

Poetry *Express*

Summer 2011

Issue 36

Portrait of a Survivor by Thomas Ország-Land

John Sinclair by Dave Russell

Four Poems from Debjani Chatterjee MBE

Per Ardua Ad Astra by Angela Morkos

Featured Artist Lorraine Nicholson, Broadsheet and Reviews



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Our latest launch:
www.survivorspoetry.org

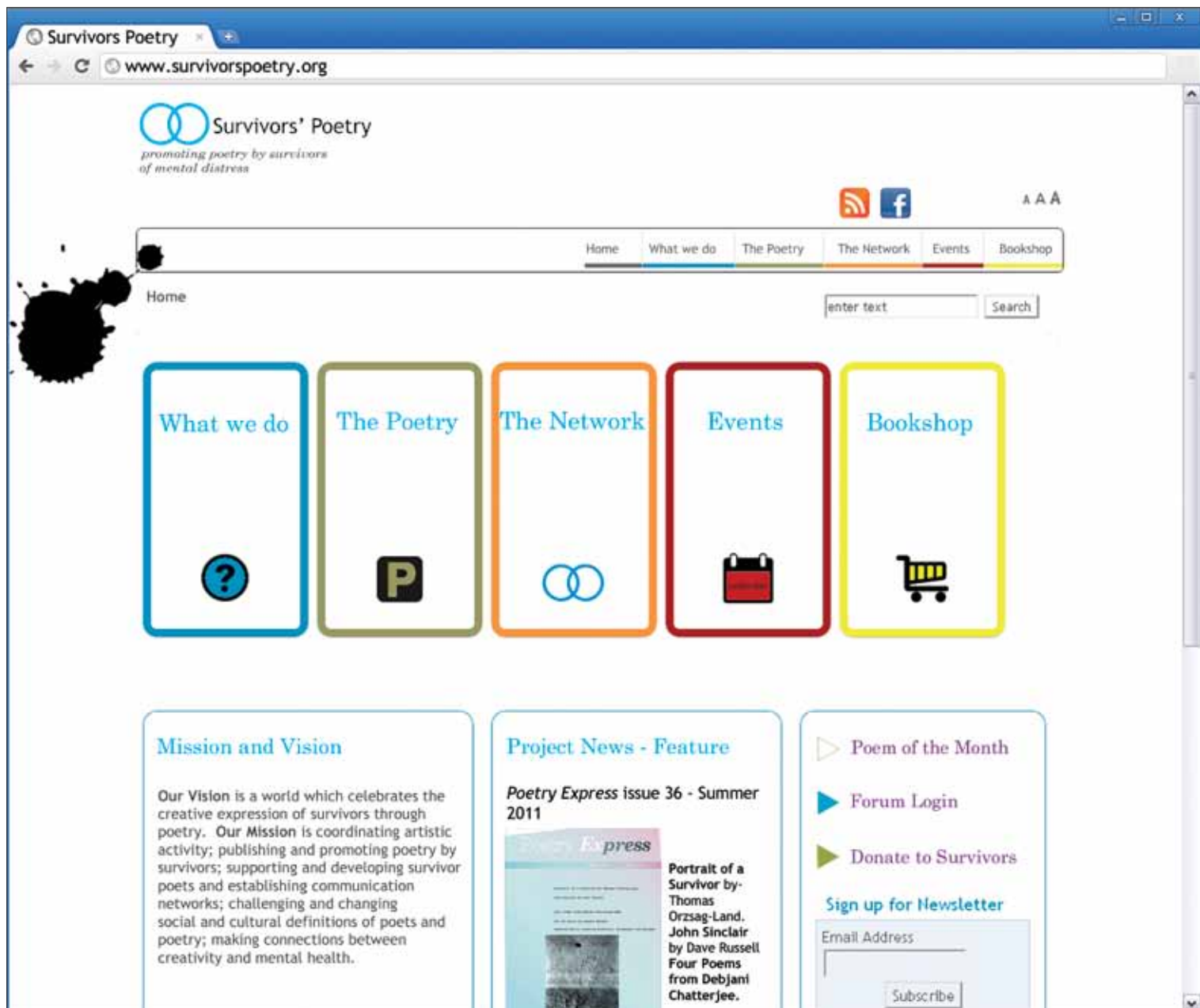


Announcing our latest launch Survivors' Poetry website is viewable now!

Our new Survivors' Poetry {SP} website boasts many new features for survivor poets to enjoy such as; the new videos featuring regular performers at our London events, mentees, old and new talent; Poem of the Month, **have your say** feedback comments for every feature; an incorporated bookshop: www.survivorspoetry.org/bookshop; easy sign up for *Poetry Express* and much more! We want you to tell us what you think?

We hope that you will enjoy our new vibrant place for survivor poets and that you enjoy what you experience.

www.survivorspoetry.org has been developed with the kind support of all the staff, board of trustees and volunteers. We are particularly grateful to Judith Graham, SP trustee for managing the project, Dave Russell for his development input and Jonathan C. Jones of www.luminial.net whom built the website using Wordpress, and has worked tirelessly to deliver a unique bespoke project, thank you.



The screenshot shows the homepage of the Survivors' Poetry website. The browser address bar displays "www.survivorspoetry.org". The website header includes the logo "Survivors' Poetry" with the tagline "promoting poetry by survivors of mental distress" and social media icons for RSS and Facebook. A navigation menu contains links for Home, What we do, The Poetry, The Network, Events, and Bookshop. Below the menu is a search bar with the placeholder text "enter text" and a "Search" button. The main content area features five large, colorful buttons: "What we do" (blue), "The Poetry" (green), "The Network" (orange), "Events" (red), and "Bookshop" (yellow). Each button contains a small icon: a question mark, a letter 'P', the logo, a calendar, and a shopping cart. Below these buttons are three columns of featured content. The first column, "Mission and Vision", describes the organization's goals. The second column, "Project News - Feature", highlights the "Poetry Express issue 36 - Summer 2011" and includes a thumbnail of the magazine cover and a list of featured poets. The third column contains links for "Poem of the Month", "Forum Login", and "Donate to Survivors", along with a "Sign up for Newsletter" form with an email address field and a "Subscribe" button.

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Survivors' Poetry is a unique national charity which promotes the writing of survivors of mental distress. Please visit www.survivorspoetry.com for more information or write to us. A Survivor may be a person with a current or past experience of psychiatric hospitals, ECT, tranquillisers or other medication, a user of counselling services, a survivor of sexual abuse, child abuse and any other person who has empathy with the experiences of survivors.

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Editor: Dave Russell
Art Editor and Coordinator: Blanche Donnery
Editorial Team: Roy Birch, Simon Jenner
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Survivors' Poetry
Studio 11, Bickerton House
25-27 Bickerton Road
London N19 5JT
Tel 020 7281 4654
info@survivorspoetry.org.uk
www.survivorspoetry.org

Patrons:
Mario Petrucci, Debjani Chatterjee MBE

Trustees:
Marius Jankowski (Chair), Phil Ruthen, Celia Potterton, Judith Graham.

Staff:
Simon Jenner (Director), Roy Birch (National Outreach Coordinator and Mentoring Scheme Coordinator), Blanche Donnery (Administration, Marketing and Media Design)

Freelance Staff/Contractors:
Dark Systems Ltd (IT), Hugh Ellacott (Videos), Luminal Ltd (Website Developer)

Volunteers:
Dave Russell (Reviews & Events), Xochitl Tuck & Razz (Poetry Cafe Events' Coordinators).

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Next Deadline: 9th August 2011

Editorial

Dave Russell

Poetry Café: Main acts on June 9th were firstly, poet **David Kessel** who did two sets, painting, as ever, his bleak urban landscape with *Summer Rain* (on Stepney Streets) and *London* (city of cockney girls) with its reference to the 'walking dead', but hope remaining with 'the dawn of cockney power'.

Second main spot was music duo **Masque (Russell Roberts and Chrissy Quayle)**, consisting of guitar and vocal, assorted wind instruments, and some percussion. Some sensitive flute, clarinet, whistle and bagpipe cantor playing. Their set included Lamento Borincano by **Victor Jara**, the great Chilean musician and poet mutilated, tortured and murdered in the course of the Pinochet-led and American-funded overthrow of President Allende's democratically elected government, famously ending with the slaughter of Allende and his aide, who were the last men standing - in the name of combating communism. *That's Right* is one of their own songs featuring Chrissy on flute, with a time-signature reminiscent of Dave Brubeck's *Take 5*. I am sure they would be at home in traditional folk clubs; they were certainly at home here. At the last Poetry Cafe gig we did, we played the following songs. Nobody is a tune based on *The Butterfly* one of the more famous Irish jigs. Chrissy wrote some lyrics to it about walking from Zennor to St. Ives in Cornwall along the coastal path, where she encountered a butterfly. Si Beg Si Mor is a beautiful Irish ballad written by O'Caralon, who wrote many great pieces. As well as being an acoustic duo, Russell and Chrissy are part of a six-piece 'fusion' band; Russell started out as a jazz drummer, and has worked with US tenor star Big Jay Mcneely. He is now playing acoustic guitar and a mix of world percussion together with pianist Tim Richards, Bucky Leo's afro/jazz outfit, Farenji Warriors, and Kit Packham's jump jive band. Chrissy was rooted in the Celtic, Cornish folk scene. She was involved with Fooksbarn Theatre, 'Touch the Earth' and folk guitarist Mike Silver, with whom she recorded her first album on RCA as *Daylight*. She has toured with The Lip Service Horn section and reggae star Bob Andy, playing at the reggae Sunsplash festival in Austria. Russell and Chrissy worked together in Farenji Warriors and Doctors of Dub and Species, a popular band on the London scene for a number of years. They are joined on bass by former Species and Doctors bassist **Oliver Johnson** on his 6 string. Oliver lays down a carpet of ambient bass, while at the same time producing a funky dance groove. Jazz saxophonist Brian Edwards adds an exciting edge to this 6 piece. Brian came to fame with the Jazz Warriors, with the likes of Courtney Pine and Phillip Bent, and went on to play with Jazz Jamaica, Aswad, Wynton Marsalis and many others. Guitarist **Ross Anderson** completes this line up. Ross has been playing a number of years on the jazz scene, has recorded and produced many artists and worked with Chaka Khan, Soul to Soul, Sly and Robbie and Lucky Dube. Masque is now working with percussionists Alex Dayo, master percussionist from **Burkina Faso**, who has worked with Femi Kuti, Ali Farka Toure, Jean-Louis Rassinfosse and Louis Chedid. Masque have just completed recording 7 live tracks on their Masque 2008 CD, and earlier in the year released their second album, *Another time*. Their first album, *Look Out*, was distributed by Proper Music. So they can be both plugged and unplugged.

Sensitive spot as ever from **Chris Goodchild**. His regular appearances at Survivors have consistently encouraged the development of his writing and performance skills. **Frank Bangay** read two spirited new poems. *Peace*, and *Us Desperate Men*, depicting the plight of those poor souls driven into watching porn and going to strip clubs. Frank continues writing and performing, frequently with musicians based at Core Arts in Homerton. Some interesting drumming and poetry from **Madeleine** and **Kalinga**. Considerable intensity from **Pauline**: reflections on a life of hardship, the plight of a 'woman caught in a biological cliché'; a patchwork education, 'graduating into waitressing at a service station'; rebellious expressions of fashion - 'like a medieval wench . . . hair shone black enough to be nearly blue. Then some biting irony with a reference to the double-entendre of Mount Pleasant. **Wendy** read *The 51st State of the DL of A*, a searing indictment of the inefficiency and frequent hypocrisy of the 'caring' services - 'D Hell A'; interesting observations in 'the Devil works for Rada' and 'man like a Druid on acid'. Feeling persecuted by bureaucracy, she felt that one of the ticks she put in the box on the form might blow up humanity. Good impact with *Angry Takeaway*: "Vent my spleen on the dish of the day". And so much for our tranquil seaside resorts, in *Oblique Hastings*: "I do like to be beside the suicide."

A spirited concluding spot with the irrepressible spirituality of **Lucy Carrington**. Once again, most of the seating area was occupied. Tottenham Chances, on July 28th, is 'going Latin' - putting on a special event in memory of Chilean radical singer-songwriter (and martyr) **Victor Jara**, Featuring **Tony Gorden**, **Bailu Peru**, **Robert Allwood**, **Flakito**, **Jorge** and **Fernando**, **Alfredo Cordal** and **Razz**.

In the last issue, I was extremely honoured to review *My Journey Home* featuring the poems and artwork of Lorraine Nicholson. In this issue, she is our Featured Artist; we are regaled by her superb command of colour and texture: take a special look at the watery one! There are also two of her poems as an added bonus. Let her be given her substantial due. How many more poets are there who also paint?

Last but not least, our website should be fully activated by the end of July. Already, the Poetry Graffiti site has attracted a substantial and varied response.

Update Simon Jenner

Electronic Sheep

Electronic Sheep and Hopeful Munsters: Futures of e-Publishing: for Survivors' Poetry (SP), these are more than interesting times. Especially if you can't read them. Availability of the printed word in any periodical format is shrinking. Many survivors don't do e-zines, and many older people don't either. Being an older survivor of mental distress isn't exactly to inhabit a world of expanding horizons. One can say it was always thus, but remember what it was like before DDA in October 2004? Easy, because those times are back; but you know what I mean. There can be better times and better-motivated people to drive them.

I've recently been to a conference in Glasgow, (the Scottish Universities Insight Institute) addressing independent publishing. The key factor apart from surviving in a recession, was the matter of electronic publishing. Our conclusion, reinforced with a few single malts in a bar afterwards, was that electronic publishing was going to parallel but not replace paper publishing for the foreseeable future, even in the opinion of bright new 2 year old presses like Cargo, founded by 22 year olds. E-publishing of big selling titles will save a few trees. Mandelson and Blair could paint a forest with the e-version of their memoirs. We got a horizon here, since the sky's turquoise afterglow from the sun had hardly set by midnight in Glasgow, and it was up again in four hours. This was the 23rd and 24th June. I remember that hot summer well as I don my raincoat this morning.

Poetry's very form is currently being challenged by for one, the Arts Council. Since 2007 they've championed mentoring and various forms of digital publishing, downloads and potential Kindle titles, increasingly at the expense of printed poetry. The paperless office was always an e-dream; paperless poetry is however seen by many as a policy fact. It's exciting and a little daunting in equal measure.

The Arts Council's decisions aren't graven but are indicative of what a predominantly prose culture makes of the poetic object. Poetry is a non-narrative form, often read back to front, sashayed or raided, sporadically or even randomly; and flipped back to re-read. The feel and fondle factor of a book has been known, and can trouble our dreams.

In an interesting time it's worth looking to what options small presses can afford to invest in. The download; the full e-book; the POD-streamed from Create Space; Kindle. The latter two are as we know dependant on Amazon or Kindle respectively, involving some surrender of independence. The last with apps in the shape of Eliot's *Waste Land* is seductive. But would Kindle be open to deal with far less iconic, new material? There does seem a way forward, but not with much of a revenue stream, more a loss leader. Would a body like ACE have any leverage, and would we want it? There aren't yet answers, but the poetry world's flux - especially given recent funding decisions - needs to create its own space. As an ancient appendix, there's always the book.

My other hat, Waterloo Press, has responded in investigating the Create Space POD stream option at the behest of innovative poet and publisher Sophia Wellbeloved. This is particularly helpful with the US market, and if you have any fail-safe classic texts, it's certainly worth recalling even in this climate, the US, university library or reading list. Kindle is an opportunity waiting to become an opportunity.

Second-guessing government and ACE priorities I'd summarize in two words: paperless poetry. This is against the gloomy prognosis reported in the *Independent* (May 12th) from The Bookseller. 'Up to a third of the nations' libraries are expected to shut. The Arts Council has been targeted, with the Poetry Books Society one of many casualties. The thrust of the government is clear, and it is anti-book.' How ACE will work with this I'll come to in a moment. At least it works both ways in government: Many read Blair and Mandelson's memoirs on Kindle, which saved a whole forest.

It's worth examining the government imperative, driving the DCMS driving ACE driving one or two of us in the public funded sector. DCMS must think we're e-sheep: with a lightning rod (or cattle prod) of such policies we're exhorted to embrace.

