

Poetry Express Newsletter #46

ISSN 2056-970X (NB: all back issues of the Newsletter are now ISSN registered)



Angels Fear to Tread by Featured Artist Julie McNamara



LOTTERY FUNDED



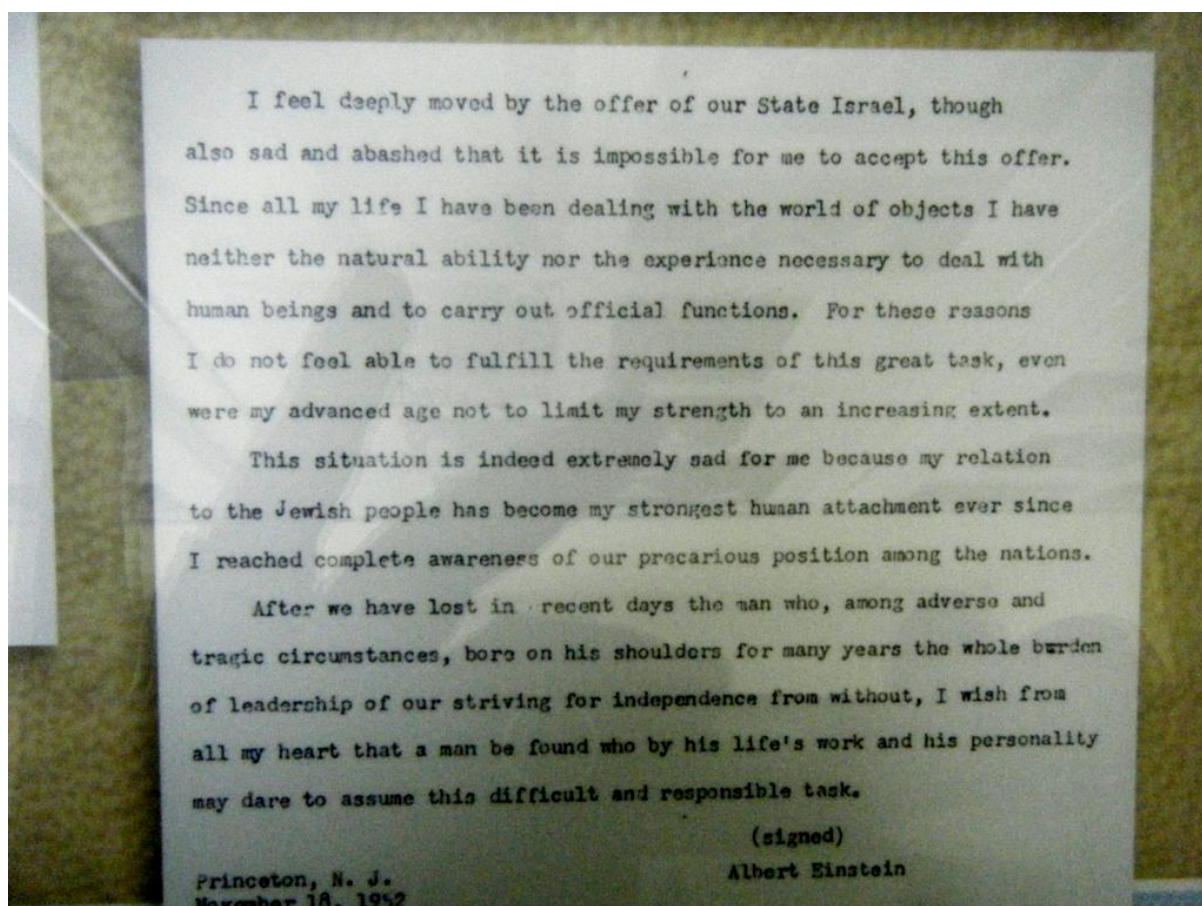
Charity No. 1010177 Company No. 2955445; Registered in England

Registered Office: c/o Central & North West London NHS Foundation Trust, 1 St Mary's Terrace, W2 1SU
Contributions to Dave Russell (Editor) – bricolage92@hotmail.com

Editorial

The autumn season started with a swing – in the form of the most animated Survivors session I have ever seen at the Poetry Café. There were two main spots: the first was a reading of the poems of **Sapna**, under the pseudonym of **Sophia Jackson**, by **Razz** and **Kath Tait**. The sequence of poems were dialogues between Sapna and Jack (an aspect of herself). They revealed a further depth of intensity in Sapna's work – a major creative phenomenon which cries out for large-scale recognition.

The main spot was a reading by **Romany Smith** of **Heathcote Williams' *An Old Man and a Young Man in Gaza***. Romany did a condensed version of the poem to fit into the time slot. She delivered it with extraordinary intensity – preceded by a powerful spot from **Jessica Lawrence**, who presented a response to Heathcote Williams. Jessica enlightened the audience by reading Albert Einstein's statement about why he declined the Presidency of Israel:



There is actually an additional paragraph that has been omitted from the archives I (Jessica) have found thus far, it reads: "After we have lost in recent days the man who, among adverse and tragic circumstances, bore on his shoulders for many years the whole burden of leadership of our striving for independence from without, I wish from all my heart that a man may be found who by his life's work and his personality may dare to assume this difficult and responsible task."

Jessica claimed that Einstein had been misrepresented in Heathcote Williams's poem. Jessica's points aroused heated argument, and later in the evening there was intense interaction between Jessica and Romany. Indeed one person cried out from the audience "this is a poetry reading, not a debate". But such is the gravity of this issue that the expression of strong feelings in this context was whole justified – bringing in its train extensions to everyone's background knowledge. The evening remained intact through all the altercations; there was no final personal animosity. In a conciliatory spirit, participants were prepared to read 'neutral' – non-provocative – poems. I did some intercession between the two main parties; each one had an underlying respect for the other.

Some great supporting material as always. A great new song from Razz, *Sanity Is Sleeping*, and three new numbers from Kath. Powerful music from **John Arthur** and poetry from **Sally Smith**. The evening ended with Alain English and his impassioned plea for the 'losers' and the downtrodden.

The pace was sustained on October 9th, with a longer set from John Arthur, including *Michael Berkeley*, his gloss on a Ray Davies song. The other main spot **Unique Technique** ('Rhythmic Explosions/Survival Techniques'): "Unique Technique is a Hackney based rapper, MC and freestyler. He is the voice behind and composer of the *Not Your Average Type* audio logo. He has appeared live in session on **Resonance104.4fm** and performs regularly on the open mic circuit. His debut 2010 *Fuck The Olympics* single was banned by iTunes but is available to stream on My Space. His Karaoke set showed the art of Rap at an exceptionally sophisticated level, with great modulations of rhythm and vocal intonation (including mimicry). Some catchy refrains with "friends; how many of us have them"; "Your girlfriend's a magician" and "S-U-R-V-I-V-O-R.

There were many gems among the other spots – lovely chromatic jazz ballads from **John Peacock**, a fantastic meditative life-story panorama from **Tony Beckenham**; some fine rhythmic 'rapping' from **Mark Knight**; strong protest about the UKIP from **Sally Smith**, extremely powerful black humour from **Tara Fleur**. Quality contributions as ever from **Madeleine Smith**, **Kath Tait** and **Frank Bangay**.

Razz made a dedication to the late Nick Snodgrass, and to **John Lennon's** might-have-been 74th birthday.

Great open-air event in **Lewisham Market** precinct, with contributions from **Razz**, **Phil Ruthen**, **Ingrid Andrew** and **Dave Russell**. An outstanding dancer highlighted the event.

Some good news on the funding front re future Survivors Press and Mentoring Scheme publications – more titles may be imminent

Dave Russell

Why are Psychiatric Hospitals still a Trap?

You've been put on a Section. Suddenly everything in your life is decided for you – from your everyday schedule, to a prediction of where you'll still be up to a year in your future, everything is pre-determined, pre-approved and assessed constantly.

At first the lack of choice alarms you. You can't decide when you eat, and there is a limited choice of what you can eat; you can't decide what you do with your time – there is the rigmarole of group activities, group therapy and appointments to get through; you have a bedtime like a toddler again. The rules seem petty and childish.

But then they begin to feel comfortable. A safety net; permission to get up, take your meds, and get on with the easy monotony of the day. Even the lack of privacy ceases to bother you. Once you have crossed the line to a nurse watching you shower, you find it much easier to have a poo in front of them. Nothing in your life is private anymore (except what's hidden in the deep recesses of your brain) and you've given up caring.

Still, these are the good times – when the ward is quiet. It is possible at any moment that a new patient will come in, someone will uncover a lost memory, or someone's medication will be changed, and then the disruption begins.

When you're already feeling vulnerable (from the dehumanisation of ward life, as much as your original illness), someone else acting out, parading their unhealthy coping mechanisms in front of you, a reflection of how you used to cope before you settled down a bit, temptation to copy is guaranteed. It's not their fault, and it's not yours. Neither of you can help it. You've been shoved together, along with all of the other patients. It's natural that you begin to bounce off each other.

One of you begins bashing your head. The repetition of the noise makes an eerie rhythm. The noise itself is a clattering temptation. Then someone else gives in and begins. This continues until the whole building is vibrating and staff are running between alarms in a hopeless effort to regain order. You now have no choice: it's a compulsion. All of your issues have been pumped up so they float to the surface. You are forced to join in the earthquake. The staff come in and wrestle you to the floor. They hold your arms in painful 'chicken wings', but you struggle anyway. You continue bashing your head on the floor, until they call someone else in to hold your head still.

It's like the fight is some kind of pay-off. It's a frustration burner. You know that they will write it up later, and you will be in that place even longer; but thinking like that doesn't help in the moment. The moment of explosion.

You begin to wonder whether accumulating incidents like this might be a good thing – that maybe staying in hospital is a good thing. It's not a nice place, but don't you feel safest in the hospital? Won't they throw you out if they can't see that you're ill enough? You become the disruptive one.

One day you go too far. Whilst being restrained (your face bruised and wrists sprained), you hit a member of staff. It's an accident, but one that causes you to discover the buzz of truly fighting back, not just wriggling. Next time they come to restrain you, you try to strangle one of them.

They put you on a forensic ward. No-one even tries to predict how long you'll be there.

Despite focus on Care in the Community, or inaccurate limits on time patients are supposed to spend in hospital, psychiatric hospitals, for some people, are still as much of a trap as they've always been. The patients most vulnerable to this are the youngest – those who were first exposed to the system whilst still adolescents, or even children. I have watched too many young people worsen in hospital and become unable to survive without the system.

Yet it is an impossible issue to solve. Tactics to solve the problem get bogged down in a swamp of Catch-22 situations. Not putting people in hospital when they are a danger to themselves or others is irresponsible. Premature release of patients to the community leaves them suddenly without enough support. Unable to survive on their own, they end up being re-admitted over and over again (there is even a term for this – “revolving door patients”).

Keeping patients in hospital for prolonged periods of time comes with its own cycle. Unfortunately patients are only ever given a short window to recover, before the ward becomes busy and the stress triggers their symptoms again.

It is also true that the nature of many mental illnesses are cyclical, mirroring the hospital system. Most patients experience a period of extreme illness, followed by a period of remission (although this may only be for a very short amount of time) – for example psychosis comes in episodes, and bipolar moods come in swings. In this way, the illness and the supposed treatment are conjoined in a never ending cycle, which quickly consumes the whole of the patient's life.

Even though this situation feels hopeless, as a society we need to try and do something about it. Just because no-one knows what to do, doesn't mean it is an issue that should be ignored. In fact this only means we need to focus even more attention on it. I admit that mental illness can be an ugly quagmire of issues, making sure even fewer people want to examine the core problems of treatment. It is something that is far too easily swept under the carpet. Still we need not to be afraid of its darker crevices, to stare at it straight on – in order to find solutions.

Sarah Gonnet

SYCAMORE TREES AND ANTIPSYCHOTICS

In the recent summer of 2014, I happened to attend a meeting (perhaps it might be better called a workshop in fashionable current jargon) on religion and mental health. One lady in her early sixties spoke of the religious beliefs imparted to her in her childhood as having an entirely negative effect on her life. These beliefs had been focussed on damnation, guilt and sin. She declared that because of these ideas, and their powerful effect on her as an impressionable teenager, she had started to hear a voice in her early twenties, telling her that she was sinful, damned and would go to hell. Predictably, she had been diagnosed as 'schizophrenic', given various antipsychotic drugs and subjected to ECT. Personally, I think that future generations will look back on the use of Electro-Convulsive Therapy and the dismal array of Phenothiazines, Butyrophenones and atypical antipsychotics in much the same way as we look back on the 'treatment' of Demonic Possession from the Middle Ages by the rack, drowning and burning at the stake. There are also issues of power, gender and hatred of women involved. There is well-documented

testimony by women victims of ECT who have stated that – having gone through both experiences – ECT used on them without their consent is worse than rape.ⁱ One writer, quoted in the huge *Psychiatric and Mental Health Nursing* (second edition, 2009 – read, of course, almost exclusively by aspiring mental health professionals) quite forthrightly describes ECT as a form of assault used to silence women.ⁱⁱ The huge textbook itself is equally succinct: ‘However, the patient group most frequently prescribed ECT are older women who do not have a strong political voice.’ Indeed! It must, of course, be said that coercion, assault and control are also directed at and experienced by men who are subjected to this ‘therapy’, just as men are sometimes (but less often than women) the victims of rape.

