 1996, but scrapped since people didn't view it as punishment, but embraced as a positive vocation. That's wrong government thinking - more workhouse directive than Big Society. Not Work Will Make You Free!

Hurd, animated, talked of the Cottage Hospital he passes every day empty for two years, and that this was a really good idea. Patrick Butler added that Gordon Brown had tried and the current government succeeded in managing to force banks to give up intestate millions - in truth £40-70M not the £400m-£1.1B we'd hoped - and to the Big Society Fund. 'This is ingenious and could be added to the Big Society Fund Nick'. I was delighted having proposed both from 2007. Perhaps Brown heard me.

Non-coercive voluntary work Hurd would also examine. He went on to address the possibility of voluntary working as a staging post. without addressing this as an end in itself, or indeed my point: government pays for it.

'We have to change the way we think'. Hurd reiterated: first transparency; second the capacity to challenge; third localism effectually working. Localism. A weasel word? Over his back as he left hastily for a flurried Commons division, Hurd said 'please write - I mean it' and was gone.

Hurd we agreed is different and effectual. Naturally he's deeply imbued in the cuts government is inflicting. But I'm not sure he's easy with all that. He became an MP, I'd hazard, out of an almost genetic sense of duty; the DNA strand has twisted with ideology. But the rapacity, viciousness and glee visited by Tory faces on the Settlement seem more alien to him. Let's hope he keeps them at bay.



# The Banana and I Angela Morkos

Afterwards, every time I looked at myself in the full-length mirror, the image I reflected, was that of a mentally retarded prostitute. I would flee from the mirror and it took a while before I could look at it again, after reassurance and time, without feeling there was an embarrassing reflection again and I looked normal.

We'd met in the pub. He must have been a bit kinky – I hate reading about kinky things and have decided not to read a book I bought 2<sup>nd</sup> hand in which it talked of women dressing up as maids – the policewoman at the Police Headquarters was very good to me and so were the other police officers who told me to take my tablets – I couldn't go through with the medical test – I was too tired – I thought I might have had some damage as there had been internal bleeding coming out of my vagina but found out I was undamaged when I talked this over with the Samaritans – I will be very careful of who I invite here as I do not go in for bananas or, to cite another similar experience – being watched by a pop group, having a bottle of Britvic orange juice thrust repeatedly up my private parts as following the 'banana' incident I have more flashbacks about that and I can hear his strange voice – the pop star with the bottles had a nice voice but I didn't like that thing we, or should I say he did. I am sometimes afraid of glass after this bottle incident and have had psychotherapy in which I got a bloody mouth and painted my nails blue for my own pleasure. I broke my nail one day and went for a manicure at the beauty salon and my pen turned into an anti-psychotic syringe, I do this monthly, and once a man eating spider sat down beside me and said: one, two three, hop o' my shoe, three four five, I'm not a slave, I only like men in white coats who put me on drips in hospital after I have O.D'd and give me morphine and I blast off into Mesmer's land of 'If your memory serves you well' I will swallow the bitter rue and funny farms of flying cattle from Mars will be a nice place for counting sheep. And I will have no more close encounters of the animal kind of *It's Raining Men*. He said he'd been in the Marines in Nigeria and rainbows and roses have whiskers like Telly Tubbies and then I wrote a novel about a penniless Albanian woman who got grabbed by a gang of punters and when the army of men in clean white coats blasted the place with pens and paper, the Albanian belly dancer went to Reverend Mother whose voluminous black skirt and rattling, rosary beads at the dancer's side comforted her and she decided to live a life of seclusion in her cell and take the vow of silence, chastity and fasted most of the time.

Reverend Mother had a lovely face and also had been a solitary soul and the Albanian woman knew that Mary had also been a solitary celibate and had a face like Reverend Mother - caring, warm and full of the Good News for those who hope in a better way of life, rather than being picked up by bad men and she knew that someday her story would be told even if it was by herself with a ballpoint psychiatric syringe and a few anti-depressants and sedative sweets for this was the only food the poor woman took. So I hope you read this piece and take note as if you don't like me – To whom this may concern – I'll flinch from my cigarette smoke and smoke my paper and ink, all, wrapped up like Angela's Ashes of suttees for women who don't really fit in to society and who are abused by the bent. The she-eagle hides in a cement fastness.

SHE IS WORTH HER WEIGHT IN GOLD!

# End of this Road ...

# Anthony Moore

Let me tell you about the end of this road, to stroll  
Lon through mist and stockinged feet, forget the  
frowsy brown stockings of yesteryear.

Let me tell you another story of the migration to  
the suburbs in which the excitement of migration  
and rivers-wide, and slow, would never exist. Bright  
lights never existed unless you include the occasional  
Christmas tree subdued behind nervous curtains drawn  
in the light, to suppress nosey neighbours and dangerous  
colours.

Let me tell you about the end of the road, this day  
L where you can enjoy the dirty spoons in the sink,  
sceneries and grub free specials, let go of the shapes  
in the darkness-persevere beyond call. Work-play and  
pray beyond the playful stretch your allowed - get back  
to living! The rivers running dry as an excuse, better  
call up the wrong number.

There's a white door opposite, expansive city on the  
T screen, windows dressed by a desk ordained with  
screen edits, people everywhere don their silver suits  
of armour, to move, across the pages of envy to suit  
friends, and enemies alike. The telephone rings, what  
are you doing - there's a party for promos down the  
road? Fish the dish out of the sink and be prepared  
to meet your dream date - we'll stop off at the Lacy  
Lady for a basin of froth. Rupert Bear never walked in  
this place, the gangsters smoke so hastily - the bottled  
black poured down bull necks at gullet speed, the  
challenge is wanted - the job is gathering public noise,  
in the unlikeliest of places.

Let me tell you about the end of this road - no need  
L to run and hide in this vicinity, we only laugh and cry.  
People around here will tell you, we're only trying to  
make a living after all - computerised images of daisies  
*et al, dente*, make up for a lack of food inside and out.  
Later on we will visit dicey Riley's for works of playful  
abandon and a tidal wave of responses to flavour; grab  
it while you can.

Let me take you to the end of this road, where the  
L population slowly plough through mouldy clothes  
and damp cupboards, battling against the demons of  
childhood. Middle aged women in tight skirts and broken  
stilettos shuffle on coke cinders, diffusing screaming  
rag bundles with a promise of an offal burger, if you be  
quiet. This still life with screwdriver reaches fever pitch  
with the twang of the guitarman not far behind. Bold  
old papers with a nose for the future are living off the  
coattails of an alcoholic nest egg. Rot and roll. Charge  
of the light brigade jigsaw puzzle shimmers in heath

haze. Rugby shirt roses in a glass case saloon, smoked  
salmon coloured paperbacks and an incestuous purity,  
beg to differ with free spout kettles and a lifetime's  
membership to a nineteen fifties bowling alley, at the  
end of this road.

The creator of the world and worship of the machine,  
T tumble and twirl with painting by numbers and  
shawning on the lawn blades. Feelings run high on the  
scent of success. Is nowhere to be purchased? The  
site master's diet of watercress reasoning begged, to  
be bootlegged for a ration of glutenate and wax. The  
benefit agency at the end of this road, is full to the  
brim.

I can smell lipstick as I queue for tea. The woman  
I in question has a north sea stare, as slight compositions  
abound in this blood fire compost of humanity, where  
we belong. There is no cricketers' dressing room at the  
end of this road. Bustle and preparation fade with the  
greying sky as potbellied butchers pounce on demi-johns  
hidden under paste tables, precariously swivelling in the  
autumn winds. Heaps of leaves surround a microphone  
stand engulfing Elvis look-alikes collecting pennies in a  
bucket, and when the bar opens at twelve for raffle  
tickets, to be swallowed with warm beer.

The singer speaks from his podium of concrete steps  
T in a hushed manner, part clone, part hungry and  
about to deliver a testimonial of thanks to the assembly  
for their contributions and adds, when you get home  
gents, switch on the T.V and be entertained by the  
dead. But instead shut up shop and get back in line, to  
decide the future, at the end of this road.

Forget all our yesterdays of imperial measurements  
F looking sad in the rain-empty disused factories  
covered in pigeon droplets and sparse feathers, echo  
shouts of cloakroom desperation, and ice blue memory.  
The boss chorus of stateside radio brings you back to  
life stacked high with chores and trim appointments -  
frayed collar and creased corduroy.

Remember to shred the photograph before the start of  
R the month - action stations; commence re-building  
the end of this road on a very personal February without  
a shovel, or keyhole to escape into. Printed onto huge  
sheets of paper "*Giant yeti in tap-dance shoes walks  
across a ceiling*", like thousands of tourists before him,  
hundreds of towers appear in front of your eyes.

Yes and still the old crooner sings "She wears my  
Y ring", and yet she wears all of me. It's not my ring  
alone; it's all of me.

# BROADSHEET

## I haven't written this

### Just another suicide song

Every word I write here  
Is a scar.  
Of the pain.  
Living without your love.  
Like blood from a gashed arm.  
Accidents are part of life.  
And the wounds of relationships  
Never get much easier to bear.  
Every word I wrote today  
Was a scar.  
Of the hurt of  
You not wanting me back.  
And the blood from a gashed broken heart.  
Are there for all to see.  
Accidents are part of life.  
And the skeletons of relationships  
Never get any easier to handle.

**Peter Vealey**

see *about the authors* on pg 40



© Angel Martinez

I haven't written this, I haven't because I don't need a thing  
Just pen and paper, or even hand. The sound of the world  
Snapping in two, eating up the landscape diving beneath the  
moon, nothing natural or understood, just wishing to know  
How I arrived at this point, we all borrow lines, it is how we  
learn, words have a way of staying in the mind,  
I am in a duel, a duel I will lose, sometime. And yet I am  
Always surprised, this world, and all of its inhabitants, it is less  
Than I know, and more than I can, so on "we" go.  
My mother once said, so and so, I forget the exact words,  
Perhaps they meant nothing at all, just a series of breaths  
Whose sound, left its echo as well as its memories.  
What do I know.  
Anyway, time will tell, it too hangs around trying to slot into  
A thought pattern, some measure or method, the whole thing  
At times seems totally absurd, even words, how much don't I  
know and when will there be a time to stop,  
Whatever it was, I doubt if I can pick up the world  
With a paintbrush, use a knife and fork, splice through the  
Feeling living earth, unsatisfied with ones situation  
How much more would it be, if I were never born at all  
As if the separation I feel from my fellow mankind  
Doesn't matter, after all.  
Now and again, I look up, as usual, things don't always  
Appear familiar. So, it that is what I know, that I don't know  
How to think about, things, things that in their essence  
Are no more than impressions, even symbols, making  
Selections, isolating out, taking a word, just one of them  
And focus on that alone.  
The whole page it seems, was not written,  
Of course, peoples conversation, come thru me,  
How is it that I can now understand, in a moment  
It is over again, it is never quite the same  
Rather like recovering from depression  
I have changed, if not the content of my thoughts  
The contents, it seems, surrounds, and extends  
My ability, what comes afterwards. I rub my fingers.  
I am going to refuse; Nippy will not jump over the fences,  
And I on its back, kick with my heels, she swishes her tail,  
And stops. I can't remember much of the rest, just trying to  
Resurrect memories, why, now should all that matter, or to place  
It all in a world which doesn't now exist.  
So to jump past the decades, even the centuries themselves  
Have passed away into a world with no existence. Just a series  
Of images, and associations, where would I exist, if  
"I..."

So that sums it up. Look forward without the hope of time  
Wrapped around my neck, stop trying to create and make  
More of this that it actually is.  
Think in Spanish if you like, give your dreams away  
Tell your tales to a local cafe owner, high on marijuana  
And the dead end where even feelings are broken apart  
And the heart is all that is left of the writer, who is to say  
If he is one at all, or is it too just another myth.  
The face cannot see itself, there in the mirror, noticing  
Ones features, the wrinkles in the forehead, the lines  
Around the mouth, the eyes, I didn't know, that they were blue,  
Or that the sea was azure, and the sky held raindrops  
And from my eyes, fell tears, I haven't cried for years  
One doesn't reason when the heart is broken.  
One isn't thought, one is not even a number, or composed  
Of three letters, it is a pause, where does sadness  
Recognize, how learning, doesn't get any easier  
As if that by the fall where the seasons, like calendars  
Twist and turn turning months into years  
Even desires, their intensity, their focus, their loyalties  
Everyone has a chance, does education, even travel  
Every existence, a class on that subject, rather like  
Mental illness, let us hit the nail on the head:  
Let us go as far back as we can, and make a difference  
To somebody else. Why, because that is all that is left.

Dave St. Clair

### Ruby Courage

*(Elegy for Patricia Walters and Tony O'Donnell –  
Hackney schizophrenics who died 2007)*

Long before and after mankind  
The wooded hillsides echo  
With the call of the wood pigeon at dusk

Grey streets wherein my heart lies  
Blacker the clouds heavy with rain

Sweet surge of heroin in a cold back room,  
Smell of nuclear wind in the morning,  
And the aftermath, alone as never before!

Addicted to life, all life, we may withstand.

Huge-hearted Pat Walters in a Hackney street,  
Arguing and singing her black gospel,  
Martyred by our indifference.

Wry humour of Turkish voices from an alleyway.

A trendy genocidal English gent in a fight with  
ECT-racked O'Donnell with his ruby courage.

Being hard to survive, tender to live.

And Copernicus, who transposed his lust  
Into such wonder for a few naked years.

Hunger half of life, respect the other half.

The pain of London pavements  
And sleet across Scafell.

David Kessel

### Funeral Song/War Correspondence *(For James Fenton)*

Floating among the ice, these peaceful  
soft, curly shapes reflect the sky.  
The river rocks them lightly, gently,  
their pace appearing slow and graceful  
beneath the evening's silver mantle.  
We cannot see the fish below, but  
discern from here a place of worship  
that dominates this Wounded landscape.

The fish cannot disturb the dead.  
Indifferent, the murdered lie  
swelling our rivers of history.  
A friendly warlord has purged a delicate  
threatening issue of principles  
(which we regret). You must have heard:  
a war afar stirs passions once  
it has occurred on television.

They've left behind a tidy village  
of great importance – once, to them,  
the toil of ruined generations,  
a scent of sweat, the stench of fear,  
spent cartridges trampled into the snow  
and children recoiled from adult ways,  
potential witnesses still in hiding  
in crumpled bedrooms (which we regret).

Others I know marched calmly at gunpoint  
and left their clothes and shoes on the shore.  
They were received by the surging waves  
tied in pairs to prevent survival,  
to float forever towards the sea  
-- rejected by oblivion.  
We have erected a monument  
to urge humanity: *Never Again!*

... A monument secured by our stubborn  
pillars of fear that make us insane and  
succumb to the lure of the tranquil river.

The icy current coils beyond  
our will and walling. Hear this dirge  
composed for you and me, undated.  
It mourns the living. We calculate  
our fate in sums of overkill.

**Thomas Land**

see *about the authors* on pg 40

## Homes of Care

Those who dwell in homes of Care  
In a distant realm,  
Of some, quite unseen, despair,  
For whom sadly, some,  
Can find no end,  
To their troubles and painful cares;  
Who ones  
Once said,  
They flower and bloom!  
But no,  
No they do not.  
They sit.  
Locked in a room;  
Who, through a bottle of coke,  
Or some precious tunes,  
Ease their worries,  
And gently soothe;  
That which bites  
And causes pain,  
For whom, quite sadly,  
Most days,  
Stay quite the same;  
And who must, surely attend,  
Daily groups of different kinds,  
Or the paid staff,  
It will greatly offend;  
To bitter anger and great distress,  
For this is how to find order,  
          in your mess;  
But you see bitter ones,  
The answer lies in reverse  
For short tempers  
          and cold hearts,  
Only make worse;  
That distance which brings,  
And through our society rings,  
A wall of hate,  
That through bricks of  
Ignorance and closed doors , creates;  
That which in schools, prisons,  
Hospitals and churches hides  
An answer of love  
Which only can mend  
Broken souls and broken minds

Which dark hearts did rent;  
Those who are forgotten  
By even their loved ones inside,  
For which only the love of God can they lovingly call mine.

**Michael Meader**

## Broken Sounds

Broken mirrors,  
Tarnished windows,  
Locked doors.  
Screaming children,  
Drowning out the other sounds,  
Until the fireworks light up the room.

They don't disguise their sounds,  
But when she slips on the dance floor,  
She lands with grace.

She wore the helmet,  
Saw the car coming,  
Was almost hit head on,  
At full speed,  
But someone saved her.

Then the drugs kicked in,  
Like a bad dream,  
A bad disease.

The drums,  
Incessant,  
The heartbeats,  
Deafening,  
A pounding noise that wouldn't stop.

There was no end,  
Because she couldn't escape her mind,  
She was stuck inside her head.