But ACE is I think at a cross-roads with poets. Novels and tracts of prose are read on Kindle. So a Poem on the Underground looms, the snatch of poetry non-poetry readers might indulge in. I defy anyone to tackle *The Prelude* that way, though! Electronic readership too fails to take account of human biology, ageing; even in low light, the health of on-screen reading is finite. With our clientele at SP, that's doubly so; one of the paradoxes of our

successful e-zine. WP utilized an e-letter, which many use. It too does save trees.

In 2007 Nick MacDowell said he'd welcome SP's *Poetry Express* as an e-zine, but not physical one. His conclusions were inescapable: SP lacked the infrastructure to distribute such a physical object, even if it could afford it; and if it could, too much core strain would be induced. He also praised the mentoring scheme. We can now see where his thinking tended. Other organizations have recently thrived or failed along these axes, not at all mutually exclusive.

ACE sees the future, several of us conclude, as digital. Whether as e-book (Chipmunka almost wholly trade thus, receiving NP status albeit reduced); POD download, or Kindle. The latter is a restricted brand. It's certainly worth knowing how one can break into this Amazon-backed enterprise. The trouble seems to be that it selects the texts, mainly contemporary and nearly all prose. Readership has here been bottlenecked, though it may be a self-selecting one. It does include people like Professor Lisa Jardine, however, whose cultural omnivorousness is well-known. It might include you!

Fiction and other art-prose forms can survive their commoditization in an e-world. Many e-zines, including poetry ones, primarily reamed with critical commentary, also flourish. Poetry, though, isn't digested in this way, bar the *Poem on the Underground* ethos of twelve lines. The eddying of a book to and fro, the tendency to begin a poetry volume at the end, in the middle, flip to shorter ones first, is negotiated far more swiftly and easily by book. As is the tendency to drift almost simultaneously between texts. Reading poetry is not a narrative affair. Kindle most decidedly is.

Having said all that, I come back to the paradox: how to work with it. How to work with the narrative zeitgeist. The grain of media and publication as well as ACE is something to work with, not against.

What will boost this all is the nature of our website presence. Two things are needed here: distribution and discussion. Distribution of our own texts and directedness to other allies. That performs in an e-version the role that for instance the PBS attempted in its encased Choice/Recommendation format, iron-masked by poet panelists anxious not to make a *faux pas* with peers. One can see the advantages of fluidity here, and freedom from nail-biting nearly-big names with herd instincts. And discussion, something else the PBS also attempted in some way to address as a nub of poetry excellence: this should be where more than SP products are discussed, as they are already. Issues of poetry as well as infinitely more (DLA deprivations, politics, everything SP does for instance) will of course have its place. We need to draw in different interest (not client!) bases: survivors and the poetry public. And of course ensure the latter doesn't neutralize the key interests of the former.

The availability of SP's works, mentored volumes to translations through to *Poetry Express*, are things that will clearly thrive on multi-presentation. The opportunity of e-distribution is something to embrace as physical distribution remains static, usually amongst the readership we serve, indeed amongst the people who most matter to us. To spread our word, however, the future's possibly warning an electronic amber, if not orange.

Outreach Roy Birch

Let me begin with the old litany. Since disinvestment in 2006 and the subsequent re-instatement of regularly funded status at a considerably reduced level, Outreach has been largely conducted from the office, which hampers it with regard to the effectiveness of the reaching out it is able to do. Happily, however, Outreach is far from being as static as my words may suggest, and, in fact, some touching may be possible in the very near future. A new group in Newcastle, which has been on hold for some time now, may yet happen, and I am in negotiation in this regard. In addition, a new survivor writing group is definitely starting up in York. It will be called SWAY - Survivor Writers and Artists in York - and its inaugural meeting is set for August 2nd at the Golden Fleece Public House, The Pavement, York City Centre, start time 7.30pm. Anyone in the York area who reads this please attend. Two new groups added to the SP network would be very satisfying indeed when viewed in the light of the essentially hands-off way that Outreach has to function these days.

The Mentoring Scheme continues to flourish. We currently have eight pairings operational and the promise of some very fine publications. We already have some potential mentees for 2012, and we receive regular enquiries about the scheme.

The Vale House Project is still in place though its future is in the balance following the take-over of Vale House Drug and Alcohol Stabilization Services by the Westminster Drug Project, a large semi-commercial organization which specializes in Harm Reduction rather than recovery.

Times are undoubtedly hard. As Bob Dylan so succinctly put it "You don't need a Weatherman to know which way the wind blows." Happily the wind of truth has blown the good ship Murdoch onto the rocks of justice, there, hopefully, to be broken and sunk forever.

Until the next issue

Portrait of a Survivor by Thomas Ország-Land

MEZEI'S HOLOCAUST POETRY IS MEANT FOR OUR TIME

AUSCHWITZ is a museum. The smoke has now dispersed, and each generation to the end of history must make peace with the past and resolve to live with our ability to commit mass murder.

András Mezei (1930-2008), a major Jewish-Hungarian poet, has left behind a retrospective exploration of the Holocaust for our time. His voices of the past address us with an urgency and directness unheard within museum walls. There are many such voices speaking to us of terror, folly, greed, cruelty and absurdity. Mezei's poetry makes them sound like our own voices. His first full collection of Holocaust poetry in English has been published in my translation as *Christmas in Auschwitz* (Smokestack Press/England, 2010, 74pp., £7:96p, ISBN 978-0-9560341-9-9). Mezei survived the National Socialists' attempt at the 'ethnic cleansing' of Europe as a child in the Budapest Ghetto where some 17,000 souls perished around him from hunger, disease and the fancy of uniformed bandits. Unlike the other great poets of the Holocaust, like Paul Celan, Primo Levi and Miklós Radnóti, Mezei refused to come to terms with death. Indeed, his work is a celebration of the unconquerable spirit of his people. And unlike Anne Frank, he had the luxury of time to give voice to the concerns of the victims while he was at the height of his literary powers. This is how he sums up the experience of the survivor in a single couplet:

Nightmares How many nights must pass before
I need not wake up anymore?

I first met him shortly after the Second World War. We were both recovering from the trauma of the Hungarian Holocaust in a camp for Jewish children at Békéscsaba run by a Socialist-Zionist movement then called Dror Habonim. It was also preparing us for emigration to what was to become the state of Israel, mostly on board ships like the famous Exodus running the British blockade. Mezei went. He found employment as a semi-skilled labourer, but returned to Hungary after a year and a half because he thought he stood a better chance of attracting a girlfriend in the land of his birth. Eventually he read literature in Hungary and became a poet, novelist and polemicist. Like many Holocaust survivors of his generation, he embraced enthusiastically the ideal of Communism in the hope of building a just society free of racial, religious and class prejudice. His first serious doubts arose over the brutal suppression of the 1956 Hungarian Revolution against Soviet power. Unusually for a Hungarian writer, his work has been published in several languages including Hebrew. He was a literary journalist most of his life. After the collapse of Communist rule just two decades ago, Mezei founded Budapest City Press as well as Central European Time, a literary-political journal that forged a leading role in the debate and reconstruction of post-Soviet Hungary. He established a club that served as an informal meeting place for writers, academics, politicians and businessmen. He used it to gain great influence in shaping Hungary's trade relations, specifically in the privatization of state assets and in the cultivation of commerce with other formerly Soviet-administered countries. Some high officials were appointed on his advice. He appeared impervious to high-pitched criticism by his literary rivals behind his back that a poet ought not to soil his soul by the world of money and power. I met him again early during the transition to democracy, when he commissioned me to translate his Holocaust poetry into English, I joined the editorial board of his journal and we became close friends. For me, our collaboration was part of a wider project, an anthology of the Hungarian Holocaust in English translation. Mezei's father, a jobbing fiddler usually engaged to play in taverns and fairgrounds, perished at Auschwitz. Mezei's poetry draws on the culture of destitute, itinerant provincial Jews carving out a precarious existence in the rapidly industrializing, complex society of inter-war Hungary. But the voices of the Holocaust speaking through Mezei's verse transcend the limits of class and nationality as well as the geographical frontiers of Nazi-occupied Europe. He called these pieces 'fact poems' as they are based mostly on his personal experiences, together with professional interviews with survivors, fragments of contemporary correspondence, medical and administrative records and analyses and post-war criminal proceedings. His work lacks a thirst for vengeance. Consider his gentle portrayal of the passive bystanders:

Deportation The people they've lived with in the village
are being herded in front of closed portals,
still and silent each. The fences
would conceal all sight, all feelings,
except for the tea-rose, the violet and weed
leaping through to reach out towards them.

Mezei, who won a beauty contest as a boy with golden curly locks, became short and fat in his old age with a shock of white hair beneath a wide-brimmed hat. I think he often deliberately acted out the anti-Semite's stereotype of the ghetto-Jew. He was deeply religious, passionate and cantankerous, shrewd and naive, generous with his love and famously mean with his money. But he published a long list of worthwhile books at a perpetual commercial loss unfailingly recouped from Jewish funding agencies, the post-Communist Hungarian political elite and a bewilderingly complex web of private enterprises. His experience of the war clearly shaped his life. The word Holocaust (Greek for burnt offering) or Shoah (Hebrew for disaster) or Pharrajimos (Roma for dissolution) conveys very inadequately the impact of a nearly successful attempted annihilation of an entire culture.

The final and most destructive phase of the process began with the military occupation of Hungary by Hitler's Germany in March 1944, at a time when Allied victory in the Second World War was already obvious. Less than three years earlier, an ultra-Nationalist government of Hungary - a minor, semi-feudal, East European backwater - had declared war on the incredulous governments of Great Britain, the United States and the Soviet Union in return for territorial concessions promised by Nazi Germany and at its neighbours' expense. Its ill-equipped armies were routed, its independence lost first to Germany and then to the Soviets. Despite mounting repression and hysteria whipped up by the country's relentless setbacks on the battlefield, the largely assimilated Jewish-Hungarian population had lived in relative safety until the German invasion. The mass racist murder by industrial means of the Jews and Roma as well as the homosexual and the politically dissident minorities was introduced under direct German rule. The ensuing Hungarian Holocaust culminated in the destruction of some 600,000 civilian lives (including perhaps 70% of the entire pre-war Jewish-Hungarian population and up to 50,000 Roma). The well integrated provincial Jewish populations and the other minorities singled out for annihilation were humiliated, robbed, massed into ghettos and other assembly points and transported in inhuman conditions to extermination camps such as Auschwitz-Birkenau in Poland and slave-camps such as Mauthausen-Gusen in Austria. Due to diplomatic pressures, the deportations were formally halted before the capital could be completely emptied of the target populations. Tens of thousands of people in Budapest were crammed into specially designated tenements under armed control. Many others sought survival in hiding. Both groups were exposed to persecution by the law enforcement and paramilitary agencies, persistent aerial bombing by the Allies and the eventual three-month Soviet siege of the city, whose ferocity is widely compared to that of Stalingrad. Mezei describes the consequent epidemic of casual murder:

Jason She carefully unlaced her grandmother's boots,
 then kicked off her own. Before the pair: the river.
 Behind them: Jason, the neighbours' son from the square
 lit by the frozen snow - and his machinegun.
 Jason, discharging his first-ever magazine.
 Jason, standing stunned as the tumbling bodies
 are whisked away and gone with the turbulent current.
 ...Had he done that? Was there so little to life?

In addition, tens of thousands of Jews were exposed to otherwise unnecessary perils of war, engaged in forced labour under Hungarian command or leased to Germany to work the copper mines of neighbouring occupied Serbia. Hungary was the only power during the war to assign to the battlefield its own citizens - Jews - as slave labourers. Some 48,000 were deployed with the Hungarian invasion force to the Eastern front alone, clad in light civilian clothes in the bitter East European winter, to build fortifications on starvation rations. Many were murdered by their own commanders. All this is still little known to the Hungarian public, who were spared during the decades of the subsequent Soviet subjugation from the pain of confronting the country's shameful past. This explains the vulnerability of this region to neo-Nazi agitation at a time of economic insecurity. A new generation of historians is trying to change this. But Holocaust poetry remains an irritant in Hungary. Some of the country's great Holocaust poets are largely ignored at home, although they are becoming known abroad. And those who cannot be ignored are often misrepresented. Generations of Hungarian school children have been required to recite Miklós Radnóti's poetry by heart, but they have been taught that he was writing about the general horrors of war rather than a specific genocide. They are still told that the poet had met a 'tragic death' - not that it was racist murder committed with the approval or at least the connivance of the Hungarian majority. Yet Mezei's poetry is part of a process of healing. He writes:

Voices Suddenly I speak in my mother's voice.
 Suddenly I speak in my father's voice.
 Suddenly I hear my people speak
 in my voice

Mezei started publishing Holocaust poetry only in old age. So now do some others, albeit very cautiously. Apart from one brave and inadequate recent attempt, I am not aware of a single anthology of Hungarian Holocaust poetry published in all the decades since the war. My own sources of original material are mostly small-circulation one-off collections, early Second World War publications, unpublished manuscripts and mass-circulation books whose contents are deliberately misinterpreted in lengthy analyses by literary/academic hacks.

I began translating poetry as a young man in the hope of learning from my betters. I saw myself as a fine-art student in a public gallery copying the work of a great master in order to learn his techniques by re-creating the same composition on a different canvass.

But there is now a very urgent, very different dimension. I believe that the poets of the Hungarian Holocaust like György Faludy, Eszter Forrai, Ágnes Gergely, Éva Láng, Magda Székely, Ernő Szép and many others including Mezei can now take their place in the European literary tradition. Their poetry may perhaps help the post-Holocaust generations - the descendants of the perpetrators, and of their victims, and of the passive bystanders - to face our dreadful inheritance together and learn to live in harmony.

Per Ardua Ad Astra by Angela Morkos

The shock and trauma of last week's racial abuse was still simmering under my brown skin like a volcano of pain ready to erupt; I'd emigrate to Egypt - I couldn't read anymore because my unworthy darkness was buried in shame by the whiteness of the paper pages, (never mind that the words, the important parts, were black like me).

I couldn't help feeling killed off emotionally by his cruel, drunken, stone-throwing words: "So your mother's a white woman - so that means you're a half-nigger!").

I'd crept about under this shadow of a torment since as early as I could remember being alive.

"He's just a bigot!", the policeman had said after I'd reported this and also after the psychiatric hospital who supported me on the phone had told me it was now a criminal offense - Oooh! I can remember the days when it was the norm and I would hide a biography of Martin Luther King in my school desk, smiling gratefully at the photo of him on the cover, yet always ensuring the book was under my desk lid. I would steal happy moments with this book, away from the problematic life as a pupil at a white Catholic school in the 60's and 70's...

Oh paper, am I too dark for you?

I remember the words I heard on the radio last year by an American rap band. They sang "Gotta read the books or the whites'll get the jobs." I only concentrated on books at the grammar school firstly just like learning jujitsu or self-defense for women as a foil against racism - but they's grown on me and become friends...

But after the racial attack last week I became, once more, a broken woman.

Later I drew a deep breath and started to read. The pages were cream coloured i.e. not pure, white, glistening authority bringing a feeling of being an alien. The book was a translation of a Syrian novel about life there in the 50's. I was thoroughly enjoying it but still felt that the Bloodaxe anthology of modern poetry I'd bought at a rather expensive price was too - well - I just felt unworthy of reading it and the black words on snowy sheets of paper fought against each other like war faring hornets. I had to sell it. I needed my smokes - stress.

I couldn't face going out of my flat or going anymore to the places where I'd met the old racist. He had friends. I felt threatened and insecure. I'd had it up to here' as they say, with bigotry.

As I sat at home I turned and saw the photo of a dark-skinned teenager on a magazine beside me. I turned to the cover to see the title of the magazine. It was 'Awake' the newsletter of the Jehovah's Witnesses and the theme of that month (July 2009) was mental health illnesses - which is my problem. I looked inside the magazine to see if there was anything about racism. I saw the words 'In our next issue - Prejudice and Discrimination - Why? How can you cope?

That afternoon I saw a lady in Hull I'd recognised from my childhood, the mother of a fellow pupil. I introduced myself and I soon realised through chatting whose mother she was - the mother of the girl with so-called 'frizzy' hair like mine. An English girl (white) who was a big Elvis fan when I was first discovering the Beatles, aged about 10 years.