The woman who spoke of the voice that had tormented her for much of her adult life was far from entirely hostile to religion; and she had continued to seek answers in religious experience. Here we came to the positive side of her life story, which had striking implications. This lady described a religious centre in the Welsh countryside, run by the followers of several different religions who cooperated with each other in harmony and tolerance. It was possible to visit this centre for a day or to pay a modest fee in order to retreat there for days or even weeks. The adherents of the different faiths who ran this place would only talk about their beliefs if asked to do so; they did not preach or proselytize to visitors or to each other; when each group held services, rituals, acts of worship or prayers, visitors or members or followers of the other faiths could attend if they wished – or not. The woman had been to this religious centre several times, and it was there that she had an extraordinary experience.

One day, sitting under some sycamore trees on a stone bench in the grounds, enjoying the peace, the greenery and the spirit and atmosphere of *acceptance* that permeated the place, she found that the voice that tormented her suddenly stopped; she did not hear it again during her stay. She was amazed at this spontaneous remission of her illness, and did not feel she properly understood it. I am not religious in any formal or conventional sense, and so the fascination of this testimony for me lay in its confirmation of a common sense *or* humanist *or* spiritual understanding of mental illness: psychosis is produced by experience and can be healed through experience. Psychotic illness is caused by some profoundly damaging experience – though this is rarely as obvious a cause as the relentless religious focus on sin and damnation described by the lady I heard speaking about her experiences in the summer of 2014 – recovery can begin when an equally potent positive experience befalls the sufferer. And how often do such positive experiences occur? Not very often. Instead, those ill with psychosis face the derision, misunderstanding and fear of the community at large, and often of their own families – rapidly followed by oppressive and authoritarian intervention by the psychiatric profession armed with callous pseudo-science and the ingrained habit of bullying and coercion.

As ever in our world – from the poorest areas of New York and London, from Palestine to Belfast, from the office of Russia’s Mr Putin to the streets of Baghdad, there are reasons for the ways in which events develop: *bad guys don’t just appear out of thin air*. One essential requirement of human cruelty in the modern world is an ideology that justifies it. People who suffer from mental illnesses are often treated with methods that belong in the Middle Ages precisely because psychiatry itself is no better than a medieval set of ideas. Thus a contributor to the massive *Oxford Companion to the Mind* (1987), writing on ‘schizophrenia’, confidently tells us that the illness develops along the same lines all over the world, irrespective of creed, culture, material conditions or language. However, this contributor is RE Kendell, Professor of Psychiatry at the University of Edinburgh – and professors of psychiatry have invested their careers, their reputations and their authority in concepts such as ‘schizophrenia’, as well as deriving their large salaries from peddling such notions. In his truly outstanding book *Madness Explained: Psychosis and Human Nature* (2003), Mr Richard P. Bentall, a psychologist with a marvellously clear-sighted view of psychiatry, describes the even more silly and sinister quest for a biological basis of mental illness: ‘a

dramatic suspension of the critical faculties of both researchers and bystanders [...] [D]iscoveries are announced triumphantly, [researchers have an] unreflective hunger for the rewards and plaudits that go with genuine scientific progress [...] as if they are Mesmerized by the scent of the Nobel Prize.'

The Holy Grail of a credible biological basis for psychosis continues to elude these noble knights of psychiatry. But even in its absence confident claims about antipsychotic drugs have been made for decades – with devastating consequences for those who have been given these drugs, which frequently cause the incurable condition known as **Tardive Dyskinesia (TD)**: repeated involuntary movements of the face, tongue, throat, arms and legs. It is claimed that by suppressing the substance dopamine in the brain the antipsychotic drugs act *specifically* on the disease process of 'schizophrenia'. They do nothing of the kind. The almost accidental discovery and application of these drugs to mental illness by Jean Delay and Pierre Deniker in Paris in the early 1950s was regarded as a great success.

The early pioneers of this treatment wrote about it with a brutal candour that later psychiatrists have understandably avoided: phenothiazines produced apathy, withdrawal, indifference and silence in patients (and passive obedience). The drugs cure nothing at all. When I worked in a community-based drug advice unit in the 1980s, dealing with those who had problems with prescribed drugs, mainly those addicted to minor tranquilisers such as diazepam through no fault of their own, but also people taking or receiving antipsychotics by injection, I was struck by the fact that those tormented by hearing voices went on hearing voices, those who felt persecuted went on feeling persecuted and those who felt unreal were never made any more real to themselves by swallowing chlorpromazine or being injected with slow release forms of similar drugs. As for relief from distress, simple sedatives, Diazepam (Valium) and Opium have been effective in schizophrenia, as some responsible and careful studies have shown.ⁱⁱⁱ

After the early pioneers of antipsychotic drugs, the multi-national drug companies – not far behind the worldwide arms industry in their vast size, power, influence and unscrupulousness – stepped in to produce scores of drugs that were chemically slightly different but basically the same. The profits were staggeringly vast; the psychiatrists went on drawing very large salaries and indulging the human capacity for cruelty and domination; the politicians, especially after the virtual right-wing revolution of the Thatcher/Reagan years in the 1980s, were pleased because health spending could be cut, but troublesome people could still be controlled in the community by fortnightly depot injections. And the victims paid the price to the tune of 38.5 million people suffering from irreversible Tardive Dyskinesia worldwide.^{iv/v}

Peter R. Breggin, a qualified and practising psychiatrist and 'whistleblower' upon the folly and cruelty of members of his profession across the world summed the matter up succinctly in the sub-title to his book *Toxic Psychiatry*: 'Why therapy, empathy and love must replace the drugs, electroshock and biochemical theories of the new psychiatry.' We hear the patronising collective sigh of psychiatrists the world over that greets these words. However, Breggin points to the path of realism and hard work, while the destructive methods and promises of psychiatry have turned out to be unscientific illusions. Breggin, in fact, points to the path that leads to the stone seat under the sycamore trees – or whatever positive and healing experience is appropriate to the sufferer.

Anthony James

Perspective from Bristol

(Press release issued: 25 September 2014)

The public's view on work and welfare in Britain has shifted fundamentally in the past 30 years, new research has revealed.

When the Labour Party introduced the welfare state in 1945, there was huge support from a nation recovering from war. Britain was the first country to make such bold changes to support its citizens – reforms which later served as a model to other countries.

Fast-forward almost 70 years and the public's views are very different. Some 62 per cent of the British population now believe that out-of-work benefits are too generous and promote the 'dependency culture' that is now seen to exist in the UK.

Researchers from the University of Bristol have analysed data from the British Social Attitudes (BSA) survey, which has been conducted every year since 1983 to capture a range of social, political and moral views, to show how and why a welfare-building nation changed its mind about the need for collective welfare to support British citizens. The results, published today [25 September] in the *Social Policy and Administration* journal and funded by the [Economic and Social Research Council](#) (ESRC), show that a change in attitude towards unemployment and social security benefits coincided with the introduction of Labour's New Deal policies in 1998.

Tony Blair famously said that 'Welfare will be a hand-up, and not a hand-out' in 1999 and that viewpoint is reflected by a change in public attitude.

Throughout much of the 1980s and 1990s, there was a widespread belief that out-of-work benefits were set at such derisory levels that they caused significant hardship for people living on them. In 1986, 46% of the British population said that out-of-work benefit rates were too low. By 1993, that figure had peaked at 55%. However, at the start of the 21st Century, a distinct attitudinal shift begins to emerge. People no longer accepted that benefit levels were inadequate and in 2011 only one person in five (19%) said they were set too low.

Congruent with this trend is the growing popular belief that the standard of living for claimants on welfare is too high. Generous benefits are now seen to discourage work and encourage 'welfare dependency'. Over half the population now say claimants could find work if they wanted, compared to a quarter in the early-1990s.

These changing attitudes are all the more striking when considered in context with the real value of Unemployment Benefit in Britain, which has changed very little over the last 30 years, while the rate of unemployment benefits against average earnings has seen a marked decline.

Dr Chris Deeming, from the University of Bristol's **School of Geographical Sciences**, led the research. He said: "Attitudes towards unemployed people are clearly changing and hardening fast. Solidarity

with unemployed citizens, poor people and welfare claimants has declined significantly in recent times.

“The extent to which the long-running downward trend will continue as we approach the 2015 general election remains to be seen but a reversal of the trend seems most unlikely, given the direction of workfare policy in the UK.

“The survey findings suggest a fundamental shift in views on the underlying causes of unemployment. The British public now sees work aversion and the declining work ethic as one of the main issues facing society.

“Coupled with this trend is a growing belief that out-of-work benefits are now too generous and act to promote the ‘dependency culture’. This view is widely held, despite evidence to suggest the real value of unemployment benefit in Britain has changed hardly changed over the past 40 years.”

The research also revealed that factors such as age, gender, ethnicity and education are important in shaping public attitudes. For example:

- The odds of someone aged 15 to 24 feeling unemployment benefits in Britain are too generous are more than three times greater than for an older person aged 65 or above.
- Men are 33% more likely to believe that benefits are inadequate compared to women.
- Citizens from a black and ethnic minority groups are twice as likely to say that state benefit levels are too high and are nearly three times as likely to say that they discourage paid work, compared to white Britons.
- Those without formal qualifications are twice as likely as graduates to report State Benefit levels are too generous, even though this group is most at risk of unemployment.

Political views also come into play. Support for welfare among Labour voters has been in steep decline over the last two decades. In 1987, for example, 73% of Labour Party supporters agreed that the government should spend more on welfare benefits for poor families, compared with just over one-third (36%) in 2011.

People who vote for the Conservative Party are significantly more likely to believe that out-of-work benefits are too generous, compared to citizens who vote for the Liberal Democrats. They are more likely to say that the social security system fails to properly incentivize work and that conditionality - the conditions attached to receiving benefits – is too weak.

Paper

‘Foundations of the Workfare State – Reflections on the Political Transformation of the Welfare State in Britain’ by Christopher Deeming in *Social Policy and Administration*.

Further information

About the British Social Attitudes (BSA) survey

The BSA survey series has been conducted annually since 1983. Each year over 3,000 interviews are conducted with a representative sample of adults aged 18 or over. Participants are selected using a technique called random probability sampling. This sampling technique ensures that everyone has a fair chance of taking part in the survey and the results are representative of the British population.

The BSA has covered an extensive number of complex social, political and moral issues. Topics include work, transport, health, education, government spending and voting habits, as well as religion, racism and illegal drugs. New areas of questioning are added each year to reflect current issues, but all questions are designed with a view to repeating them periodically to chart changes over time.

About the ESRC

The [Economic and Social Research Council](#) (ESRC) funds research into the big social and economic questions facing us today. We also develop and train the UK's future social scientists. Our research informs public policies and helps make businesses, voluntary bodies and other organisations more effective. Most important, it makes a real difference to all our lives. The ESRC is an independent organisation, established by Royal Charter in 1965, and funded mainly by the Government. In 2015 the ESRC celebrates its 50th anniversary.

Great Britain at the National Theatre 15/7/14

I saw this with Simon Jenner when on holiday in London. He suggested I write something about it after our brief discussion afterwards walking to and then waiting at Waterloo. Something about the play, its presentation, bothered me, still does. This is a shot at working that out. So, what was it about you say? Nothing less than the phone hacking scandal and the shenanigans of recent years we've all watched play out. Sadly, it cannot really be about that, as it happened, perhaps it would result in too many legal problems, and perhaps also it would be too distasteful for reasons we pretty much all know. So, instead, we get a curious parallel universe to that curious chunk of space-time we've just passed through – very similar but different, and in some ways a caricature. It may be this is the play's greatest weakness for me. For example we get a Met Commissioner as PC Plod. I found that simplistic and something that may avoid something, some reality.

But, it is a slick production. Directed by **Nicholas Hytner** and written by **Richard Bean**. It makes great use of the stage. The large screens that put on 24 hour news and tabloid headlines are very effective. I liked the movements of their rat run like office. Much seemed right. I enjoyed the acting. Billie Piper was excellent as the central news editor turned phone hacker character, Paige Britain. Though I felt the role was more of a type than a character, a broad brush stroke. This for me is another weakness and gets to the heart of things – that the play adopts a tabloid tone.

Of course in writing this I realise this may be seen as a strength. That the whole sorry mess is presented in the same way such a tabloid presented the world to us. Leaving us to decipher it, unpick their language and view of the world then make our own decisions about it. If 'the medium is the message' then perhaps putting their presentation of the world into the theatre to be played out live invites us to question their medium and message when seen afresh.

Yet still this sits uncomfortably with me as the play invites our complicity with the views of the protagonists; we're drawn in to laugh at PC Plod and many of the journalists' antics. It is a dangerous line to take. Yes again it may then leave it to us to step back and see it for what it is. The thing is –

how many do? Even if they do, what can they do? Isn't that the same problem we already had? And is not so much of this play, the language and character of the journalists something we all knew well before phone hacking, does it surprise us they were up for it, conducted themselves this way? Maybe these are not fair questions, of any play really?