**Vanessa Sicre**

## Above all Despair

Above all despair  
When we look ahead  
How life is so precious  
Even at trouble water  
Recnac as it exists  
To no regard to our

Time space  
 The universe moves  
 In its orbit  
 The road into the  
 Valley  
 I have grown  
 Weak with flowers  
 Of love  
 That has made stronger  
 In a circle of family  
 By a spring of winds  
 Come drink the cup  
 Of wellness  
 For a circle of joy  
 In our life  
 Healing is the only name I know  
 As the Eastern sounds of Yusuf Lateef  
 Climbs higher and higher  
 Dawn at the moment of glory  
 Set to the tune of blue horizon note  
 Of how sweet it is

Carlos Raul Dufflar, 17/4/10



©Carlos Raul Dufflar

## The Cancer of the Soul

Post Traumatic Stress Disorder, that's what it's called  
 PTSD for short, it leaves its victims appalled  
 At the changed to their lives, the invasion of the very soul  
 Flashbacks, nightmares, and panic attacks do really take their toll

Hypervigilance makes the person right on edge  
 Their family and friends feel this really big wedge  
 Anger and rage can encompass their very being  
 The person changes for the worse as others will witness seeing

The soldier, feeling the horrors of war, is a prime example of this  
 Call it 'shell shock', 'combat fatigue' 'soldiers heart' or even the 'suicide kiss'  
 Man wasn't meant to be a killing machine, it goes against the grain  
 Not in our nature to maim and kill, it plays havoc with your brain

Just ask 150,000 Vietnam vets who took their own lives  
 More Falklands vets have died from suicide, it really is rife  
 1 in 8 of our prison population is from the British army  
 PTSD plays its part in driving these guys utter barmy

The Sun newspaper has taken the lead in highlighting this curse  
 The Arena of war can drive you mad or even worse  
 Like some of the SAS and Para's of the Falklands war  
 Who took their own lives in the aftermath, really what for?

So what can we do about it, is there a magic pill?  
 Afraid not, but love, care and understanding will not kill  
 Compassion, humility and empathy seem to be in short supply  
 A selfish society in a dog eat dog world, a real pig sty

Cameron cries out that 'the big society will work'  
 So how's about spreading some of this 'society' to PTSDers that hurt  
 Properly compensate and eradicate, send this curse back to sleep  
 Then those with PTSD may really want a life to keep!

PTSD itself is telling us that we shouldn't war, war  
 Mankind is meant to live in peace and harmony, and jaw, jaw  
 So I ask you this as a man whose fragile mind went to 'war'  
 Rockets & bombs causing blood and death, what's it really all for?

**David Kerr**

see *about the authors* on pg 40

## London

I wander through each chartered street  
Near where the chartered Thames does flow,  
And mark in every face I meet  
Marks of weakness, marks of woe

In every cry of every man,  
In every infant's cry of fear,  
In every voice, in every ban,  
The mind-forged manacles I fear –

How the chimney-sweeper's cry  
Every blackening church appals,  
And the hapless soldier's sigh  
Runs in blood down palace walls;

But most through midnight streets I hear  
How the youthful harlot's curse  
Blasts the new-born infant's tear  
And blights with plagues the marriage hearse.

**William Blake (1757-1827)**

(From *We Have Come Through*  
published by Survivors' Poetry & Bloodaxe 2003  
ISBN 1-85224-619-)

see *about the authors* on pg 40 for links to **Dave Russell**  
performing Blake's *London* on YouTube

## Death

I saw the tear on the face of the shadow  
that walks the earth with her head bent down,  
like a stray dog  
looking for its bed  
inside the black soil,  
to give in to unquenchable death.

I am waiting in the dark  
as if hiding from shame and fear.  
There are shadows everywhere, and crows and bats  
that are much braver than me,  
I dwell with silence, with the curse, the prayers,  
the scent of thyme, and the oblivion.  
In the moist entrails of the night,  
I am chasing the dog to death.  
If I could only know when it arrives,  
whom it visits and whom it is waiting for now,  
that invisible, yet well known death.

But death thinks it has no obligation to speak  
of itself, because those who waited for it say

that it eternally preys in the shadowy dark,  
near many windows  
where a few candles burn to honor the deceased –  
and that it comes unannounced, with the wind's breath,  
with the breath of silence, the whisper of damped voices,  
with many a silent prayer and scared voice,  
simultaneously murmured by the rich and the poor,  
the lucky and unlucky.

Death arrived without making a sound, slowly and quickly,  
like that dark shadow  
carried through the crosses by the wind  
like a withered leaf, and there is no ear  
that can hear it, no eye  
that can see it, always barefoot,  
silently marching across the grass, the desert,  
the sea, and follows a man  
more closely than his own shadow.

Where there is a tear, there is death,  
always faithful and incorruptible,  
marching behind life waiting for its turn.  
There is no human lust in it,  
only true to its cause,  
because it is the mediator between heaven and earth,  
and when you hear a tear beating against a cold face,  
know that it is somewhere near,  
always waking and ghastly faithful,  
next to lavender, a rose, white and red,  
a lonely tear in a black shirt, a wooden cross  
and a creaking crow, always there, barefoot, cold,  
inaudible like silence in the holy land,  
tall like the palaces of solitude,  
humble like a homeless man and patient  
like Job, dark like the darkest night,  
cold like the very heart of winter, lonely  
like the night, unbending like a dictator.

In a foggy grave my shadow lies,  
and angels, these soul guardians  
stand next to the grave, white and trembling  
like alpine snow, holding my shadow in their hands,  
and a warning glows in their eyes,  
Look at the heart of the noble shadow  
and forget my heart,  
there is no courage in me  
to listen to the cries of death from within the earth,  
endowed with special dreams,  
left at the mercy of death  
I only want to live.

**Walter William Safar**

see *about the authors* on pg 40

UNTITLED?  
DON'T WORRY  
ABOUT  
YOUR "VOICES"  
THE REAL  
PUBLIC WILL  
SAY FAR  
WORSE  
AND DON'T  
WORRY  
ABOUT YOUR

CHOICES  
BECAUSE  
ALL AROUND  
YOU ARE  
TERSE!

IF AND  
ONLY IF  
I'M  
USING THE  
WRONG  
NOTE  
PAPER

## What about us?

We mentally ill are often downtrodden by society at large  
Only afforded taboo, stigma, ridicule, ignorance and fear at no charge

we mentally ill are often discarded and callously flung away  
Put up on the 'damaged goods' shelf mostly every day

we mentally ill are sometimes drugged into utter zombification  
Everyone looks away and turns a deaf ear throughout the nation

we mentally ill are treated by some quacks who think their gods  
Overkilling with overpilling leaving us against the odds

we mentally ill are left traumatised and scarred virtually every day  
Wounded minds with broken hearts leaving us in dismay

we mentally ill are sometimes written about as the scum of the earth  
The sun newspaper wrote 'bonkers Bruno locked up; giving us a wide berth'

we mentally ill are waiting for real care in the community  
Some kill themselves by suicide, they no longer want to stay

We the mentally ill are left to pickle in our own juices with demons from our past  
Our grey matter is pulverised and pulled about each day and it's going to last

we mentally ill are familiar to the use of the revolving door  
Left on benefits, fighting for survival. Being oh so poor

we mentally ill are stared at in the street, the fingers point  
No one seems to want to offer a helping hand much around this joint

we mentally ill can go to prison, be left in a meagre cell  
Demons from our past come to haunt, and we're left to ring the bell

we mentally ill are often at the bottom of the politicians agenda list  
These Cinderella services leave us all with an angry clenched fist

we mentally ill play a part in the million suicides a year  
Sometimes being left alone & deserted leaves you in so much fear

we mentally ill really do deserve a much better life  
Georgie's poem 'a new understanding' could save us from trouble and strife

We mentally ill are left out of Blair's 'education, education, education'  
Isn't it about time we got true caring help and patience

we mentally ill have had enough it's time we were noticed  
To lead a life of proper care. Be respected and not dissed

We mentally ill need love, care and understanding expressed  
After all we're experts through experience by being put to the test

we mentally ill are not mad, bad, or sad but just ill  
Can't we be understood and be put on a politically changing bill

we mentally ill are tired of being bottom of the rung  
We want our place in society, an agenda for change can be done



I've mentioned 'we mentally ill' in this poem too many times to mention to you  
But if it enters your psyche you won't forget about us, to stop us feeling blue

David Kerr

## Respect For the Nothing?

Standing on the street corners with nothing to do,  
Spitting, Shouting, Smoking whilst drinking Taboo,  
No money but wishing and pouncing fags,  
People assume they the spawn of the council estate slag's,  
Crack heads, scagg heads, everyone's opinion,  
People know nothing, they only just seen them,  
But what lays within their true soul you ask?  
Many dreams and ambition but scared of rejection under their dark mask,  
Lost kids who speak out in blasphemy to saviour attention,  
Tried it at school, ended in dismissal or suspension,  
Everything costs money and these kids are so bored,  
Retailers brought out computers not something these kids can afford,  
But now people moan about this technology being sold,  
Kids play too much? The arguments are getting old!  
You mock these kids, does it make you feel better?  
Explain it to parliament and put it in your snobby little letter,  
How can they learn morals when you have opinionated them?  
How can they respect society when society don't respect them?

Claire Burke

## Terminator Demure

I have said this before  
Or I cannot move on  
But where Nadia wondered why  
Asherah wonders style now voyager  
And France persuades her stay Nephathiti  
Where I cannot be tricked  
By the red book in chains  
Is no bridge in the mouth of madness faithless  
And pillars there again  
Maiden headed  
Forsaken feudalism

Tamlin Hodgkinson

low branches  
in full bud-  
an ideal shelter

deep in a book  
a butterfly  
released me

**Girija Shettar**

from *This year, daffodils*  
published by Survivors' Press  
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## RULES versus HEALTH

Stress is the truth behind all living  
I am but one in the human race  
With the government now taking a dangerous level stand  
Many will be in stress, causing more focus on the NHS

You cannot blame the government only  
You can only blame yourself  
Why is this I wonder?  
The truth behind it all, is being one of the human race

Over yonder in different countries  
War and reprisals have come into the media again  
Political stands, environmental earth eruptions  
But the truth of the matter is, you are one of the human race

Where do we go from here I wonder?  
Take a stand unto ourselves  
You know the eruption of reform in this country  
England Is setting your life into a dangerous rapport

Relax, I say, not only for me, but you  
 For if these levels of force into the human beings of our world continue  
 The country will have deaths on their hands  
 They, the government say it's the economy ... the obese at fault  
 But no ... listen well, and listen hard... it is the élite of this world  
**who have to change their routines because of the rules government make**  
 That causes many people to get ill in this country and put pressure on  
**the NHS ...**

I disagree with what you read sometimes in the media  
 The words often come from PR levels which can be changed  
 These words they are told now because the pressure of the world has come  
**upon me**  
 My blood pressure now is 180/106 . . . dangerous level to having a stroke  
 I know it is because the stress levels of the world and its social  
**attitudes to the common day rule have effected me . . .**  
 I am fearful of the world as it stands

Social uprisal ... Is always caused by government taking their stand  
 We all know that!

Josie Lawson

morning mist-  
 traversing the silent lake  
 a moorhen

a blue bowl-  
 from within  
 pure white

**Girija Shettar**  
 from *This year, daffodils*  
 published by Survivors' Press  
 ISBN: 978-1-874595-30-4

## The End of the Siege of the Holy City of Nadjaf - Iraq

My neighbour's garden is sacrosanct.  
 The keys of the Holy Shrine  
 Are now in safe-keeping.  
 The occupiers of the land are checked  
 But not before the indiscriminate  
 Slaughter of innocents.

Their heavy weaponry encircled the City  
 And pounded the very fabric of the Shrine.

This autonomous Holy City,  
 As the Vatican is to Catholics,  
 Symbolises the faith and antecedents  
 Of worshippers  
 That crosses boundaries  
 Within the Mesopotamian state.

My neighbour's garden is sacrosanct.  
 At least, for now, the Shrine  
 Is shielded from a force  
 That seeks to impose  
 A quasi-subjugation of the hinterland.  
 By touting the name of "democracy"  
 From the advent of misguided intervention  
 And domination of an ignorant will  
 They kill without remorse.

Angela Cheyne, August 2004

## Bitter

(In memoriam Salvador Allendé)

The bells of St Anne's are ringing down East India Dock.  
 Do they ring for Christ or for Pinochet?  
 Tears falling like rain  
 On the mean streets of London,  
 Red as workers' blood,  
 Falling on a market place,  
 On a labourer's fierce decency,  
 A busman's daily lot;  
 Flooding the streets with pain and desire.  
 Plane trees finger into a winter sky,  
 As beautiful as Bengali girls,  
 Straight as cockney lads.

We are all alone, but not separate  
 From each other in streets and parks.  
 We live in the spaces, of others' lives.  
 To spill the entrails of M.I.6,  
 That worldly terror,  
 Onto the wide market pavements,  
 Between the alcis and fruit stalls.  
 Life so fragile, death arbitrary.  
 Lascar seamen and Bantu gold miners.  
 And I have heard in desperate streets  
 Poor kids whistle like blackbirds, at midnight.

David Kessel

## Salaam

Zuleika has a sand-hued face –  
She wears a black jersey headscarf and  
A brown poncho. She's from Algeria  
In N. Africa. The country that Camus  
Wrote of in his famous books –  
'*L'Étranger*' and '*La Peste*' which  
Spoke of the absurdity of life  
And how to solve life's  
Fractured pieces of puzzle.

As I sat on the bench  
Smoking my health away,  
She came to speak and  
Settled me down –  
Beaming the image of  
A dark, feminine lady  
With sparkling red drop earrings.  
Her photo of me was nice.  
Other people's aren't.

Once she visited me and  
Gave me lavender incense crystals  
To burn in my room.  
The smoky perfume was amazing.  
My Dad came from her corner of the world;  
I saw him die when I was 14 and part of me  
Died with him.

He healed the sick. That's what he  
Wanted to do and now that I'm sick  
I search for a healer, and today  
Found some healing from Zuleika.  
We're on the same waveband on the radio,  
And I'm looking forward to seeing her  
Passing by and stop and say  
Salaam – Peace.

Angela Morkos

## Tug of War

These chains  
They try to hold me back  
Pull me in  
Away from myself  
My reality  
And I don't want this  
I don't want these chains  
That so affect my moods.  
They distract me  
Become an obsession almost  
And a love unfolding

No longer holds any attraction  
It becomes too debilitating  
Tries to take me back to my past  
Afraid of the dark  
And the fear paralyses me.  
These chains  
They wear me down with their weight  
They want to ruin something  
I know has the potential to be beautiful  
And set me free  
Make me happy.  
I try to stand tall  
Refuse to let the fear stop me  
I want to grow, change  
Live life to the full  
And savour the happy moments  
I know the potential is there  
I just need to sit back a little  
Unlock the chains that try to pull me in.

Vanessa Sicre

## The Lighthouse

He in this room –  
Can you smell the fear  
That spreads like fire from me  
Licking everything near, and  
I'm ready to pounce on the devil that  
Haunts the room – he's here  
He's there popping up blatantly  
Like a flare that hops and  
Leaps till I'm fixated by its  
Glare which lights the room in my  
Lighthouse home as the vibrations,  
Currents and waves outside dash and  
Crash crowned with foam like an  
Epileptic's fit – all nasty and  
Shaking my frame as the people outside  
Shout for my blood and I'm like an aristo in the  
Bastille, ready to be guillotined and the Bastille is  
Lit like a lighthouse of fear and there's no  
Escape but to tap in the walls and scratch these  
Lines to prove I exited at all.  
There's a gale of voice  
Without that shake the  
Walls and my calm is my  
Pen and my paper which call for  
Mercy from the elemental  
War of Darwinian survival.

Angela Morkos

## Forest

Glory to you, forest, the clover of my youth,  
you wildly spun string, here I meet with you  
again, where the wind sleeps  
and the ocean effuses your silver leaves,  
so I can act upon your shadow  
in whose bowels the respected coal grows,  
so I can extinguish the fire in the daylight of moist trees,  
so I can stretch next to the thirsty flower,  
spilling your tears until the rain comes.

If I could choose where they shall bury me,  
I would want my grave to be there.  
If I had to wake up and find myself alone in the world,  
I would want to wake up there,  
in the embrace of the crystal night,  
in the embrace of the proud northern wind,  
in your embrace.

Walter William Safar

## Hungover

The blunt of windows opening  
suddenly is my mood. The hunt  
for broken glass as sun streams  
is not good. The sharp accrue  
the currency of guttered solitude.  
Eyes dance in the doorway of my  
thoughts, and here a penny to be  
bought. Distaste for damaging a  
multitude of cells, while the  
understanding rebels. An iron  
malice grips me as I turn the key  
then walk. The combing mirror captures  
me, and I am shuttered in the light.  
All at once I am the night, and  
talk to cats and dogs outside, and  
bite myself to sleep.

Bruce James

from *Songs from Silence*  
published by Survivors' Press  
ISBN: 978-1-874595-27-4

## The Dancer

You shyly follow  
Daring and brave  
Into the circle  
Music fills the room  
Five years old all in pink  
ballet shoes, tights, skirts,  
Wrap-overs and hairbands  
A Degas scene  
A deaf child's dream  
Like then, no sound just eyes  
To copy the rhythm  
Each step a counterfeit movement  
A passionate quest  
To hide a handicap  
Reaching out to match every step  
Stretch and hold  
The fight to survive  
Dancing to come alive  
A dream to blend in and merge  
In a circle  
Just like you

Diana M Erskine-Hill



©David Gordon

## Opposites

How would I know happiness if I  
never knew despair.  
How would I know contentment if I  
never had a care.  
If I never saw the darkness, how  
would I recognize the light.  
If I never know what wrong was,  
how would I know what's right.  
Our lives are full of opposites,  
of pleasures and of pains.  
And we have to bare the losses  
to appreciate the gains.