The lady, Mrs. Formby, told me 'I went to a school called The English Martyrs' where the girls taunted me, calling me 'the golliwog with the face like a squashed tomato'. It was a Catholic school like mine was. Mrs. Formby has tightly curled dark hair like me and like her daughters.

"They really upset me! They upset me!" I blurted out to her, gazing into the distance and in an anguished tone.

Mrs. Formby then gave me a warm and gentle hug, saying "Take care. God bless." Then she left.

I thought of the words ‘English Martyrs’ and the stone-throwing attitude of the nasty man in the pub and also of the torture Mrs. Formby had undergone in her school and also afterwards. Who were the Catholic English Martyrs? John Fisher, Thomas More ... I’d seen the film ‘A Man for All Seasons’ when I was at school and ended up with a very painful crick in my neck as I was trying to watch John Hurt, an actor in the film I fancied and there must have been some tall people sifting in front of me in the cinema forcing me to crane my neck...

I’d asked the headmistress, a nun, for paracetamol. My next memory is of being told to visit the nuns’ common room. A nun said “We’ve been praying about this, Angela. We don’t think you ought to have paracetamol. Pray instead.” I followed the advice and the pain went. Later I used this advice when I was in the pangs of child birth and it was so helpful as I was a very weak woman and the prayers gave me strength to give birth...

Also I remember an Eritrean lady I met on a visit to London who’d just been to the site of the execution of the Tyburn Martyrs and also I recalled arguing with an atheist lecturer about the origin of the saying: ‘To each according to his needs from each according to his means.’ I’d claimed the words were by Thomas More in Utopia, but he - a Belfast, ex-Anglican atheist insisted that the saying was by Karl Marx...

The racist man I’d met last week who’d shocked me said he couldn’t believe that a virgin could give birth. He was a dirty old man too and wanted me to ‘go back to his place to keep his bed warm’, in spite of, or perhaps because of his brutality. “Everyone believes that a virgin can give birth!”, he jeered. “It’s rubbish!”

...

And I will end this piece by saying that I’ve always loved the prayer ‘The Magnificat’. Mary was humble and the way to be is not to lord it over others with your race, colour, class, creed or anything but to let ‘The Lord work in Mysterious Ways.’ Ideally, if I’m trying to be a Christian I should just ‘turn the other cheek’. I’ll avoid him and rise above his small-minded, little Englander attitude even if it comes to being a 21st century English martyr myself, like all the other victims of racism and bullying.

Angela Morkos is currently a Mentoring Scheme Mentee.

If you are interested in becoming a mentee, download our Guidelines and Application Form from our website.

Four Poems

Debjani Chatterjee

Survivors’ Poetry is delighted to have received four poems from our acclaimed Patron

AFTER THE DIAGNOSIS

(For my own ‘Mr D’Arcy)

When we walked away from the Breast Clinic, everything had changed in our lives. And yet the August air was teasingly pleasant, the hospital grounds were green, the going-home traffic had the same monotony, Sheffield was still a favourite city, children wore football strips in a triumph of hope or a come-what-may unreason. The world had the gall to go on without shattering into a zillion shards. We walked with slower steps to Brian’s car. We did not look each other in the eye, but I quietly slipped my hand in his.

PROGRESSIVE PROGNOSIS

(For Mr Stanley R Kohlhardt at the Royal Hallamshire Hospital)

A merry summer Santa, my surgeon came with a present - a ‘good’ prognosis. ‘You recall the poor prospects you had? I’m happy to say they are now good, much improved!’ The change was down to chemo and the op., with radiotherapy still to come. We knew I owed him my life. His bearded face wreathed in smiles, he waited for effect and a drum-roll in my head: ‘Fifty percent chance of five-year-survival!’

Suitably impressed, my husband thanked him. But I was still in an ill-omened place. Never good with numbers, I blame Dozy-Docetaxel now for my innumeracy.

But a 'fifty percent' arithmetic
percolates even a chemo-thick brain.
I think I thanked him, grudgingly; I lied.
I envisioned the proverbial glass:
half-full for this good man but half-empty
for me who had hoped to live forever.

CANCER IS ...

Cancer is the cat
sitting open-mouthed below
the nest I must fly;

a sly hyena:
a scavenging predator,
dribbling and laughing;

a razored needle,
transforming into a spear
in each painful side.

Cancer is lightning:
picking on random victims -
and can strike again.

CANCER PATHWAY

In what mad moment
did I buy the ticket for
this cancer journey?

The pathway is dark,
there's no map, no directions,
no light to lead me.

Cancer erases
the ordinary wrinkles
of my daily life.

The side effects are
just 'collateral damage',
so-called 'friendly fire'.

Hansel and Gretel
taught me to scatter breadcrumbs,
to survive this ride.

Anniversaries
are milestones on the pathway.
One day at a time ...

About the poet

Debjani Chatterjee is a survivor of cancer and post-traumatic stress, a patron of Survivors Poetry, and founder of the Healing Word. She has mentored several poets and is active in literary, cancer and mental health organisations. Andrew Motion has called her 'a poet

full of wit and charm'; while Barry Tebb says she is 'a national treasure'. A prolific writer, she has won major prizes. Sheffield Hallam University awarded an honorary doctorate in 2002 and in 2008 she received an MBE. A former Royal Literary Fund Fellow, she has had many residencies, including Sheffield Children's Hospital and York St John University. Debjani's latest book is *Let's Celebrate! Festival Poems from around the World*, which she co-edited with her husband Brian D'Arcy.

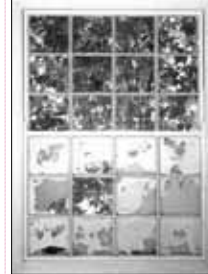
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Peter Street (poet, writer, Royal Literary Fund Fellow)



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Phil has been with CoolTan Arts for over a year now, employed to facilitate the Comic Relief funded Self-advocacy skills training programme. www.cooltanarts.org.uk. A Trustee, and currently, Chair of the national literature development charity Survivors' Poetry, www.survivorspoetry.com, he started writing poetry and short stories as a teenager, with work in recent years appearing in a variety of publications carrying a diverse range of literary styles. At present, he is continuing explorations in prose-poetry/poetic prose.

Advertisement

BROADSHEET

Saskia's Party

Three days before, Saskia cleared the house -
a seething rubbish mosaic that moved
in waves of green-black beetles,
fat enough to carry bass guitars,
dancing in a trash heap of yesterday's
hoarded newspapers, where she beheld
the flash of footnotes that didn't exist,
joyful black-bag clearance, no excuses anymore.

As the guests walked in to an empty house,
eight o'clock on every hand-made invite,
the only sound was an echoing metronome
and before they could even call her name
Damien was warmed up at the keyboard,
and cups were dipped into the well-lit
liquid shimmering punch bowl,
handfuls of nibbles bathed in their sick syrups
were snatched up and crunched, spilled, split,
a girl with a fin for hair who wasn't invited
tucked-in while Damien improvised on an A scale
and their chatter grew like larvae, hatching.

In the backroom drum and bass penetrated hearts
and spines, all the days of fresher's-flu bile
washed down with cheap vodka.
She'd wanted elevation to the leader of fools,
It should have been different this time
thought Jo, blushing, grinding down dancing,
waiting for Saskia's smile,
self mutilation under a sterile lattice
of cotton bandage, a comfort against January,
she'd made a grammar for talking to strangers
rendered in scars, raised messages reading *love me*
leave me, love me, a footnote for Saskia.
And they carried on and on waiting,
twisting down-dirty-down with no host.

But Saskia's out by the river,
she left the door cracked open,
and she's watching plastic bottles half-full
of green bitty slime water bobbing,
pond skater's eaten by gulping mouths
that break the surface scum,
orange lamppost light glowing like
that twinkling string of January sale Christmas lights
she'd draped under the punch bowl
to make it look inviting

and not just a pale, frantic curiosity.
She can't enjoy her own party
because they'll be grinding their grime in,
grinding themselves in,
rooting in the places it took three days
to clean, it hurt because it isn't junk,
it isn't junk, it wasn't junk.
She threw a note in the water,
a footnote about talking to strangers at parties,
about seeing messages no one else sees.

Jessica Nash

No fly zones over Bradford and Marseilles

From a nation obsessed
With cheap celebs
And weddings of toxic royal chavs,

Pig faced Cameron
Fires cruise missiles
From his fat arse
On a sovereign state
When he has no cash
To feed his own people
Who die in hospital corridors, after bash,
bash the bashing of poor workers,
Asians, Blacks, students and the unions.

Dwarf Sarkozy cannot Reach his wife's vagina
For foreplay but plays
A "war leader" the frogs never had.
Even Marie Le-Pen out polls him!
Cheap scum, basking
In war glory when puppet
Master, US of A has you
Both by the short and curlies.

Revolutions fomented
By the CIA and MI6,
For oil and Lockerbie
stoked up by
Brit and US hacks like the "Con",
Cough linctus in the pay of CIA and
arms merchants is no war of "Liberation"
but subversion
(List of bribed whitie hacks and MPs on internet Tomorrow)

Don't give us this shit
About humanitarian aims,
You sub-human fuckers,
Killing poor civilians
For personal power, gas and oil but mostly power.

What do you care for your
Own people, you just
Cheat and con them, even
Make them pay for porn
and of course your mistresses and whores.

Eternal Hell awaits you
Cameron and Nicholas,
Tories and Lib Dems!
You, your wives and children will die poor and
Burn for ever in hell.
That is guaranteed.
I have instructed them
To expect all of you soon.

There will also be a UN
No fly zone over Marseilles and Bradford
immediately.

France and England
Will be cut in half to protect rebels from torture,
Racist harassment of police And tribal WASP
attacks.

Look what happened to
The bastard Blair.

It is your country that
Needs liberation you fools, from your cheap royals
and crooked parliamentarians,
The Mafiosi of Murdoch.

John Baptist

The Doctors' Waiting Room

We wait all night
We wait all day
For the doctors to say
We can all be on our way
The doctors' waiting room.

We take their drugs
We sing their songs
Of the psychological rights and wrongs
The doctors' waiting room.

We laugh and smile
We brush our teeth

We ignore what goes beneath
The doctors' waiting room.

I came here blonde
I've now turned grey
I hope to be free one day
The doctors' waiting room.

I make up jokes
I laugh all night
Now I know what's wrong from right
The doctors' waiting room.

I've been cured
The curse has gone
Do the doctors sing along
The doctors' waiting room.

Then one day they came to say
We need your bed now move along
This is the end of this song
The doctors' waiting room.

April (Fynn) Stuart

The Psychiatric Window

Standing at the window
Wearily watching, gazing on
As it all went passed
I stand still, paused

Yesterday the highlight of my day
Was staring at the coke machine
Sitting on a sofa
Most of the day, long, long

Others shuffled past
Some like me, some not
You feel quite distant
Sometimes not

But today
I'm looking out the window
So wanting to be ... out there
So today I guess I'm lucky
That when I look out the window
I see something else
Other than, my own stare

John Harrison

That Same Man Again

That same man again,
He just can't see,
The trouble that's far from new;

As any trouble that seeks,
To find its gain,
Is a trouble that sticks like glue.

So if you think you see,
A monkey on parade,
Or a cause for no concern, Then think again;

For it could so easily be you.

Michael Meader

The Game

It's a good game you're all playing
You're all going to get what you want
No matter what I do
The problem is, I'm not a participant
I am the game
Play well for you can never lose
The game is not with me
It is me
It must be good to play
Knowing you will always win
don't worry
Me . . . my life . . . it is the game
I congratulate you all
It's a game everyone
Seems to know and play so well
I await you or their next turn
The next throw of the dice
To see what it may bring for me next
A game like any other
Winners and losers
They must be mindful of this game
As with all games it will end
But there are always other games
Now before and in the future
Some play and don't even know it
But the dice is thrown none the less
Some know and enjoy
I live in the knowledge
Life is no game
Those that treat it like one
I have no time for
But the players are always there
Everywhere you go
So play the game
Play it well
But hope that you will always be a player

And not the game itself
Like me, like us
The game

John Harrison

Tears of Love

When a woman of beauty
Has a beautiful dreams
She lives all her life
But never it seems
To see the volition in her heart
I know only too well
Her sacrificial Part
To hide all her tears
And her broken heart
To submit those dreams
For another part
Just to help others
Her love so strong
So when you see me
Shed a tear
It's only because
I want her near
But where love is brave
I play the same Part
I keep on smiling
With my broken heart
I'd rather play love
Than those broken wars
Then one day
You will see
You really are happy
Just like me
Because we never gave up
And now we are free.

April (Fynn) Stuart

One Last Flower

One last flower
in the garden.
One last spluttering song of summer.
One last linger.
On another year passing.
Looking at you.
Can I brood or move on?
Rebirth or silence.
Pretty as flowers are.
They're only petals, roots and earth.

Nowhere!

When compared to the intricate puzzle that is
LOVE, HATE, BLOOD & WATER!

Peter Vealey

The soft hammer

A soft hammer
Runs through my head.
And although I may ignore
The song,
The spirit is not dead.
Just a soft hammer in the night.
Through the days, a nagging malaise.
I will return for the Soft hammer.
For a headboard on my bed
I miss.
For the friend called darkness,
Lover named solace.
All the comforts I've traded in.
For different quick-answer delusions.
Oh how the soft hammer betrays.

Peter Vealey

Our Silence

We speak but you refuse to hear
We speak but you won't believe
We speak but you won't understand
A silence that drowns out words
A silence that drowns out a cry
I try not to hate you but pity you
The silence you shame is yours not ours
Because there isn't really a silence is there?
It's what you create that we learn to hate
But it's all around because it's in us
It pops up when you don't want it to
Because the silence doesn't make up for the fact
That we know and you know that we do
Even though you're more silent than us
I'm afraid like ours your silence speaks volumes
Believe it or not we're in the same boat
But one of us was wronged, the other did wrong
Our silence is because we were wronged
But yours, is because you are wrong

*"I am proud that this is the poem that I chose that
will be placed inside the child abuse monument in
Canada".*

John Harrison

The Insurance

Insure me, please, against my silliness,
against the common willy-nilly mess
invading lives despite the best advice!
I need a sound risk policy, for a price -
Who knows an agent?
You know the grey gent.

A policy against a life in verse
with lots of praise to swell my empty purse,
against the view beyond my tidy fence
of beggar-bowls amidst the affluence -
Where is the agent?
You'll meet the grey gent.

A policy against ... questioning why,
a policy against ... needing to sigh,
a policy to answer every threat
in life from passion, treachery or debt -
Who is the agent?
Death is the grey gent.

Thomas Ország-Land

Time

Time starts where it ends
But it never ends
It began somewhere
At the last ending
Hour upon hour a moment lasts
Day upon day
Year upon year
To another second gone past
Eternity has just past me by
Just a fraction, how many fractions
Of endless time to pass
Until another moment past
Light rushes by
But time stands still
In this moment of eternity

April (Fynn) Stuart

The First Shall Be First The Last Shall Be First

The path is neither straight nor flat
Up the hill I take the track
The mountain peak in the sky
There need not be a reason why
A shimmering haze in my mind

The strife of life I leave behind
Above the clouds I see the tops
My kind of people on the rocks
I take a breath and set my line
I want to beat the fastest time
In a tunnel at breakneck speed
Crashing down I take the lead
The target set is smashed apart
A dream come true
First at Last

April (Fynn) Stuart

Drift

Something wakening the sea
has entered and held me,
surrendered and soothed
by a rolling tide of wonder,
caught in sight and sound,
pulled under, until released
like flecks of spray
suspended
on waves of memory.

Ally Gardener

I used to be

He went calm like a curtain of muslin.

Now and then a moth made a sound.
A fly cried from sudden recognition of the
deadly dread
of the shortness of life.
I almost wasn't aware that I was not alone
and that I did not lay in comfort like if I was
moved down.

He spoke just like I felt.

Laughter was coming out of me like a
scented steam.
I was dying from boisterous impatience,
although I was solemnly serious.
I was digging blindly into hollows and
bulges,
I was rubbing soft and hard signs of his
response.

He combed my hair.

Ifigenija Simonovic

Sunday

This Sunday - I saw the headlines
In the paper - 'A Textbook Suicide',
And a large, black and white photo of
A troubled and worried man - David Kelly,
Doomed apostle of peace and humanity
In a barbed-wire, cynical world of hatred and war.