Paige Britain tells us that none of us cared when phone hacking was just celebs – yet no, this was not true of me, I had no reason to think they'd limit themselves to celebs, just the opposite, if they can hack them surely they'd hack anyone seemed clear. But what could any of us do about it? The play implies an analysis of power – simply put, those that can, do. It is hard to argue with. Sadly it is a role of the press to curb that. But we see here how the press may join the power game, how this version of the press could. Paige's statement about us not caring is typical – such people have the front to define us to ourselves. I write this on the day I read of a recent Sun headline about a very young child that it said bore the mark of Satan. The language of witch accusers, I think, perhaps it is no surprise such wielders of words are vulnerable to that.

Perhaps the play is doing good things to have me reacting in these ways. Maybe I am a bit of a witch hunter in wanting them exposed, their style and content that I just do not like – feeling as I do that it is beholden on us having experienced so much in our past to act differently, with some sense of responsibility. Sadly I learned this personally, but I am not a national newspaper that surely must have a different responsibility. I do feel this play pulled some punches, maybe they cannot be thrown at present. There was an implication for me that some of this type of journalism was ok as it did not stoop to phone hacking, that may be something I do not like. I did wonder aloud to Simon if the play might be seen as an establishment reaction and setting the story to rights, so that we can then continue otherwise as planned, these few bad eggs having been gotten rid of. Perhaps that is the truth. Yet for me, yes this is it, I wonder if what happened was simply a symptom of our culture.

If it is all a symptom of our culture then I wonder about the tabloid presentation, which after all is another symptom of that mass culture. It has a danger that the very thing it sets before our eyes may not be seen at all, but just accepted. So when the Guardian reviewer sees the tabloid presentation as a good thing – yes I can see all those arguments as above why this may place this before us for us to decide – I wonder. Perhaps one thing that comes with the progress that we made is that responsibility to be clear not to play off some lowest common denominators of understanding. Maybe I rail there against the way the world is? What else can we do? Would to do otherwise be to dally with political theatre of a type I may not like, despite my wish to clarify? And yes, again the play has prompted these questions – it has a strength in offering no answer, giving us the protagonists words and deeds. Yet still I'd like to see another go at this problem, as I am not sure this is the "correct presentation" of it as Chekhov prescribed, but yes I may be choking on the medicine of it just as I should, mark of its effect. It may be that it would be so much simpler if the story as established in court and Parliament could have been told, leaving me feeling less like I have been thrown a version of it that in some ways seemed neat, simplistic Met chief, protagonists in relationship to each other and all; wrapped in a bundle of the type of medicine that got us all into all this to start with.

¹ *Washington Post*, September 28 1996; *Houston Chronicle*, June 26 1996.

¹ B. Burstow in *Violence Against Women* 2006; 12: 372-92.

¹ Paul Keck and Ross Baldessarini, *American Journal of Psychiatry*, October 1989.

¹ Peter R. Breggin, *Toxic Psychiatry*, New York, 1991.

¹ David Hill, *Openmind*, No. 13, February/March 1985.

Anthony Howell



MAGGIE & LUCY LYRICAL

WHO: Maggie & Lucy Lyrical are protest singers that never take anything too seriously – even a protest. They perform original material and disrespectful rewrites of classic rock and pop tunes in order to have their say about everything from political rebellion to finding romance on the picket line. Their summer anthem – *They Cannot Tax the Sun* – celebrates the rare UK sunshine as perhaps one of the last things that we can all enjoy without paying for it.

Maggie Swampwino (née Lyrical) has been playing music since, as a wee kid, she swapped her bicycle for her first guitar. It's been said that she can get a tune out of a lawnmower and, although that theory hasn't been tested, she has played lead guitar, bass guitar, bouzouki, slide guitar and ukulele professionally for years. She has toured the UK, USA, Europe and Canada in rock bands and lived for four years in Greece – where she perfected the bouzouki and her song-writing. Maggie produces and records for numerous artists at The Swamp, her studio in South London.

Lucy Lyrical thinks some of her best friends are words. That doesn't mean that she's unfriendly but she is rather obsessed with the written word. She has been writing professionally for many years, publishing short stories, articles, marketing material, poetry and various nonsense to keep the wolf from the door. She started writing songs a couple of years ago and joined little sis, Maggie, to form a band in February 2014 to perform at a fundraiser for the Miscarriages of Justice Organisation in Scotland. Lucy is an irrepressible show off and enjoys pinching the best bits of other people's acts to make them her own.

WHAT: Protest singers, quirky comedy duo, rock and folk ditty writers, Maggie & Lucy Lyrical have been called 'difficult to categorise' so they thought they should invent their own genre #bouzoukelele. With a bouzouki and a ukulele, Maggie & Lucy Lyrical have been entertaining audiences (not all audiences of course) at gigs and parties across London and often in Glasgow, which is a second home to the sister act. Maggie & Lucy Lyrical were honoured to play the Clutha Celebration fundraiser event at The Barrowland Ballroom in Glasgow in February 2014 and visit as often as they can to see their McLyrical friends.

WHERE: Maggie & Lucy Lyrical live in London. They reside north and south of the River but always left of the argument. You can find out more about where Maggie & Lucy Lyrical will be playing at their Facebook page www.facebook.com/maggieandlucylyrical

WHEN: Maggie & Lucy Lyrical have been playing since February 2014 although Maggie's experience as a professional guitarist and songwriter reaches back decades and Lucy has been writing seriously since she started her first copywriting job on a manual typewriter wearing fingerless gloves – which were very fashionable at the time.

WHY: It's been said, by Maggie & Lucy, that you can't make an omelette without breaking a few heads and, as protest singers they have had their share of static from the establishment. A recent song, *UKIP Arising* (with many apologies to Creedence Clearwater Revival and none to UKIP), became one of their most viewed YouTube videos when UKIP supporters took objection to their musical poke in the eye. Songs about royalty have divided audiences and their enthusiasm for speaking ill of the dead (in particular dead Tory politicians) has necessitated a few swift exits from the stage.

SHE SAYS: Maggie is never happier when someone is dancing along to one of her songs. An incurable romantic she says, "People only go to gigs to meet someone, dance and get snogged. The day we look out into the audience to a full crowd of people kissing to one of our songs is the day I'll know our work is done."

SHE SAYS: Lucy's goal isn't to bring down the government or overthrow the monarchy but she'd like to have a go at it, "Spread the word," she says, "and if you can do it with a good metre, crisp lyrics and a couple of funny rhymes then you're onto something."

THEY SAY: Maggie & Lucy Lyrical played at The Harrison Bar in July 2014: "A highly entertaining bouzouki and ukulele duo who have put the singsong-ness back into political song. Poignant, clever and humorous lyric writers with great harmonies and melodies and a dynamic stage presence."

WHAT NEXT? New songs are being recorded weekly and an album is planned for the latter half of 2014. In the meantime, you can hear them live at **Tottenham Chances, The Windmill Brixton, The White Horse Peckham, The Poetry Café Covent Garden, Creative Bubble Borough** and various other live music venues across London. Or visit www.soundcloud.com/maggie-77



THEY CANNOT TAX THE SUN MAGGIE & LUCY LYRICAL

© Lucy Lyrical 2014



Music: Ta Paidia Tou Piraia by Manos Hadjidakis

Words: Lucy Lyrical

Arrangement: Maggie Swampwino

<https://soundcloud.com/maggie-77/they-cannot-tax-the-sun>

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/244759355696848/>

UKULELE C-TUNING – calypso strum DDUUDU

INTRO: G D etc - end on G

D G

Life can seem bleak when you're stuck once again at the job centre, kissing ass

D G

You have to work for no pay, or you risk getting sent on a typing class

D G

You sit at home in the damp, with the mould and the leaks and the broken glass

D G

Your landlord wants the back rent but you call him back – coz you got no brass
stay on G D

Step outside – onto the sunny street

C

Open windows playing happy beats

D G

Kids yelling, having fun

stay on G D

The cats are lying in the sunlight – it's as if they must be stoned

C

*The summer can't be owned,
They cannot tax the sun.*

D G

Hear the flip flop rhythm of the girls in bare legs, just hoping to be seen
Tattooed men, strip off their shirts, getting macho, playing footie on the green
The planes make trails across the sky like a white cloud tapestry
And you lie on your back with your eyes closed and smile – it's all for free

*Step outside – onto the sunny street
Open windows playing happy beats
Kids yelling, having fun
The cats are lying in the sunlight – it's as if they must be stoned
The summer can't be owned
They cannot tax the sun.*

The wage slaves slip from the shadows, to sneak a ciggie in the open air
One-legged pigeons play gladiator over picnics in the city square
You skip down the road without a coat, without a coin – without a care
No matter who you are, it's summer time for all of us to share



*Step outside – onto the sunny street
Open windows playing happy beats
Kids yelling, having fun
The cats are lying in the sunlight – it's as if they must be stoned
The summer can't be owned
They cannot tax the sun.*

G,D repeated

*They cannot tax the sun
They cannot tax the sun
There's no licence for summer style
Slip your shades on and smile
They cannot tax the sun
They cannot tax the sun
At last it's all worthwhile
They cannot tax the sun
Step outside – onto the sunny street
Open windows playing happy beats
Kids yelling, having fun
The cats are lying in the sunlight – it's as if they must be stoned
The summer can't be owned
They cannot tax the sun.*



Clearing by Julie McNamara

DATING SITE by LUCY LYRICAL

© Lucy Lyrical 2014

I'm desperate, you're deluded – there's no time to wait
Let's not leave love in the hands of fate
Click on my profile, it'll be alright
If we don't say we met on a dating site
It's a fantasy farm, and the first search is free
You can find one to breed with, or one to fuck and flee
All types, all sizes, all animals are equal
Virgins, sluts, divorcees looking for a sequel
It's a super-sexed supermarket, where the lights are dim
Where the photos are cropped so the fatties look slim
Where the angry are 'artistic', the lazy, 'funky'
The maniacs labelled 'sensitive' and the thugs called 'hunky'.
I'm desperate, you're deluded – there's no time to wait
Let's not leave love in the hands of fate
Click on my profile, it'll be alright
If we don't say we met on a dating site
Join the nightmare nightclub where you don't buy a drink
There's no queue for the loo, but it's always later than you think
No music, no beer goggles, no friends being stupid
A died-dead disco, run by a binary code cupid.
Let's be logarithm lovers, matched by mathematics
Not mention our need for sex acrobatics
I'll say 'yes' to extreme sports 'stead of a good night in
If you ignore me smoking in the lav and a morning glass of gin
I'm desperate, you're deluded – there's no time to wait
Let's not leave love in the hands of fate
Are you out there, my darling, searching unaided
For someone as cynical as you are jaded?
You don't fancy one in uniform, see eHarmony is a pitch
Want to let it all hang out with a worn-out mouthy bitch?
Then click on my profile, it'll be alright
If we don't say we met through a dating site



Vinegar Tits by Julie McNamara



Specimen by Julie McNamara

BEER GOGGLES

MAGGIE & LUCY LYRICAL

© Lucy Lyrical 2014 PRS ref:
EJNW-130414-0168-00 - CAE 737 361 041



(I'm Just Too Sober to Love You)

C F
He met her in a dim-lit crowd
G F
Smoke billowed a macramé cloud
C F G G7
Bongos played, the buffet was pure vegan
C F
But when the sun came up on Kensal Rise
G F
He looked at her with blood-shot eyes
C F G x 2
And realised she resembled Nancy Reagan

Chorus

C F G x 2
He's just too sober to love you
C F G G7
He's just too lucid to care
C F
Sorry, it's not him it's you
C F
Unless he had a drink, or two
C F G C (then C F G F until next verse)

He could never really love you as you were, as you were

Her hen night dress – a size too small

He danced on stage with a glitter ball

His G-string promised a bigger story

The next day over a sweet latte

Her lust turned into pure dismay

To find out her Adonis was a Tory

She's just too sober to love you

She's just too lucid to care

Sorry, it's not her it's you

Unless she had a drink, or two

She could never really love you as you were, as you were

You said you had a house in France

I thought our romance had a chance

You gave me more gifts than you really oughta

My mum thinks you're the perfect match

You drive a Porsche, but there's a catch

I think you're even duller than dishwasher

I'm just too sober to love you

I'm just too lucid to care

Sorry, it's not me it's you

Unless I had a drink, or two

I could never really love you as you were, as you were

<https://www.facebook.com/maggieandlucylyrical>

<https://soundcloud.com/maggie-77/beer-goggles-im-just-too-sober>

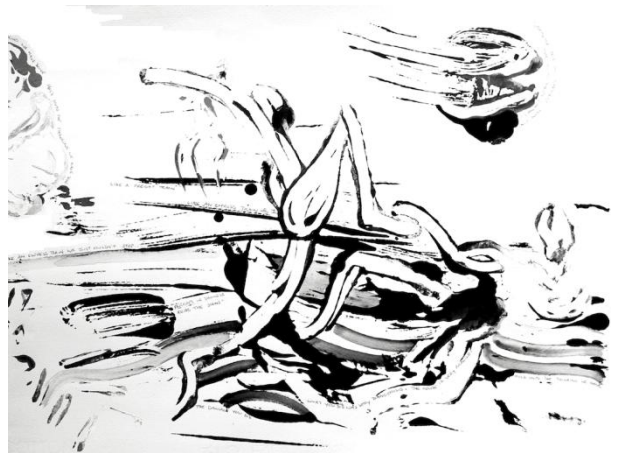
© Lucy Lyrical 2014 PRS ref: EJNW-130414-0168-00 – CAE
737 361 041

Julie McNamara on her Artwork

As soon as I could hold a paintbrush I began to make marks. I love colour. I love the magic of watching a blank sheet transform with just a line, a shape, a smudge. I went to Art College long before I became involved in theatre. My passion back then was working in clay. I created sculptures first and then moved on to abstract painting. Acrylics were my favourite; I like the clean line and the vivid pigments you can get with acrylics. I am way too OCD for oils.