**Kathleen Hargreaves**

**i want to stay**  
(for a newborn boy)

for every way you  
drop that chick-beak  
open to receive torn-off

trust at times spat out though  
being able to watch such  
dust struck alive is

what time passes  
for luck while slow fingers  
pinch bread from dough testing

temperatures on elbow or tongue to  
stop that slot-pink mouth  
with timely hosts

this is not mine  
to guarantee as you do  
the unthought unseen behind

action soon to be lost to you or  
sooner to me this gangue  
we owe to crust &

stars they say though  
bread so freed by you may  
one day grow backward sting

while stars for all their pang  
& thrust cannot see for shine  
nor know

**Mario Petrucci**

## Soda Fountain

On Summer Sundays, I would pack my lunch,  
towel and swimming costume and head for  
the Lido at Parliament Hill Fields.  
My favorite part was the large three tiered fountain  
at the shallow end of the pool.  
Painted bright blue, its waters frothed and cascaded down  
over its layers like cream soda.

Small boys clambered up to the top tier  
- their personal Himalayas - and perched there  
punching their fists in triumph,  
ignoring the weary warnings that  
crackled from the loudspeakers "Get Down! No climbing  
the fountain!!

But I was content to sit on the edge of the first tier,  
swish my feet in the tumbling waters  
and let the cream soda spume cool my face  
and shoulders before sliding down  
onto the turquoise tiles at the bottom.  
And lay bumping against them,  
my mind expanding into the deep blue sky above

**Mala Mason**

from *The Coming of The Rains*  
published by Survivors' Press  
ISBN: 978-1-874595-32-8

## Sorting the Sheep

Red spot	green spot
shed left	shed right
cull	keep

this one has mastitis -  
thin as a hat-rack  
blood and puss in her fleece,  
her udder's breaking open  
muck and straw stuck in the mess,  
her lambs suck poisoned sludge.

No pain relief, no tending of the wound,  
only a shot of antibiotic  
a burst of blue spray on top of the dirt.  
She'll go for slaughter  
once she's raised her lambs.

Red spot
shed left
cull in a couple of months

**Lydia Hill**

from *Fishing for Potatoes*  
published by Survivors' Press  
ISBN: 978-1-874595-31-1

## Hunger

Why are elk and hares leaping through the forest,  
making themselves scarce?  
People have been eating the bark of poplars,  
the green shoots of fir trees ...  
Women and children roam the forest,  
gathering birch leaves,  
gathering birch leaves,  
for soup, or broth, or borsh,  
tree top and silver moss -  
forest stew.  
Children, woodland scavengers,  
wander through the thickets,  
and bake white worms in the fire,  
wild cabbage and fat caterpillars,  
or else big spiders, sweeter than nugget.  
They catch moles, grey lizards,  
with bow and arrow shoot hissing reptiles  
and bake pasties of goose-foot.  
Out to hunger they chase butterflies  
and collect whole sacks of them.  
Today there is butterfly borsh -  
Mum boils them.  
As thought in a dream, children  
watch a hare tenderly leaping through the trees,  
enraptured, they watch with big eyes,  
sacred with hunger,  
not believing the truth.  
But he leaps off, and agile vision,  
with blackening ear tips.  
An arrow flew in pursuit,  
but too late - the ample dinner fled.  
The children stand bewitched ...  
'Look there goes a butterfly ...  
Go on run catch it, the blue one!'  
The woods are gloomy, in the distance a wolf approaches  
the spot where last year  
he had gnawed a lamb.  
Like a cub he circled for a long time, sniffed everywhere,  
but there was nothing left -  
the ants have done their work, just a cloven hoof remains.  
Disgruntled, his gnarled ribs pressed together,  
he slid back into the forest.  
There he'll crush with heavy paw  
crimsonbrowed heathcocks and grey wood-grouse,  
bespattered with flurried snow.  
A vixen, a fiery russet ball,  
clambered onto a tree stump,  
and thought about the future ...  
Really - to become a dog?  
To serve humans?  
Many nets are spread -  
to lie in them  
is a dangerous matter.  
They will eat a red fox  
like they eat dogs!  
Dogs no longer bark in the village ...  
The fox began to wash itself with its downy paw,  
twisting the fiery sail of its tail upwards.  
A squirrel grumbled:  
'Where are my nuts and acorns?'  
The people have eaten them!

Quietly, transparently, evening came.  
With tranquil lisp, a pine kissed a poplar.  
Perhaps tomorrow they'll be cut down for breakfast.

7th October 1921  
by Velimir Khlebnikov

## The Soft Mosco Rain

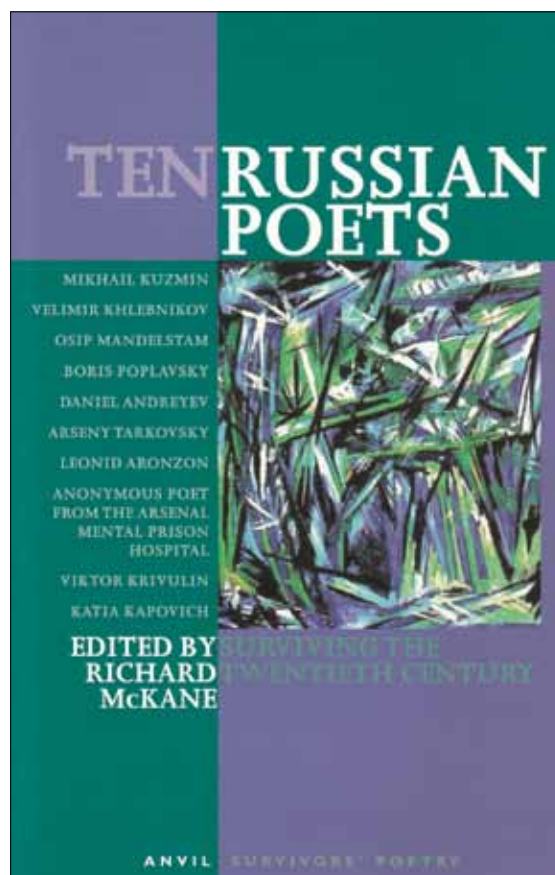
It shares so stingily  
its sparrow cold -  
a little for us, a little for the clumps of trees,  
a little for the cherries for the hawker's stall.

and a bubbling grows in the darkness,  
the light fussing of tea-leaves,  
a though and ant-hill in the air  
wer feasting in the dark green grass;

fresh drops stirred  
like grapes in the grass,  
as though the hot-bed of the cold  
was revealed in web-footed Moscow.

1922  
by Osip Mandelstam

Both poems were taken from *Ten Russian Poets*  
Edited and Translated by Richard McKane  
Published by Anvil Press and Survivors' Poetry  
in 2003, ISBN: 0-8564-328-0, £12.95 available  
from Survivors' Poetry.



## Dark Street

It is dark all around me,  
and the capricious winds of destiny  
push me and chase me on  
into even more frightening darkness,  
where solitude rules,  
as if it was the honest truth  
that there is no place for me neither here nor there,  
nor anywhere, and still,  
that the thought haunts me  
that I am here somehow for her sake.

This darkness can only be lightened by Your gaze,  
oh, my dear, I am begging you  
to show me your eyes,  
so I can finally see how the sun shines  
and how the most vivid flowers grow  
in the great cathedral of nature.

You are dark, my street!  
How many, many shadows, how much solitude  
to leave me alone, if I could only ever see  
the source of my happiness, her eyes.

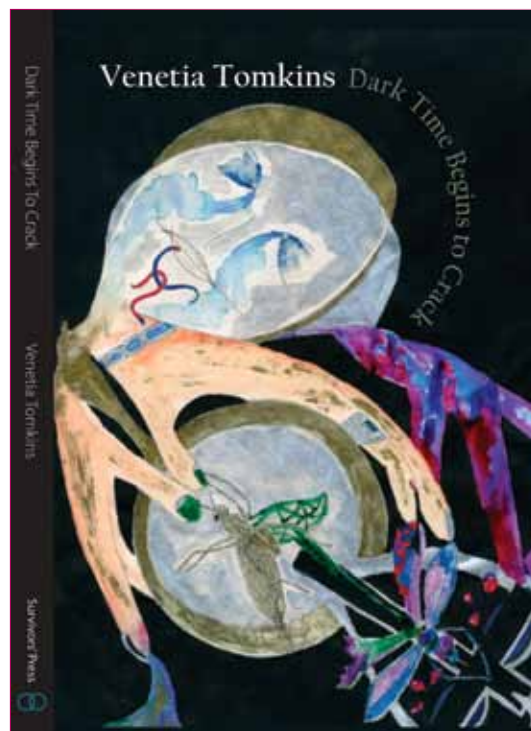
Step by step I am threading along my dark street  
like the black earth of my grave,  
I leave my capricious and gloomy moods  
to the weather and the wind,  
but I can't seem to escape the shadows of solitude,  
the faithful muses of my destiny.

The wind passes my street and plays,  
that blue shadow is listening, the stray dog  
is also listening, as is his old faithful companion  
in good and bad times - hunger-.  
Now I understand them too,  
I understand their anger and their bitterness,  
it's horrible when they tell you  
that you are no human being, that you watch  
the wind and the fog pass you by,  
and that you fell  
that your solitude makes you their company.

Tell me dear wind,  
how is it to go to Africa, China, Burma,  
like a heavenly physician,  
to cure many poor  
and be a wonder of purity and gentleness  
in that work?  
You are dark, my street!  
you must be the darkest  
and most glorious street in the world,  
because you are the street of many poets,  
and wherever I am, I promise you  
that I will always remember my glorious ancestors,  
and those beautiful eyes

in which each day is wonderfully fair,  
and the skies are blue  
just like the day I opened my eyes for the first time.

Walter William Safar



## Light Morning

Heart hope before the sunrise  
is a rock already warmed,  
where lizards bask and lichens  
gentle to the touch  
in yellow, green and lavender  
speak quietly.  
The anxious night is passed, when  
dreams impregnated with distress  
have alerted the body,  
and broken sleep's barriers.  
This is the long shore of coming to acceptance,  
washed smooth by the waves of the unconscious,  
purely exposed for the litany of a new day.  
The doves' breasted sand is blood heat  
already, as your footsteps come toward  
awakening; regrets,  
that may not need to be.

Venetia Tomkins

from *Dark Times Begins to Crack*, soon to be published by  
Survivors' Press, as part of the Survivors' Poetry Mentoring Scheme.  
£8.00 ISBN: 978-1-874595-34-2

# THE IMPACT ART FAIR

20<sup>TH</sup> - 22<sup>ND</sup> MAY 2011

THE UK'S FIRST ART FAIR SUPPLIED

SOLELY BY MARGINALISED ARTISTS.



©Gabby Jenkinson



©Sebastian Jones



©Russell Jones

This spring presents a unique opportunity to view and purchase affordable work from more than 80 of the most exciting, contemporary outsider artists in the UK today at **The Impact Art Fair**. This is a truly fantastic opportunity as many of the artworks have never been on display to the public before.

**The Impact Art Fair** is the UK's first art fair to be supplied solely by marginalised artists - highly talented practitioners with limited access to the mainstream art world, typically artists suffering from mental ill health, disabilities, addiction or homelessness.

See and collect distinctive works at affordable prices by highly talented artists. There is something for the first time buyer as well as the established collector. The fair will be held at the Candid Arts Trust, Islington from the 20th-22nd May 2011 and will showcase exceptionally high calibre paintings, photography, drawings and prints from solo and group exhibitors, from the UK and overseas. All have been carefully selected by a professional judging panel.

This three day event is being supported by The Arts Council England and is being organised by two charities - Creative Future [creativefuture.org.uk](http://creativefuture.org.uk) and The Other Side Gallery [theothersidegallery.org](http://theothersidegallery.org). Both of these organisations are dedicated to supporting outsider artists in the UK, providing individuals with opportunities to progress within the professional arts sector.

With an anticipated audience of 2500, **The Impact Art Fair** is regarded as a stepping stone towards ensuring outsider artists will be a prominent feature of the British art scene in the future.

Location: Candid Arts Trust, 3 Torrens Street, London EC1V 1NQ

Dates: 20th-22nd May 2011

Admission: Free

Preview: Thursday 19<sup>th</sup> May 5-7pm. RSVP Simon Powell

For more information visit [www.impact-art-fair.org.uk](http://www.impact-art-fair.org.uk) or contact Simon Powell 07795 691 579 [simonpowell@freeuk.com](mailto:simonpowell@freeuk.com)

A group of contemporary outsider artists whose aim is to facilitate social change by creating opportunities



# BROADSHEET

## continued ...



©Maria Kuipers



© Phil Baird

### Art pieces shown

**Gabby Jenkinson** - *Sheep Dog*, Mosaic (cover image).

**Sebastian Jones** - *Little Animals*

**Russell Jones** - *Blue Goddess*, acrylic on board

**Maria Kuipers** - *Crown of Life*, mixed media.

**Phil Baird** - *Central Tree Spinning Hats*



03/4 vine edges known world/s / arc roots above heads / spirograph feet in sand / and now from under / bells toll free of the winding-sheet / school was only ever a goalpost, and stopped stroking shaved head / what message did your last kite carry? / ghost markets, our hair whiter, both hands on the eclipse / a coda kicking chair away / anyone who dreams is only living / song rips on thru

15/4 trees speak the library of hands / their ghosts walking alongside on secret paths never intersecting our / the right to run to the forest and keep on running, a basic right surely / vivid dreaming so-called - side effects or hyper-brilliant-realities / wake the beer can sliced by mowers / wing flayed wet / bee heavier than air / licence plates reading wnk

Sean Burn

from *People are their own dreams*, soon to be published by Survivors' Press, as part of the Survivors' Poetry Mentoring Scheme. £5.00 ISBN: 978-1-874595-33-5

# Graffiti Corner

**Oi! Slow Down!**

by **Tony\_Demoncy** » Wed Apr 13, 2011  
10:29 pm

The words fly past so swiftly  
Before my inner eye  
So Fast, They flee too quickly  
To lay my claim. I try,  
But they won't slow sufficiently.  
I grasp at some pale unity.  
But deep insights elude me  
Till I howl, bereft I cry.

Tony Demoncy

**Re: Oi! Slow Down!**

by **sammy1977** » Thu Apr 14, 2011 6:58 am

I enjoyed reading this Tony. Good rhythm, pace and feeling. Think I allude to similar feelings at the end of umbilical.  
Cheers

**Teacher**

by **sammy1977** » Sun Mar 20, 2011 10:50 pm

The light filtered through  
The chalk filled air,  
Its notes reflected off the specks  
Of the dust of the erased ideas,  
The etched lines  
Of the familiar trace  
The teacher had  
Knowledge embraced,  
The lines etched into the board  
The squeak echoed across the room  
A symphony to the neurons of the instructed brain  
The intense silence  
Watching the instruction  
Taking shape on the black washed wall,  
Unleashed by the learning of the teacher  
Who contained within  
His bald pate  
The years of constructed knowledge  
Once so new and green  
Now golden aged  
A vision

Surrounded in coloured spectrum,  
At once all and none.

**Re: Clarity**

by **sebcp5** » Mon Apr 11, 2011 9:39 pm

your poems make me think of Silvia, and that she must be thinking something like this now that she's left me, though I think now she's got to the stage of complete indifference. If only I could stop thinking of her!

**CRUMBS**

by **patrick** » Wed Mar 16, 2011 6:53 pm

he accepted  
the crumbs  
from her  
table  
which  
collected  
together  
with nutmeg  
grated to taste  
made a  
surprisingly good  
bread pudding!

**Re: CRUMBS**

by **sebcp5** » Fri Mar 18, 2011 1:34 pm

Hey Patrick, yes, this is a nice, funny little limerick type poem, and certainly shows how to be positive and make something good out of what initially seems like a negative situation. Experience teaches us to be like this, I think.  
Keep writing!

**Re: CRUMBS**

by **patrick** » Fri Mar 18, 2011 4:07 pm

cheers [b]seb[/b] writing is a life blood to me  
!!!they come into my head and niggle me to be put  
on paper

# Reviews



## Dreams of Flight by Jessica Lawrence

Poet Launderette Press 2007; £8.70

Please accept our apologies as this should have appeared in the winter issue of Poetry Express

There is a strong sensory tone to this collection. Its dedication is 'For friends who have been family'. Jessica has a strong bond with her daughter, whom she now relates to as an independent person. Several of the poems deal with that process of growth, including Jessica's sense of ageing, and her daughter's attaining womanhood. In *The Beautiful Girl* she realises in retrospect that she was beautiful, though she had not been aware of it at the time. Her consciousness of beauty is reflective, and retrospective. The title poem, *Dreams of Flight*, refers to the reveries of her adolescent daughter, re-enacting her own flight dreams: in contrast to the 'solid' banalities of real-life air travel. She would love her daughter to have real life power of flight. *Seasons* celebrates her daughter's physical development, 'rising into her season of green . . . Her slim hips swivel over/broadening bones . . .', counterpointed against her mother's 'retiring into/my season of white'. Disturbing image of Mum feeling like mothballed clothes, or 'a letter in an envelope of snow'. Similar sentiments in *Plaster Cast*: Mum longs to slough off her body, or at least its 'adipose casing'; she contrasts it with her daughter's slimness and agility; then the two feelings are synthesized by a reference to her daughter having had her broken wrist put in plaster, and the beautiful sight which emerged when the plaster was removed. In *The Cliff Face*, Jessica empathises with her daughter's pain through analogies with Greek mythology - 'the serpent of my fate'.

There are flashbacks to Jessica's own childhood. *Washing by Hand* harks back to her fastidiousness in domestic science at school. She applies those standards to clarifying dialogue, and to her own utterances: "I like to pick apart/phraseology and iron/inconsistencies . . ."