He tried to stop the Iraq war -
'There are no weapons of mass destruction.'
But he spoke to the deaf and those of poisoned minds
That bayed for blood and clambered for oil and greed
In the name of God. Bush and Blair turned
God's word upside down and set themselves up as
Prophets - but they were false prophets.

Saddam Hussein had blood on his hands -
The blood of innocent Kurds, but did we
Have to have our own holy war
Against the 'axis of evil'? Our own fatwa?

David Kelly was a martyr for peace
And like Jesus the government put a crown of
Thorns on his head and mocked and pilloried his
Pleas for a harmonious world.

Later on that day, or was it earlier on
I took a small overdose of paracetamol with wine,
I had despaired - David Kelly bore the weight of the world
On his shoulders like Atlas and could no longer cope.
Even his own Bahai community doubted it was suicide as they
Don't condone it - but a mighty machine of evil crushed him,
And only small pinpricks have hurt a small mind
Like mine that survives and is constantly selfish.

Maybe, like Jesus, it is only the truly selfless that die
May he rest in peace.

Angela Morkos

I want to think of him

I am picking ears of wheat. No knife. Getting blisters.
I am picking field poppy. Also no knife. But petals fall,

so I am leaving red trace.

Yarrow has hard stems. Dandelion bleeds white
and my palms are yellow, sticky,

and there is black behind my fingernails.

A blue butterfly is circling around me. I go quiet
and I want to think only of him. Blueness can't
hurt,

unless it is ice in the eyes.

Ifigenija Simonovic

Mrs. Johnson

There she stood before me hanging washing on the line
a cigarette burning in her mouth, nicotine-stained lips
her ample arse so perfect in a tight grey skirt with a broken zip;
I was 25 she was 53, it surprised us both on that Friday night
I gave her a lift, she gave me a kiss, what happened next took a twist
my husband won't be pleased if he found out, and then she said let's go upstairs
her hair was grey her mouth did taste of a pub ashtray
as we lay down to stimulate, the floor did creak and shake
she arched her back, her legs outstretched, as we began to copulate the bed did sway and sway, I emptied
a pocket of jissom into her pulsating quiet as she swore and came
she lit a cigarette, and told me her old man's name was Sid.

Anthony Moore

John Smith's Bitter

john smiths bitter
john smiths bitter, bitter at what, bitter about the bitter, bitter at being ripped off
john smiths bitter, bitter about the stout lying through his teeth to ponce another grout, john smiths
bitter clenching his fist at the moon in June, as he bellows his way through another bloodstained
monsoon.
john smiths bitter, Chinese lifeboat took a hit, it was them or me you've got to do your bit-
john smiths bitter, running through mud in a dream, pebble dashing winklepickers, running out of steam.
cling to intuition, cling to the trees-hi-tech in Singapore, another fast-track scheme.
john smiths bitter, gathering choice in his mind as he struggles for the courage, a crisis
from behind.
john smiths bitter-seeking peace in lucky dips, punchdrunk on print and granny smiths wicked grin.
john smiths bitter leave all your bitter at home, stick to kippers on a Wednesday, stay one step ahead of
the loan, john smiths bitter - bitter about being a brute, bitter about swallowing Rosie Bolton's sausage
stew.
john smiths bitter, looking at his stare in the mirror-stand back and light the blue touch paper, things can
only get bitter.

Anthony Moore

Open Field

I feel better and better,
I feel better than the moon.
She circles her own path
and hides behind pine trees
and halves herself
or makes herself full
at her own will.

When I am somewhere on my own
I look at the moon and the stars
and loneliness stops burning.

Is it so simple?
No, because I have to want to do so.

Ifigenija Simonovic

Dragonfly Jester

Dragonfly jester come from Godmanchester
A witch in polyester
looking for a gargoyle and scratchcard
with a lilywhite breaster and no watercresser
only polyester for dragonfly jester
She knew Millie Munter who trod on Billy Bunter
She cried over roger the lodger who was
trying to dodge her
She played with Boris the spider who sugar-coated her in clutter
she swallowed uncle Joe's mintballs that rhinestoned
pariah of a munter
Grounding her feet in sparklers, she then boarded
Sir Billy Bunter.
She stepped out of her munter, and slipped on
garlic butter

All because dragonfly jester came from Godmanchester
 who dressed in polyester, and dined on watercresser
 Water meter for Lovely Rita and instant geezer, drove
 a red hot bargain into next week's sister, because he
 couldn't resist her.
 Dem jelly don' do dat without the beans and fatback
 Don't stare at the flashback or dragonfly jester
 Dance warrior don't do dat for dreams of a hatchback
 Get back on the right track, and mind your own beeswax
 cat-sitting target mobster in gross jeopardy conduct
 Across a wide frontier dem wearing polyester
 Seeking solace inna bedder without dragonfly
 jester
 Shiver me timbral, for partick thistle, its a Jethro Toer
 wicked inna bedder, like a Jaxunday pester, bolt up
 right for paper shredder.
 Dragon me back to Godmanchester with the maximum
 of jester
 She spoke to Desmond Dekker about a sovereign lecher
 Double or quits in the scullery cellar, and ever since
 the rain has fell on dragonfly jester.

Anthony Moore

Miss Abbot

Miss Abbot has been spotted hitchhiking in Norfolk clutching a lunchbox,
 compass and odd sox.

The petrol consumption was of such magnitude the diesel tankers were
 facing bankruptcy within 48 hours. The price of oil has risen dramatically
 since Miss Abbot accepted a lift; she has since promised the ministry to take
 up goat racing in the future.

On returning home Miss Abbot sat down for breakfast - not paw ridge but
 snap crackle and bop straight to the top. She has also asked Mr. Kipling to
 design a fruit slice she can fly on a mission to Mars, so remember when Miss Abbot
 tells a story, you will never look at a restaurant menu again in the same way . . .

Miss Abbot travelled from the Norfolk Broads yesterday by unicycle, heading
 for the Abbey Road studios to sing backing vocals on the new Johnny Wardrobe
 and the Pavement Oysters platter "Baby don't you make a pavement out of me".
 After the session Miss Abbot was taken by armoured car to Buckingham Palace
 to receive a Lifetime Achievement Award from her majesty for incredible
 storytelling.

On receiving the 500 cucumber sandwiches, Miss Abbot muttered "baby:
 don't you make a cucumber pudding out of me" and left in a stumbling huff.

A Garden

It was yesterday. And the day before
 yesterday.
 And the day before.
 I worked in the garden. There was a fence.
 And I did have a key to the cellar.

Now - I keep forgetting
 and I am becoming selfish.

Ifigenija Simonovic

Une Fleur Du Mal

What does snow smell like?
 Well enough to make me weep.

How sharp is the sickle?
 Sharp enough to cut through cream.

How brutal are words?
 Brutal enough to kill.

How late is death?
 Almost too late.

Ifigenija Simonovic

She uni-cycled back to Norfolk to organise a weekend barbecue for the Oulton Broads Angling Association's tribute to Tokyo Joe's escape from a Russian submarine stranded in Loch Ness trying to catch minnows with a baseball cap.

Fred Zeppelin singer Rubber Plant will scream for his supper at the said shindig, due to overwhelming public demand and the kind auspices from the guardians of Colonel Gaddafi's refrigerator, Miss Abbot will enter the Egg and Spoon Race at the 2012 Olympics, sandwiched between the javelin and the shot-put. She will also attempt a vigorous rendition of the cucumber rumba sponsored only by Skysports and Old Moore's Almanac.

On completion of this task and rare treat, Miss Abbot will accompany the descendants of Fanny Craddock to watch Leyton Orient F.C. lose 14-0 to the Girl Guides in a charity match. This event will also reveal the recipe which, as a joint effort between the rivals suggest a sausage roll that will seriously undermine the Hong Kong Stock Exchange.

Every time there is an eclipse, Miss Abbot says its only a gargantuan steak and kidney pudding exploding in the universe. According to yesterday's *Financial Times*, Miss Abbot will feature on the new £3 coin dressed as Britannia seated on a Dundee cake as wide as Beachy Head, brandishing a fork. Garrison children across the empire will rejoice at the spirited return of the legendary Miss Abbot . . .

Listen up: meanwhile back in Essex on a windswept bank holiday, Miss Abbot threw a barbecue for the locals. They had to turn Goresbrook Park into a kitchen; sausages as long as Southend Pier were floated on giant barges upstream to Dagenham Dock and off loaded onto 18 wheel trailers 2 lanes wide to be escorted by folk police for the auspicious grilling. Buns were dropped by cargo planes onto the bemused populace below; it was a very great eating: she don't eat no humble pie, and rules with an iron grill at all times.

Anthony Moore

This is not a world, in which I exist. If I could put paid to reality, give up beginning, give up even living, changing every philosophical concept, defying all traditions.

The methods, of course, are academic, a process of reasoning Proving nothing, just thoughts, one after another, with no more Meaning than the manufacture of words, for whatever they are saying, I myself am engaged, in writing. An exercise, whose value, seems no more real than anything else, just passing time, without any connection to space even the universe itself, I can do without the material world and its scientific pretensions, so why am I trying?

To come around and stop looking, or naming any objects Along this line, my thoughts have a way of progressing Yet how is that possible, how is it possible to do without thoughts and feelings, there are so many other things it seems Much more important, to prove that, I must be out of my mind If that is truly impossible that I have gone insane and lost all sense of common sense, where am I going?

The extension, leaving that, inside of this second, is a circle.

A clock talking, a light shining a computer tapping, my fingers Even my brain in participation, Somehow or other, I have to break free, dismiss the necessity, of this action.

Change my mind, become a character unto oneself, become Another person, he was, I guess, trying to open up the boundaries, telling himself, that he had once existed However that happened, he had heard it, read silently

Words somehow, going to the edge, falling, down, smack crack Snap, he had nothing left to say, just lying there on the railway track, the thing he wanted to happen didn't. he was still thinking So I suggest to myself that that person I use to be is dead. My demise, my end, there has to be a continuation, a direction. The source seems to begin, very early in childhood memories It is very difficult to grow up,

responsibility seems to be where I am heading. Ambition hopes and dreams, even failure has a way of understanding, in fact all this comes along later,
My perceptions have changed. I have changed, there is only one thing left to say. Goodbye, I am leaving my voice behind.

Dave St..Claire

Have I heard oppositional thinking? Its location.
Source of energy, unknown.
Mind, how you go,
Let us not mind at all. These are a trillion ideas
Within the course of thought, thoughts, don't have a place
Nowhere to lay down, nowhere to sleep.
And the reason for dreams.
I awake, to forget, what had transpired.
To recover, piece it all together, make out whatever Happens, in whatever worlds, and
Mr. Whatever said.
Without words.
How his fingers work,
Change, in that moment. I register, the setting sunshine
A moon, or three of them, over all the colours, even the shapes
A tiny mark, linked together.
Was it literature after all
Have I the right to express myself, call what I do, something
As if I meet this is not it after all.
I don't make any conscious effort, nothing I say or do
Is separated the whole thing, is black and blue, and was I there
In Berkeley California, or was it really just a myth,
A belief, a memory, over 30 years ago.
Now and again, I see the present, minus all of my sensations
Everyone has their own world.
How to proceed, how to not change anything
To actually in fact see things I like, and the sound of people
Their faces a blurr.
What has happened, who has changed who.
I have no compulsion, to state categorically that
I as myself, was once the structure, I reacted against
Who knows what principles are absolute
Would it be true, would it be true at all.
Whoever I used to be has turned into a flow of words
I pick and choose.
And turn away, leaping forward
Placing my head on this page, and sever myself from
The umbilical chord.
My first words, a little later only
Remembering what I said.
It doesn't matter now
Because reason has let me down, or vice versa
Let us swim together in the
Swinomish River
Nations were once important.
As were personal souls.

Dave St. Claire

The Difference

A woman comes like a water lily,
slamming door when leaving.

A man is impatient like woodpecker,
leaving a puddle in the quarry.

Ifigenija Simonovic

DOWNHILL

slowly
but surely
he sensed
 bit by bit
 that he was
going downhill
but on the way
 there are some
 little hillocks
 small rises
 lovely views
 distant vistas
 and pleasant
 stopping places
 and at the
 very bottom
 he finds a
 cheery stream
 with willows
 a rich meadow
 inhabited by
 singing birds
 dazzling flowers
 bumbling bees
 and sky painting
 dancing butterflies
 and he gratefully rested

Patrick Mcmanus

Fire Escape

I got up early, no combing my hair.
I run down the fire escape
and I felt my day will be different from his.

Freedom, a large wave.

I returned using the same fire escape,
took my shoes off and threw myself in a suffocating
embrace.

The fire escape was rattling in the wind.

Ifigenija Simonovic

Old Woman

The door handle stays in her palm,
Splinters attack her bare feet.
A dead lamp hangs from the ceiling,

She is seeking, seeking
a pair of lips to match her own.

She no longer does any mending.
She's scratched plaster
off the walls. Her doorstep
is smoothed by departing lovers.

She is seeking, seeking
a pair of lips to match her own.

Shedding memories, closing in
on herself, she can't stand
different kinds of non-coexistence,
concealed disharmonies.
Failing loves. Too many. All over.

She is seeking, seeking
a pair of lips to match her own.

Ifigenija Simonovic

As High up as Gentian

I set out up high. Even if I don't return!
I exclaimed in sudden joy over existence itself.
Wildly bleu gentian was stilling my gaze
away from the rocks and roots and the sky. Hawks over the tops.
Butterflies of all colours were presents to my tired eyes.
Tiny wasps were entangled among my eyelashes.
Legs started to feel heavier and hands were swinging.
I took off my blouse, I left my rucksack in the bush
and took a deep breath, walked, far, far, far and high.
As high up as the level of wind and gentian.

I laid down at the pick of the mountain and while asleep
I slid downwards twice the length of my body.
Luckily towards the softly cut side of the overhang!
I exclaimed in sudden awareness
that while asleep I was unconsciously escaping death.
My hat was left behind, and my shoes and socks,
symbols of abandonment and constant never never.
I was bareheaded, bare feet! Symbol of headlessness?
So high up! As high up as the level of wind and gentian!
As high up as the state of dispersed, not jet chosen possibilities.

At the edge of the overhang there rested a mare with its foal.
Having no fear of precipice. No urge, no burden.
It brought its foal as high as the level of wind and gentian
and butterflies, which were stilling gaze of the foal, too,
and which made it happy by their flittering. Just as they made me happy, too.
The mare took its foal away from the herd of cows and bulls and calves.
Just like me, taking myself away from everything and everybody.
But I did not set to go like a proud courageous mare,
I was, even up there, high up, in spite of the wind and gentian
and in spite of all not jet chosen possibilities still weighed down by the fear of death.

Ifigenija Simonovic

Anguish

and suppressing the question
and the answer, offering oneself again
and hiding, what wanting to give,
and giving oneself to be pushed aside, not
requesting
and waiting afterwards

afterwards asking
afterwards not allowing to oneself not to be
answered
afterwards listening to the wish, denying
afterwards wanting, tyrannising
offering waiting for nothingness
afterwards waiting in secret

and withdrawing
and wishing not to wish

but the walk was beautiful
but the geese flew high
but the brunches reached the ground
but the bushes were thick
but leaves were a ground rug
but the sounds were comforting

to conceal the question well enough
so that every answer fits
Some other Euridice

You called. From a dark room.
One candle only. White sheets.
Bare bad. Hollow space.
We were received by dark men.
They allowed us to dampen our lips
by one happy tear. One for both pairs.

A girl, who I once was, closed her eyes.

Clapped her hands. Silently.
She wore gloves. Made of fur.
Perhaps soft naked palms.

Dark men peared through us.
Iron eyes. And pulled me off your lips
and out of our gaze. Brisk gestures.
A girl, who I once was, moved away.
She sunk into me. Silently. Weeping.
Inside me. Softly.
Her fur coat caught fire.
Perhaps soft her whole skin.

Dark men pulled us apart.
Not hiding their disgust for love.
You pushed me away before you even hugged.
Not hiding fear from togetherness. Not even tried.
A tear left a gray mark of a kiss
on both pairs of lips. Perhaps gray mould.
It was Winter. Silence.

There were also dark women
who have never been girls.
They were clapping cymbals
and tearing the silence.
Putting pins in their hair.
Letting shoulders fall out of their blouses.
A girl who I once was walked alongside.
Her shoes made of fur.
Perhaps soft feet.