The paintings featured in the book *Chaos Calls* were all produced whilst I was in the midst of a complete meltdown and receiving treatment at the Maudsley. Clearly they liked them, because they hung onto them for four years in a folder marked 'therapeutic notes'. They may well have been helpful in shaping the picture of who I was at that time, emerging through the fog of depression and traumatic shock. The whole collection looks like a blood bath if you spread it on the floor. And that feels about right given what I'd survived.

But once I'd grown some emotional muscle, I wanted them back. The whole series. So I wrote a carefully worded letter informing the hospital team that they were keeping my body fluids against my will as they had never received signed clearance from me. Those paintings were made with my blood, sweat and tears!



Freight Train Running



Lost Crop



Pain



Dervish



Thy will be done



Angel of Page 33



Devoured



And Death Creeps In



Access Denied



Brain Storm



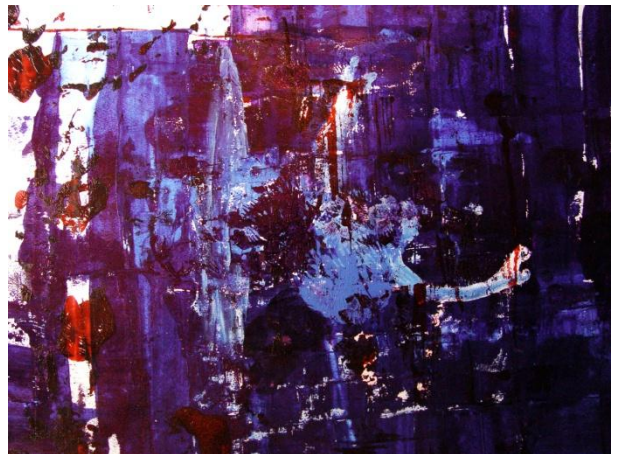
A Landscape of a Broken Heart



Cliff Hanger



Angel of Death



Drowning

MILITANT MAN

MAGGIE & LUCY LYRICAL

© Lucy Lyrical 2014 —
PRS ref: EJNW-190514-0436-00 – CAE 737 361 041



G Em
It's not an easy world, in which to fall
in love
C D
It's not a simple story to be told
G Em
I knew the day I met you, at the
protest rally
C D
Your politics were red, your heart was
solid gold

And we were flirting at a sit-in
Boycotting Starbucks
Show the right-wing scumbags all their
flaws
You'd give up on consumerism
If you didn't love your iPad
You're a rebel with a cause
C
You're beautiful
D
You're militant
G

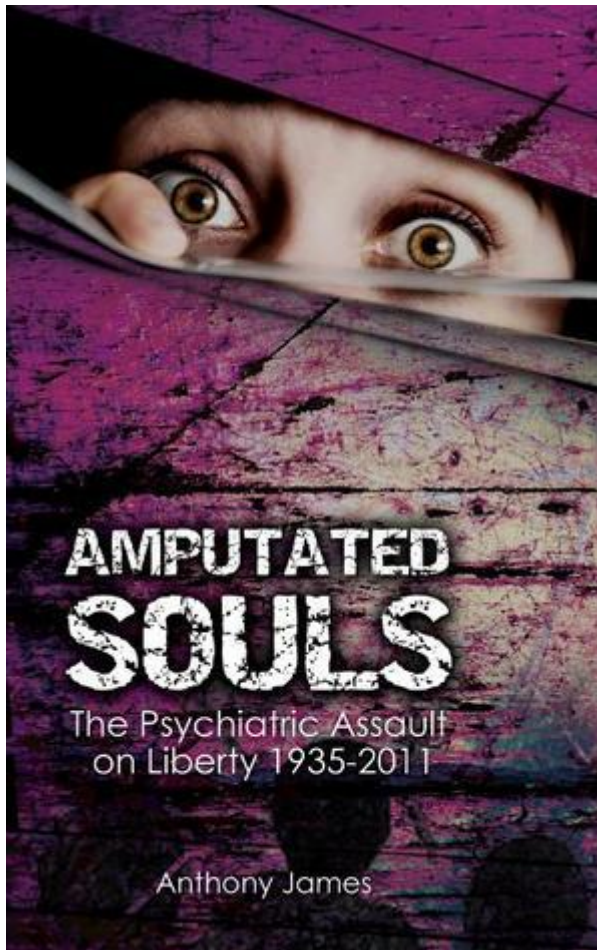
And you're mine
The NSA are watching, they've got
your number
A camera films as you walk down the
block
You wear your left wing pride
Like a one pound plastic wrist band
I love you from your beret to your
Che Guevara socks
And we were yelling at the police force
Drafting petitions
I hope to hell they'll listen, dear,
because
Fumes from graffiti
Play havoc with your asthma
You're a rebel with a cause
You're beautiful
You're militant
And you're mine
You say you really love me, although
you missed my birthday
Tied to a 300 year old tree
But you keep me up at nights
Reading poems of rebellion
Swigging supermarket rum and wishing
we were free
And we were holding hands at the
picket
Kissing behind a placard
A raised fist and a slow applause
One day you'll love me like you love
the revolution
You're a rebel with a cause
You're beautiful
You're militant
And you're mine

www.facebook.com/maggieandlucylyrical
www.soundcloud.com/maggie-77

Amputated Souls

The Psychiatric Assault on Liberty
1935-2011

Anthony James, Imprint Academic 2013
ISBN 9781845404505 £9.95



A work which pulls no punches, concentrating on the use of ECT and lobotomy, and exploring these phenomena in relation to social and political structures, and to important literary figures.

Amputated Souls is based on painstaking research, and the consultation of major authorities, such as Professor Colin Blakemore, whose lectures in this area were published in *The Listener*. According to Blakemore: "The present-day use of

convulsive therapy stems from a revival of the 18th century opinion that maniacs were best treated by a very severe physical stress, and from the entirely erroneous view that epileptics are protected from schizophrenia by their natural convulsions."

As a definition of lobotomy, he quotes the words of Dr Jacob Bronowski:

"We do not know exactly what the frontal lobes may do. We do not know anything very exactly . . . they make behaviour into patterns. They take the past and pattern it so that it is usable for the future. They organize behaviour. If you do an operation, as people foolishly did, twenty or thirty years ago, in which you cut off the frontal lobes from the rest of the brain, you get an extremely happy animal that you still call a man, but which is quite incapable of making any future-directed decision."

Brain surgery is hazardous to the extreme: ". . . while there is now considerable knowledge of *the function of individual parts of the brain*, the way in which the brain works *as a total system* in all its varied aspects . . . remains almost a mystery." (36)

The practice of lobotomy originated in a reaction to an experiment on two chimpanzees by C Jacobsen and J.F. Fulton. The Portuguese neurosurgeon Egas Moniz used this 'prompt' to perform comparable experiments on human beings. He claimed that out of 27 operations, 7 recovered and 7 removed. As the author points out, criteria of improvement and recovery can be subjective. Dubious indeed!

Because of this ignorance, in the words of Peter R Breggin, "Instead of offering human understanding, psychiatry has fabricated biological and genetic explanations . . . to

justify a massive drug assault that has taken a profound toll in terms of damaged brains and shattered lives.”

Anthony James writes in depth from his experience in a drug advice unit in the mid-1980s, when the abuse of medications, particularly psychiatric ones, started coming to light. He rightly points out that all psychiatric medications can be addictive, and that none of them are without side-effects. It is good to be informed of the *British National Formulary* (BNF) reference work which deals with these aspects, and is available to the public.

Anthony gives a fully detailed report of someone who had been prescribed Largactil.

From his own experience, he explores the issue of ‘informed consent’. He had consulted a Dr Smith about depression, and prescribed various medications which proved ineffective. He rejected Dr Smith’s suggestion that he should enter hospital as a voluntary patient to ‘find the right drug’. Anthony felt that he had a lucky escape. Dr Smith was a charismatic personality, and could easily have pressurized him into undergoing ECT. Once in hospital, his status could easily have been changed from voluntary to sectioned patient. He goes on to describe how he was prescribed Chlorpromazine for 5 years, and then gives a tragic account of a voluntary patient who was ‘gently persuaded’ to give her consent for ECT – a sickening story indeed. Christopher Price MP, who wanted to ban ECT made an incisive observation: “There is widespread abuse of the consent procedures. If you say that you don’t want this treatment, the doctors say, ‘Oh yes, that is part of your illness, not wanting it.’”

“Therefore, as reliable evidence of *incapacity* to make a choice can never be found, any

society that claims to uphold the freedom, integrity, and autonomy of the individual must always assume that capacity exists, just as a citizen accused of a crime is innocent until proved guilty . . . I would also suggest that the rejection of a particular form of treatment should not have to be ‘cogent’ or articulate: a simple ‘no’ should suffice.

We are reminded that that Ernest Hemingway had been subjected to ECT, which induced loss of memory, and possibly his suicide. A.E. Hotchner, a friend of Hemingway’s wife, recalls Hemingway’s own bitter words on the subject: “Well, what is the use of ruining my head and erasing my memory, which is my capital, and putting me out of business? It was a brilliant cure but we lost the patient.” This point is reinforced by the author: “. . . the Royal Commission that led up to the Mental Health Act was very clear on the point somebody who is mentally ill is not necessarily disabled.” But such a person could give an impression of being disabled, and psychiatrists could take advantage of that impression, which would render the patient vulnerable.

Rightful prominence is given to *One Flew Over The Cuckoo’s Nest* by Ken Kesey (1962). Reinforced by the powerful film version released in 1975, this work remains deeply entrenched in popular consciousness.

Plath’s *The Bell Jar* (1963) is largely autobiographical, written in the background of the execution of the Rosenbergs as Soviet spies. Plath is highly critical, through the fictional filter, of her own psychiatrist. Significantly, the real life psychiatrist ignored Sylvia’s desperate plea for her to come to London during the months leading up to the suicide.

Faces in the Water (1961) and *An Angel at My Table* (1984) by Janet Frame. Some powerful work by a writer from New Zealand, a country which has generally been respected for its enlightened and tolerant attitudes. Nobody as articulate as Janet emerged from the UK psychiatric system at that time.

Girl, Interrupted by Susanna Kaysen (1993). Susanna attended McLean Hospital (which Sylvia Plath had attended 10 years previously). She 'signed away her rights' by entering the hospital voluntarily under the false threat of a court order (akin to UK sectioning procedure). Kaysen made a radical step of obtaining her hospital files via a lawyer, and using this as the basis for an attack on the psychiatric system. Her committal was strongly related to fears of youth rebelliousness in the early 1960s.

In Two Minds (1967) and *Family Life* (1972), by David Mercer. The former is a television play, the latter a film, telling the same story 'although the order in which incidents happen and the characters themselves differ significantly in each work.' The theme is that of a young girl with a domineering mother who, amongst other impositions, makes her daughter have an abortion, whilst hypocritically proclaiming the criminality of abortion. "Is it surprising that someone who is subtly controlled by parental disapproval and by internalized guilt for years begins to feel that she is a robot controlled from a distance?" A sympathetic psychiatrist is thwarted in his attempt to guide Kate/Janice to independence of mind.

The Divided Self, R D Laing (1960). In the author's opinion "Laing's later work deteriorated as he fashionably described those suffering from psychosis as sane people in an insane world, so that the methods he used in an alternative refuge for patients

became increasingly dangerous and irresponsible."

Anthony James unflinchingly outlines the affinities between psychiatric abuses in the 'civilised, democratic' Western world and the measures adopted in Nazi Germany and the Soviet Union. Re the UK, he discusses in detail the atrocities perpetrated by Dr William Sargant, who in 1940 established a psychiatric unit where he experimented on soldiers. The Ministry of Defence ordered him to keep his findings secret. He was given a free hand to administer ECT, and some of his patients died. He was never brought to justice.

The 5th chapter relates to the author's personal experiences. 1974 was a stressful year for him, and coincided with the death of Jacob Bronowski, the expulsion of Alexander Solzhenitsyn and the resignation of Nixon. In his state of depression, he was prescribed several medications which proved ineffectual. Anthony's psychiatrist, Dr Smith suggested that he went to hospital as a voluntary patient. James challenges the label of Bi-Polar-Affective Disorder.

The concluding chapter makes an astute comparison between psychiatric abuse and rape, suggesting that psychiatrists can get sadistic pleasure from their ministrations. A final plea for freedom and independence of thought: "If we have blind faith in the authority and expertise of any elite within society, political, medical, or technical, we lose the ability to think clearly . . . There is no clear dividing line between psychotic illness and the inner anguish that we all experience at times." There is a powerful reference to Dr Peter R Breggin who claims that some medical staff can get sado-erotic pleasure from administering brain operations.

In the words of one reviewer, James Maw “Anthony James uses clear language to lay out the story of the inhumane treatments that have blighted the reputation of modern psychiatry . . . This book should be read by anyone who is setting out on a career in psychiatry and has been given the standard texts to study. It will also be of invaluable help to those who were the patients, who so often feel isolated and alone in their experience.”