Another dominant theme is that of illness and hospitalisation. In the opening poem, *The Aftermath*, the nurse seems like a priestess, a 'whitewashed angel' carrying a 'holy vial' and an 'assortment of sacred needles'. As a refugee from Nazi Germany, who had also lost her son, her sufferings far outweighed those of the poet - 'an amateur in this business of grief'. On the shore of the sea of Galilee, she remembers her sojourn, and has a vision of being drawn to safety by a star beneath the wing of Pegasus; the nurse was obviously a heavenly redeemer.

Poetry Interruptus makes a parallel between the creative process and gestation. The theme interweaves with a searing tableau of someone disabled, in severe pain, snubbed by the Social Services and reduced to starvation. The situation is only remedied when she collapses and has to be taken to hospital. Her creative 'unblocking' parallels her recovery.

Blood in the Snow refers directly to a physical injury - a head wound. This scheme is further explored in *Pillaging the Landscape of the Brain*. *Memories from Montreal* suffering from severe illness, being subjected to intensive scanning attunes one to the latest technology, enables one to consider one's own body as, say, an ocean to be explored in a bathysphere. Malignant growths, blown up under the microscope, can be botanically, biologically, aesthetically fascinating. They seem to be marine growths, "Their coded instructions embed/like dolphin sonography." I am puzzled by the conclusion: '. . . my dead hard blueprint, impounded/like flounder in a mile long drift net.'

*Refugee Trees* demonstrates Jessica's strong sensitivity to the environment, and its link to the human condition. In the former, stunted trees make gestures of indictment - compared firstly to fists and cigarette butts, and then to the shaven heads of concentration camp internees. There is an analogy between tree surgery and the brutalities of massacres: 'stripped of their clothes/like the bark wrenched off trees'; also a suggestion of deforestation to destroy rebel hideouts and generally. Like the human refugees, the trees have their life-cycles truncated for the purposes of cruel sacrificial ceremonies.

*Agony in the Ash* explores this theme from a geological and historical perspective. The indelible memories of those who perished in natural disasters and in the Holocaust are compared to fossils - consider the sheer pain of living tissue pressed against molten ash! - 'dig sharp as shards in the flesh pit . . . stunned faces fossilised in a carbon plaque'. The images of natural disasters and man-made ones compliment each other: 'The eruption of pumice and ash/thrown in the air like pellets/of cyanide gas.' It relates her individual physical traumas to the common lot of oppressed humanity.

*The Weight of Water* concerns collapses and subsidences - natural ones, whose possibility is ignored at one's peril, and man-made ones like a library whose designers ignored the weight of books. Jessica's concern about these related to worries about her daughter, bearing the weight of a cello on her back, and seeming to disappear into oblivion when she had to take the underpass on her way to school. General observations are focused on a personal situation.

In *The Butterfly House*, through the imagery of an insect's life-cycle, Jessica daringly explores the 'underside' of religious art and ceremony, which she described as 'cathedral porn'. The purple moth is a ' . . . banana-sucking/red laced angel' and a 'char-broiled gargoyles'. She refers to 'porcelain cherub flesh'. The emergence of imagos from pupae "shows me how/dying flesh can be/reborn." This idea is blown up into a spectacular hyperbole: "DNA extracted from/a raptor's claw/regenerates a dinosaur - and fictionalisation: 'a corduroy/triceratops with velveteen/eyes'. 'My marbled face' suggests that the poet feels like a church or temple icon. Her conclusion is that she defies religious (including biblical) prophecies of famine and plague - presumably reassured by the biological resilience of lepidoptera.

*Gift of Stone*: In this highly complex poem, the subject undergoes mutations of definition: she begins 'like a dry weed/through a small crack/flowering', then 'the breath through/the vent; then there is a transference to the mouth (through which the breath goes). A further transference - to 'appendages/wearing faces/of the infamous'. She then expresses affinity with suffering poets, teachers, dancers and dreamers - acknowledging the sordid undersides of their lives, showing the utter extremity of their suffering, forced to physically stagger through life, as she has experienced difficulty with walking. Jessica refers to 'the/cockpit/of their/weakness' and then, through that linking word, mutates into an aircraft - her metaphorical aircraft engine resembles a three-legged sheep. Next mutation: she is a stone - inundated, transported, but ever resilient. She feels the water in her head like Niagara falls (cascading on herself?) Each time she is washed up on a shore, it is like the spark of a resuscitation machine - a brilliant evocation of sustained illness. There is speculation about how one person survives when many have perished - ones who could not believe they were going to die. At the bitter end "there/was no/water,/only stone/the gift of stone." The symbolic significance of stone has been reversed, from being a metaphor for life into being the shroud and cold essence of death.

*The Hammer's Hymn*: the poet feels as if she is 'under the hammer' of the blacksmith/metal worker, being pummeled into shape, with some vital sparks flying in the process. There is a suggestion of physical confinement through severe illness, and constant writhing paroxysms of pain: "The window closes on the great outdoors/of my body . . . My body latches and locks from the/sudden ascent, it rises in the head/like a hammer's hymn bashing the vessels/with its heavy din . . ." In a later stanza, the hammer rises in her head, presumably registering the traumas in her body. These tool are instruments of coercion, and in the final stanza, the poet begs that they be 'bent in the sun', and that their users "not let knowledge incite fear/and cause rationality to run".

The extremity of pain leads to a cataclysmic expansion of vision: the poet becomes an astral body, has a collision and goes down the cosmic 'black hole'. My knowledge of astrophysics is greatly increased here: "The visibility of the black pit/is revealed by the objects sucked/into it . . ." close-up to geological focus 'the gases contrive and/contract in a spectacular mass,/mercurial mushrooms rush through a/volcanic tent . . .". She protests that if her brain is not fixed, it will "burn for the sake of what they refuse to admit"; the agony could be a warning beacon, to get the treatment right for the sake of others. There may be enlightenment in the future (as the final stanza concludes)

*Pillaging the Landscape of the Brain* evokes brain surgery, and the donation of organs on decease. The skull is envisaged as a landscape, the two hemispheres of the brain as an apple; the surgery is compared to making an irrigation channel - for blood to the brain, clearing sediment and silt. The first stanza begins 'When I die'; the fourth with 'when I was alive' - crossing over the 'great divide' in mid-poem. There is a suggestion of failed surgery, of not restoring blood flow properly, so that "my speech becomes as barren as a salt lagoon . . . my body sinks into quicksand." ". . . they blocked/all the inroads and watched/the walls of my life fall down." There is a bitter indictment here: someone was allowed to die when she could have been saved. This was possibly by design so that the medics could acquire the brain organs, without regard for the human life of a peasant. The deceased is compared to a cannibalistic feast.

*The Ugly Sisters* I found enigmatic. The figure suggested the dark side of the subject. She seems inextricably tied to them, "they attach themselves like magnets". She lavishes presents on them, to 'buy them off' - to no avail. They are determined to become part of her: "they drew their names/in the quicksand of my/brain" and are finally accepted as an integral part of the subject ". . . the only/two things upon/which I can rely."

The mythology of malignant blood relations is further explored in *Spider Woman* where a mother wishes to murder the daughter, dressing her up for a sacrificial ceremony, feigning the desolation of bereavement. Once again the poet speaks through the persona of the deceased. Breathing the spider's fumes, she makes her ascent - not to any idyllic 'heaven', but the 'fervid centre . . . the parasitical heart'. The beatific physical corpse is 'beyond recriminations', not so the ascending spirit. The victim is 'blamed' for what has gone wrong. There is an implicit journey back to physical life. The frenzied dancing of the spider energises the prisoner, who breaks her bonds; the fracture destroys the spider. At one level, justice is done. But still ". . . I cannot/rise/above/recriminations."

Another malignant mythical mother in *House of Ice*: 'Captain Hook mother'. The poet is initially in Cinderella pose; he has to be 'lithe as Tinkerbell', create her own world of freedom and magic, which ends at the stroke of midnight. She watches her mother cooking, while listening to her tales of the Holocaust. There are painful physical, tactile analogies between the fate of the victims and the fate of apples prepared for stewing: they 'crackled/through burning flesh'.

*The Plea* seems to be a cry from the heart of someone undergoing a painful operation, and yearning for oblivion in the process.

*Whitehaze*: this biblical, apocalyptic poem is in 6 sections. It opens with the image of a Dreidel - a four-sided spinning top, played with during the Jewish holiday of Chanukkah, also used like a dice in the gambling game Teetotum. The creation myth is referred to, then the apocalypse, where there is nothing left but a *Lamud* (The Talmud get its name from the word 'Lamud' - taught, and means 'The Teaching', that is, the doctrinal book which alone fully expounds and explains all the knowledge and teaching of the Jewish people, and a Yud (10<sup>th</sup> letter of the Jewish alphabet). (The letter *yud*, a small suspended point, reveals the spark of essential good hidden within the letter *tet*. Subsequent to the initial *tzimtzum*, the contraction of God's Infinite light in order to make 'place' for Creation, there remained within the empty void a single, potential point or 'impression'. The secret of this point is the power of the Infinite to contain finite phenomena within Himself and express them to apparent external reality.) In Part 2, she reflects on her 'dreams', which seem to relate to past journeys, real and/or imaginary, into the wild expanses of Africa. They are 'like a white herd/of wildebeest/plodding into/a colourless/sky'; the 'muscular opening of a dream' is compared to that of a lion's jaws. When she cannot recall her dream, "the lion has lockjaw"|. In Part 4, we are back in the humdrum reality of the Neurologist's surgery. Dreams are all-powerful when one is in their grip, but have their own self-willed elusiveness when the wakeful, conscious mind wants to tap into them. But then a twist: the consultation was ten years ago; in the interim elusive dreams are balanced by everyday memory lapses. (Part 5) "Forgetting is mostly/what I/remember". She hopes that the vision of fugitive gazelles will reorientate her. Part 6: her forgetting her dreams incurs their disapproval, their down-grading of her memory ". . . as if my mind/was designed for/limited functions/and practical/purposes." She asks, rhetorically, whether it matters if one forgets an illuminating, symbolic, Jewish letter: of course it does - dreams and memories should reach far beyond the mundane, the practical.

The aquatic, oceanic theme is prominent in Jessica Lawrence's work. In *Tasting Water*, the poet compares her mind's contents to brine. Surrealistically, algae seem absorbed into clouds. Part of her feels like a bird. She wants the algae to come into her eye - perhaps nourish that vision - and feels an affinity with the algae: ". . . so I/crumble in small degrees". She then envisages herself as a piece of hard, rugged terrain: "My geology is displayed . . ." - former life seems frozen, congealed by organic process. Personal geology can be read like Braille, which can only be read by appreciating the gaps between the letters - similarly, "my thoughts' fish slipped/between commas and dots". But she insists that "my condition is not cryptic" and adds that "tactile translation is blameless". She venerates the clear divisions and distinctions of the natural world, 'the clarification between coral and rock . . . the effortless change from sand to reef rubble'. In comparison everyday life is a 'friable mesh/of cooked offal'. *Revisiting* wistfully recalls a romantic sea voyage with a mysterious stranger.

*Italy* speaks against travel nostalgia. Memories of spectacular landscapes ought to be perpetually reassuring and invigorating, even though one might have had ghastly experiences in their proximity. This is not always the

case: Jessica, at the time of her visit, had a lot of dietary problems, and was on a strict dietary régime to combat cancer. It was nearly impossible to get the correct health food items in Italy, and the cancer returned. She wished she had stayed at home.

*Dissolution* was written for some whose wife had drowned, and who retraced her path to the scene of her decease. He threw commemorative flowers into the river, and played her a funeral air on his harmonica. Her spirit did not return to him in any way: "She dissolved like/salt, felt salt washed out/of her wounds." This suggests to me that he had been unfeeling towards her in her lifetime, and that his apparent remorse is largely an empty gesture. *White Swan* - the theme of drowning again, opening with a gloss on the Ophelia legend. The poet seems to be a jealous rival of the deceased woman. The couple seem to have been locked in an elementally sado-masochistic relationship, which could have led to both their deaths; the bereaved is still attached, obsessed, even though he can reflect on the possibility of a 'clean' living separation. *Dissolution* and *White Swan* seem to refer to two sides of the same relationship. Same theme again in *Rebirth* and *Kyson Point*: someone else's wife has drowned. The bereaved cannot show any emotion at the mortuary, nor when the children come to mourn. He bursts into tears at the sight of the empty token of her hat.

*Venus Rising* honours an 'old flame'. Like the bereaved in *Dissolution*, he plays harmonica: could he be the same person? *Harvesting* - preserving euphoric moments in the memory. *These Days So Long Without You* - love makes the poet feel like an awkward schoolgirl, aquiver with anticipation: ". . . angst and pleasure compressed/like atoms into atomic bombs and/I exist on the verge of explosion . . ." *The Two Computers*: the angst of 'switching off' an amorous overture is expressed through the imagery of computer technology, which is now vital for many relationships. 'The Software of my Soul' and the 'Hardware of your love' now have disturbing literal implications too. *Addicts*: although all passion is almost spent, the 'ex' still has some ability to ignite a flame; since the separation, sadly, they re-started smoking. *The Polestar* is a lament from someone recently ditched/separated. The desolation has a cosmic dimension: '. . . the immensity of space . . . the polestar of your presence'. She tries to 'erase all the reminders'. A powerful sensual image of '. . . Your milky marinate boiling/like a hot spring'. The most painful sensation is evoked by the memory of the tender parting touch of his hand - 'like tapping a saltcellar to loosen/the moist grains'. *The Gravity of You* concerns a predatory, malignant lover: "I wish I had trusted/my wolf instinct." His hold on her is an unbearable burden, like a crammed back pack that cannot be taken off; she feels like 'atlas lifting a/world that spits/a bucket of blood/through every trail of silver', and wishes she had sustained her 'weight free space flight'.

*Naked Water* is a celebration of elemental sensuality, at-oneness with that element and its creatures: "in bowl of sea broth the empty thoughts slough and settle". She is absolutely happy to risk injury from sticklebacks, octopods and barnacles - and receive shocks from electric eels.

Bloodbath - a possible haemorrhage (or menstruation), causing two bloodstained cloths to be

thrown into a bath, suggests the possibility of a sea burial, and the leaking blood being re-blended with the sea. She is attracted to being absorbed in the sea, even though she does not relish a sea burial: “. . . I am part of the ocean,/the everlasting blood flow of the earth . . .” *Flotsam*: same blood-soaked bath imagery. In the dreamscape, the clots of blood sink, and resurface as sea creatures. Then there is procreation: “I give/birth to/round blubbery/bats and balls . . . like newborns/delivered to/thalidomide mums . . . gelatine quads”. She shudders at the thought of what her grandchildren will be like.

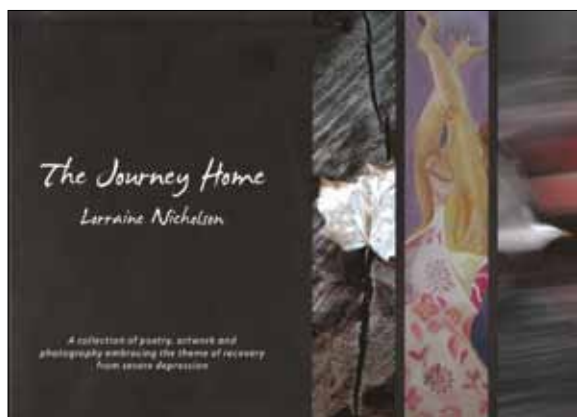
*Tulips* ‘takes the lid off’ flower fetishism. The aesthetic patterns of tulips’ petals parallel the manifestations of cruelty and oppression: “. . . the whip’s/hieroglyphics/detached/in flesh’ The whole collection is suffused with Jessica’s utter individuality and independence; this is most overtly articulated in *The Thing Is to Belong* -where she proclaims her pride in absolutely not belonging.

*Dreams of Flight*: “A deep, many-layered collection of beautifully crafted poems. It feels as if every word has been individually agonised over, every line honed to a polish. This is not comfortable reading, the subjects and themes often dark, highly charged and obviously personal. *Pillaging the Landscape of the Brain* is my favourite, as sharp as a scalpel, disturbing and as visceral as its subject. This is the work of a serious, talented writer. Buy it, this is an important anthology.” (Terry Grimwood).

Dave Russell

### The Journey Home by Lorraine Nicholson

Tooth Books, 2010; ISBN 0-9551764-7-6, £20.00



“In the battle between heart and mind, it is the heart which has finally been victorious and allowed this artistic flourishing which I had suppressed all these years.”

“With the benefit of hindsight I can see that I have changed for the better as a human being through having had severe clinical depression in that I am more aware of others suffering and care more. I am also far more self aware and have the tools to cope better now. When I was first hospitalised in 2004 I did not know that I could recover but the difference is now I do and each subsequent admission has left that underlying knowledge

that I could again recover the life I had lost to depression. Two years ago when I relapsed and was hospitalised I thought I had gone all the way back to square one but it only served to make me realise that I will NEVER be that same person as in 2004 or 5 or 6. I am growing all the time and realising my dreams at art college in the Hebrides.”

“Recovery doesn’t at first seem like an option for a lot of people when they’re in that black hole and it certainly wasn’t an option for me, I never thought I’d recover my life again or regain any quality of life again - be able to go hill walking or go out and enjoy myself again. It’s just; it’s a question of time, as all healing is in life. It’s a question of keeping that faith and knowing that it’s possible and being surrounded by people who think it’s possible and eventually, I think everybody’s got potential to recover”.