I turned around at the door.
I covered the eyes of a girl
who I once was. Rubbed them.
Until her eyelids caught fire.
I didn't cry out. Not surprised.
I sensed it.
You haven't even spoken out
the whole name
when you were already silent.
I sensed it in an embrace.
Your arms haven't even met yet
when you already withdrew.
I sensed it in the dark. And it was winter.
And you couldn't talk. No promise.
Only fear of love. The kiss not dry yet.
Perhaps slight trembling.

Dark men fried the shoulders of dark women.
Bones. No flesh. Bones not even connected.
And they wheezed. Out of breath from hate, eager,
bloated.
Dropping cymbals out of their hands.
I was stumbling over.
Wearing the girl's shoes made of fur.

Only now, on my departure, will the dark women
without flash on their shoulders,
without a burden of lust and envy
stop digging into you and let you be alone in love,
missing me to your bones.

You will be allowed to call me.
You will call out the whole name.
You will multiply your calls
by echoes inside the dark room.
I shall stop coming.
I shall be killed by lovelessness.
The dark men will moisten your lips
zealously, your slaves,
and, using a peace of the girl's fur,
they will keep polishing
the grey mark of our unfinished kiss,
wet from the one tear out of four eyes of ours.

Ifigenija Simonovic

Abused

under your skirt
above the knee
under your jeans
I always see
the swell of buttock
and the slide of thigh
the yell of sex
that blasts my eye
murders my hearing
razors up my gut
oh door of memory
that will not shut
the small heart fractured
long ago
that could not bear
to have it so

Claire McLaughlin

Going to see the Therapist

Waiting at her front door, distractedly,
I saw her through the window of a room;
beyond the dappled glass I saw her loom
as fish loom in the dim vaults of the sea.

Oh, then I felt such love! - but when she stood
a moment later, smiling, at the door,
and we were face-to-face, my own face wore,
of course, just the bright, empty smile it should.

But I had seen too much - not eyes, but heart
had glimpsed a world where I could never come;
swim of a life in which I had no part:
the lit, green rocking of her deep-sea home.

So I went in, to take the client's chair,
hoping to hide my love, and my despair.

Claire McLaughlin

Cardboard country.
Or perhaps we are a world
at a primal stage of evolution,
have been like this for a million years.

Dissociation

I am my own sky.
Boneless, pallid, inert, I hang
over my own landscape. Below,
dark purple colours in a curve of mountains.
A lagoon, *étang*,
unfringed by reeds or trees,
is beached by plains of sand.
Nothing is moving. Nothing grows.
Nothing can happen.

Unchanging. Untroubled.

I wish I could ignore the watery glimmer
that is a rent in my cloud, high up,
with a glimpse of clear sky
where a sun may be shining.
It makes me queasy,
like the shifty, one-eyed glitter
that precedes a migraine.

I used to get them
when I was trying to grow up.

There was so much pain.

Claire McLaughlin

Goodbye with Love

Caretaker Self
I'll always remember you
how hard you worked
how tirelessly you tried
to make them smile
to earn their approval
to win the love
that would keep Me alive

In my childhood
how hard you tried
how you sat at your books
how you laboured over homework
how meek you were at home
how you toiled to gain friends
to win the love
that would keep Me alive

In my twenties
how hard you tried
to be pretty when prettiness was required
to be elegant when elegance was required
to be sexy when sexiness was required
to be serious when seriousness was required

how madly you flirted
how gravely you frowned
to win the love
that would keep Me alive

In my thirties and forties
how hard you tried
to keep the house clean
to make the bed nice for him
to make the baby smile
to make the children happy
to ease the daughter's path
to win the love
that would keep Me alive

In my fifties
how hard you tried
how you cradled me to therapy
how you coaxed my first steps
how you spoke to my terror
how you dabbed at my rivers of tears
how you stroked me in my despair
week after week how you willed me to endure
to win the understanding
that would help Me to be born

Dear Caretaker Self
you are dying now
your eyes are closing
in your ash-pale face
your hands are thin as paper
you are worn to a gauze
how little fun you had
how little joy you knew
how little pleasure was yours

May you wake
to a kinder world than this
and gentle hands receive you
may soft lips kiss your cheek
and a sweet smile greet your waking
may you walk in green meadows
and smell the flowers
may you have no more work
and try no more

Goodbye with gratefulness
goodbye with love

Claire McLaughlin

About the poet

Claire McLaughlin is a London-based survivor poet who is currently being mentored by Debjani Chatterjee, as part of the Survivors' Poetry Mentoring Scheme. She was educated in Oxford and worked as a commissioning editor for a major publisher in the late 1970s. After retraining as a counsellor in the 90s, she worked for a variety of mental health agencies and is now retired. Having lost her eyesight, Claire taught herself Braille, which she uses for reading poetry. Debjani says: "Claire is not only a very talented poet, but is someone open to new ideas who will not let her disabilities stand in the way of pursuing her art. Her commitment to poetry is admirable."

Graffiti Corner!

Author: tonyh

Haiku

Thought I'd try to write some occasionally. I'm not great at counting syllables and that stuff, so apologies if i am following the rules loosely.

Maybe I could open this out to others - reply with one if it takes your fancy?

So much I want to do. Freedom hides where to start. The weather changes.

13 Jun 2010 02:54 pm: tonyh

Re: Haiku

Insomnia strikes suddenly. Trapped by office hours. Rush on Greek days.

14 Jun 2010 06:09 pm: sammy1977

Re: Haiku

The golden sun floods onto my floor, remnants of A different day

14 Jun 2010 09:00 pm: tonyh

Re: Haiku

Full of words over a busy week now freedom has come, where to start?

21 Jun 2010 12:14 pm: sammy1977

Re: Haiku

Beginnings of A new life, releases the Trappings of the old

22 Jun 2010 01:59 pm: tonyh

Re: Haiku

Feverish heatwave.

England persist. The weather breaks. All new again.

23 Jun 2010 05:01 pm: tonyh

Re: Haiku

Freedom rests in you Do not shut me in with fear Acceptance brings life

23 Jun 2010 05:07 pm :tonyh

Re: Haiku

Do I need you to smile to smile myself to help you smile? Sometimes yes.

23 Jun 2010 07:50 pm: tonyh

Re: Haiku

Emotional calm Still water sits in a deep pond Do I stop to be?

or the less preachy:

Hidden by day's light Still water sits in a deep pond Stop looking, find it

23 Jun 2010 08:06 pm: tonyh

Re: Haiku

The broken rocks howled their lost unity to the sky sacrilege to time

I cannot breathe
08 Jul 2011 12:53 am

Author: starchild

I cannot breathe
I cannot breathe.

Stuck. Again.
Fools luck.
Breathing.
Soot. Dirt.
Gas. Choke.
Cry. Out. Pain!
Scream!

I cannot breathe.
Lies. Tears.
Falling. Down.
Cheeks. Stained.
Friends. Apart.
Reality. Distant.

I cannot breathe.
Dreams. Nightmare.
Reality. Merging.
Can't. Can't.
Ending. Reality.
Pain. Agony.

I cannot breathe.
Flashback. Screams.
Death. Hurt.
Anger. Fear.
Destruction!

I cannot breathe.
Reality. Gone.
Blink. Eyes.
Dream. Overcome.
Emotion.

Too much.

08 Jul 2011 12:53 am: winter

Re: I cannot breathe
i really like this__
Please hold all muses are on hold
but your inspiration is important
to us

feature

artist

Lorraine Nicolson
Born in 1962

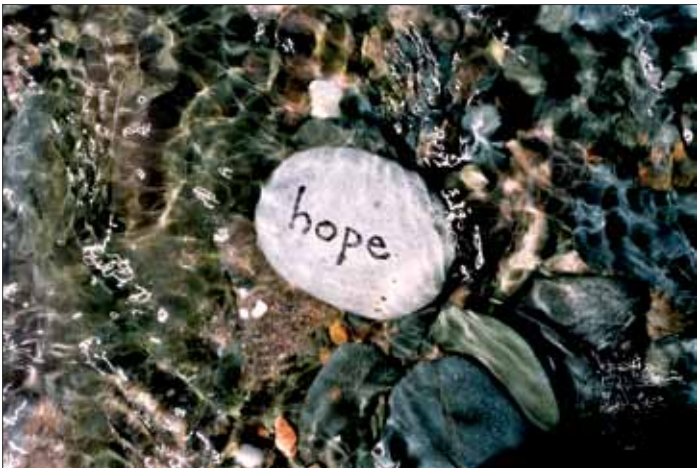
Studied for an M.A. in modern languages at St Andrews University but didn't get my degree in my final Honours year because of depression.

Have completed First Year of my B.A. degree and have a place at Dundee to study time-based art for the next 3 years.

Currently taking an academic year out to promote my book "The Journey Home" previously reviewed by Dave Russell, which recounts in poems, artwork and photography the story of my recovery from severe depression.

The artist within has always been a very key part of who I am but the poetry writing came as a very powerful outpouring of emotion following my second admission to hospital in 2005.

Together, poetry, artwork and photography became key tools in trying to construct meaning out of chaos and ultimately helped me reshape my life shattered by depression.



Innovation Park Ltd
Scion House
Stirling University Innovation
Park
Stirling
FK9 4NF



Lorraine will be holding an exhibition of her art, previewed on 24th July :
"Painting with Light a Journey out of Darkness"
at Stirling University, Stirling University

check artist's website for further information:
www.hope4recovery.co.uk





Elusive Gift

Swathed in arid squalls of sandy granules
 I strain to make progress
 and feel close to despair.
 Alone in this parched world
 on the extreme perimeter of life,
 My laboured steps fel abundantly pointless.
 Eroded, weathered, barren to the core,
 leaden thoughts weigh me down.
 Making any purpose questionable.
 Where will it all end?

Overhead, black depressive wings
 circle this tiny speck of humanity;
 solitary shadow, only an outline of life remaining.
 The oasis of health, that most precious of gifts,
 seeming an impossible mirage.

Taken from *The Journey Home*, accompanying the image
 on the cover of *Poetry Express*



Maiden Voyage

Ripples circle before my eyes - made by me,
 My compass set beyond the safety of harbours
 On new and courageous horizons.
 Faith fills my sails as I gather momentum.
 Exploration is my blood
 And the spirit of adventure spurs me on.
 Knowing not where journey's end might be,
 An attraction in itself as I break through
 Waves of new knowledge of self.
 A wake of foam measures my progress
 And the spray of life splashes my bough
 As I rejoice on deck, arms aloft in celebration,
 The darkenss of storms left on the distant horizon.
 I look forward to frequent sunrises now
 in this the high summer of my life.

Taken from *The Journey Home*.
 ISBN 0-9551764-7-6 £20.00 available from the author
 Lorraine Nicholson.

Reviews

Book Slam

**The Tabernacle, Powis Square,
W11, 21st April 2011**

This memorable event featured Ben Okri, Philip Wells and musician Tanya Auclair, emceed by Charlie Dark. There was a ten-minute gap between Charlie's preliminary announcement and the actual beginning of the show. I sensed the punters (myself included) getting restive. I felt that the intervals were a bit on the long side, but this was offset by the high level of animation of a truly involved audience. The hall was filled to capacity.

Philip is known as 'The Fire Poet', and is one of this country's foremost 'protest poets'. He has performed in prisons, psychiatric units, and in front of major politicians, including declamations in front of the Prime Minister's *Newsnight*. Tonight he made the radical statement: "As an activist, I've found words nebulous." Admitting to having 'a problem about being English', he read *St. George's Day*. This poem wove back and forth through history, from the Avebury stone circle, through churchbells and the *Beano* to 'ordering organic cucumbers on the Internet'. Then he presented a pastiche of names - 'Milton and Blake, Wills and Kate - a mixed breed of emerging gods'. He read *Storm of Creation* - cosmically visionary: "crack in the egg shall sky/fly out beyond to the highest skies of fire." *Dying Wishes* reaches out for the extremities of experience: "hold me in the nape of your neck; the world is ending." and *Rap Poem*, which he introduced with a quote from Nietzsche, "live as though the time was here". This poem certainly demonstrates his multicultural affiliations: "Put away that accent . . . I'd be a Jamaican born Welshman - imitate your redemption fire." Incisive aside comment about 'expensive compensatory fixes'; great proclamation of optimism: "Mother earth would wake up . . . fear will dissolve in the blaze of the sun" declaimed against some dramatic sound effects.

Ben regaled the audience with his poems, some perceptive truisms, and the opening of his fame-making *The Famished Road*. His opening poem *More Wishes Than Stars*, has been made into a song by Harper Simon (I hadn't known that Ben collaborates with singer-songwriters!) It would have been nice to hear the sung version during the interval! A great spirituality in the words: "I'm not sure who I am/I'm sluggish like the ocean when it moves . . . I'm not chasing success/I want to transcend happiness . . .". Next came *The World is Rich*, struggling through despair to optimism: "They tell me that/the world is rich/with terror// I say/the world is rich/with love unfound// It's inside us/and all around// There's terror in the air/and we have put it there// We have made/God into/an enemy . . . But the world is rich/with great love/unfounded//Even in the terror/there is love/twisted round and round//Set it free/River, flow/to the sea

His 'philosophy' is admirably expressed in his series of linked essays *The Time for New Dreams*: "To see something I must be something . . . I must become myself . . . one must be established in the art of self . . . To see I must first be . . . All seeing depends on being . . . All looking before we find ourselves is not true seeing."

He continued in the same vein with *The Romance of Difficult Times*, which crystallizes the essential dualism of his outlook: "You cannot rise without a fall and vice versa . . . Great civilizations can be built on great failures . . . Difficult times either break us or force us to go back to the primal ground of our being, who we really are in our simplicity . . . Too often we go through life with vague dreams . . . Adversity never deceives, flatters, lies . . . A high point is not necessarily a golden age . . . Difficult times are more romantic than good times." This is all supremely in the spirit of William Blake's "Without contraries there is no progression".

After extensive opening and closing passages from *The Famished Road*. This work merits every iota of acclaim it has received, a true synthesis of poetry and the novel, as the exquisite opening fuses the natural river with the man-made road. Its scope embraces archaeological time: ". . . just returned from the world of the living . . . drawn back to the land of origin." Much of its utterance is posited as coming from 'spirit beings', deeply attached to the 'spirit world/the world of pure dreams' in which half of their being are always located. "Not one of us looked forward to being born" . . . they had "the ability to will our death". Their emergence into materiality came from being 'seduced by the enunciation of wonder'.

The passage from the conclusion began by describing his father being in a coma after a fight with a spirit being. He returns to the image of the road as a universal channel of communication: "Our road must be open; a road that is open is never hungry. A great assertion of 'spirit-power': "a single thought of ours can change the world". On to the cosmic dimension, poetically embracing sci-fi: "elections in heaven and under the sea . . . a great something is going to come from the sky." A cautionary note: "Beware of empty spaces and invisible civilizations . . . look at the world with new eyes . . . Human beings are gods hidden from themselves . . . the whole of history is an undiscovered continent."

A truly apocalyptic conclusion: "We need a new language . . . all roads lead to death - wonderful things that can never be finished. Angels and demons win us. Before being born first the spirit . . . everything is energy we can use. Death has taught me the religion of living."

Ben completed his set with his poem *On The Death of My Father*, evoking the 'father lion, roaming in my being.' He wanted his father's spirit to live on in him, ". . . Multiply my powers, be the invisible warrior . . . some good battle might be won . . ."

Tanya is a truly inspired electronicist. Could she be a disciple of Charlie Dark? In addition to her guitar and ukulele, she achieved an astonishing depth and range of near-orchestral sounds, including layered vocals via a loop pedal - from a tiny synthesizer - piano, percussion, strings - and not one single backing musician onstage!

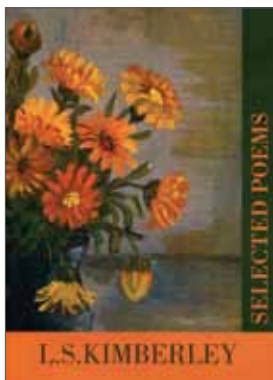
Hailing from west London, via Canada and Rwanda - Tanya Auclair's musical upbringing straddled influences as wide-ranging as Bongo Joe Coleman, Juana Molina, The Staple Singers, Laurie Anderson, Matthew Herbert and E.S.G. Armed with just a digital recorder, FruityLoops and some instruments she wrote and produced her debut solo release, EP *Thrum*, which received rave reviews worldwide, together with fervent support from Resonance FM, BBC 6 Music's Tom Robinson, Guestlove's Okay Africa, Eska and Hero's Marc Mac. "Early vocal-body percussion work with jazz pioneer Leon Parker and an excitement for music made from 'minimal means' gave rise to her distinctive sound and compelling one-woman-band show.