Dave Russell

Taking Actions To Promote Wellbeing & Challenge Stigma

Emachi Eneje

<emachi_eneje@yahoo.co.uk> Jul 03

12:10PM +0100

Hello All,

Hope this finds you well.

I previously send a few emails about Actions Beat Stigma. A new online activist platform I've been gradually developing the past several months. The platform was at different stages of the build process with those previous emails.

The part aim of the platform was to give mental health activists who use social media to promote wellbeing and challenge stigma a platform that built from scratch with the intention supporting what activists do.

I'm pleased that the core of the platform is built and activists are already taking actions.

Of course, they'll be new features and gradual refinement, with time.

If relevant for you, join in at <http://www.actionsbeatstigma.com/>

With time I'll put together a

document/report/whatever properly exploring the design of technology that supports activism. Prior to building Actions Beat Stigma I'd been involved with "activism" of some form on various platforms: Facebook, Twitter, Google+, LinkedIn etc. However, along with a few pieces of academic writing that suggest that these platforms aren't particularly the most useful for the range of activist activities (though certainly useful in some, or many aspects) I felt there was a need to explore technology and activism.

Again if relevant for you and the things you consider, I'd be happy to send a copy. Sometime.

Happy Thursday.

Hope all is good.

Em

The NHS and the EU

People's NHS supporter Paul Giles was recently diagnosed with cancer. He wanted to find out about how TTIP, the new EU trade deal, would affect his treatment and our NHS.

So we sent him to Brussels to find out. He knocked on doors, phoned offices, did everything he could to get some answers. And no one would help him.

We've made a video of his journey. Please watch it, share it widely. The more people who see it, the more we can show how secretive the EU is being. The link to the youtube video is

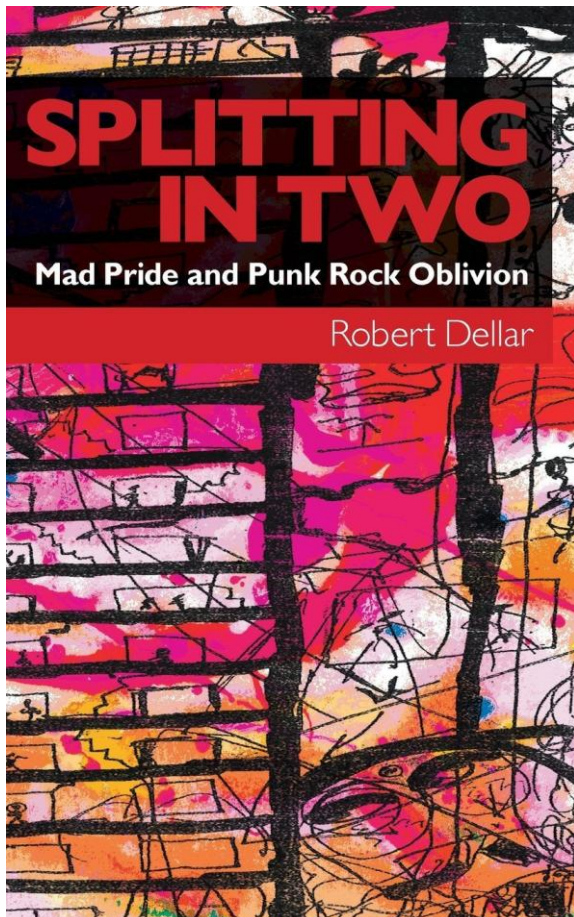
here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mcgBUrHAHXo>

This video is important. It shows just how little bureaucrats in Brussels are telling us.

SPLITTING IN TWO – *Mad Pride and Punk Rock Oblivion*

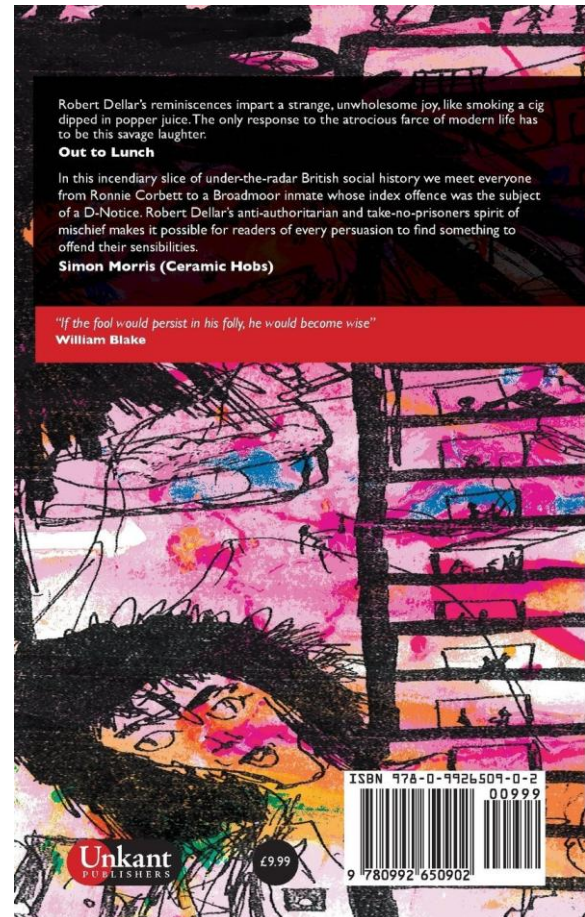
by **Robert Dellar**, Unkant Publishers (1
Mar 2014)

ISBN-10: 0992650909 **ISBN-13:** 978-
0992650902 £9.79



In this book Robert Dellar traces his life journey from his childhood in a working class area of Watford, through Sussex University and the London squatting community, to the murky waters of mental health, as he describes it. Of special importance is the pioneering work Robert did in Hackney Hospital. Here he set up a Patients' Council and Advocacy Department. At the time of the hospital's closure in the mid 90s, Robert organised some lively gigs described here in colourful detail. His journey then continues to **Southwark**

MIND, (the first user run MIND group) – then on to **Mad Pride** – an organisation who through the gigs they put on linked mental health to rock and roll. Together with his friend **Peter Shaughnessy** they also turned mental health demonstrations into theatre.



The title of this book is also the title of a song by punk legends Alternative TV. They make several appearances here, as does **Nikki Sudden** and two Survivor Punk bands, **The Ceramic Hobbs** and **Rudimentary Peni**. Lesser known but equally talented artists like Dave Russell and **The Astronauts** also make a number of appearances here – as does **Ronnie Corbett**; he turns out to be a decent chap. While Mad Pride is associated with Punk Rock, a number of folk musicians and poets also took part in their gigs.

Some parts of this book deal with grim topics; there is also much tragedy described here. But a sense of humour runs through this book, and much compassion is shown. A little anarchy is also at play. The titles for a lot of the chapters come from songs. Many of the titles relating to the Punk and New Wave years. This period of time being of importance to Robert as it was when he produced many fanzines.

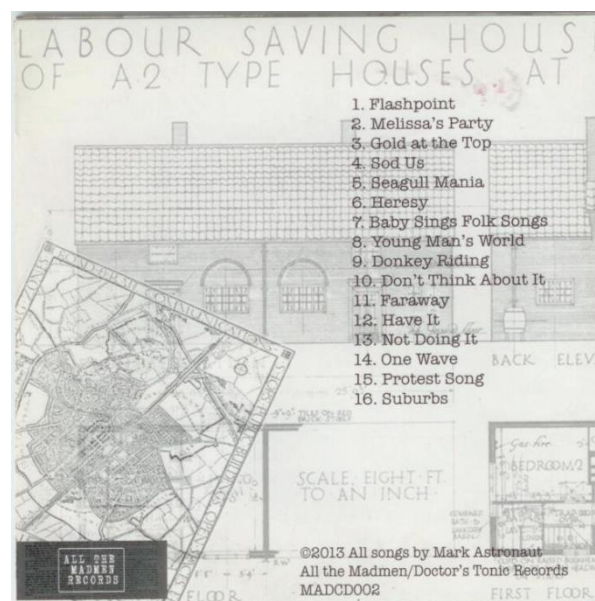
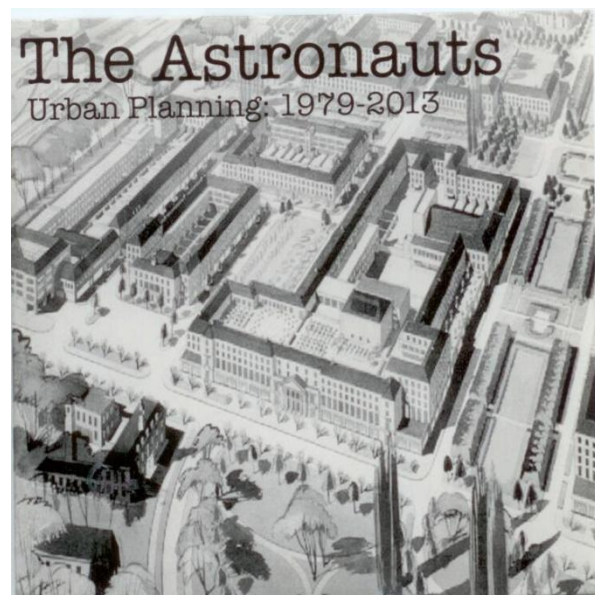
His fanzine influence would continue with the Southwark MIND newsletter. This was always an Inspiring magazine to read. Along with the different realities featured here, there are pieces of fiction but they fit in well. Some little known capitalist scandals are exposed like the exploitation carried out by the drug companies. Also exposed are charities like **SANE (Schizophrenia a National Emergency)** who, while appearing to be respectable do a lot to demonise people with that label. Also exposed is the reality of life for people who are diagnosed as Schizophrenic. A life of heavy medication, stigma, and locked wards.

This book is an enjoyable read. It is very entertaining. Robert's journey has been an uphill struggle; it shows both his vulnerabilities and his strengths. But there have been proud achievements along the way. An example being the **SANE** demonstration Mad Pride organised in the late 1990s where **Marjory Wallace** came out to face her public. I have a lot of respect for the good work that Robert Dellar has done over the years.

Frank Bangay June 2014

(To buy a copy of this book visit Amazon and type in the relevant information)

THE ASTRONAUTS – URBAN PLANNING All The Madmen records



The Astronauts are based in the Home Counties, in particular Welyn Garden City. This CD traces their history from 1979 to 2013. Through the dedication of singer and songwriter Mark Wilkins, better known as Mark Astronaut, the band are still active, and will no doubt continue to be so. I didn't get to hear the Astronauts until the mid 1990s, when I saw them play at a Mad Pride gig. Mark Astronaut has shown continuous support to such causes. While

it was a late introduction to the band, I am glad that I discovered them.



Over the years they've had a number of different line-ups. This is reflected in the different musical styles displayed here. Some tracks like *Sod Us* and *Seagull Mania* are folk songs. Both songs feature a lively fiddle. When I have seen Mark Astronaut perform *Seagull Mania*, (a song about urban squalor and disillusion caused by the failing of radical ideas), he has always sung it *a capella*. It is interesting to hear him do it here as a folk song. In recent years Mark has teamed up with a group of teenage musicians. One recent song *Hersey* is about the loss of community. Something that is happening too often in these days of gentrification. It shows the band tackling 70s Dub Reggae in fine form, while another song *Have It* shows them taking on rap and techno sounds. The song talks about modern day DJ culture in its lyrics.

Sometimes the Astronauts have put gentle tunes to harsh lyrics. An example of this being *Baby Sings Folk Songs*. However the music gets tougher as the song moves on: at one point in the song Mark sings about the Fulham nightlife being controlled by the knife. We are reminded that there was a time when parts of Fulham were quite rough. Another song *Don't Think About It* features some nice saxophone playing from Loll Coxhill. This takes the song off somewhere else before Mark brings us back again with his lyrics and vocals.

Another recent song *Melissa's Party* is about the down side of hedonism. Musically and lyrically it has a brooding

sense of menace running through it. A similar sense of menace runs through the epic *Protest Song*.



Since the Astronauts started in the late 1970s Mark Astronaut has shown himself to be a fine singer and a gifted songwriter. As the new songs here show Mark's songwriting and singing gifts continue to shine brightly. Mark Astronaut is a national treasure.

Frank Bangay July 2014

To buy this record visit All The Madmen website at www.allthemen.co.uk also available at All The Madmen is the 45 single *A Typical English Day* – one of my favourite Astronauts songs.

There are a number of Astronaut songs on YouTube including some live performances. There is also an American surf rock band from the 1960s called the Astronauts. To get the right band type in Mark Astronaut



Recycled Wheel Hub
(Artwork & Photo by Debjani Chatterjee)

Chaos Calls by Julie McNamara

Vital Xposure 2012 ISBN 978-0-9571851-0-4
£7.99



CHAOS CALLS

Julie McNamara

“The entire collection is boldly stamped with my own brand of feminism. They are from my perspective as a woman and as a lesbian feminist. They are all autobiographical. Writing is what helped me to survive, writing saw me through my own dark nights of the soul.”

“Chaos became my home” stands boldly in the centre of the author’s Foreword. She had been devastated by a succession of bereavements, and struggled, through her writings and her visual artwork, to reconnect with ‘the breath of life’. The collection is divided into four sections, *It’s Cold Out There, The Journey, Mother and Love*, and embellished by Julie’s surreal paintings and drawings.