“There is a potential for everybody to heal and often it’s just a matter of time and although the journey of recovery is very unique to each individual, there are certain commonalities - support and caring and interests which run alongside medication. For me, it was art and writing poetry. A lot of them are very recovery focused, they’re very positive poems and it’s out the other side of the dark tunnel.”

26 Lorraine Nicholson // May 7, 2010 at 10:13 am Lorraine’s personal testimony has been impeccably presented in a de luxe edition, demonstrates her high aptitude in all paint media, as well as photography. Highly prominent in the visuals are figures of hands, the embodiment of groping struggle.

A sweeping cosmic study in oils accompanies the opener, *The Storm*. Verbal and visual are beautifully blended in *Fairground*, where the ‘raging inferno internal’ is complemented by a maelstrom of water (or poster?) colour brush strokes: ‘Quashed by circumstantial contraction,/These my channels to keep me sane’ *All Day, Every Day* is announced by a superb picture of (I think) a dustbin or a manhole. Interesting personalisation of political vocabulary: “Sensory shutdown,/Indefinite strike action” *Ravaged*: incisive picture of shattered ice or glass, accompanying a powerful poem which compares a breakdown to a conflagration (natural, accidental, or military?). *Deep Freeze* in a way counterpoints *Ravaged*: this time the picture is of unambiguous ice; the poet longs for the thaw. *Elusive Gift* describes the struggle for survival in terms of a journey through the desert - the matching footprint in the sand picture.

Understandably, there are many references to having been confined in limbo. With *Tsunami of the Mind*, personal trauma feels like an elemental holocaust: “Time has no meaning in this dark world./The hands of the clock have stopped.” *Lost*: another exploration of limbo: “. . . a featureless mindscape./No points of reference”. *Clutching the Moonlight*: reaching out for the light in the darkness; frequently-recurring hand image in the accompanying picture. “Hope . . . is the light at the end of the tunnel . . . Don’t let the memory of darkness eclipse your new-found sunlight.” The source of light is a ‘glowing orb of possibility’.

Sea/marine imagery is to the fore in this collection. *Life-Wrecked*: breakdown = shipwrecked - accompanied by surging foam and seashells. The second section begins with *Taking Shelter* - marvellous colour

quality in painting of sun and stormy sea; collage effect with picture of yacht. "Hospital is a refuge too but once our storms are over, we leave the safety of harbour walls and resume our voyage on open seas." *Anchor's Comfort* is a lament of someone 'all at sea' - literally and metaphorically: 'seabed's security' is an interesting concept. Floating Questions - the 'at sea' theme again; I like the figure 'trying to net the finite'. In & Out of Hope: the poet depicts herself as a personification of the tide. She also yearns to 'breathe in the ocean's energy'. Once she is recovered, she will, with her new essence and identity, 'journey inland once again'. Riding White Horses is another variant on the sea theme: "Go ride the white horses on the waves of life/Letting them propel you through the spray/To arrive at a canter in meadows of gold . . ." Similarly in *The Lost Years*: "I felt like tiny flotsam those lost years/Crushed by waves of giant force . . . My very being was surf sacrificed./And yet in the very action of the waves/There was a necessary purging of ill". Reassuring apparition of Aphrodite at the end of the poem, and facing it a close-up of a patch of oil (evoking an oceanic oil-slick?) Marine imagery again in *Ebb and Flow*: "Go with your flow and your life force will not ebb." In Happy Migrant the poet perceives herself as a migratory bird. *Stormclouds* are duly dismissed with the advent of light. *The Gathering Calm*: again the storm as leitmotif, honouring the 'power of compassion'. Life's Voyage - (Journey With the Wind) - sea voyaging again: "I am the helmswoman that steers my course now,". The oceanic exploration continues with *Hunter, Gatherer* and *Maiden Voyage*: "A wake of foam measures my progress/And the spray of life crashes my bough . . .".

*The Felling*: breakdown = deforestation. *Stuck in a Rut*: the trap of negativity. *Elemental Deliverance*: ". . . I seem my own cremation", with lovely phoenix and flames motif. *Timebomb*: more war imagery. Lorraine here shows herself a skilful portrait painter. *Labelled Lost* and *Found*: feeling of oneself being a piece of lost property. *Arrested under Section* is the most literal statement in this collection. *Hear My Silent Voice* complains of reification: "I've been packaged, processed, dehumanised enough", and compares the life cycle to a session with the washing machine: "I've merely taken leave of my true self/In the spin cycle of my life." The poem is accompanied by a picture of purple hands. *A Tribute to Courage* - simple but effective, counterpointed by poppies. *Abandonment* describes seemingly endless waiting, presumably on the ward; *Time, Space & Swaying Pines* concerns 'nature's healing powers'. *Celebrating the Art of Living* also celebrates art therapy, complemented by a four-part painting: hands reaching upwards, eggshells, a bird which could either be newly hatched or in flight.

*Sunshine and Showers*: the opening caption of this section relates the plotting of personal recovery to a weather forecast. *Renaissance Woman*, accompanied by a very graceful piece of figure drawing, embraces artistic and spiritual rebirth, through analogies of biological gestation. *Silent Illness* shows how writing is often a unique thread of sanity: "Friends want to help but don't know how". She had received postcards from foreign locations, and had felt cut off from travel; now the portals of travel are reopened.

*Witness to recovery* - journey theme again, accompanied by hand reaching out towards light, towards

the sun. *Our thoughts are with you* - nice graphics/calligraphy.

*Holding the Umbrella* emphasises altruism. Giving support to others is often a crucial factor in one's own recovery process. *Send Me Roses in Winter* - an appreciation of 'Nature's cure' with beautiful close-up photo. Scarcely is dedicated to a close friend 'gentlewoman of grace' (same as the 'Renaissance Woman'). They are utterly mutually inspirational, spiritually ever close though geographically at a great distance. *Constant* possibly refers to the same partner, who disperses and evaporates the spurious 'waves' of others. *A Sense of Belonging*: concern for others is in total harmony with valuing of oneself; highly evocative image of a heart-shaped leaf. *Seeing the Light in Me* is another dedication to a supportive friend, *Be There is All I Ask* - a plea for affection, *Rays* the poet's desire to radiate affection to a kindred spirit. *Glimmers of Sunshine* focuses on trying to resuscitate another. Journey to Joy says that life is a book = writing sustains sanity; ebullient optimism: "Journey on my friend./Good times are ahead . . ." *Always & Ever*, the ever-supportive partner (is this the person in the picture?). *Cradle Our Flames* describes the needs of nurturing, through some powerful imagery such as 'a concave existence in hedgehog's bristle of defence' and 'this blizzard of the brain'. *Outside Looking In*: altruism again; roles are reversed; the poet is now the visitor; the patient is someone - her mother.

Double-edged comment in *The Cure*: 'The writing always on the wall'. *The Healing Path* is a highly clinical piece: the poet needs self-evaluation: 'An objective stance from which to view things/To interpret my new set of responses,' *Gold- Nothing Less* - reiteration of the candle image. *Unashamed* - a plea to be honest and overt: poppies spring eternal.

Some great eco imagery: "Slowly I made my dreams a reality,/Letting each precious drop of water/Be absorbed into the vast Arizona desert of my previously parched existence. The 3<sup>rd</sup> Dimension compares personal discovery to musical improvisation. *We Can Grow Through Our Pain* experience of pain is integral to growth and recovery. The theme of sea-travel is complemented by that of land travel in *Climbing Metaphorical Mountains*: the poet felt truly lost: "It was as though I was on another planet/And alien to myself and my surroundings./The wonder of maps and the information they provided/Were lost on me and indeed I was lost on them." She returns from her literal and metaphorical climb to be greeted by friends, and a sense of the familiar.

*Embracing the Light*: progression from shafts of light in the darkness to being suffused in light. *Finding Myself - A Journey Made* celebrates a new found self-assurance and sense of direction; backcloth of hand and foot prints in oils - struggling through the desert. *I Can Sing a Rainbow*: now the poet feels she can fly. Shrewd observation in *See Me* - the false foundations shook and crumbled,/Almost destroying the very life they supported . . . I am finally whole again, my fragments reunited." Flight and water are fused in *Light Play*, with some tantalising twinkles on an inky surface.

*Aurora's Magic*: A further advance of light. "The analogy with an aurora is a constantly changing flux or picture where a myriad of facets and colours can be viewed." Powerful picture of silhouette against a dawn

sky. *Heart's Compass* - 'Spreading out like spokes of the sun's rays' fittingly visualised in patterns of pebbles on the sand. *Emergence* - interesting idea of a 'cotton wool world'. *Nature's Temple* - very touching: "This is the source of worship I engage in"; lovely collage of flower petals superimposed on a woodland scene.. *Lifted* compares conducting ones life to driving a motor vehicle. *Mending my Wings* - "life is fragile like a butterfly's wings" - exquisite glass sculpture collage of a butterfly. *Starjump with Joy* explores the visual concomitants of recovery: 'A waterfall of light,/A spangled sheet of stars' reinforced by photo of sunlit garden with streaks of rain. *Colour Encore* relates Lorraine's art activity to her recovery. In her distress, she has had a 'monochromatic soul'. She is now restored to the full colour spectrum, and paints as she lives life to the full. This theme is further explored in *On a High*, where she celebrates her first offer of an exhibition. She will paint in genuine colours: "Throw away the spray paint/artificial highs are out!/Emotional, natural highs are in." *Flight Fantastic and Resolution* - Lorraine envisages herself as a butterfly - now taking flight. *No Longer in Shadows* proclaims optimism: "I stand in the clarity of a vibrant light,/Which sculpts my newly-created persona."

*Trusting the Onward Journey*: Highly perceptive watchwords for recovery: "Like the trauma of falling through ice it's the rebuilding of trust in every footfall. It can only be done step by step, at the right time and with the right support." On to flight with *Heart's Answer* - "The safety of cage I need to fly." Interestingly, the flight of the freed spirit is related to artistic activity: "Kneeling before my diesel altar,/hands clasped in divine accord".

*Reflections*: the reader is given Lorraine's distinguished CV. Then some 'local colour (from India?) Good quote from Michelangelo: "The greatest danger for most of us is not that our aim is too high and we miss it, but that it is too low and we reach it." And from Einstein: "It's very depressing to live in a time when it's easier to break an atom than a prejudice." With the concluding pages, the visuals take over, accompanied by brief captions - such as "Some people have shone beyond their constellations for they are in their own galaxy." "Sometimes part of us has to die to allow new parts of us to grow." Again, Lorraine emphasises the necessity of human interaction: "I have made many journeys in this life entirely on my own. Recovery is not one of them . . ."; "Whatever we can do individually to nurture recovery makes the collective difference.

In conclusion: "This book is my signature, my affirmation of living and most of all my celebration of recovery which I acknowledge daily . . ." (For further details see [www.hope4recovery.co.uk](http://www.hope4recovery.co.uk))

This magnificent effort has received global accolades - including ones from Canada and Hawaii.

**Dave Russell**

**Faiz Ahmed Faiz**

**Poet in the City, King's Place, London.**

**17<sup>th</sup> January 2011**

**Javed Majeed**, Professor of Postcolonial Studies at Queen Mary College, University of London, chaired the event and gave a biographical introduction. **Dr. Farooq Bajwa** outlined Faiz's political and historical background;

**Ms Rukhsana Ahamd**, author and translator, explained the poet's philosophy of art and society. The poems in Urdu were read by **Saqlain Imam**; one in Punjabi by **Amarjit Chandan**; the English translations were read by **Sudha Bhuchar**.

Faiz Ahmed Faiz, who wrote both in Urdu and Punjabi, was a key writer in India over a long period, embracing the end of the British Raj and partition. He had a strong grounding in traditional verse forms, including love poetry. He was also a devout Muslim. Faiz's first published collection, *Naqsh-e-Taryadi* (The Lamenting Image, 1934), begins with the typical musings of a young poet - on love, beauty, loss and the beloved's countenance. It ends with expressions of his nascent political awareness. Faiz became involved with the All-India Progressive Writers' Association, whose manifesto was thus: "It is the object of our Association to rescue literature and other arts from the conservative classes in whose hands they have been degenerating so long to bring arts in the closest touch with the people and to make them the vital organs which will register the actualities of life, as well as lead us to the future we envisage."

The new movement vociferously condemned the philosophy of 'art for art's sake'. They deemed it incumbent upon the artist to use his or her art to criticise the existing social conditions of society - as a tool to lay the foundations of a new society. The two schools of thought would seem bitterly opposed, but Faiz, with the deep commitment he required, could to some extent make the two contrary currents coincide, turning love of the beloved into love of humanity - 'the language of love into the language of politics'. But in pursuit of transformation of content he always retained tightness of form. He was always prepared to take risks with his composition, often weaving compounds of meaning and shades of subtlety into measured spaces such as couplets.

In 1947 Faiz became the first editor of the English daily, the *Pakistan Times*, flagship of the Progressive Papers Limited chain. V G Kiernan writes that Faiz 'made use of prose as well as verse to denounce obstruction at home and to champion progressive causes abroad; he made his paper one whose opinions were known and quoted far and wide.'

In the new state of Pakistan, he was a major spokesperson for workers, women, peasants and the poor, and collaborated extensively with the trade unions. For his troubles, he was arrested on trumped-up charges in the notorious 'Rawalpindi Conspiracy case - a plot hatched by some left-wing army officers in the new state of Pakistan to overthrow the government and establish a republic along the lines of Turkey under Mustafa Kemal 'Ataturk'. Over the next two years, he would face trial before a secret tribunal that held the power to condemn him to death before a firing squad. Faiz was imprisoned from 1951 till 1955; passed the time teaching the Quran to his fellow prisoners - mystifying his jailers, who had been told



their charges were godless communists. He considered himself as a *Sake* - Sufi spiritual leader. He identified with prison as the 'abode of nonexistence' postulated by Sufis. In a somewhat contrary manner, he associates intoxication with closeness to God.

The poet attached great importance to his time in prison. He felt he wrote some of his most powerful work there, and considered prison cells as 'the defining spaces of the earth'. "Writing is defiance of imprisonment"; "Pain creates the energy of hope". He felt that his guards were oppressed too, 'yellow, tyrannised by hunger'. A *Prison Evening* was read: this poem rightly depicts political oppression through the imagery of a prison, and hope for freedom and a better society through that of being reunited with a loved one: "This thought keeps consoling me: though tyrants may command that lamps be smashed/ in rooms where lovers are destined to meet, they cannot snuff out the moon, so today,/nor tomorrow, no tyranny will succeed, no poison of torture make me bitter,/if just one evening in prison/ if just one moment anywhere on this earth; can be so strangely sweet".

In the 1930s Faiz Ahmed Faiz married Alys Faiz, a British woman. They had two daughters. Alys influence on Faiz's life and poetry is reputed to have been great. She sustained intense correspondence with him when he was in prison, and may have been the personal focus in the poems written there.

In 1962 Faiz was awarded the Lenin Peace Prize (the then Soviet bloc's equivalent of the Nobel Peace Prize. The military government of Pakistan (then in alliance with the USA), warned him against accepting the award. Faiz defied that warning, and when accepting the prize, made a memorable speech in favour of world peace. He was extremely popular in the Soviet Union, and very guarded in any criticism of its regime. *Graveyard of Leningrad* celebrates the Russian equivalent of Remembrance Day: here the poppies are 'on the cold slabs of stone, like drops of blood . . . stretched-out shroud of existence' After the trauma of Pakistan's 'second partition' in 1971, and the bloodshed in Bangladesh, Pakistan's first elected civilian government came to power, and Faiz was appointed its culture advisor. In that position, he created the Pakistan National Council of the Arts as well as the Lok Virsa, the Institute of Folk Heritage.

The first poem to be read was *Bol* (Speak), 'In the name of this day'. Here Faiz was a true spokesperson - for office workers, for peasants robbed and abused by feudal lords. He described a 'the carnival of suffering which is my homeland' - a sad world where "all life ebbs away like a sob unheeded". How can artists ignore concrete realities and cruelties? Faiz lamented that some artists termed writings on unpleasant realities 'propaganda', refusing to consider them art. Throughout his life, Faiz stuck to the firm conviction that political poetry is not propaganda. Beauty should be celebrated, but it should motivate the greater goal of creating a beautiful. How can one sing praises to the beauty and fragrance of the rose while ignoring entirely the careworn hands of the gardener?

*The Dawn of Freedom*: This shows Faiz's bitter disillusionment with Indian independence and Partition. He joined the British Army's propaganda department once he was convinced that Hitler and his armies allied with the Japanese presented a far graver threat to India than the British. He was one of the first to see that Independence,

the communal partition of India into two countries, was a poisoned chalice. The searing lines of 'Independence Dawn' record his disillusionment, leading to much anger and recriminations from his contemporaries in Pakistan: It was a 'false dawn' - a 'leperous brightness'. Darkness and light were rigidly separated; the 'dark weight of night' prevailed.

There was the awesome spectacle of the 'call of beauteous dawn vying with a hidden need'. Faiz was arrested several times during the reign of General Ayub Khan. When the India/Pakistan war broke out in 1965, faced a dilemma: Friends pressured him to write 'patriotic' songs; instead, he wrote *Lament for a dead soldier*: "Beauteous child, playing in the dust/It is time to come home now/Come then, it is time to come home/Priceless jewel, lost in the dust/It is time to come home now . . ." This infuriated both the nationalists and the left, and for a time he had to go into exile in Beirut, where he was a supporter of Yasser Arafat. The theme of *Lament* is reiterated in *Lullaby to a Palestinian Child*. The parents are all gone, but "If your smile may be transfigured, they'll all come back."