I have heard much similar material (including Ben himself) in the more formalized setting of Poet in the City. This evening was a superb piece of 'crossover'.

Dave Russell

L S Kimberley Selected Poems

Stepping Out Theatre Company £7.99
(See pg 46 for contact details)



This is the work of one born in Trinidad, who settled in England at the age of 5, and became deeply involved with the British and European literary traditions. Very telling comment in *Essential Thoughts: Mayakovsky*: "Sometimes the place can be vulgar/where all true poets learn their art". Together with this, he integrates elements of patwa and rap into a vital, hard-edged idiom. In *Destiny*, a great subtlety of substance emerges through an apparently crude, apparently oral-based verse scheme - such couplets as "Better, give up your mortal dalliance,/ Your chemistry is all that's science." *Style* proclaims the inner substance of style for him; it is intrinsic, in no way ephemeral or superficial.

Night at the Fridge is a direct patwa chant. Likewise in *Prison Blues*, Kimberley speaks with the voice of the ghetto. However, in *Old Etonians*, he can express

veneration for old English 'greats', including Scott of the Antarctic. In *The Minne-master singer* he waxes eloquent and nostalgic about the environs and traditions of Oxford.

Interestingly, one of his literary heroes is Brecht. In the poem of that name, there is a deep sense of affinity with the playwright, who stood for activism and radicalism, but tended to be taken over by orthodoxy. Some cries from the heart here: "The routine you set up in your workshops/is meant to blind the literate." He wants to understand the reality of oppression: "The terrible husbandry of women-folk I am/Dying to know." In *A Non-Brechtian Image*, he celebrates a literary-inspired love: "And may it not be because of Brecht/Or Horace that I am in love with you." *The Press-sure is On* paints a nightmare picture of a 'carnival in reverse' - set in Africa, in the midst of a traumatic tumult. But in *A Wartime Poem*, he can identify just as intensely with a Brit's experience of air-raids. *It was the night before Christmas* is overtly sentimental.

There is a great freshness in his adulation of the literary 'greats'. This is apparent in the opener, *I Loved Browning* - a touching naïve tribute to an esoteric writer, including a couple of allusions: "Death, you are not important" - cf. Death, be not proud (Donne); 'Waving or drowning' - cf. Not Waving but Drowning - Stevie Smith. The title of *Little Gooding* is derived from *Little Gidding* in T S Eliot's *Four Quartets*. The two poems celebrate a love experienced and lost - in the form of a bereavement. Prior to the loss, he wanted to make a painting of his love. There is an interesting interplay between the Shakespearean motifs of Othello and Desdemona, Venus and Adonis.

O My Captain seems to speak through the persona of a girl who has had a passing encounter with a sea captain, of which there is an offspring. 'She' refers to her 'unripe age' resulting from this experience. Kimberley's attitude to romanticism seems equivocal. In *Not at all: Said she* the goddess Athene seems, in cynical contemporary fashion, to reject stylized compliments meted out to her. Similarly, in *Destiny* and *Strange How Cypresses Fail* - the poet seems to be truly steeped in the romantics, but in some way opposed to them: "I have worked in the laboratory of love before". The first poem faces the issue of death with dignity, the second arraigns the shortcomings of the funereal cypress tree, referring to the 'romantically ill' and 'hearts' monotonous tide'. The synthesis of his cynicism and idealism is perhaps best articulated in *Love is not here, it is somewhere else* - where he feels that love is an abstract ideal and/or an illusory reality located in an idealized past.

Before Hibernias pondered moon becomes is an exciting contemporary gloss on Elizabethan and Jacobean English - such innovative phrases as 'windy-instrumental wave', 'your artless weapon of unlucky tears'. Paper money is treated as something almost organic. His language is frequently innovative, as well as being somewhat evocative of Gerard Manley Hopkins. This is apparent in *join the spontaneous never say 'Aye'*: "Spring-free a chauffeur-driven note,/then-child, bounce back the years no longer.' He has a fascination with female icons: "Aphrodite woman . . . belles all decent souls . . ." Likewise "Each overture to Helen,/Holds dust-returning flowers". Such fascination embraces the 'real life area' as is apparent in his eulogy of Beryl Bainbridge.

The same synthesis is apparent in *A lovely bone is death*. Death embraces a gamut of textures - from bone, through cocoon, to airy breath. Interesting use of the word 'battlement' (fortification) in the sense of battling. ". . . if mermaidens harden beauty/crafty materialists think it wrong." I would have welcomed a footnote to explain 'dewi tied tempers'. 'Sackcloth bard and sinner' challenges/reverses the idolized poet figure. Alongside the classical allusions there is a bit of the anti-biblical "ignoble Dawn'/threw down Jerusalem's mighty walls".

Kimberley is acutely sensitive to the relationship between creativity and human suffering/inadequacy: in *Bullet outdid brush and pen.*, he (irreverently?) points to human shortcomings in Van Gogh. In *Essential Thoughts: Mayakovsky* he faces the issue of a creative spirit's suicide, and can feel rightly ambivalent about the human cost of creative endeavour: "a book is like a bitch/it takes everything out of you/but gives nothing back." In *The Artist* he proclaims that "Death is in agreement with the stars." Significantly, one of his favourite painters is Soutine, best note for his portrayal, mainly in oils, of meat/flesh. His work had a feeling of physical self-sacrifice: "your own life-blood flowing into/each painting you had done. Your nervous energy carried you/to suicidal extremes and depressive states./This flesh, that robe. Became you." Similarly, in *Schubert or Shakespeare?*, when the sublime compositions have been accomplished, "The blood ripples,/the veins stand out./A non-recital." There is a profound irony in *All Good Olympians of Metrical Verse*: through the sheer sublimity of their mission, poets are a 'battle weary crew' blighted by 'love's contagion'. *Below a time* is an almost cryptic portrayal of the creative life-process, comparing it to supervising childhood games. At that younger age the poet-teacher was self-assured: "in Goosberry Grove my midnight mouth was law"; not so in later years: "Bright minds have brought air-staged and water-tight/my broken length on the tip/of the tongue/of the year. More intrepid exploratory struggles. A man who came back seems to be self-censorious, addressing his own alter ego, the prodigal son. It is impossible to reflect comfortably on the past: "If you haven't the money then you ain't ageing". Disturbing image of metaphoric cannibalism: "(you're a dish)/I'll have to trussed in an hour or two". Also doubt and equivocation about his scholarship and literary endeavours: "ESOTERIC to the last,/you fished for meaning but found little."

Many of his poems are not an easy, literal read. He demands reflection and speculation; the enigmatic fascination of his work is often enhanced by apparent deviations from conventional grammar. It is stated on the cover that "He now resides in a clinic in Bristol". All this points to a true survivor - a sentiment he articulates in *The Artist*: "Never let it be said,/we missed the laughing voices,/the hallucinations, the paranoia,/the madness for we/ really are,/really/demented." All in all, he fortifies his aesthetic ideals by giving them a tremendous battering.

The first edition of this collection has spectacularly (and justly!) sold out. The second edition is imminent.

Dave Russell

16 Cocks by Simon Robson

Grosvenor Road Books

This is a series of poems accompanied by some powerful 'action' shots of cockfighting - a home produced effort with the texts on an old-fashioned typewriter. It certainly merits a more sophisticated production. The motif of cock-fighting is used as an extended metaphor for human conflict and predatory human behaviour; the pictorial gestures of the birds echo the extremities of human emotion displayed here. There is a strong local base to this collection: the author's home in Aldershot. It reveals the poverty-stricken underside of a notoriously well-off Home Counties area. Horse-racing is a strong theme in the background: it is an organic link between affluence and destitution; Ladbroke's is part of the environment. The opener, *Jesus Loves Miss Amberstone*, shows someone in total adoration of a partner, waiting on her hand and foot, lavishing gifts on her. Strange twist at the end about going to Jerusalem on his scooter. This poem opened in the setting of a snooker hall. The second, *I Walked into Another Universe* starts in a bar, which immediately turns futuristically surreal. He then walks into another (or is it the same?) universe which is unspeakably sordid (featuring oppressed young girls in rags, who appear at several points in the collection, irregular bowel movements and rotten teeth among the older people there) - then into yet another - 'nothing happening'. *Heavy Metal Kids* is a clinical cynical survey of ageing cult fans, and fluctuations in taste. He prefers Paul Gacgoigne to Heavy Metal; he acknowledges that Iron Maiden corrupted the words of *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner*. I like the phrase 'creosote fencing'. Interesting expansion of focus to past history (piracy), and to air travel. *Can I be Your Cuttle-Fish Cupid?* Is a grim gloss on the 'boy and girl next door' theme, including some hints of sado-masochism. It takes off into fantasy-land: "changing colours when it suits,/zebra-striped when we get sexually active"; surreal end: "I'd conjure you out of a jar", fantasy of beach consummation. *Life's Preparation for Death* reflects upon mum's philosophical attitudes in the face of the bleak routines of life - a touching domestic scenario. *Waiting to Get a Suntan* expresses the poor man's resentment of his utility bare back being spuriously treated as a sign of leisure. *Life's Preparation for Death* honours the figure of the stalwart, stoical mum, philosophical about mortality, always sewing and stitching, including Rupert the Bear outfits. *She's Eighteen and Wonderful* is a moving portrayal of a deprived girl, beautiful but without material prospects, but emanating an intrinsic dignity. Very striking phrase 'her face gleaming with Brasso. A simple but effective prison lament in *Cell of a Thousand Men*. *The Chatham Bus Driver* depicts someone who is trapped in a 'dead-end' job. He is without educational qualifications, has a bad back is insanitary and almost innumerate, a chronically sick wife, a son bloated with steroids and a neighbour with brain damage. *Bed-Sit Life, 2009* describes an ageing woman, shaven head, tattoos and all. Though lacking in sex appeal, she retains a certain rugged attractiveness, and compares favourably with 'Fat Boy John' upstairs. *Miscreant Teenager* is a lively piece

of bedsit drama. A middle-aged bedsit tenant has been moved-in on by a destitute teenage girl who has been kicked out of her home by her parents. There are various visitors from among her contemporaries, who tend to vanish when the tenant appears. He advises her to get a job at Debenham's, with a barbed comment: "selling vases, ashtrays, full-length mirrors - maybe she should take a better look at herself." He tries to interest his landlord and neighbour in this situation, but they do not want to know. The police are lurking in the background.

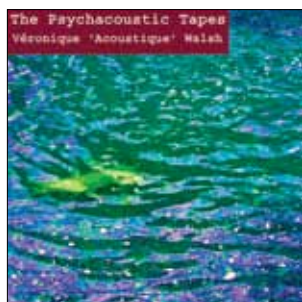
Old Silver Tin-Foil Lady - Washed-up Mermaid is a blend of surreal dream and sordid reality - I cannot easily imagine the literal reality of someone wrapped up in tin foil. The 'land of dancing folk dolls' suggests this world of the imagination, similarly with the medics as scurrying, shiny beetles. She seems to be an ageing prostitute frequenting the exterior of a betting shop, taken to hospital in a state of collapse. More surrealism in *The Invisible Man* - the poet feels that he has been physically filleted of bones and internal organs. Interesting geographical analogy with the Wellington Shopping Centre in Aldershot, and the Hog's Back leading into Guildford, a soul-less town he cannot trust. He identifies with Claude Rains, who took the leading role in the Hollywood film version of H G Wells's story - which reinforced his sense of authenticity. He sees himself re-enacting scenes from the film, such as untying himself from bandages.

Kimi Raikennen refers to the boyfriend of Simon's mother - a Finnish hyper-macho. Mum, extremely old and frail, seems happy with the relationship, the attraction of opposites. A great, bustling panorama in *Aldershot Boot Fair, Sunday Morning* - a parade of 'born-again' non-smokers, ex-servicemen, Nepalese women 'in billowing tents' rummaging through the market stalls, unsure which items they really want to acquire. The narrator is in a dirty, disheveled state, badly hung over. He makes an abortive attempt to chat up a girl, he feels embarrassed - but in some way pulled up by this experience: "maybe one day I'll learn to shut my mouth/and write shorter poems, more concise, less rambling . . ." He contemplates suicide, and refers to his insolvency punctuated by occasional luck at the betting shop.

I find *16 Cocks* an entirely laudable effort, expressing with total honesty the perspectives of low life, of deprivation. No comfortable detached observer's standpoint here.

Dave Russell

The Psychacoustic Tapes by Véronique 'Acoustique' Walsh



This is Véronique's fourth home-recorded album, divided into three main categories of 'Tracks with Colourful Sounds', 'Noisy Energy Acoustic Songs', and 'Pure Emotion Acoustic Songs'. It consists of seven songs, and three instrumentals:

Desperate Housewives to me has echoes of the Pink Floyd - some great atmospheric (wind-like) effects on the synthesiser. *Ode to Miss Iron Pants* is an exciting 'world music' fusion track, embracing That, Balinese and folk rock - lots of unorthodox tempo changes - obviously inspired by Véronique's pursuit of an MA at the School of Oriental and African Studies. *R2D2 is sucking my brain* is described as a 'Sci Fi Psychedelic Jam Ending' - an inspired piece of 'home techno' which many imaginations struggling with limited resources should take on board. These feature Tony Mellotron on keyboard, Steve Clear on lead guitar, and some highly imaginative electronics from Ben Sassen - exciting, disjointed psychedelia. Some powerful strings effects on *R2D2*. Of the songs, *Heart* and *Long Dark Night* have electronics effects: more imaginative and experimental in the former, more laid-back and 'integrated' in the latter. The other 5 numbers are acoustic. "Joni Mitchell meets Hawkwind" it says on an earlier draft of the inlay. Véronique's tracks have had airplay on various channels, including Rob da Bank's programme on BBC Radio 1.

The lyric focus is on fragmented relationships in an anonymous metropolis - loneliness, rejection and the related coping strategies. *Creatures* and *Night Sky* emphasise keeping up appearances and positive interfaces to combat loneliness and rejection. In *Creatures*, the narrator wears colourful, fashionable gear to put on a 'bold front'; in *Night Sky*, there is a plea to put on 'a respectable face'. In the former, there is some transitory solace with an assemblage of strangers in an Internet café, and the sense of a kindred spirit/fellow sufferer in the form of a woman she sees walking along the street. But as well as comforting, other people can crush - like a seething crowd. The narrator longs to be a tree, self-contained in solitude. The night in *Night Sky* beckons like a lover, but the narrator is aware of the danger - of being lifted up and dropped. The defence mechanism is in operation; there are 'circling silhouettes of crazy memories'.

Wage Slaves is a raunchy piece of punk-edged feminist protest - a free spirit wanting neither money nor love from the sources of oppression; I could easily have taken the guitar here as a dulcimer. I'm *So Annoyed* rocks happily - Joni Mitchell-esque. Relationships can be very exasperating; one can be aware that one should be ditched, but still desperately want it. One should be able to attain independent, solitary self-containment by Yoga, meditation etc, but so often one cannot.

Kirsty's Song is the most pessimistic number here. It portrays a struggle to surmount suffering - words of consolation and guidance to one who had to go. The listener is urged not to scream in protest, as this will only engender further screams; to 'seek no justice in this world; you'll not be disappointed'; It is 'safer to break down'. This reminds me of one of Madonna's more perceptive truisms: "It takes more strength to cry, admit defeat". Polar emotions alternate with verse and chorus - in the verses the lover is exhorted to cultivate solitary, independent defence mechanisms; in the chorus, he is encouraged to admit to weakness, and be consoled.

Long Dark Night is an extremely powerful evocation of loneliness in a Heartbreak Hotelish inner city apartment. There seemed to me to be a reference to a former

partner: "You were mistreated and I put you right." The impression I got was that the partner had to go when the maximum of help had been given, but that the comforter had been rejected in turn. Véronique advised me that the narrator was referring to family rather than partner; but there is emotional relevance to both areas in the lyric. Ditching and being ditched are key elements in contemporary relationships. Yes: I know Billie Holiday's *Gloomy Sunday* and this stands comparison. The reference to the therapist gives it a contemporary feel; one always queries their effectiveness.