A Solitary Date: “This may well be every average woman’s reverie, as I am pointedly noting the only date in my diary is for a pap smear. Average men don’t have smear tests.”

Greenham honours a successful attempt to restore peace and the balance of nature. “I was protesting the presence of the US nuclear base at Greenham Common in the 90s with hundreds of other feminists. *Greenham* is a moment on returning to that very soil, I was invited to run writers’ workshops on Greenham common some 20 years later – in the portakabin where the soldiers had tooled up to challenge the women!”

The eco-balance theme is reiterated in *Hollywood Parade*: “I swear a pledge to gravity/I’m returning to the soil//it’s a bit by bit retrieval/of Mother Nature’s toil”. *Holton Haiku* is an enigmatic celebration of an Equinox celebration or the like – again, “the land yields promise”.

Learning Curve is an impassioned portrayal of a four-year-old from a one-parent family. “The boy was *alleged* to be disturbed but what disturbed me most was the letters **sent to his blind Mother** inviting her to come and discuss his behaviour.” The end of the poem reverberates with a pathetic, lame excuse: “I’m told his mother is registered blind/but I didn’t know when we wrote/why she’d ignored the invitation/and all our other notes.”

Millbank honours a stately building, giving token acknowledgement, with a touch of remorse, of the anonymity of the receptionist. *Plastic Paddies* demonstrates Julie’s passionate loyalty to her Irish roots. *Misery Gnaws* – a once beautiful, now

desolated woman who lost all her sons in the Bosnian conflict with Serbia. *We'll Come To Power* is a rant on behalf of disability activists.

Thank You For The Flowers is an ironic expression of thanks to those who attended the funeral of a dead lover. All of those attending church would have frowned upon same sex relationships. A couple had experienced true love 'though never joined in church', and all he saw was shame. She ironically thanks him for 'the limelight/the place in the front pew'. *A Thought For His Mother* . . . the deep grief of a mother about the downfall of a so promising son.

With the second section *The Journey*, the poems increase in intensity. *The Valley Of The Shadows* – a poem of bereavement, echoes, and contradicts, the Bible and Dylan Thomas ('death has no dominion'). Shadows mock the tottering frame which casts them. The spiritual and temporal are fused in its stark conclusion: ". . . my very soul is stretched across/the cold clay soil/that snatched you from my breast."

The title poem *Chaos Calls* is about a failed suicide attempt. Mac Connemara is Julie herself: "My name means Son / daughter of the sea hound. So I went towards the sea, to throw myself off the cliff. The suicide attempt failed; I am still here, honestly."

There is a strong feeling of contrariety, of opposite directions in the absorption: ". . . shrinking from the earth's surface/and scattering bright electric charges out into the universe/I stood beneath/the pink imploding stars/chaos called me in". She flies suicidally off a cliff edge. Typically, the spiritual and the carnal are fused: 'fucking the Pope without a condom/performing the stations of the cross/in the shape of a clitoris.

The Prozac Princess bitterly parodies the pseudo euphoria caused by that medication: "Watch me soft-shoe shuffle/on the Diazepam dazzle-dance daze/where all the world's a forget-me-fog . . ." Britain's sunshine smarty/the quack quack quack's new hope". Rightly, she decides to trash her medications – and look for a job as a chemist. *Place of Safety Orders* is my own rant at 136 sections. I've experienced two. They never feel safe to me and I have not yet been taken to a place by the nice policemen that I would define as 'safe'.

Some background information is called for with *The Hag o'Bheara*:

"Legend has it that this rock which rises above Coulagh Bay represents the fossilized remains of the face of the Cailleach Beara awaiting her husband Manannan, God of the Sea, to return to her. Her presence still haunts visitors who leave coins, trinkets and all sorts of other small offerings, on and around the rock. Other legends say that the Hag stole a Bible from the Catholic cleric Caitighearn. In order to recover his revered book of God, Caitighearn struck the Hag with his staff, instantly turning her to stone. Whatever legend you believe in, the Hag of Beara in many ways has come to represent Mna na hEireann – the women of Ireland – due to her power, fertility, and strength. Surely she will rise to help nurture Ireland once again. Located only minutes from Eyeries, on the Kilcatherine coastal road, the Hag is worth a visit." (Eyeries)

The poem celebrates the supreme strength of women surviving gang rape. Its persona is both victim and conqueror supreme – 'some sad carcass/spent and disarrayed' . . . but then 'There is no stallion can break me in/no horse I have not ridden into hell'.

The pain of rape is emphasised supremely: "did you know your arse/doesn't open like your cunt/unless your raw arse rips/in giving birth to

venom” “my body weeps an open wound/seeping through the carapace/that once festered between my thighs.” In Julie’s words: “Your body doesn’t open when you are being raped.” The Scrag seems to have infinite resilience and survival capacity.

Abandon Hope – a brilliant gloss on Dante’s slogan: “did they mean the womb/the world/or just this grimy cell?” – emphatically the latter. Some happy whimsicality in *Iguana Dance*. *Hearing Voices* represents a terrifying fusion of physical injury and mental distress – it suggests an extremely difficult and painful birth –

A possible still-birth, and the disposal of a body: “Will you place the lumps/in carefully sorted jam jars?/In formaldehyde?/With clever little labels?/Or dash them in the bin/in disgrace?” *Conscious Coma* refers to major surgery: “My captor wields a scalpel/carefully carves/a continent with my breasts.” The surgeon who did the stitches from left to right ‘pulled tight, too taut the line,/creating rucked ripples in my skin . . .’

The *Night Before Release* – an outlandish display of surreal luxury of items to be put into a mental suitcase before discharge . . . “detailing all the things I have imagined I need to take with me on the next journey – medicated to the high hilt on release from hospital.”

An absolute wealth of references: **Armitage Shanks** is the United Kingdom’s premier manufacturer of commercial grade sanitaryware and fittings. *Armitage Shanks* refers to the label you read when vomiting down the toilet. Tablets often make me vomit.

Packie Manus Byrne, the Irish folksinger, is known to me. (perhaps a reader-friendly footnote for these two would be in order). Some inspired absurdity in such things as ‘en extra rib for Adam,/a pair of specs for Eve . . .’. “There’s a lot to be said for medication.” – perhaps so, in terms of activating the imagination. Packie is one of my

oldest (quite literally) and dearest friends. I take him everywhere with me. Although we no longer work together. He still advises on my work from his home in Ardara.”

Dibbuk – a restless, usually malicious, [spirit](#) which haunts the consciences of the living, and sometimes even possesses them. But Julie thwarts the feisty fiend and flushes away the pills.

The last three poems in this section, *d’Anu*, *Wind* and *The Elephant Dance*, are in lighter vein.

“*d’Anu* refers to the goddess Anu, from whom we take the name the ‘Paps of Anu’ referring to the Kerry hills approaching Killarney. Ireland was a matriarchal culture long before the Roman Catholics stepped in. They had to convince the Irish people to leave behind their pagan ways, stop worshipping the Sheela na Gigs and replaced every Sheela with a statue of the Virgin Mary in each and every grotto around Ireland. (They knew it had to be a woman, a female deity to replace Anu’s Sheelas. Jesus wouldn’t have done.)”

The next section, *Mother* is dedicated to Julie’s own mother, who lives with dementia – “She’s not having power/of my eternity” (gloss on Power of Attorney). *Mend Me* is a plea to a loved one, across the boundary of mortality: “I need you to hold me in your heart still more/now you are gone/for I will not play the martyr/married to death forever/abandoned here to soldier on.”

“It was in fact My Mother's bittersweet reference to being at on her own funeral – presumably coming back to life for the Wake!

Author's Note: “In fact the current show I am touring, *Let Me Stay* is written for her, alongside her stories, footage and photographs taken over many years. We will show on September 3rd and 4th at Purcell Rooms at Southbank centre. *Silver Shoes* is my Mother referring to attending her own funeral (she probably will).”

Wandering Alarm – being on the ward has to have its funny side: “I'm having a High Commissioner . . . I never miss my shrinks”. *Your Father* portrays a fragmented, dysfunctional, self-deprecating family with strong affiliations to psychiatric institutions. *Eulogy for My Father* – part ironic, in view of the father's alcoholism.

The last section, appropriately, is called *Love*. *Mae* concerns a woman pianist, playing a 'sad concerto' in memory 'of one who sang that same old song/not so long ago.' Her conflicting emotions are reflected in her piano playing, changing from a harmonious formal structure into wild, discordant improvisation – 'crudely shattering/the pipe dream/ivory tower/she had scaled . . .' *She* – half-joking reference to an ex-partner: “. . . so she's going East to find herself/to flirt with death and demons//because she loves fruit/and she's married an onion//that's why she's left me. *I look like Daddy* – could this be a lament of the newborn “She sits wrapped tightly/around an open wound . . .”?

She Prefers Blood – does the security blanket relate to a painful afterbirth, or to mental distress – or both: “. . . we sit with

the great chasm/gaping/like an open wound between us/I don't suckle/she is yearning/to feed . . .”

Hot Havana is an unreserved eulogy of a lover, while *Madinah* celebrates a true love that lasts – “Well, when you're ready/rotting apples grow the richer/make the sweetest cider/and I'll be sat beside you/while we drink to friendship/and nurse old wounds/forever home!”

The names of the illustrations provide further substantial food for thought: *Freight Train*; *Daddy's Home*; *Place of Safety*; *Cliffhanger*; *Specimen*; *Angel of Death*; *Clearing*; *Lost*; *Dervish* and *Thy Will Be Done*.

As an Afterword, what better than Julie McNamara's Foreword: “And writing through the chaos wreaked by the great void in my heart kept me alive. I now offer you a glimpse of the first faltering steps towards hope, the breath of life again.”

Dave Russell

TREAD SOFTLY

Invention of Mother
You lift me up
I am nearer to death than to love.
She will always be more than a memory
Who beckons my mind to follow its
streams
Of rivers of seas.
Oceanic underfoot
Spread like Yeats' dreams.
Another day over
Another year nearer
I cry myself younger.

LABELS

Images that find a label
Pinned upon their chests.
Chests that breathe so heavily
All others profess
To own
The distress, which only they possess.

The distress of a world bound in chains
Chains with no lock and key.

In the beginning was the name
A name with no beginning
And evacuated by history.

History is fear of faces
Fear is real.
But, reality is mere imagery
Attached to labels

Labels are to blame.
Tear off our labels
And we all look the same.

(taken from *A Life Reborn* by **Louise M. Hart**)

THE WOUND OF MANHATTAN (A Holocaust Poem for 9/11)

By **András Mezei**

*(Translated from the Hungarian
& Edited by Thomas Ország-Land)*



1

The Horror

Oh – the ashes! Dissolved in the dust of the ruins
of our Twin Towers of Babel, merge forever
the sacred remains of the slain . . . as well as their
slayers.

Humanity! Your name is being abused
again to justify mass murder for righteousness,
freedom, goodness and God . . . whichever god.

Appoint for the killers safe cities to hide and to heal
for they are turning themselves into bombs in
flight,
exploding a Holocaust of random hatred,
destroying themselves with others they do not
bother
even to count or encounter or comprehend.

The rage and the plight of the world have accumulated,
blighting the human face and the beauty of life.
A lust for death and betrayal invades our households.

As the sap withdraws from a winter-chilled tree,
the vital lights of our culture retreat below ground.

The worldwide web sags limp in our digital newsrooms.

The news is stark. It may dismay us: If we trample down the soft black earth of the molehills, the soft new Holocaust ashes might . . . fill our mouths.

2 Psalm

From the ashes, arises this psalm of our time:
Just yesterday, the killers dug up the sacred bones of our dead and boiled them up for soap. Today, our own societies clandestinely harvest our own remains for commercial use. God of the Jews! and Jesus! and Allah! Whoever!

. . . They can tolerate this, as long as we will.

My God, this hatred burns Your very domain,
the land where the predator does not detest the prey
but desires it, where the eyes of the carnivore
are green as the grass, where the satiated lion
peaceably lies alongside the trusting lamb.

Oh – the powerful burden of the ashes!
Gather a handful from the grounds of our ruined
Towers of Babel, my Lord, to wipe away
the rage from face of humanity, Thine own image
that lives and dies by slaughter and by inheritance.

For there is no hatred left in the ashes... I know that.

For sacred are the remains of people, and pure

the marks of the Lord and the people left in the ashes.

3 America

Mourning Manhattan, daughter of America:
squat down on your stiletto heels in the ashes,
this tender, soft, rich dust, and summon a jeweller
to fashion the ashes into bracelets and rings
to advertise your magnetic might and wealth,
and a necklace with a medallion adorned
by your delightful profile in high relief...
like the raised security print on a banknote.

You ruled the world from these twin towers of trade,
and wore a mantle of glass that swallowed the light
without reflecting an image. From the multitude
of our immigrants' boats, we marvelled at your dark,
magnificent, impenetrable sunglasses.
And your super-fast elevators raised us
from our sea-levels to the waters of heaven.

And even the traders of the ancient world
still lift their envious gaze towards your shores
across the millennia. Fleets of sunken galleys
would
gladly rise from the depths to bring you their cargoes
because you have become our mainmast, America!

4 Trade

Your dainty shoes, Manhattan, have walked the moon.
Your frontiers today embrace the celestial bodies.
You have adapted our oars of Biblical craftsmanship
to navigating your solar-powered spacecraft . . .