He was evacuated from Beirut in the face of the Israeli invasion in 1982, and returned to Pakistan where he died soon after. Just before he died, Faiz went back to his ancestral village. There, in a final act of defiance to his detractors - including writers, government officials, bureaucrats and even some erstwhile 'progressive friends', who had vacuously branded him an atheist, communist and Russian agent - he led the prayers at the local mosque.

*We Shall See*: this became the anthem of the Loyalist movement - understandably, considering its ebullient optimism: "When these high mountains/Of tyranny and oppression/turn to fluff and evaporate . . . Then the masses, people of God will rule/Who I am too/ and so are you"

*Memory* is one of the tenderest of Faiz's love poems: "Even in this desolate wilderness the whisper still in jasmine and rose . . . mirrors of you . . . bright night of love . . ." Another love poem read was *Scene* (which has been set to music); this is memorable in its lyricism: "the breast of the sky . . . like someone undoing the folds of a cloak . . . dream formed and unformed . . ." In *Stay with Me* he did acknowledge the 'other side' of love, love as comfort and destroyer - 'my slayer, my sweetheart'; "the flask of wine begins to bubble; it will not be filled" demonstrating that his two main areas of expression were not finally incompatible.

*City of Lights*: This was written in 1954, when he was in jail, dreaming of his beloved Lahore: ". . . the faded amber day . . . stain eats away/joyless muddied surge of pain/hosts of love fall back on every flank". *Blackout* uses the imagery of an air raid to make a dual expression of reconciliation with a loved one, and the future of his people; in a way the personal and political are fused: "the lamps have all gone out; he is 'surging with memory and hopes of love'; "Let this stormy sea find a shore". But he cannot be articulate until his eyes are released from blindness.

*My one true God* was the only one of Faiz's Punjabi poems to be featured this evening. God does not seem to have kept his promise that man should be his favoured creature and inheriting the earth. The poet pleads for greater justice from his Maker - with a threat.

"If this bargain doesn't suit you, I'll seek another God." The inclusion of this piece left me wondering about Faiz's other Punjabi work, and if there had been any imbalance in the presentation.

The evening ended with musical settings of Faiz's poems, sung by **Swati Natekar**, who also played accordion, accompanied by **Hanif Khan** on tabla, and a guitarist **Siddharth Singh** - a very charming feeling of East-West fusion; great audience rapport and participation; they wanted more! Apparently they are veterans of Womad.

Overall, this lecture gave a panoramic view of Faiz, illustrating his premise: What good is a verse that does not light up the world? What good a tearful eye if it does not wash away the city?

Dave Russell

## Love Poetry

Poet in the City, Kings Place, London  
February 14<sup>th</sup> 2011

A true kaleidoscope of emotion for St Valentine's Day in conjunction with the recently published *Picador Book of Love Poems*, edited by **John Stammers**. **Rebecca Wilkinson** appropriately opened the evening with a Shakespeare quotation: "The lunatic, lover, poet gives to airy nothing/a local habitation and a name". The presentation conveyed the anthology's aim of fusing past and present, idealistic and cynical. She outlined the underlying concept of the anthology: It stresses the binary concept of poem = lover. So there are paired poems, poems set in relation to each other - Burns' "My love is like a red, red rose" set against Carol Ann Duffy.

**John Stammers** opened with *Weather Report* - something of this poem's depth and complexity is an unusual starter, but it succeeded in painting a backcloth for the evening, partly because it used the motif of an El Greco painting and its possible desecration, also highlighting the egotism, absurdity and destructiveness of love: "You wear ludicrous seaside hats of self-aggrandisement." He followed with some of **Michael Donoghue's** panoramic poems - *The Present*, and *Stella*. Great image in *Geodesic Dome*: "Fractured lenses spectate on the axis of the universe", putting love into an astral perspective. In John's words, astrophysicist is fused with lover.

Second to read was **Robin Robertson**. His own *Static* is a tender evocation of unrequited love, against the background of a storm. "The storm shakes out its sheets/against the darkening window:/the glass flinches under thrown hail . . . He cannot tell her how the open night/swings like a door without her,/how he is the lock/and she is the key." Robin followed with W B Yeats's *No Second Troy*. This is an outstanding lyrical statement, from a jilted, wounded lover, expressing compassion and magnanimity towards the object of his desire: "WHY should I blame her that she filled my days/with misery . . . Why, what could she have done being what she is?/Was there another Troy for her to burn?" He described *Rain Maker* as "the closest I get to love poems". I think he belittled himself; this is a lovely piece of tender eroticism: "he unhooks her - starts to make her rain". Similarly so with *Abandonment* - self-abandonment to total love

in the context of the sea at Naxos: "that moment sudden loosening into beauty . . . the one I had abandoned was myself." Blatant phallic imagery in *Artichoke*: The nubbed leaves come away in a tease of green, thinning down to the membrane: the quick, purpled beginnings of the male. Robin then made what he called a "grotesque departure from the agenda" by reading some Scottish stories from the Celtic folk tradition. Yes: inclusion of the macabre, the dark side of love, here: 'husband's head in wooden box' indeed.

**Annie Freud** followed with *The Glass Bead Time*. *The Best Man that Ever Was* set the bleak scene of an unhappy home: "It was torment in my family home . . . aunts threatening suicide." She included Pablo Neruda's *Lone Gentleman*. This must be one of the world's most universal love poems, embracing as it does all ages, orientations - and a variety of species too: 'throbbing sexual oysters'.

**Ian Duhig**, like Robin Robertson, also drew on the Celtic tradition, with *The Badly Loved*, and *Silken Bed*, translation of an Irish poem by Nuala Ni Dhomnaill, inspired by the *Song of Solomon*, showing relish for Irish phraseology, comparing the moon to a slice of half-boiled potato, and the sun to the bottom of a lake. Some reflections on the incompetence of the English at the art of seduction, and some interesting historical perspective focused on the English Orthodox Church in *Archbishop Mar Jacobus Rembemers*. This was the most complex poem of the evening, seeming to deal with an unrequited gay love relationship between two musicians: "We played duets but kissed only once./At last he denounced me as a fraud/and schismatic. I said he played the spinet like a lobster trying to escape its pot -/after that, my overtures were useless." Some affection remains: For all his violence and absurdity/I warm to think of him now". The poem makes weird time shifts between ancient/medieval antiquity and the present day - Venice being a home to the inventor of submarine photography? The Archbishop seems to be a flamboyant, bizarre character - panther-skinned gondola and all. Interesting comment about 'godless Middlesex'. Surely Venice was worldly and corrupt enough, or was he talking about aesthetics?

Ian also did a 'rewrite' of the traditional song *The Trees They Do Grow High* ("My bonny boy is young but a-growing") where the 'hero' comes to his death through heroin - apparently he was banned from performing this in pubs. Ian counterpointed this provocative number with Robert Frost's *Silken Tent*.

**Paul Farley** stressed the 'other side' of love by facing the areas of fetishism and sado-masochism - gruesome portrayal of an ex-wife having an affair with Tom Waites, and wanting 'to be creamed'. He also read *Treacle*, quoting the Tate & Lyall caption: "Out of the strong came sweetness". The 'love on the dole' factor was represented with *Living in Sin*, and the theme of tattooing in *Liverpool* (originally written for radio), valuing the 'sacred heart' symbol on the arms of sailors.

**Lorraine Mariner** started with one of E E Cummings's most sensitive poems: *Somewhere I have never travelled* - again, some of the tenderest sentiments ever articulated: "you open me petal by petal . . . nothing equals the power of your intense fragility". Again a touch of contemporaneity with *Sister Gone Speed Dating*. *Say I Forgot* is a great favourite among Lorraine Mariner's

readers: it is deeply compassionate about a fascination with someone wearing an 'outdoor pursuit mac' (associated with molesters), and an urge to reciprocate with the same attire. *Second Wives* related to Daphne, Ted Hughes's second wife. Lorraine concluded with a charming piece on an obsession with a bird-watcher: as she remarked, 90% of bird species are monogamous - yearning for an ideal situation where glamour (in a rugged sweater) is combined with solid fidelity.

**Clive James** said he wished he had written about love better, and placed emphasis on the greats, including Andrew Marvell's *To His Coy Mistress* and *A Definition of Love*. Completion of the spectrum with gay love in the form of W H Auden's *Lay Your Sleeping Head, My Love* - in memory of his encounter with a truck driver. Louis MacNeice's *Meeting Point* was a highly appropriate inclusion, showing the power of love to suspend time and (apparent) reality. To show that love knows no bounds, and can embrace absurdity, Clive recounted the experience of an 82-year-old Goethe, who fell in love with Ulrike von Levetzow, proposed marriage, was rejected and exposed himself to ridicule - and read his own poem *Spectre of the Rose*, where the poet said "this rose is also me". He wanted to celebrate the power of photosynthesis in generating the rose, and remarked that thorns are meant to protect a rose's frailty. The concluding line demarcates the balance of feeling between the two parties: "Perfect too late for me, too soon for you". *The Buzz* is tenderly sensitive, showing the endurance of essentially youthful loving feelings into old age: with a major qualifier: "But there is nothing young love fails to see/Except the future." Apparently he was inspired to write this while in hospital.

A fine blend of the touchingly familiar with the new and disturbing - and with an excellent backcloth of slides. It is very salutary for cynicism and idealism to be put face to face, as with this anthology.

Dave Russell

## A B Normal

### Frank Bangay and the Topsy Turvy Band

Frank continues to blend poetry and music - the latter getting more imaginative with each successive album. This is another excellent piece of collaboration within the Life and Living setup, recorded at Mick Hobbs's Studio 9. Highly imaginative artwork for the cover: superb photography by Martin Harrison of twigs and foliage against a leaden sky; excellent graphic spiders by Andrea Massey and Martha Colburn. Musicians are Frank (vocals; some slide guitar & harmonica); Silvana Maimone (backing vocal); Tunde Busari (guitar); Mick Hobbs, Norman Holmes and Howard Jacques (bass, drums, melodica, keyboard, percussion and natural sound effects). Apart from *Something Gone Wrong* by Kevin Coyne and Bob Ward, this collection consists of original material.

The opener, *a normal man* pokes fun at crass stereotypes of normality. The satire is strengthened by the sound of Frank's mocking laughter, which is reiterated in some of the other tracks. Prejudicial tags are thrown back at their utterers: "How does it feel to be mental?". Sensitive up-tempo reggae backing, with good sounds on acoustic guitar and melodica.

*Something gone wrong* is another of Frank's

highly empathetic covers of Kevin Coyne. Frank, who had one of the last interviews with Coyne, has a close attunement with his work. The influence of Kevin's backing tracks is very apparent in this selection.

*Walking through a landscape* has a sense of spirituality - "gateway to a better world". Very tasty background melody on the melodic and keyboards; Frank's slide guitar makes some interesting jagged counterpoints here.

*Big frank and the little spyder* is the track I find most imaginative. It opens with a highly exploratory extended atonal instrumental - great new dimension to Frank's recordings. I wonder if the theme had been inspired by The Who's (Pete Townshend's) *Boris the Spider*? Frank's laughter is applied to great effect here. One wonder whether the spider is ultimately benign; the poet is 'cursing when the flies return'.

*Special friend* has an imaginative free-form jazz backing. Frank proclaims his sense of identification with Rupert the Bear.

*Secret garden* is an expression of Frank's interest in Botany, and care for the environment. He values those areas of urban so-called 'decay' where the weeds can proclaim their resilience and validity - both 'tame' and 'wild' gardens are respected.

*Waterloo at night* is a panoramic vision embracing the atmosphere of the station, the sound of the trains, and the plight of people sleeping rough. It moves at a fast 16/4 tempo in emulation of a fast train, and takes the listener on a guided tour of industrial waste lands and urban renovation, listing all the stations; the Isle of Sheppey is 'a treat for the urban mind's soul'. Frank pictures his journey as a sort of pilgrimage, approaching a sort of Jerusalem.

*This beautiful nature* is a further extension of the theme introduced in *secret garden*. Much of it has been inspired by Frank's long acquaintance with Homerton BR station. There is a panoramic journey through the seasons, relating time cycles to growth cycles. He celebrates buddleia sprouting through cracks in brickwork; buddleia entered the popular consciousness because it blossomed in the long-neglected 'bomb-sites' from World War 2. Next comes highly honoured ragwort: "volcanic masses of Peru/amidst the cinders." Trees, including 'good old London plane trees' are beacons of hope, rising above the grime and pollution so prevalent at ground level. Plants and humans have a deep bond, as 'fellow strugglers, fellow seekers'; humans will 'burst into flower'. The musical backing is highly sensitive and varied, starting with a delicate, ambient backing of subdued organ and Silvana Maimone's haunting voice. It goes into an insistent drum rhythm, evoking a slow train, then back to free form, and finally with a guitar rhythm. I found the fade-out instrumental at the end was far too long, and something of an anti-climax after the excellence which had preceded it. With these recent recordings, Frank is getting much more fluid and textured with his vocals.

There is one bonus track, not listed. It is about a broken-down wheelbarrow, which is rusting and almost museum-worthy. It is constantly filled with nettles and weeds, but 'had a lucky break' - was 'restored to life' by getting filled with compost. The poem draws an analogy with people who feel that they are on the scrap-heap and 'a lucky break comes up'. Good blues backing with the accent on Tunde Busari's guitar and Frank's harmonica.

This is another instance where I would have appreciated having the lyric texts in the inlay; nevertheless, the words come out bold and clear.

Dave Russell

## In Memory of Grace - The Children

This double album took two years to produce. The title is, rightly, ambiguous. It could be dedicated to an individual called Grace, whose gravestone photograph appears in the inlay, or it could refer to the State of Grace. In the absence of specific reference to an individual in cover and lyric booklet, I would favour the latter interpretation. It is certainly consistent with the collection's dominant religious theme.

True to John's and Armored's backgrounds, *In Memory of Grace* is, par excellence, a literary album. I had to follow the printed text of the booklet to keep up with the complexity of the lyrics. Never having been much drawn to Christianity, I cannot wholly identify with the songs' messages. However, John and Armored have been impeccably thorough in studying the background. There are parts of the Bible which should definitely be appreciated as mythology and poetry.

I found some sense of discrepancy between the depth of the lyrics and the music, which has something of an 'easy listening' quality. There are pretty, catchy melodies - a lot of calypso influence and - dare I say - echoes of Buddy Holly and the Crickets. The main emphasis is on John's guitar and harmonica, and Armored's bass, but there is also some very tasty electric guitar, flute, clarinet and soprano sax.

### Volume 1

**Chapter 1:** *Celebrate*, the opener, echoes the refrain of *Joshua Fit the Battle of Jericho*. But it does not fall into blind orthodoxy: "We'll be walking with the wounded/when the walls come tumbling . . ." Earlier there is an apocalyptic vision of saints coming out of the flames. Imaginative key change.

And *Dust Be Raised* - some sensitive 'virtual Hammond organ' 'Virtual Hammond', played from an Apple Mac computer (the other keyboard tracks are on an old 80s synth (Roland JX-8P)).

*See Me in the Good Place* a bit reminiscent of Neil Young's *Heart of Gold*; the lyric cleverly blends the mundane and the heavenly. The humdrum background of a bedsit in the vicinity of King's Cross can be spiritually (and perhaps sensually) transcended: "Kiss my lips and show your wings off/In this land we're kings and queens of . . ."; materialism is transcended: "Take that gold band off your finger,/Melt it down for the bells of heaven . . .".

*Again* has a fairly obvious 'born again' message, while *Turn* is a fairly obvious statement of happiness. *Waters of Sleep* has a great vocal performance from Armored; her self-assurance as a veteran jazz and spiritual singer positively radiates from this track.  $\frac{3}{4}$  time highly appropriate; nice percussion effects. *Dreaming Hill* has a strong melody, and also a jarring note: the journey towards it is along a heavily brambled path; the travellers are beset with robbers; the blissful destination is not so blissful after all; it is 'none too green'; it is Calvary. The 'dark side' of grace is emphasized: "there were laughter, blood and nails". There is even a suggestion of a 'dark side of the Resurrection: "dead men walked from open graves".

One extra track, *Rooks and Planes*, is listed as rounding off Chapter I, but was not to be heard on the CD. I would be most interested to hear it. John explains that this track: ". . . is about 20

seconds of ambient recording between Dreaming Hill and Isaac. Likewise *Ash and Oak* on Disc 2.

**Chapter 2:** *Isaac* deals with the Biblical legend of Abraham and Isaac; here Isaac's life is spared. In John's words: "We follow the Bible version in Isaac - he isn't killed in the original story".

Good rhythmic mid-tempo with powerful electric guitar intro by Isaac Lee-Kronick. The lyric follows some of the structure of *Hard Rain's A-Gonna Fall*.

*Second Thoughts* - a plea to reject them - Judas and Thomas are held up as examples not to follow. 'That soul rebel yell' - excellent cross-cultural phrase. Musically good;  $\frac{3}{4}$  time appropriate; great slide guitar work.