Walking expresses a universal need to 'take off' somewhere and escape from the repressive patterns of everyday existence: "the mind needs to wander" - but at the end of the day one tends to 'return to base' - good tempo changes and rhythmic emphases.

This is an outstanding example of home recording - all originally done on cassette! This is very much in the spirit of Michelle Shocked's first album, *The Texas Campfire Tapes*, recorded live on a Sony Walkman. Through the years, Véronique has been a regular performer and emcee at Survivors. It is time for a far wider awareness of her recordings.

Copies available via www.roughtrade.com

Dave Russell

Vintage Bromides

Poet in the City, National Portrait Gallery,
Thursday 9th June 2011

This event, chaired by **Alice Northridge**, explored the relationship of Poetry with photography. It highlighted on screen the photographic work of **Ida Kar**, who documented so many literary, media and musical figures. The photographs were complemented by poems on the theme of portraiture. Live readings were given by **John Mole**, **Rosalie Jorda**, and **Bernard Kops**, and there was a brief talk by photographer **Jillian Edelstein**.

A short film was shown of **Robert Graves** shaving, as used in the TV programme *Monitor*. This merited the description: "A face is a history". Reference was made to *Reflections in the Glass Eye: Works from the International Center of Photography Collection*. The key points were made that: our identities are secretive; we like to hide in plain view; portraiture is akin to caricature.

John Mole read 3 poems. The first, *Checkpoint* relates to 'Checkpoint Charlie' on the border between East and West Berlin during the Cold War Period.

This was followed by *In Camera*, where the snapshot device was described as 'truant of unguarded moments . . . recording angel . . . avenger with a Brownie'. With *In the Darkroom* he referred to the gradual emergence of an image "in the darkroom all is brought to light." Mole has a special regard for the photography of John Cotten.

Film further emphasised his nostalgia for old-style box cameras: "in it an exposed film so close, so intimate, so special . . . in its very ordinariness saying everything".

He later presented a video of **Royston Ellis**, who was described by John Lennon as 'England's answer to Allen Ginsberg'. It must have been quite a revelation to many of the audience that he determined the spelling of the Beatles name, was the first non-muso to perform with the Beatles, and that early Beatles performances incorporated spoken word. He claimed to have been the first poet to perform to rock music, and wanted to get it beyond the Bohemian crowd, including performing in Russia alongside Yevtushenko. In 1962, he gave up poetry and turned to novel-writing, having 'learned to make words count'. Bernard's comment was 'skiffled by the washboard, he rolls to the end.

Royston had been photographed by **Donald McCullin**. He also read Dannie Abse's *Photograph And White Tulips*: some interesting observations there on the camera's 'power to lie': ". . . all photos flatter if we wait long enough . . . white tulips changed into swans . . . never fell into that black coffin . . ."

He went into some detail about **Victor Musgrave**, the distinguished art gallery entrepreneur, described as a 'true pioneer' in the promotion of avant-garde art; **Ida Kar** became his second wife. Both **John Mole** and **Bernard Kops** had extensive, in-depth contact with the couple. **John** showed an early photo of **Bernard** in Monmouth Street.

A fine conclusion with *Epilogue* in *Collected Poems*: ". . . slim silhouettes of slender boys/lively tumbling with bright abandon/images demanding explanations . . ."

He was followed by **Rosalie Jorda**, who reflected on a photograph of herself as a child, then proceeded to read *My Father's Hair* by **Deryn Rees-Jones**: this was described as "like a coxcomb before a fight . . . he resisted gels and lotions" The poem was accompanied by a photo of **Augustus John**, looking exquisitely bristling and unkempt. This was followed with *Rembrandt's Late Self-Portraits* by **Elizabeth Jennings**, which extolled the artist's utter honesty of self-criticism in painting. This she compared to 'old-time' photography, of the 'peephole era': "no arrogance; you make light drift the way you want."

Then **Bernard Kops**, with reminiscences of **Ida Kar** and her husband, whom he had known well. Indeed he had been one of **Kar's** models - an early picture was shown of him in Monmouth Street.

More background was given on **Victor**, who 'died young'. He gave many an artist a break. **Bernard** told an amusing anecdote about a prostitute-cum-model, who remarked: "I was working as a machinist, then one day realised I was sitting on a fortune." He filled in the audience on the background of the Aldermaston marches, and the radical leaflet featuring himself, **Pete Brown**, **Adrian Mitchell** and **Michael Horovitz**.

A high spot of the evening was his famous *Shalom Bomb*. This poem, with all its intensity, its nuances and ironies, is one of the most eloquent pieces to be evoked by the Peace Movement of the 50s and 60s: "I want my bomb to sprinkle the earth with roses." He referred to a play he is writing about Soho. Then his famous celebration of the Golden Age

of Espresso: "I sing of thee, o coffee machine/I want to piss pure black" For him, being photographed by Ida was 'like staring down the barrel of a 17th century gun. He also read *To Eugene Lamb in Heaven*, referring to '... unregenerate Tories ... drugs and pop art.

Rosalie read Margaret Atwood's *This is a Photograph of Me* - a 'post mortem' observation:

It was taken some time ago/At first it seems to be/a smeared/print: blurred lines and grey flecks blended with the paper . . . (The photograph was taken/the day after I drowned . . . but if you/look long enough/ eventually/you will see me.)

This was followed by **Neil Rollinson's** *Long Exposure*, which highlights the fragility of the photographic process: "A single flare of a match could ruin your work." The poem was dedicated to photographer **Phil Huntley** - famous for his portrayals of landscapes, ('staying out all night on Dartmoor to capture the night sky') plant, animal, bird and insect life. There was a detailed outline of the photographic work of **Robert Mapplethorpe** who, among his many other great achievements, ". . . photographed Ida's models much older" - including Doris Lessing and Stanley Spencer. Among many others, he captured (mainly by Rollefex) Jonathon Cope and Larry Bussell, Damien Hirst (against a backdrop of corrugated iron), Janis Joplin, Bruce Robinson, Catherine Hammers, Rose Tremayne, Ruma Godden. Bert Hardy, photographer for *Picture Post* he photographed with Ann Scott-James. There was the dust jacket image of Julian Barnes, with the shining reflection of his front zip. One special commission was photographing Nelson Mandela; because of Nelson's poor eyesight, he could not use a flash; Robert held the light meter close under Nelson's eyes, and Nelson grabbed it. He also did outstanding shots of Bob Geldof and Bridget Riley.

John Mole made a fitting conclusion with a reading of *Threen For Ida* by Victor Musgrave: "Each room is silent with her traces . . . hers was a life of humdrum ritual . . . always to know too soon what to think."

Jill Edelstein presented her own photographs. As a press photographer in Johannesburg, she has some significant photographic documentation of South Africa. Since moving to London in 1985, her portraits have been featured in the *Sunday Times Magazine*, the *New York Times Magazine*, *Vanity Fair*, *Time* and the *New Yorker*. Jillian has received many awards including the Visa d'Or at the International Festival of photojournalism (1997) for her work on the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, which led to the publication of *Truth & Lies* (Granta Books, 2001). She is currently working on a project about 'Migration and Ancestry'.

The event clearly demonstrated the vital creative interdependence between poetry and photography, probably just as important as the meeting of painting and photography which catalysed Impressionism. The period captured in this lecture was a high spot of black and white photography. The startling results achieved with comparatively primitive equipment speak volumes to today's generation, brought up on digital high fidelity. A great example of mixed media consciousness on the part of Poet in the City!

Dave Russell

Ruth Fainlight: *New & Collected Poems*

Bloodaxe Books 2010

ISBN 978-1-85224-885-7; £20.00

This collection is a compendium covering over 50 years of poetic endeavour. It vindicates the poet's self-evaluation. "A poem develops organically from the first inspiring phrase. That phrase, or cluster of words, includes every essential element of the poem, and the poet's work is to allow all its potential of sound and meaning to realise itself. And like every other living organism, its development is a unique combination of unassailable laws and the entirely unexpected."

The ordering of its sections is toughly chronological. The first section, *New Poems* is dated 2010, and concentrates on her most recent work. The final section is devoted to her translations. The intervening sections are dated from 1966 to 2006.

Ruth Fainlight is intensely preoccupied with the nature of language and imagination. In struggling to express herself, she is conscious of pursuing an unattainable ideal, that of *God's Language* (94). But each worldly expression points to that area beyond its grasp: "each consonant/proclaims a further meaning". In that ultimate area, "angels forget contradiction". She does, however acknowledge that some ". . . claim that language defuses danger" and concedes that they have a point. In *Unique Forms* she expresses the desire to do with words what sculptor Boccioni did with metal, because ". . . your shape-shifter still maintains unique forms/of continuity in time and space." The double-edged nature of language is acknowledged in *The Plastic Bag*: It can 'uncage paint and terror'; it can 'defuse danger'.

This author is acutely conscious of 'writer's block', where words are paralysed under the pressure of experience, unflinching about facing the significance of the blockage. This is most apparent in *Words* (p.147): words 'petrify' a 'flood of images . . . leaves me dumb'; "It's the need for patience and/Order, the stringing together/Of words like beads on Time's cord/Which dumbfounds me." ". . . the empty pages crawl/with an alphabet of worms" (*Dreaming*). The struggle for self-expression is 'an endless game of chance'. Often, words cannot keep up with elusive experience, as in *The Usual Poem* (124), when she longs in vain to observe a newly-emergent imago insect: "My words are forced/To drag torn, useless wings/Rather than fly, certain and glorious." *Missing Word* shows her dependence on that crucial, elusive quantity. Key expressions resemble particles of soil ". . . all engulfed by swash/Of water every solid sluiced away." In *Words and Letters*, she describes mining, quarrying and drilling words in search of meaning - while also emphasising the significance of subtext ("Beneath the words are other words") and associative meaning ("Links which might dissolve/So easily, and then unite/Into quite other words,". The need for a subtext domain is reiterated in *Driving I*: "The purpose of writing notes/is that the words are not spoken://A system which would be shattered by articulation." Conversely, a word, a phrase, a poem "does not exist until you read it". Is this positing a realm of subsistence, or non-existence? *Prosody* relates the strictures of versification to chemical and physical processes. 'the alembic of iambic,/trochee's fused aggression . . .". Similarly, in

Mosaic, words and verses are compared to tiles. *Deletion* is a cry from the heart of a computer-literate writer, who deletes files regularly. However, all the words in those files are super-durable and super-elusive: "But those hundreds of words, read then deleted,/do not disappear. The air I breathe/is clogged with them". In *Until You Read It*, there is the rider that words do not exist until they are read; their being depends on a vital link with a reader. *Poetry* proclaims the universality of poetic inspiration, embracing the hypothetical and wide-eyed explorations undertaken during childhood. Above all, language is a liberator, as expressed in *Vertical*: "I am released by language,/I escape through speech,:/which has no dimensions,/Demands no local habitation,/Or allegiance, which sets me free/From whomsoever's definition" Poetry must express itself, follow its own rules: ". . . poems which make no concession, but magnify/the truth of every note and colour,/indifferent whether they blind or deafen, or are ravished and ignored." (*The Prism*)

In *Author! Author!* Ruth faces the elusiveness of experience: "How can I live, here and now, when the past/ is being unwound from its great spindle, and tangles/ forgotten motives around the present? Rather/ then set the record straight, further knowledge complicates." In *A Discussion with Patrick Kavanagh*, she laments 'The conflict between poetry and contemplation', and in *The Poet*, remarks on 'the melancholy pleasure of aimless thought'. She would like to have the 'cool, ironic' detachment of an observer, but cannot manage it. She feels embarrassed by her own subjectivity: ". . . pondering one's destiny is suspect . . . forces the language into defensive postures." *The Author* lampoons the solipsism of the self-styled, self-righteous writer, comfortably detached, free to replay the past according to his/her caprices - detached from the 'hard facts'.

This preoccupation emerges powerfully in her actual verses. She has the spirit of an absolute polymath, defining and exploring emotion and experience in the perspective of every aspect of knowledge, be it mythology, history, physics, chemistry, biology. In *Time Theory*, for example, love is expressed in terms of physics: "The moment like a black cone rises/Expanding timelessly in space//Paolo and Francesca clasp/Insatiate mouth to eternal face" - love here seems to break the barrier of mortality. Two of her strongest 'scientific' poems, featured here, are *Aftermath* and *The New Science of Strong Materials*. In the former, human beings are equated with bacteria because of a common ability to 'clear a space around themselves, create a desolation'. The movements of bacteria are compared to 'streams of refugee'. An analogy is drawn between the collective lot of humanity and an individual's brain. There are dying cells; those with the best chance of survival are those furthest from the nerve centre. Nerve connections are random, fortuitous. Then there is a plea to 'go back to basics': "Before recovery, the entire/body - physical, political or astral -/must descend to more primitive levels. The image of the shaman is fused with that of the astronaut, who undergo some process of self-destruct/self-abnegation "Yet trusts in his re-integration . . . must never doubt he will arrive". In the final stanza, there is a reiteration of the 'refugee' theme with an image of streams of plague victims and those wounded in war, against a background of cornfields half run wild. *The New Science* starts on a deeply pessimistic note, facing the friability and fragility of matter, subject to 'two failure mechanisms'; she is aware of 'the

three-dimensional reality/of imperfection'. She seems almost envious of the rows of atoms which can combat fracture, and always work towards cohesion. Yet this is only at the cost of mindlessness: ". . . the rows of atoms/ can reject the slightest deviation,/yet not acknowledge or accept even/a modicum of individual/involvement or decision". One feels that Ruth Fainlight comes down on the side of fragility, the pain of thought and feeling. This attitude is consistent with her sense of being a verbal painter, as in *A Painting*, where she verbalises in the style of Marc Chagall. Other of her painting-inspired poems include *Velazquez's Christ in the House of Martha and Mary*, and *Beardsley's St Rose of Lima*. These frozen works of art come to organic life through Ruth's observations. In the former she pleads, accusingly, for an icon to have human foibles: "You cannot find/Courage for the negligence of faith". In the latter, the central figure is '. . . the meeting point/Of saintliness, carnality . . .'

The Midas Touch proclaims universality and eclecticism. Sensitive emotional areas are successfully described through the imagery of finance and accounting: "I calculate relationships/in columns clearly double-lined". *To See the Matter Clearly* acknowledges the relativity of all visual experience through the image of a telescope. *Valleys and Mountains* conveys a sense of geological time. In *Natural History* the protagonists' personal history blends with that of the environment.

Facts About Ants is entomology-inspired, celebrating their sophistication in the insect world, the similarities between their nests and human conurbations, and they way they are harnessed medicinally by human beings (stitching wounds/use of formic acid). *Newborn* makes an eerie synthesis of biology and mythology. She traces the life-cycle of a Pacific octopus, and compares its eggs to an Egyptian mural which portrays clusters of grapes - the frescoes are exceptionally well-preserved. By comparison, the octopus's skin is described as 'peeling like blistered paint'; the eggs resemble 'the weightless husks and residue/of grapes pressed dry' - unlike the lush wholeness of those painted in the fresco. Mortal and immortal are fused in the conclusion: 'like souls departing for eternity/or new-born gods'.

Glass-thoughts puts into a strongly physical form Ruth's self-analysis and sense of self-awareness. She explores its every attribute, embracing its supreme power to reflect and its fragility: ". . . glass contracts, cracks mar/Windows that were never hit or jarred . . ." 'Clear neutral glass' stands as a symbol of clarity and integrity, but all is brittle: "Glass, slow liquid, rigid and upright,/But unreliable as the citizen/Personifying those virtues. Truth can only assert itself when the glass is shattered. She faces head-on the problems of negativity and pessimism, as in *Terra Incognita*: ". . . I'm left in an absence of faith so/absolute that any suppositious future/mocks the prospect of change". In *The Law*, negativity and passivity seem to be accepted: "For things to stay the same/they must keep changing. So the best way to change your life/ is to be still and do nothing . . ."