Collect the surviving treasures of Solomon's
fortune
from the Holocaust ashes, for they want to please
you.
And so do the wines congealed in the lost
amphorae,
the diamonds and rubies and jades of the Queen of
Sheba,
and all the world's data that seek to advise you of
goods
on offer, and goods in demand. *We must sail on* –
the message of traders will soon be bounced
between
the planets across the electric storms of space.

Your enterprise is admired by all the world.
Even your enemies share your loss of the towers
whose busy trading floors collapsed with the
dreams
of profits entertained by warrior merchants
who have hung up their shields and helmets and
swords
in your spirit: *Wage no war – but trade!*

Humanity that you've led into space, Manhattan,
trusts you to shape and define our shared
ambitions.

5 The Merchant

And the towers of our ambition will rise again
and our conflicting tongues and dreams and
schemes
prevail and unite in common comprehension.
But first we must learn again... how to run
business.

Those who have eyes and ears can see and hear:
Good merchants do not prey upon strangers. They
welcome
and offer them tea and cakes and fragrant seeds,
because the security of home and business

depends upon the safety of every road.

When the traders display their goods on offer,
their spirit ennobles their merchandise, for they
love
the essence of trade as well as its substance . . . The
merchants
convey their customers past the sand-dunes of
commerce
towards the mutual gain rewarding a sale.

Such endeavours survive any suicide flight
because a trustworthy merchant serves the
consumer,
because the God of the Jews and Jesus and
Mohamed
sails with the flying carpet of Aladdin's spirit.

Don't let the worshippers of death detain you –
Arise from the Holocaust dust and walk,
Manhattan!

6 The Advice

And listen again how an ancient teacher and trusted
business consultant put it: *If in your greed
you add house to house and join field to field,
you will be left to live alone in the land.*

He spoke to you and me in the greatest best-seller
spanning our space and time: *How dare you crush
and grind the faces of the poor into dust?**
Your answer to our need... must be pure as the
ashes.

The faces, the eyes, the mouths, the dreams of the
poor
are all your markets, Manhattan. You must protect
them.

Deploy the power of your wealth to ease the pain

of the gaping wounds of our decaying cities.

Leave us something worth saving. Return a third
of the profits. Dampen the faceless embers of rage.

Remain the spiritual tower of our freedom,
America, support our wretched masses,
and give us sanctuary! give us work, and a chance:
give us a chance in our lands against our tyrants!

And learn to respect humanity's loss in the sacred
dust of even the slayers... as well as the slain.

=====
*The Holy Bible/Isaiah, 3:15.

András Mezei (1930-2008), a foremost poet of the
Hungarian Holocaust that reached its peak 70 years ago.
More of his work in English appears in *Survivors:
Hungarian Jewish Poets of the Holocaust* (2014)
and *Christmas in Auschwitz* (2010), both translated and
edited by Thomas Ország-Land and published by
Smokestack Books, England.

Thomas Ország-Land (b. 1938), poet and award-
winning foreign correspondent based in London and his
native Budapest. His poetry appears in current,
forthcoming or very recent issues of *Acumen*, *Ambit*, *The
Hungarian Quarterly*, *The Jewish Quarterly*, *The London
Magazine* and *Stand*.



Lotus

(Silk Painting by Debjani Chatterjee)

Poems by Sanjay Bhattacharya

Translated from Bengali by Debjani
Chatterjee

Snake

The snake comes and goes in the room,
bangles tinkle on the wrists,
anklets chime on the feet.

The snake comes and goes in the room,
Death stands at the threshold
in secret and with veil pulled across.

The snake comes and goes in the room,
pouring frothy venom –

an acute burning is in that addiction.

The snake comes and goes in the room.
its touch is deadly cold –
life is stunned in that craving.

The snake goes and comes in the room,
twists and coils around virtue,
squeezing the breath
and trapping in stains and blemishes.

Building

The water that washed the woman
labourer's body
strengthens the foundation of my house.

Her child's fly-smothered face
and shrill screams echo in every brick.

Their filthy sweat washes
my prized second-storey roof.

At the close of a tiring day,

along with the smoke from baking bread,
in every corner of the walls
wafts the tune of a folk-song.

A year has rolled by.
I count on my hand the few remaining
months
and when they will go away,
having built my happy nest.
Then
four walls and a roof will shelter my world
where we'll dwell happily
for all the year round.

To You Only

When sorrow once loves someone
it lifelong presses itself close to him.
Like a kept woman,
it hugs him with both hands.
Nevertheless,
since I have you without asking,
then
come, Sorrow – forsaking hope of
happiness
let me love only you.

Discomfort

If I sit on a very costly sofa
a feeling of bewilderment comes over me.
Though I try a thousand times to be at
ease
I find that my trousers or my shirt
have an uncomfortable crease somewhere
that calls everyone and says:
“Look, where Luck has seated
a lower middle class fellow today!”

About the poet **Sanjay Bhattacharya**



Sanjay
Bhattacharya is a
distinguished
Indian artist

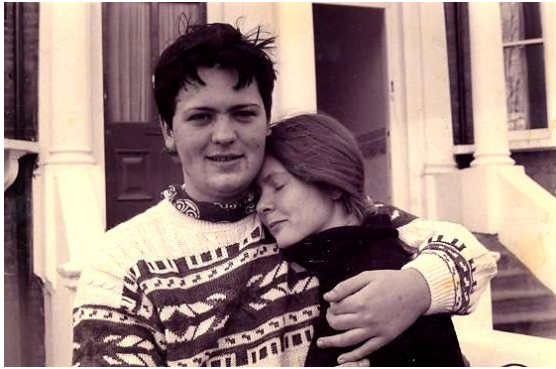
whose work may be seen in India
House, London, and in many other
prestigious venues around the
world. His paintings, photography
and poetry in Bengali are known
for their exploration of
contemporary urban life. In his
bilingual collection *Ostitwo /
Existence* (Creative Minds), the
translations are by Debjani
Chatterjee.

About the translator **Debjani Chatterjee**



Debjani Chatterjee,
MBE is a well-known
international poet, a
patron of Survivors'
Poetry and founder of

The Healing Word. She has written
and edited over 60 books, including
Namaskar: New & Selected Poems. She
is also a fine translator from several
South Asian languages and won the
Muse India Poetry in Translation
First Prize for translations of Nazrul
Islam's poems and songs.



Jesse Ferguson – A Snapshot

A 'vulnerable and sensitive poet', who suffered from schizophrenia, fell to his death in mysterious circumstances during a holiday in Majorca.

Hospital Consultant's son **Jesse Colin Mark Ferguson**, 23, of Regent's Park Road, Camden, was on holiday with his mother, **Celia Potterton**, and friend **Lydia Loizoa** when, with no eyewitnesses, he fell from a second floor balcony on June 9th 1997.

His father told the court his son heard voices: "The most dominant thing about him was that his auditory hallucinations seemed to be troubling him more. He was a sensitive and troubled young man."

He said his son, who had done voluntary work and had been attending job interviews before he died, was strong physically and had been a cross-country runner at one stage.

Celia described her son as 'absolutely beautiful, charming, a lovely bloke, very artistic, a brilliant poet and very musical. With his artistic temperament, his moods did change from moment to moment.'

The poems and artwork presented here are dedicated to his memory

Compact

On the astral flight
comets race through endless night

Angels save
falling fallout people's
they don't
however
necessarily

hover above churches' steeples

Angels are my eyes
all my soul is stored
in HIS storehouse
power dream hits me too obscene
and have balanced my power
to hook up with April shower
lower yourself to indignity
and be pretty
and walk with pride
and hide sometime
but don't let your roll subside
take some time, but not all the time
a walk forward and onward
loose and lean, soft and serene
and ride the mean street and look will come
back to you
and that which you forsook

boy
have I got a tale to spin
a tale
where has-beens
are the operative force
where they are diamond-coloured
kings and queens
because they are saluted in the street
by the neat and proper
suits
heading their way for work
leaving the has-beens
to direct the processes
and machinations of fate
that will govern their day
the homeless, the invalids
the afflicted
rue the day that the suits displaced them
and tell the cars
in which information
to put on their display

Night Raven

The night raven
is in descending flight
to end inconsequential
mind embroiling fight
with claws that
restored
my sight
this spine pinning bird is fighting
against
me with God's authority
to make darkness
light

Your voice lifts
my languid limbs
out of the maelstrom
dearth I carry
day to day
from shocked sunrise
to twisted bed
as by honourable, abominable citizens
I am led
easily through
youthful living and live graveyard
of those who have dared
to cross
over too many times
the border of what
I'm told is decent: 'pukka', 'kosher',
'sound', 'deadly'
and who have tried
to break down the barrier of pain,
another abyss



THE SHIP IS SAILING HIGH
ONLOOKERS WATCH US FLOAT BY
ROLLING ON GREEN SEA'S DEEP
WHILE THE LAND HAS BEEN PUT TO SLEEP
LAND IN THE SUN
THE EVAPORATES IN FLASH
NO MORE CHANCE TO LIVE, LANDWALK ON LAND
AS THE SHIP ROLLS OVER THE LARRY SANDS
TEMPEST ATTACKS
TAKING US BY SURPRISE
SHIP SINKS
ONLY THE GOOD + WISE SURVIVE
SEIZING SOME DEBRIS OF THE SHIP
THE TEMPEST TRIUMPHES
THE
GOOD WISE FLOATS ALONG THE OCEAN
DESPERATE AND TIRED
CARRIED BY THE TIDE'S MOTION
AND JUST WHEN GAINING UP HOPE
THEY SEE A STARK MOUNT + CASTLE IN THE SUNSET
PLEADING FOR THE DRAWBRIDGE TO DROP
IN DESPERATION NOW
THEY WANT THE WITNESS TO STOP
JUST THEN CASTLE SHATTER
CLATTERS INTO DUST AND RUST
ALL IS GONE
AND THE GOOD WISE ARE AGAIN SURPRISED
AND LEAVE FROM THIS WORLD LIKE THE BAD + IDIOTIC
3.7.2016

As you enter my lair
what do you think
do you care
that I might
be transmitting
the waves
to release the slave
of a flipped over backward society
righteous in its vanity
high on nurturing and furnishing men,
women,
spiritual destroyers
with toy guns and torches
squirting deathly serums through
needles into the culture
of our body, soul and mind
still they insult our nurturing
furnishing insanity

The hill is beautiful today
my woman is here too
maybe she doesn't know it
I wish that I could see her again
We could know it.

She's been with me all afternoon.
It's like a weary knife and a rusty silver spoon
clacking
Together, I pray that no cataclysmic clash of
wills will let
me down. As money brings us down,
and therefore upwards
if she was here and now I'd tell her 'you have
to taste
below to know what is above.'

After this sad SOS
and I am going to throw it all away
dear Prudence come out to play
that's how I feel about myself
cold and wrapped up, warm and alone
so keep the words you have just heard
and interpret life into the vision you want it to
become
go out there! And be second to none!!

Let's talk about the dream I have –
a world with no disparity, no squabbling,
hatred
and a place of dignity, rest and love for
everyone.

For me a house on the hill, the woman I have
yet to meet,
the song I have yet to sing, the joy my children
will bring and for you your dream
maybe a rainbow
a tropical landscape



a perfect world
heralded by angels

is this the beginning of the end
I hope so
because that is the beginning.

A love so true
purple rainbow
kept inside my heart
glow hidden
revealed, died, resurrected, slept
but kept alive in some realm
for my benefit and for the benefit of radiating
love like a force from above
after the storm and thunder
and plunder of the precious
when the Sun of humanity shines
the rainbow glows again with warmth
and transfigures and transforms
the entirety of the form of my life.

Unlimited 2014

Perceptions of Difference:

DAO & Survivors' Poetry

4 September 2014

On Level 5 on the Royal Festival Hall lies the **Saison Poetry Library**: an eclectic crowd gathered to hear poetry from four stalwarts of the Survivors' Movement. Wendy Young was there for the inspiring words of **Hilary Porter**, **John O'Donoghue**, **Debjani Chatterjee MBE**, **Frank Bangay** the Bard of Hackney! MC'd by **Colin Hambrook**.



Under The Asylum Tree: one of the gems from the Survivors' Press imprint, on the shelves of the Poetry Library

Colin furnished us with a brief background of this 'Gang of Four' who have each worked tirelessly to bring society's marginalised to

the fore and certainly opened up a valuable training ground for his journey through disability arts. Colin has not forgotten his roots and kept a link with Survivors' development, going onto set up DAO (Disabled Arts Online) which is carrying on the beacon of light for the disenfranchised with something to say.



There's a theory that Shakespeare should be read starting from the end and so here at the beginning is Colin's final word on the quality of the reading tonight was 'texture'.

Hilary Porter, a 'sprite of light' worked hard to organise events and writes delightful snippets of life and treated us to poems from her book *Don't Trust the Moon*.





Power, a poem for her small daughter paddling on pebbles on Brighton Beach is testimony to the 'power' of poetry as a preservation of life. What an alternative to flowers at a funeral?

'*Those Days*' (yes we've all had 'em) summed up succinctly when it all goes wrong!

A few gloomy but lyrical poems like *War Baby* (this woman is so nice she feels guilty for being born in WW2 when so many were killed!) and '9/11' and then – a dash of HP sauce in *Meaning of Life*: 'obeyed bible and procreated when the world was empty, now it's too full.... couch potatoes proved Darwin wrong'

Ending with her ode to her 'Arachnophobia' 'execute or extradition to the garden' it was like a friendly aunt was leaving the stage.