*Judith and Holofernes* is by far the strongest track in the collection. It is a well-written verse version of the Biblical legend, but with the characters of the participants fully developed: Judith, Holofernes himself, and Holofernes's captain Alchior. It is fully dramatized with monologue speeches. The song moves at a moody, slow tempo in perfect sync with the full range of Armored's voice, the whole performance hugely enhanced by Alex Ward's clarinet.

*Something Stronger*: a fairly literal plea for hope and optimism in the face of despair, invoking Christ's 'Lama sabachthani' (My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?) - a despair which was transcended. This number has a definite 'soul music' feel: nice backing track, with blend of synthesizer and harmonica; very mellow - I initially mistook it for a flute.

*Ghost Dancing*: this phrase is now embedded in the popular consciousness as associated with Native Americans. The opening quote, which John discovered in *Bury My Heart at Wounded Knee*, is in Sioux. There seems to be intentional cross-cultural reference here: '. . . Sambas, polkas, rockers, quadrilles' - very lively.

*Made of Love* is quite a literal, straightforward hymn; it has a lightweight charm. Some calypso feeling, some resonance of Buddy Holly's *Love is Strange*.

*Little Children*: rallying cry to struggle against adversity, holding out the hope of a saviour. Some raunchy slide guitar here.

### Volume 2

**Chapter 3** A very powerful 'dark' opener here in *World Without Mercy*. The world is unspeakably brutal, in a sense cannibalistic; people die when they've hardly been born. Destructive fire predated the formation of the earth's crust: "the wheel of flame is rolling in reverse" - even a suggestion of Christ's body being cremated!

*No Name*: a hymn of self-abasement, using the catchphrases 'green and pleasant land' and 'spirit in the sky; good sound from the cymbals. *Fashion a Prayer*: lyrically this is the most complete expression I have read of the multi-faceted nature of prayer. This is the first time I have ever heard of a prayer being compared to a missile - to be thrown from a sling or fired from a gun - and with a flame inside! I always used to think of prayers as supplicatory; here they are given an aggressive role. But one of these prayer-missiles (a human artefact) returns, with a mind of its own, and crucial advice: it is futile to send them heavenwards; they ought to be sent downwards, to the area of true need, "Where the tormented yell". Here I feel that the music detracts from the depth of the message. It savours of a carefree summer holiday with the strains of *Guantanamera* droning happily in the

background; however, some nice flute backing here.

*Heart of Flesh* is a protest against tyrannical callousness, the 'heart of stone'. Initially, pessimism seems to rule here: "And each one in the end will stand alone" - both warm and cold, both good and bad. There can be no more comfort in the familiar: "Back in vain we look for the way we've known", and there is doubt as to whether one has 'enough blood to atone'! But then, in the last stanza, "Nobody goes to heaven on their own". Some extremely striking images here: "The kings are drinking to hell's chaperone/While prophets lie unburied in the square . . ."; "Life is running out around the throne,/Death is riding out on the pale nightmare." Musically, after the blandness of its predecessor, it restores raunchy rhythm; excellent slide guitar and percussion.

*Greatest Wonder*: very simplistic by comparison; exhortation to 'look into the depth of another being', and recognize love and wonder in ones immediate vicinity to sensitive accompaniment of 'virtual' organ.

*Grow Strong* is, ecologically, supremely sound: one needs to slow down to gain durability and resilience. But once again, that bland 'summer holiday' sound. *Heaven Knows* is a simple but effective call for optimistic exertion to be mutually supportive; one interesting paradox - 'Calling out inside like flame'; fine opening with Hayereyah's harmonica.

*Coming True*: a paean to love at all levels. Music is love/soul essence. Some emphasis on contraries in the second stanza: falling and rising, bowing and standing, the polarities of mighty oaks and tiny acorns, rose flowers and thorn bushes. Optimism finally prevails: "And one day life will conquer death". Nice birdsong sound as opener; jazzy instrumental break.

*Love and Trust* is the second most powerful, and the most didactic, song in this collection. It looks square in the face of the contrary - destructive chaos, and gives a rallying call. Strong delivery, imaginative chord and tempo changes.

Quite a pretty rendition of William Blake's *The Tyger*, but I would have preferred their excellent version of *The Little Black Boy*. Perhaps this will surface on their next album?

*Gone for Good* is straightforwardly moralistic; effective again - a song to sustain the struggle along life's long road. "Shine your light to your long home/Till the end makes its inroad." Strong vocal performance by Armored here.

The journey continues with *Time for You*. Adversity is honestly expressed: "Our glories are stripped from us; They go from dust to dust" . . . "that poison dart's in there hurtin'. God knows that time's no cure." Vocally this is very effective, with Armored and John doing alternating couplets, adding variety to the album's texture..

*Out Where the Pines Grow* is a conflation of the imagery of Nativity and Crucifixion - very rarely combined within one song: the green of Galilee is counterpointed against the black of Calvary. In John's words: "The imagery of the verses . . . is strictly of the Gospel episode, popular with painters, called 'the Flight into Egypt', rather than the Nativity itself."

*This Life's the One*: light, jaunty closing number. Raunchy mid-tempo rhythm with some great jaw harp from Hayereyah, who also does all the harmonica parts on the album, apart from one bit by John on *Little Children*.

This double set reinforces an opinion I have held for some time. One can often find greater literary substance inside a CD inlay than on the straight printed page. There is considerable variation in verbal/lyric depth within this selection. I have gone into detail with the numbers which demanded I read the text. The others can simply be listened to. By literary standards they could perhaps be described as clichéd, but this was probably John and Armored's intention. There's a huge amount of gospel music which has deeply moved me without my closely scrutinizing the lyrics.

**Dave Russell**

**Modern Classics:**

**Dancing in the Sunlight**  
by Bernard Kops

**This Room in the Sunlight**  
Collected Poems by Bernard Kops

David Paul Publishing, London, 2010, £9.99p.,  
Paperback, 132pp., ISBN 9780954848262

AMONG the greatest events of British literature this decade is the publication of the collected poems of Bernard Kops, the doyen of contemporary European verse.

His career began close to seven decades ago when he became the bard singing of the ruthless exploitation and callous neglect endured by the now bygone Jewish immigrant communities of London's East End -- their old men huddled around the wireless (his words) weeping tears of pride at weather forecasts from Radio Moscow. He has gone far beyond that.

Queen Elizabeth last year rewarded him, at the advice of Gordon Brown, then her Prime Minister, with a Civil List Pension in recognition of his service to literature. This is a very rare honour that he now shares with Lord Byron and William Wordsworth. Probably the only member of the British poetry-reading public still doggedly unaware that Kops has taken his rightful place among these literary giants is Kops himself.

Kops (b. 1926) is a top British dramatist, his plays performed worldwide for decades. He has written more than 40 plays, nine novels and two autobiographies. He runs a master-class for playwrights. But poetry remains for him, as he put it, the quintessence of everything in literature.

His plays have won many prizes and they have been performed in many translations. One of his recent classics, *The Dreams of Anne Frank* (1992), has been performed in Hungary, and it is now being translated into Czech to confront the rise of anti-Semitism sweeping Eastern Europe. The play is about the miracle of survival through the Holocaust that claimed Kops' large extended family in Amsterdam. Anne Frank's *Fragments from Nowhere*, a hugely powerful poem in the new collection, is a prayer for peace.

He is extraordinarily prolific. A sense of humour almost never deserts him. Here is how he says he experiences creativity:

Poems are like grandchildren.  
You should never bribe or persuade them  
to visit you.  
...But wait until they enter and overwhelm  
and delight you.

Kops is my teacher and my close friend. He is a spellbinding public speaker whose still frequent performances are often remembered in small detail by his audiences for years after such events. He is easily approachable, with informal manners radiating the warmth of a secure early childhood when he was spoilt by the love of his six elder sisters. But his face betrays the suffering endured by him as well as his extended family.

This is Kops' eighth collection of verse. The poems are mostly deceptively simple, insightful, dark-and-joyful and poignant. Many are already classics, having assumed lives of their own. The book includes more than 40 hitherto unpublished pieces among the old favourites describing the desperation of destitute communities dependent for survival on soup kitchens and pawnbrokers.

They also deal with Kops' own, quarter-century struggle with drug addiction and an attempted suicide. Familiar literary figures crop up in the work, friends and idols like the First World War poet Isaac Rosenberg, another Jewish master from the East End of London, as well as W. H. Auden, Allen Ginsberg and the recently deceased Adrian Mitchell. The collection addresses death much too much for my comfort.

Kops' poetry combining touching simplicity with naked passion stems from an 18th century English literary tradition revived in the 20th century by Rosenberg. The poems project great empathy and deep emotional commitment, their power driven by a desperate, unconcealed awareness of the vulnerability of all living things.

The new collection contains something very Jewish but also very rare in Western literature -- a deeply felt recurring declaration of passionate, lifelong matrimonial love. The poet's muse, wife, lover, friend, editor, mentor and manager and the mother of his four children is Erica, a diminutive woman of enormous intensity, the sort of matriarch you might think Rachel of the *Bible* might have become if she had been granted a longer life. The collection is dedicated to her. This is how Kops describes her in a train ride:

Beside me is a lovely girl  
with long dark hair.  
The sun strikes the amber of her dreaming eyes  
where I am trapped like a prehistoric fly.  
She smiles.  
I must get to know her.  
She is my wife.

East London as Kops knew it no longer exists. The dockside Jewish communities once sheltering there from the Holocaust have moved on to the prosperous North-West London suburbs of Golders Green and Hampstead. Their place has been taken by more recent immigrant communities from South Asia, introducing to it their very differently exuberant culture. But East London has not

forgotten Kops.

The collection opens with the poem *Whitechapel Library*, Aldgate East paying homage to that institution, once known as the university of the poor, that the poet used to attend as an ill-clad, hungry child feasting on literature. Today, lines of that poem grace the walls of the library, which now serves a splendid modern museum.

On a recent visit to the museum for a performance of a Kops play -- *Whitechapel Dreams* (2008), about an Asian teenager seeking refuge from her family at the library -- I watched young girls and stern matrons gaze at Kops fondly when they thought he did not notice. A bartender brought me free drinks when he became aware that I was in the poet's company.

Kops is a well known figure of the community. He stages plays there and holds poetry readings, lectures and theatrical workshops. The local press reports on his views and activities. Many residents warmly recognize him on streets and in restaurants.

Kops left school at 13 during the Blitz. He tried acting and the second-hand book trade, drifted through the bohemian world of Soho and won sudden, unexpected fame with his East End play *The Hamlet of Stepney Green* (1957).

That was drama steeped in the Yiddish theatrical tradition. It pioneered Britain's "New Wave" of "kitchen-sink" drama that was to sweep away a lot of entrenched theatrical conventions. He was hailed for it by the critics of the day as a significant trendsetter. But several of his subsequent plays were slaughtered by the press. A theatre performing his play *Ezra* (1981) about the anti-Semite American poet Ezra Pound was firebombed. Most of his life he was dodged by financial worries.

*This Room in the Sunlight* -- the final poem in the collection -- sings the joy of the simple, greatest pleasures of love, creativity and sharing. Kops' ability to issue such a book after the bleak decades of drug-induced breakdowns praises the steadfast, unflinching support of a strong and devoted wife.

## Thomas Land

### The Coming of The Rains by Mala Mason

£5.00, published by Survivors' Press  
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I went back to lay my childhood.  
But standing in the garden of my first home  
I could find none - only  
The tranquillity of autumn air.  
The house was smaller than I remembered,  
Not dark-pervaded or menacing,  
Just ordinary and smiling in the sun.  
*Survivor*

Like the rising arpeggios of birdsong after a storm, the lovely poetry of Mala Mason is certain to win the hearts and minds of all who have also survived hardship and trauma in their day-to-day existence, for make no mistake about it, Mala really is a true survivor, and her well-addressed poetry is a creditable tribute to that

purposeful achievement. **Survivors' Press**, you see, is the imprint of **Survivors' Poetry**, a unique literary and mental health charity promoting the writings of survivors of mental distress: and though Mala had successfully pursued a fulfilling career in the Civil Service, over a number of years (prior to retirement), she had not only suffered the severe effects of Neurofibromatosis, but had later been constantly haunted by tragic circumstances of earlier childhood and adolescent days:

If I had the courage to take off all my masks  
I would be more radiant  
than a thousand dawns rising,  
more free than the wind  
and love, would be my metaphor

#### ***Masks***

Mala had grown up in a largely Jewish community, and had parents who seem to have been quite indifferent to her personal needs - and indeed, to those of each other, so that real family affection was seldom shared. Mala was only 15 years of age when her mother was taken ill (whole on holiday) and soon afterwards died of Cancer:

When I was fifteen we went to Shanklin, on the  
Isle of Wight. My mother was ill there.  
Maybe that's why she remembered  
- Bought my holiday treat.

#### ***The Promise***

There had been a brief instance of togetherness with her mother, during that holiday period, and instance that was all too fleeting, but which Mala was able to retain as a treasured memory:

I find myself on childhood's shores  
- Shanklin Pier, watching the swish and slap of  
Against its edge. My mother and I breathing in  
Clissold Park roses - A rare time of peace together.

#### ***On the Shores of Her Passing***

There are also poems about her father, a man whose moods fluctuated to such a degree that Mala was never able to discover any warmth or closeness in his relationship towards her; and in her early teenage years she had come to resent his long unreasonable protracted silences:

On his shadow side were his rages  
which he flew into without warning,  
then sulked for weeks afterwards.  
I hated his silences more.

#### ***The Janus Man***

Her father, too, had died when Mala was quite young, which had also contributed greatly to agonies of the mind in not having been able expressed, especially as Mala has found grounds in her own later life for recognising certain qualities in her father that she felt she should have been able to previously determine. Childhood happiness was, however to be briefly found when occasionally visiting her uncle, who was a keen gardener:

To enter, I slipped the latch of my memory,  
and stepped into a magic world  
that was my uncle's garden.

#### ***In My Uncle's Garden***

Besides pronounced family discord, Mala had to contend with the persistent traumatic effects of Neurofibromatosis, a progressively disfiguring affliction:

Once I thought someone put a spell on me  
and made me a member of the Elephant tribe.  
A spell that tangled up my neural paths,  
Lost my connections - disfigured and disabled me.

#### ***Elephant Tribe***

In the above quoted poem, Mala was, of course, referring also to John Merric, the so-called 'Elephant Man'.

It is not surprising that such vicissitudes would eventually ring about a serious deterioration in Mala's mental health; but how wonderfully cheering that there were those on hand who would help to inspire that remarkable new light of hope, so brightly touched upon in a number of her poems:

Each night you dream of healing.  
Fly then towards yourself in the far off future,  
where all dreams are healed and you  
are clothed with the sky of peace.

#### ***Dream Maker***

There are so many heart-warming aspects to Mala's assertive writings, not least several poems concerning visits to the homes of friends in India; and even now, I really don't consider that I have done sufficient justice to her fine work, in my well-intentioned appraisal. The task of selling one's published collection is ever an onerous one. I sincerely hope, therefore, that there are **Reachers** out there who will be supportive in their decision to purchase this lovely collection.

**Bernard M. Jackson**

First published in *Reach Poetry* by Indigo Dreams

[www.indigodreams.co.uk](http://www.indigodreams.co.uk)



Available from:

[http://www.survivorspoetry.com/SP\\_Shop/](http://www.survivorspoetry.com/SP_Shop/)  
or send a cheque for £7.00 (£5.00+£2.00 P+P) to Survivors' Poetry, Studio 11 Bickerton House, 25-27 Bickerton Road, Londn N19 5JT.

Standard Midland  
by Roy Fisher

Bloodaxe Books 2010  
ISBN 978-1-85224-870-3; #7.95

This is a sequel to Bloodaxe's major retrospective on Fisher, *The Long and the Short of It: Poems 1955-2005*. It contains poems written subsequently to that collection, and his texts for the artist Roland King's *Tabernacle*. *Standard Midland* has an excellent Ivor Hitchens painting of autumnal vegetation on the front cover. The title refers to Fisher's 'received idiom'. He is very deeply rooted in the Midlands and believes in a Midlands English (just as many years ago there was some movement for Northern Standard, distinct from Received Standard).

The collection places emphasis on decay, decomposition and death, seen in the perspective of organic mutability. The opener, *The Afterlife*, celebrates Malagasy burial rituals. He is attuned to the way they take inspiration from excavatable body parts. It seems that the ancient Britons had a similar attitude. There seems to be a transference from a prehistoric burial location in his own locality, to Madagascar.

*On Spare Land* is an example of Fisher's preoccupation with urban waste grounds, where nature reasserts its resilience. In *Somewhere along the Pool*, the initial quotation from Ivor Hitchens almost crystallizes Fisher's philosophy: "I like my long shapes, so I can 'move', so that one part reacts against, while furthering the purpose of, the other." The principle of dynamic contrariety radiates throughout Fisher's work. *On the Wellingtonias at Pilleth* is a geographical and historical panorama. In the first stanza I sense an echo of the Anglo-Saxon *Seafarer*, though it goes into the surreal with 'beings of what seemed flesh'. Then there is a switch from canoeing to motoring, and the sight of a corroding contemporary metal sculpture, counterpointed against three horses, who coagulate into one and wait to rise to heaven - nature triumphs again? Another shift from the 'High Great Chamber' of the heavens to, the roof of a church the holy Church and Well of St Mary's, Pilleth (near Knighton, Salop) - where sacred relic-bones are displayed (shades of *The Afterlife*!) Another possible shift to *The Tabernacle* in next stanza's 'marble counters in the pomp of the market. Utterly surreal image of a masque in an aquarium tank, with masque attire brushing against sharks. Handel Broadbent, invoked next, was the Minister of Alma Park United Methodist Church, Levenshulme, in the late 1940s. The Wellingtonia is a giant redwood tree, exceeding in size many a statue. Bryn Glas (Welsh for grey or blue hill) was the scene of a great victory against the English on the part of the Welsh rebels under Owen Glendower. The village of Pilleth stands on that site. There is a blending here of war and holiness, with the mention of hundreds of corpses, under the earth, their 'seepage driven down the rain/out of hundreds of corpses . . .' water has dual power: it both sustains life and carries off detritus

Interesting to hear that he lost a 40-year-old son, and that he valued the areas of silence in Roy Eldridge's trumpet playing.