John O'Donoghue, ex-Chair of Survivors', reviews on DAO and is a 'fine poet' with a slick wit ('how the bleedin' hell do I know' when I asked the title of his 2nd poem of the night), so taken was I with his *Sectioned: A Life Interrupted* – a biography detailing his journey through the mental health system.

Telling tales of sipping/drinking cool lemonade outside the pub while his broad made dad's supping stout inside, jogging the collective memory for many a Bash Street kid in *First*. Reminded of Charon the

guardian of Hades, John talks of the Ha'penny Bridge crossing the Liffey.

Once in Asylums, now in a University, dishing out creativity rather than being dished drugs in a similar world where green fields are solace. *From an Asylum Diary* documents daily suicide attempts/ window smashed/ dances/ at night drowning in a pool and then 'Lull' resonates as he tells of finding a clan, a Survivors family.

From out of the dark, John moved into the light with a jolly tribute to Jonathan Swift and ended with an obituary written on a Four Seasons Hotel notepad at the passing of Seamus Heaney *The Gift*.

Debjani Chatterjee all round 'national treasure' and tribune for the unpublished ('if they haven't been published yet they'd better be' before reading poems by Survivors Gail Campbell's tribute to Kurt Cobain, 'rattling in a nut house with Cobain in 'How Things Fall' and Claire McLaughlin's 'I'm too Lazy'... with the exception of making cups of tea (aren't we all?). Heart wrenchingly we heard how Amita Patel took her own life a few years ago and Debjani read her poem 'Words from Paper Road'.... 'left like bird droppings'.





Describing the Indian and Bangladeshi poet **Kazi Nazrul Islam**, who didn't speak after 1942 (saw carnage of riots and broke down), as a literary hero, Debjani read an extract from her translation of 'The Rebel' which begins 'O rebel-hero speak, Say: I tower over the highest peak'.

Debjani referred to John O'Donoghue and Jonathan Swift, read a 'small' poem about a 'small' postcard from Lilliput and ended with a pretty 'Star Haiku'.

Talking of stars, **Frank Bangay** was not named so for no reason, surely it was written on the cosmos that Frank would bang a gong, get it on and make the world a better place starting in Hackney!

He is a trooper of a man whose humanity and humility shines through his personality and his words. He talks of rhythmic pigeons turning into doves – a call to be strong in *Wings*. Treats like his stories of 1960s London and moving from old abode to a balconied high rise in an ode that tells us

how 'there was more room to swing the cat'. Likable and warm, the great Frank Bangay threw out his arms like a preacher at the lectern and shouted out *Greedy Men* and *Journey through Corridors* – a protest at being labelled and having a go at do-gooders (and so say all of us!!)



And in the end, Amen, to *Comfort Eating Blues* a superb and rings-a-bell message about abusing our bodies with good old greasy grub incorporating a ballad about fruit and salad (yeah we're all bored with that!). Accompanied by **Natasha from Core Arts** (who annoyingly only learnt the tune and practiced slide guitar two weeks ago!) it was a rip-roaring blues driven singalong ending to a 'textured' tapestry of a night.

Please click on this link to the [Poetry Libraries online catalogue](#) to search for details of *Survivors' Press* publications and other titles by survivor poets

Colin Hambrook

9 September 2014

It felt a real privilege to recreate the atmosphere of a *Survivors Poetry* gig from the mid 1990s in the Poetry Library at the Southbank Centre. **Chris McCabe**, the Poetry Librarian was very welcoming and introduced the event referring to survivors' poetry as a genre within poetry that is being recognised more and more.

McCabe mentioned **Robert Lowell** the poet who spent time in the same Northampton Asylum where John Clare was incarcerated. Later, during his performance, John O'Donoghue's poem Lowell in St Andrew's, Northampton re-imagines Lowell recalling the words of 'I am', feeling the presence of Clare beside him. O'Donoghue's poem is a tender appraisal of the strength and endurance of poets to face life and reflect it back to the world, head on.

I loved the performances of all the poets; I was left with images of Debjani Chatterjee's warriors, Hilary Porter's daughter commanding the seas and Frank Bangay's descriptions of the mental wards of the 1980s.

Unlimited 2014 Perceptions of Difference

DAO & Survivors Poetry

3 September 2014



Poetry and Mental Illness

Let's hear it for the Survivors

Thursday 4th September 2014 7:19 pm



"I was in a lot of asylums, and now I'm in a lot of universities." That was how [John O'Donoghue](#), pictured, introduced one of his poems at Perceptions of Difference, an event at the Poetry Library during Unlimited, a festival celebrating the artistic vision and originality of disabled artists. This event was organised by Disability Arts Online, celebrating its 10th anniversary, and Survivors' Poetry, an organisation created by and for survivors of mental distress, set up in 1991.

As the Poetry Librarian, Chris McCabe, said in introducing the event, poetry and mental illness "is now a major strand of contemporary poetry". He quoted Roddy Lumsden's words: "A poet confessing to mental illness is like a weightlifter admitting to muscles."

O'Donoghue's memoir, *Sectioned: A Life Interrupted*, was the Mind Book of the Year in 2010. He has had poetry collections published by Pighog and Waterloo Press, and now teaches creative writing at the University of Westminster. He read a poem, 'The Cost of Sanity', after Dietrich Bonhoeffer, which lists social workers, benefits advisers, key workers, housing officers, probation officers, policemen, magistrates, and prison officers, and concludes with these lines: "I spoke the walls, they ignored me / I spoke to the voices, for now there was no one else."

He mentioned that poets **Robert Lowell** and **John Clare** both spent time in the same Northampton hospital, over a century apart. O'Donoghue, who chaired Survivors' Poetry from 2000-2005, is a regular contributor to [Disability Arts Online](#), edited by **Colin Hambrook**, who introduced the poets at the Poetry Library.

First to read was Hilary Porter, one of the four founder members of [Survivors' Poetry](#), who with Jo Bidder, Frank Bangay, and Peter Campbell, set up Survivors with Arts Council help in 1990-91, first establishing workshops and performances in London, which led to groups in other areas, including Bristol, Liverpool, Manchester, Leeds, and in Scotland. Spiders featured in more than one poem of Hilary Porter's, including 'Those Days': "Those nights when sleep won't come ... spider on the wall is a harbinger of doom". Another poem contained the wry observation that a face painted by Picasso "deep-lined with sorrow" could now be seen adorning an art gallery shopping bag.

After John O'Donoghue came [Debjani Chatterjee](#), poet, children's writer and storyteller, and a patron of Survivors' Poetry, which publishes anthologies through its imprint Survivors' Press, and also individual collections produced from collaborations between survivor poets and volunteer poet mentors. Chatterjee, awarded an MBE in 2008, is one of those mentors. She read poems by three "remarkable" women - **Amita Patel**, who died in 2010, **Gail Campbell**, and **Clare McLaughlin**.

"It was a wonderful evening. I thought it was great that you brought in the work of other poets to your reading and I really enjoyed the range of your performance. In fact it was the range of the whole evening that was remarkable, every poet was very distinct and had found different ways of articulating their experiences though

poetry. It's very unusual to have an event of so few poets which can suggest so much about the possibilities of poetry."

Chris McCabe, Poetry Librarian, The Saison Poetry Library, Royal Festival Hall



Another founder-member of Survivors' Poetry, [Frank Bangay](#), pictured, rounded off the night in rousing style. A long-time campaigning poet, known as the "bard of Hackney", he had been organising similar events before Survivors' Poetry was set up. An emphatic and passionate performer, some of his poems seemed infused with gospel spirit: "The proud rhythm will keep beating inside ... and yes, we will be strong this time." Another poem, which included the lines: "We became scapegoats, for so many leftwing comedians' jokes", was "maybe a bit dated now", he said. Let's hope so, anyway. In a rueful reference to his figure, he concluded with 'Comfort-eating Blues', accompanying himself on harmonica, and aided by Natasha on guitar.

Afterwards Joe Bidder said the formation of Survivors' Poetry, back in the early 90s, had been "just at the right moment. We touched a well-spring. The Arts Council phoned me up. They wanted an organisation run by mental health system survivors. Within a month I put together a programme of work." Times were harder financially now, but Survivors' Poetry was still there, with regular open mic nights, too: "It's great that it's kept going."

Greg Freeman

Further Reflections

As you know, I have suggested that we collect some impressions of the 'Perceptions of Difference' evening at the Poetry Library and, to get the ball rolling, here is Claire McLaughlin's enthusiastic comment:

"The evening was a powerful experience for me. It increased my understanding, I hope, of how difficult and challenging so many aspects of life may be for mental illness survivors, and what a powerful and enabling outlet poetry may be for some, and how Survivors' Poetry fosters this healing, imaginative connection. It gave me new thoughts to think, and new perspectives to consider.

The poets gave us a wonderful variety of entertainment, from John O'Donoghue's excerpts from his long poem about Jonathan Swift's dialogue with twelve other British poets to Frank Bangay's gleeful Blues number,

from Hilary Porter's tender, domestic vignettes to Debjani Chatterjee's dramatic monologue about the ten-headed demon king Ravana – Rama's monstrous enemy in the *Ramayana* epic. It was a warm-hearted, enjoyable evening, full of talent and interest."

Claire McLaughlin

* *Claire McLaughlin's long-awaited debut collection Remembering Blue is forthcoming from Survivors' Poetry this autumn.*

"It was not just a privilege for me to perform my poetry, translations and poems by three of my mentees at the Saison Poetry Library, alongside three stalwarts of the survivors' poetry world. It was also a most memorable and enjoyable occasion. The fact that the evening was to celebrate Survivors' Poetry and ten decades of Disability Arts Online made it doubly special. And what a celebration it was! The whole event, ably MC'd by Colin Hambrook, had a warm and friendly glow about it.

Dr Debjani Chatterjee MBE

Patron of Survivors' Poetry

ⁱ *Washington Post*, September 28 1996; *Houston Chronicle*, June 26 1996.

ⁱⁱ B. Burstow in *Violence Against Women* 2006; **12**: 372-92.

ⁱⁱⁱ Paul Keck and Ross Baldessarini, *American Journal of Psychiatry*, October 1989.

^{iv} Peter R. Breggin, *Toxic Psychiatry*, New York, 1991.

^v David Hill, *Openmind*, No. 13, February/March 1985.

Survivors' Poetry

The Mentoring scheme: An update – October 2014

Although SP has no formal mentoring scheme up and running at present, we're finishing the publications of previously funded mentee books, so you may see some new publications advertised before Christmas.

We've received a number of enquiries, so the following information hopefully will answer some wider questions:

Whilst SP is fund-raising for a more extensive national mentoring scheme, it's canvassing for survivor writers, and potential mentors, to register their interest.

Several SP people have been/are mentoring informally, though not in the framework of a formal SP scheme and its previously set guidelines, support mechanisms and organisational support and publication opportunities, insurances, yet, maintaining and offering the quality and experience the mentors can offer.

[Ironically, in my view it's what Arts Council England could fund, but only under a different funding stream next year that SP will apply to . . .]

That's not to say that if funds allowed, SP wouldn't consider a quick reallocation of funds into book production or filming or recording if someone had work ready, and the funds were there. So – keep in touch! We can consider a limited number of provisional acceptances at present – about two or three a year. At the moment the best we can offer is *possible* electronic book publication till we finally hear from the Arts Council and other potential funders

It's just at present, SP has to be careful: a) not to raise expectations; b) be clear that it encourages and enables writers where it can, but is clear about its limitations and why; and c) continues to try and get funds and partners for the formal mentoring scheme it has designed with e.g. Disability Arts Online for new funding [SP has also to be aware funders don't want to fund something already begun – a Catch22!]

There's much to plough through here, but I hope at least some will assist.

This reply of is not a 'no' to you, it's just saying what we can do, what we'd like to do, and, frustratingly for us at SP as well as writers who contact us, we know we could offer more if resources allowed. Fingers crossed for a boost in 2015.

Simon can look at one or two potential mentees and give some detailed feedback with one or two poems. This would then work a little towards the poet's own excellence.

But the main thing is of course to see if we can work with the mentee, which when running we usually can. Our experience has been threefold.

We don't outright refuse someone and if they're clearly not ready, we suggest ways they might work at what they do, provide tailored reading suggestions and so on. And to re-apply in about a year. That worked in a more streamlined and time-managed way than it does now, since we used to suggest re-application in a year. This happened usually if the poet felt strong enough. The feedback provided – often by myself, Simon – is mentoring in all but name, and differs in nothing but the official imprimatur to what I'd say as official mentor. I can respond at present to one or two poems as stated, whilst possibly making broader strategic suggestions. This, though, is in context of the daily work of SP trying to fundraise, so I'm necessarily limited in what I could reply to.

2. Through *Poetry Express* single poems can always be submitted, and I can sometimes double them as Poem of the Month.

3. We can help build a collection through the mentoring process and it can take three months or several years. It's meant to take 9 months-1 year, but this can and sometimes does dilate to several. Each mentoring process is different, and people experience it differently too.

Our own programme slowed whilst we discussed the best way forward with funding. It looks to the future more now, but as yet we have no certainties with regard to physical book publication, and even e-books are going to be limited. We trust that will change.

Simon Jenner/Phil Ruthen