At many points, the reader of Roy Fisher has to consult reference material, which is a very good thing. This was certainly so for me with *Jumping the Gun*, viz:

'Circle of Fifths': In music theory, the **circle of fifths** (or circle of fourths) shows the relationships among the twelve tones of the chromatic scale, their corresponding key signatures, and the associated major and minor keys. More specifically, it is a geometrical representation of relationships among the 12 pitch classes of the chromatic scale in pitch class space. Since the term 'fifth' defines an interval or mathematical ratio which is the closest and most consonant non-octave interval, then the circle of fifths is a circle of closely related pitches or key tonalities. Musicians and composers use the circle of fifths to understand and describe those relationships. The circle's design is helpful in composing and harmonizing melodies, building chords, and moving to different keys within a composition. (Wikipedia)

The poem challenges the attitude of aesthetic polarisation of Vivaldi's 'sublimity' and the 'banality' of banjo chords by underlining their common denominator.

The theme of *Impurities* is the ethically ambiguous nature of washing. There seems to be an initial reference to the use of scrapers at Roman baths, punctuated by a twinge of guilty conscience (*Always known I lied, whether I spoke or not*). There is then a switch to the hangman washing a corpse, after the last remnant of living breath has been elicited. Then on to the terminal ward in the hospital, and with decomposition (dead or alive) in progress, including an analogy between breathed air and water ('an unused galvanized bucket'), then on to life support tubes. There is an analogy between breath air and water (via 'an unused galvanised bucket')

*Sanctuary*: Reflections on the balance of nature - a fox makes its intrusion and departure, and a pheasant preens itself on the site of a bumble-bees' nest, which has been moved on by 'the season'. In *Syntax*, a cat breaks a stalk of kale, and the 'green juice gleams'.

*Plot* celebrates the organic growth of vegetables. Interesting choice of word with Carminative: inducing the expulsion of gas from the stomach and intestines.

*The Skyline in the Wall Mirror* fuses Fisher's aestheticism with his understanding of matter. He can appreciate the visual aesthetic quality of the pasture 'as good as lamp-black' but assert that ". . . the right not to know what it's made of/revives". Ignorance is often bliss as far as landscape spectacles are concerned. The recognition of clinker cinders and slag detracts from the impression. It concludes: "I always/had cinders ready. I have ashes" suggests that the cinders have been trampled, powdered into ashes; the illusion has been destroyed.

*Dancing Neanderthal* speculates on the possible superiority of the Neanderthals. They may have been better than *homo sapiens* at strengthening their lives through prohibitions, and more aware in contemplating extinction.

*At Brough-on-Noe* is a cameo of delightful optical illusion. The place in question is a hamlet in Derbyshire, site of a Roman fort. It is 'no more than a road junction' but 'feels like a village'. It generates the impression of a multitude of watercourses, roads and paths. It feels as though it has in some way been dislocated: '. . . mounted on a wandering confluence/and twisted to fit. The 'misalignment' has some refreshing, regenerative power; the related buildings appear 'newly created'. The overall entity is utterly elusive and self-contradictory: "It moves/and stays put. There's/no single place to be/at Brough."

With *Adjectives*, I felt that the significance of Basil Bunting's "adjectives drain nouns" could have been explored in much greater depth: Fisher has this in him.



*Shocking Pink* - thought-provoking opening: 'a griststone moor conserved/with care to be disquieting'. He obviously prefers the less 'conserved' quality of the compost heap. A bit of urban detritus in the form of an abandoned headboard. Does the conclusion express an attitude of 'compromise' on Fisher's part? 'No hope of hiding it/from visitors from town. No point any longer/in making them sleep in horse blankets'. Not many people could face the totality in living with total nature conservancy; the number of 'stone age village' dwellers is quite small.

Some lighter pieces follow. *Long Ago in a Town in the Provinces*: yes, wholesome people often are boring. *Travel* - a bit of whimsical time-warp brew: taxi excursions to public hangings; good bit of ironic bathos: '. . . Too schematic . . . too formulaic'. *Log* - similar approach to log-carving. *Of the Qualities: Petulant* - people should beware of impulsive value judgements; *Importunate*: the banal, the intrusive can be so benign and comforting; *Definitive*: no-one could dispute his evaluation of Louis Armstrong's trumpet playing.

The *Tabernacle* is a seven-drawer cabinet designed to celebrate seven generations of printing in the King family, with historical text gleaned from family archives and poetry for each generation specially written by Fisher: *Hole, Horse and Hellbox* are the accompanying poems. *Hole* begins with as parody of a Biblical genealogy, from a new 'Book of Kings' (a play on the name of the subject, Ronald King, the 'artist, printer and publisher' referred to at the end of the section). The three sections that follow make a poetic evocation of old letterpress typesetting: the exquisite sense of order seeing the letters tightly secured in the frame; the sense of malignant mischief conveyed by those letters when in jumbled chaos. Fisher then jumps to an analogy between the printer's workshop and the environment, which could do with a sympathetic compositor: "Go looking./Through countryside shaken out clean,/and everywhere fortunes falling out of it" - cf the emptied letter tray. There is a strong recommendation that 'Gentlefolk' should follow the example of the printer's wisdom.

*Horse*: 4 - the sense of a secure dynasty, related to the power of the printed word. But the progress of this dynasty is not uni-directional: 'the mayoral robes passing from father to son and back again' . . . 'All the contracts of commerce reborn/and steadied, as the empire feels the current'. Yet it is a rigid authoritarian dynasty: "everybody/reads print be force of law. Deviate,/develop - hardly. 5: an analogy between a compositor having an accident with a badly-secured frame and larger-scale disasters - in the form of rocket attacks: 'human projectile, off balance . . . thrashing through London as if it were America.' The power of printed instructions can assume cosmic proportions: 'hard enough to send his genes/skidding halfway across the planet and back.' The second stanza of 5 suggests that one key person in the dynasty came to an exceedingly bad end. There is a suggestion that he battered himself to death. I have to ponder on the full significance of 'jailbait story'. 'Jailbait' is slang for a person who is younger than the legal age of consent for sexual activity, but physically mature enough to be taken for an adult. (Wikipedia). Was this a suicide due to the failure of a publishing venture? Was there a failed attempt at a bit of best-selling scandal and sleaze? 6 seems to refer to the global reverberations of a disaster within the printing dynasty "Over the curve of the planet and/out of earshot,/where the bang of the press/and the slug of the till never come.'

*Hellbox* seems to be some sort of 'retrospective' on the printing dynasty, with its reference to 'magnetic/

attractions to sleeping books'. This ties in with my awareness that so many letterpress printers have now vanished; only a small core of dedicated stalwarts are determined to keep the craft alive. *Peeling* reflects interestingly on automatic writing; I appreciate the idea of 'a decent sidelong curiosity'. Indeed, random ramblings through *The Times* with a pin can be highly illuminating.

*A Masque of Resistances: Dancing in Chains* suggests a magnificent gesture of independent spirit on the part of a slave, in the context of 'Slaves' Games' - gladiatorial conflicts. At the end of the poem there is a mysterious sense of suspension: 'looking out agreeably/unhindered, bitten away with action so far'. Does this refer to a transient state of happiness, which might be truncated by death in combat?

*The Run to Brough*: interesting device of 'animating' features of the landscape: ". . . the road unhitches itself"; 'a disheveled basin of land'; 'villages sealed out of sight'; 'mineral village . . . clambering over itself up the hillsides. For Fisher, Brough has multiple significance as the destination and focus of the various motions portrayed in the poem. One 'lead' that I gleaned is that Brough (again a former Roman site) stands on the boundary between the Midlands and the North of England, and could therefore be crucial to Fisher's sense of his Midland identity.

*Stops and Stations*: Nocturnal 'bird's eye' view of village landscape from the vantage point of a 'vacant institution', a derelict hospital building, soon to be refurbished. This poem is an exceptionally poignant portrayal of urban decay and renewal: "Goes every so often into commerce until commerce fails every time." 'Sunny splendor' has recently visited the derelict room: ". . . the cartons and packing cases/maintain an oppressive inertia bordering on menace' over this dark, portentous period pending normal service being resumed.

Nearby there is a cottage without a back wall - somewhere in a more lasting state of dereliction. "Can it be nature's way"": is nature rightfully taking its vengeance against having been ravaged. Exceptional portrayal of a derelict building: 'A two-storey wagon-tilt of canvas bellying and sucking.' There is a suggestion that the cottage is being squatted in: 'By day, cooking and washing on the bare earth.' There is a concluding reference to fireworks across the street - a circular return to the opening theme of darkness. Only one of the cottage's bedrooms has a window.

*Rattle a Cart* certainly leaves a huge amount to the imagination. There could be a stagecoach journey in progress - transporting a judge? The horse could have broken loose, or there could be a stray or wild animal in the vicinity/ Or both. The horse reappears, precariously pulling a ramshackle cart laden with research papers on land use, and various antique documents. Documentation meets dereliction. This is obviously a dream-sequence, and its time locus is poetically ambiguous. Reference in the middle to "Peeling the present off the past/the better to show the wiring". The possible judge passenger has disappeared, to be replaced by archive detritus. *Standard England* does contain some lighter, more occasional pieces. But its overall substance make it an essential addition to any serious devotee of Roy Fisher's work.

Dave Russell

# competitions

- 1. Bridport Prize 2011** -Closing Date 30th June 2011  
Poems (42 lines) 1st Prize £5000. Judged by Carol Ann Duffy. Short Stories (5000 wds) 1st Prize £5000. Judged by A L Kennedy. Flash Fiction (250 wds) 1st Prize £1000. Judged by A L Kennedy  
Enter by sending A5 SAE to PO Box 6910, Dorset, DT6 9BQ or download application from: [www.ndparking.com/bridportprize.co.uk](http://www.ndparking.com/bridportprize.co.uk)
- 2. The Corneliu M Popescu Prize 2011** -Deadline 31st May 2011. For poetry translated from a European language to English. 3 Copies of a volume of published poetry (published from June 2009-31st May 2011) sent to: The Corneliu M Popescu Prize, The Poetry Society, 22 Betterton Street, London WC2H 9BX. Contact : [award@poetrysociety.org.uk](mailto:award@poetrysociety.org.uk)
- 3. The Bruntwood Prize for Playwriting** (New Plays) -Deadline 6th January 2011. 1st Prize £16,000, 3 further awards of £8000. [www.writeplay.co.uk](http://www.writeplay.co.uk)
4. United Press Ltd: National Poetry Anthology -Deadline 30th June 2011. Free to enter; £1,000 prize. Send 3 poems (up to 25 lines including blank lines and 160 words each) to United Press, Admail 3735, London EC1B 1JB. Telephone +44 (0) 0844 800 9177. [www.unitedpress.co.uk](http://www.unitedpress.co.uk)
- 5. The Manchester Writing Competition** -Deadline 12th August 2011 for a short story (max 3000wds). 1st Prize £3000, each entry fee £15. As many entries as you like. Do not put your name on your story, use entry form Judged by Heather Beck, John Burnsied, Alison MacLeod & Nicholas Royle. Contact James Draper, PM for the Manchester Writing School at MMU, +44 (0) 0161 247 1787 / [j.draper@mmu.ac.uk](mailto:j.draper@mmu.ac.uk), or enter online: [www.manchsterwritingcompetition.co.uk/fiction](http://www.manchsterwritingcompetition.co.uk/fiction)

## .. items of interest

Music and Wellbeing Project: Ipswich @SCS Media Clubhouse 120 Princess St. Ipswich. Contact Siobhan Barrett on 01473 418017

Equilibrium Haringey's Wellbeing magazine is looking for feature contributions. Check out their latest publications, it's well worth a read: [www.haringey.gov.uk/equilibrium\\_spring\\_issue\\_2011.pdf](http://www.haringey.gov.uk/equilibrium_spring_issue_2011.pdf)

IdeasTap and the Royal Shakespeare Company have launched a brand new poetry opportunity for emerging writers. IdeasTap, an online creative network and funding body for emerging artists is working with the RSC to give 15 aspiring poets a one-off writing workshop with the RSC's poet-in-residence, Aoife Mannix. The lucky winners will also have the chance to have their final piece performed as part of Adelaide Road – the RSC's new groundbreaking interactive project. Closing date for applications is April 6th 2011 and participants

must be aged between 16- 20. To apply or for more information go to [www.ideastap.com](http://www.ideastap.com)

From an SP forum user Tony Demoney:- Hi all, I recently discovered the BBC Ouch! website, which is a website for those with disabilities. While the main site itself is quite sparse and out of touch with the reality of living with a disability the forums are a gold mine of disability and benefit related information. There are people on there with every imaginable disability, physical, developmental and psychiatric. If any of you are interested the url is <http://www.bbc.co.uk/ouch/messageboards/>

## letters & emails

E-mail: Polly Mortimer - Coordinator of Equilibrium,

I found the article about ACE funding way too long and not really relevant. Just thought I'd let you know - as the poetry is amazing and needs all the room it can get.

E-mail: Dear Poetry Editor,

I believe in my poems as much as I believe in mankind. Wise people say that poetry enriches human souls, and I say that poetry is a tear on the face of mankind, and this is why mankind needs it. Because, once that tear disappears, mankind will be gone too. Tears give birth to compassion. This is why I believe in these poems, because they awaken compassion in people. Sincerely, Walter William Safar, poet/writer.

## notes on authors

\*\*\*\*\*  
David Kerr a.k.a The Journeyman, Recoverer of PTSD caused by the Ealing Vicarage Rape Incident of 1986. Author of upcoming '*A Journeyman's Voyage Into Wisdom*' and '*My Visit to the Planet Madness*', published by [www.chipmunkapublishing.com](http://www.chipmunkapublishing.com). Editor of [www.theplanetmadness.co.uk](http://www.theplanetmadness.co.uk) and [www.kerrfree.com](http://www.kerrfree.com)

\*\*\*\*\*  
Dave Russel has a version of William Blake's *London*, visit : [http://www.dailymotion.com/video/x4nuov\\_dave-russel-london-poem-by-william\\_music](http://www.dailymotion.com/video/x4nuov_dave-russel-london-poem-by-william_music)

\*\*\*\*\*  
Peter Vealey publications *With Authentic Stains* Published by Chipmunkapublishing, 2008, ISBN: 9781847477439 His new e-book *Particular* ISBN 978-1 84991-234-1, will be in hard format, later in the year. Published by Chipmunka 2010

\*\*\*\*\*  
Thomas Orszag-Land is a poet and award-winning foreign correspondent. His last major work was *Christmas in Auschwitz: Holocaust Poetry Translated from the Hungarian of András Mezei* (Smokestack, England, 2010).

## 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

## GROW - east sussex

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: Louise Glasscoe  
email: glasscoe@tiscali.co.uk

## 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 us at: thebreadisrising@  
excite.com or 001-347-534-5715 [USA]

## The Poetry Cafe

The Poetry Cafe (The Poetry Place)  
22 Betterton Street  
London WC2H 9BX  
Tel +44 (0)20 7420 9880  
Fax +44 (0)20 7240 4818  
<http://www.poetrysociety.org.uk>

## Dates

## Features

12th May	Poet John Sinclair
9th June	Musical duo Masque
14th July	TBC

NO August Date

8th Sept	TBC
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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 sharp. Finish time for the event dependent upon the amount of people who want to do floorspots. There will be a break half way through. These events are organised by Xochitl Tuck, volunteer Events Coordinator.

North London Survivors  
every fourth Thursday  
of each month



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<http://www.multimap.com/s/y6qTi6v8>

## Open Mic Dates: 8pm start

26th May, 23rd June, 28th July, August Date TBC, 22nd  
Sept

email: [xmtuck@hotmail.com](mailto:xmtuck@hotmail.com)  
Tel: 07796 831 935

# Survivors' Bulletin

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

<http://vimeo.com/survivors>



New SP website coming soon ...



We are always happy to receive your poetry, reviews, short story or articles.

If you've found insight and understanding toward survivors within these pages, please tell us about it, as we'd like to hear your story.

## Donations:

Please send a cheque payable to Survivors' Poetry or go to mycharitypage.com and make an online contribution - click on link on the bottom right of this page or visit our website



## Schizos Care

Schizophrenics Salvation Network

"Can't you see buried within all that wreckage. His craving for freedom?" Our Disability could be a Diabetes of the mind, caused by traumatic disbelief? Solidarity. Very often invalidated and demonised, often both together could become the modern Jews?! Also, probably, 'Guinea Pigs' for secret state experimentation - Psycotropics, mind policing, and short-wave radiation, etc... Fellowship must associate to counter loneliness and stigmatisation Local Groups needed for fellowship, mutual therapy, political initiative.

'FULL SHILLING CLUB': - hope to have regular Central London Meetings. Contact Dave 020 7790 8269 / Joe 020 8575 0250

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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

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