The English Country Cottage gives an insight into Ruth's feelings about her Jewishness and her nationality. Her father was a Jew who tried to be 'more English than the English' but was always treated with suspicion by the people of his locality. He went abroad, looking for an environment where he would be less conspicuous. He met Ruth's mother, who came from Bukovina, and knew a life

of undisguised exile and alienation. He eventually became 'homesick' for England, and brought his wife back with him, presumably to live with comfortably masked alienation. It seems that Ruth lost both parents in fairly quick succession. Her double bereavement could have left her feeling confused and divided: "Half of my nature is as simple as a medieval/peasant. The other isn't, and that's the problem" (*Thunder*)

The extensive *Sugar-Paper Blue* highlights Ruth's attachment to her aunt as a role model, coupled with her fascination for Anna Akhmatova. Her aunt Ann had given Ruth great cultural guidance and inspiration, including the musical background of *Tosca*. Ann's own sense of being a 'failed artist' gave her niece something to react against. Such was her fascination with Anna that she held a vigil outside Akhmatova's old abode in the hope of getting a vision of her shade. This obsession was crucial to Ruth's creativity: "I had the childish wish/to take the misery out of the century/compact it into a small black stone . . . cast it into the core of a black hole". The 'childish wish' seems always to have remained with Ruth. The leitmotif of sugar paper shows the author's appreciation of the chemical, biological and physical facts underlying creative endeavour.

However, she does not have a blind, uniform adulation of 'great' and 'legendary' figures. This is stated emphatically in *Ordinary Sorrow* - to which Mozart and Shakespeare are not immune: "They shared the objectivity of gods/towards their own lives as much as others'" Similarly, fascination with antiquity and exotic locations is qualified by a full awareness of the brutality of repressive traditional societies. This is especially marked in *A Village Story*, depicting dire reprisals for an illegitimate birth. Fainlight could have been a hard-hitting journalist too.

The Betrothal: in-depth exploration of a tryst in the open, where the two parties may be more interested in communing with the earth than with each other - "Even the earth is more caressing than he . . . He's forgotten/Who she is . . . Something is pulling him down/To the earth's centre". Feeling of distance from lover means feeling of closeness to earth: "He's far from her, out between the planets,/But his embrace makes her one with the earth./She seeks comfort from the dead who support her."

There is a suggestion of nihilism (about her genesis) in *Then*: "My mind becomes victim/Of a hazard as profound and meaningless/As the encounter which produced me." The sequence of poems *A Child Asleep*, *The Screaming Baby*, and *The Infanticide* reveal Ruth's darkest thoughts about the birth and death cycle: In the first poem, her perception of the child's head ". . . is seeing death clear/The power that makes those bones appear/Will not spare anyone." There is one force, which brings about procreation and death - in tandem. The poet sees the child as a mirror image of her own suffering: "I cannot spare him for I am not spared." *The Screaming Baby* faces the trauma of the utter fragility of the newborn: ". . . Too pure/An expression of something completely felt/Not to inspire fear". When faced with this, there is no safe emotional 'middle ground': "The cringing woman must adore or kill him." When she has committed her dream infanticide, the poet is happy to offer herself as a sacrifice to the forest gods. Contradictory, but complementary feelings are expressed in *The Chain*. Her reaction to a bereavement - the loss of her sister, is to want to conceive: "I feel compelled to make this act of love/And give your spirit

rest in living flesh." *Some Thoughts on Death* reflects on adult mortality - an adult woman who died in the street. Disturbing twist at the end: "My own protection from the final knowledge" is described as 'more grandiose horror'. A stoical faith in the cycle of mutability is declared in *A Different Form*: ". . . that matter can change but never die,/that nothing is wasted". The theme of suicide is unflinchingly explored in *Last Days*, which faces the possibility that it might be a merciful release, into the 'meadows of death'. This poem is, in a way, complemented by *Breath*, a highly sensitive comment on the fragility of life, and the near-ephemeral quality of what sustains it.

In *My Position in the History of the Twentieth Century* (144) Ruth Fainlight acknowledges her privileged status: "My self-image never subjected to a real test . . ." But she uses that awareness to define and contain her egotism: "I flaunt my being manifest/to whoever wishes to read the signs,/And what seemed to private and unique in me,/I find dependent on my place and time." Ruth militantly cherishes her individuality, as in *Another Full Moon*: ". . . I should/Much prefer not to be absolutely/In thrall to the rhythms of ocean and cosmos,/Such a solemn primitive,/A romantic pauper." These sentiments are further explored in *The Ante-Room*: "I'm only in the ante-room/of waiting . . ." She must existentially wait until the expressions and experiences summon her (which might involve a real test of her self-image).

A person of great antiquarian scholarship, Ruth Fainlight applies her imagination to mythology, with some startling results. "My muse is in myself: As past and future/only exist/By my own need to think them." *The Hero's Mother* describes the ritual sacrifice of a son; for the duration of the 'ceremony', the mother has a clear conscience; but then she wakes with horror from a bad dream - dream and myth are inextricably intertwined. In *Fire Queen* she devises a mythical figure of her own. In some ways she is a symbol of negativity "Ambitionless as death, perfect, absorbed/Forever by her silent incantation". The 'Fire-queen of the north' in a way has the heat of her identity neutralised by the elements: 'touch blunted to ice'. The poem reflects on the deadness and power combined in iconic statues. But she is also an 'iron-maiden of self-hatred'. In *Illo Tempore* celebrates Ana Maria Pacheco's painting of a tightrope walker, who looks like an iconic figure. The pulley which controls the rope is compared to 'a god's visitation'. The 'flip side of the coin' is expressed in *Like Manet's Olympe*, where the real-life sight of her aunt functions as an artistic and mythological archetype. A blood relation looked ". . . so much the same as the painting/I had just fallen in love with". But this was an iconic figure deprived of its full, rightful context: "her aesthetic was helpless/against suburban power". But partly by virtue of this sheer deprivation and isolation, she exerts a supremely powerful influence on her niece, 'her adoring victim'. In *The Muse*, an iconic entity is generated by the poet's imagination, and gains in strength as the poet tries to define her. *Lovely Hands* endows gods with human brutality, What endows God with doubt and hesitation. *Marvellous Toys* blends myth with fairy tale - Dionysius is childlike and impressionable. Ruth acknowledges her debt to the researches of Marcel Detienne and Jean-Pierre Vernant.

A fairy-tale theme is glossed (and modified) in *A Fable*. A ring has slipped off a girl's finger. Neither she nor her partner, objectively, consider it as having any great importance. But it did have magical powers. With its loss,

both partners lost their own rational powers. They are 'spirited' into a dark forest. Now the ring is the only link - between the two individuals, between the pair and the outside world. They must be rescued by a role-reversed deus ex machina: a prince turned into a toad. Similarly, in *A Fairy Story*, glamorous, magical myth is given a demystifying gloss. The errant knight has a taste for flagellation. He feels exhaustion, boredom from his repeated quests. He is eventually defeated by a dragon, and abandoned by his princess. Still noble in part, he swears to go on a quest involving self-imposed exile, but before he does so, he must have a monument erected for his past (princess) conquests. The mythology of bullfighting, past and present, is celebrated in *The Preserver*.

Nacre gives a panoramic view of the genesis of pearls, and their significance throughout history and mythology. *Pomegranate* is a dream epic. That exotic fruit, with its unusual texture and its many purported medicinal qualities, is a talisman, a link between Gods and humans, between human civilisations. Its very physical texture is so richly multi-faceted; its husk indeed resembles 'the casing of an archaic bomb'.

There is significant biblical reference in Ruth Fainlight's work. *Lilith* re-examines the legend. Lilith was banished because of her 'equality'. Adam needed to be worshipped in order to understand God, so God made Eve, the chattel for him. In Ruth's 'version', Lilith has a certain (qualified) malignancy: "Lilith's disgrace thus defined/Good and evil. She would be/Outside, the feared, the alien,/Hungry and dangerous./His (Adam's) seed and Eve's fruit/At hazard from her rage." *The Garden of Eden* posits a plausibly 'real' location of paradise, and relates it to subsequent events in Babylonian history. *Dinah* reports atrocious acts perpetrated in the early Old Testament period. The author adopts the persona of the heroine; she feels she was there, at that point in history, and ached to have been able to change history's course.

Sheba and Solomon is an extended, speculative rewrite of history. All the historical stereotypes we have been conditioned to lean on are subject to drastic revision in the light of archaeological evidence. One is also free to speculate. It opens with a young girl's response to *The Song of Solomon*. In *III, Solomon*, the king is shown as more than human: "He had seen heaven and gehenna, earths' molten/matrix, had watched the elements transmute,/and fuse into gold./He knew the secrets of life and death. No man/knew so much. He had been a shaman./He had been a woman." He later calls upon the magical powers of his djinns to create a glittering court for Sheba. For her part, Sheba too is more than human: "her haughty father . . . rejected human women and chose a demon's daughter for wife." In herself she is too powerful for marriage, but feels obliged to have a (token) consort to retain the loyalty of the tribes. She made overtures to him, to his surprise, and then murdered him. The hoopoe drops the message from Solomon on the place where the sword had struck. As part of her tests, she makes an experiment in transvestism, ordering her five hundred (androgynous-looking?) boys and girls to change into each other's clothes. Solomon makes the correct estimate of gender identity. She herself later makes an approach to androgyny, and transcending the human category: "she was only half-human, an efreet's child,/with the face of a girl but the hirsute legs of a youth." Solomon utters a plea for gender distinction, and then imagines her legs covered in silver stockings. (In the

notes at the end of the poem . . . "until Sheba accepted his demons' depilatory formula [she was their first client], and unless she submitted to such symbolic gelding - to put it bluntly - she would not be appropriate for his attentions.") There is a reiteration of the legend of the tree of life - which originated in Eden (Adam and Eve ate from it), was recognised a sacred by Sheba, and was eventually used to make the cross for Jesus. *IX Solomon's Desire* is quite a radical departure in that both parties acknowledge each other's promiscuity: "All the men who passed their turn in her bed are no more to me than/ clouds passing before the moon./And all my wives and concubines are no more to me than vapours of the/dew to the sun who makes them." Sheba is then described as making three mistakes - showing admiration for a handsome envoy (mistaking him for the king), revealing her legs, and then taking an illicit cup of water - an act seemingly insignificant, but giving Solomon his rights over her body, which he asserts. In *XVII Sheba* is shown to be a multiple legend. Another version offers an alternative legend, whereby Sheba and a girl friend go disguised as the King and Prime Minister of Abyssinia, to see Solomon. There is a startling 'change of identity': Sheba assumes the identity of Menelik, whom Solomon accepts as a son, but who then steals the Ark of the Covenant and becomes the Abyssinian 'Lion of Judah'.

The Moon: Ruth's moons are multi-faceted: in *Dawn Blue* it can seem as friable as 'crumpled tissue paper'. The *Insomniac's Moon* is a frightening chemical entity, with its 'phosphorescent mushroom-punky glow, its halo of acid orange, rim of gassy blue' also challenging in terms of physics; the appearance of the halo could come from a prism or the edge of a mirror; it is also a 'harsh moon mother' emitting milk. *New Moon and Full Moon*, it can be 'malignant', and 'ashy moon', emitting an 'awful heat'. In *Equinox* the moon is strident and arrogant: "Her lurid halo makes the sky seem hollow". In *One Phase of the Moon*, it can be banal matter: 'obdurate as scar tissue,/A circle cut from steel sheeting . . . slick as cellulose multi-coated,/Queen of dust and bones . . .'; she even "Denies her light reflects from anywhere."

Sibyls: There are 32 Sibyls in two sections of this collection. They span a comprehensive range of civilisations, mythologies and religions, and seemingly form a vital link between apparently disparate cultures. The Sibyls, these 'proud, pagan women, half-forgotten' - are entities of enormous strength and independence, possessed of great prophetic and visionary powers. They can bargain on equal terms with kings and emperors, as happened with the sale of the 'Sybilline Books' of prophecy to Tarquin the Proud. Sometimes they suffer, as in *The Destruction of a Sybil*. There is a 'sick Sibyl' who laments that her ecstasy is a 'self-consuming sickness', and a 'blocked Sibyl' who can be reduced to uselessness, as well as a decrepit, aged one that needs to be rescued. They can blend with the gods, as in *Hallucinating Sybil* 'her waxy flesh become/candle to the flame of Apollo.' They can also defy the Gods: one 'refused Apollo her virginity', and suffer their wrath, as "when Apollo's goad bit into her brain". The Phrygian Sibyl is 'Great Mother of the Gods' (who in another poem is described as 'squatting at the womb's mouth/giving birth to herself'); the Tiburtine Sibyl is a channel for the words of Hercules. The *Elegant Sybil* has absolute power over human beings: "The Emperor comes to hear her pronounce almost daily". But she feels there is an element of mendacity in what she does - 'Having

become an expert at false tones'. When she retires into an ice-cold bath "she is able to think of the god and wait his pleasure". Is this gaining of higher power or final subordination? In *Introspection of a Sibyl* blankness and human frailty can coexist.: "If only I can be aware of what is happening/in that void . . . where time and space must exist But I am no more conscious of the prophecies/than I can understand the language of birds . . ." Being taken over as a medium is supremely contradictory: "you don't exist/yet have the power of a god." *The Egg Mother* reminded me of *Leda and the Swan*; presumably they have a common source.

Ruth Fainlight is ruthlessly honest with herself about declaring her darkest thoughts. This comes out most powerfully in *Unseemly*: "In dreams I kill my child" and in *Everyone Dies*, has a nightmare vision of running over her parents in a driving accident. In *Fever Hospital*, a true Survivor poem, she laments her child playing with war toys. In a way, her confinement and suffering neutralise her malice: ". . . I disinfect/My fantasies by playing victim)."

The prose passages suggest to me that Ruth could have excelled in the speculative fiction form. *The Tooth Fairy* stands out as an example of how a really great, perceptive writer can illuminate the commonplace, by exploring all its depths and implications. Who says dentistry can't be poetic? There are also some touching tributes to her late brother Harry Fainlight, a highly significant figure in Beat poetry, who, tragically, died young. *The Bench* shows her need for reflective reminiscence, in the shade of the trees where she had gone on hearing the news of the decease. *The Storm* describes how the burial ceremony was disrupted by the rain - that quirk of the weather upset the sexton, and Ruth 'made the first movement' in the burial. The sense of reverence for the departed was in a way enhanced by the absurdity of the situation: "Harry, I know how much you would have enjoyed it./I can see your mouth's ironic curve as the heavens/opened."

There is a stimulating element of travelogue in this collection, embracing her extensive travels in the United States and Japan. Her portrayal of rural and urban locations is always supremely sensitive, taking into full account the processes of growth, decay and decomposition. The minutely detailed tableaux of her childhood reinforce the sense of a life's work.

I had not hitherto been aware of Ruth Fainlight's prowess as a translator. Through her, I am introduced anew to the works of her kindred spirit, Portuguese Sophia de Mello Breyner: I could easily have taken Sophia's poems as Ruth's. They certainly share the theme of Sybils; both are determined 'to live the whole of the possible'. *Cyclades* explored the theme of contradiction: "Your name emerges as if the negative/of what you were develops here//You lived in reverse/Incessant traveller of the universe . . ." "being no one, you could say everything". Likewise with the Mexican poet Victor Manuel Mendiola. *Your Hand, My Mouth* challenges the boundaries of the literal and metaphorical. As channels of consumption, plate, cup and glass form a link between the two characters; these utensils are also attributed with animate qualities.

She certainly captures the essence of the Greek tragedians in the sections of Sophocles' trilogy *Oedipus Rex*, *Oedipus Coloneus* and *Antigone*.

I cannot fault this collection, though one ideal way to enhance/perfect it would have been to have reproductions of the artworks to which she explicitly refers in some of her titles. I realise that my summary can only be the very tip of the iceberg as regards coming to terms with this indisputable life's work. It would definitely merit a full-blown critical tome.

Dave Russell

Cities

Poet in the City, Kings Place, York Way,
18th April 2011

It was announced at the beginning that Poet in the City had been awarded Portfolio Funding.

The chairperson, **Kate Lewin**, outlined the main changes in poets' attitude of the cities, from the biblical concept of mankind being expelled from a rural paradise - idealizing the rural, treating cities as evil, to valuing cities in their multifaceted glory. The programme featured **Anna Robinson, Elaine Feinstein, Tobias Hill** and **Iain Sinclair**. The scope was global, but in the cityscapes presented, there was considerable emphasis on the Second World War period.

Anna's selection concentrated on those parts of London where she had lived out most of her life. From her book *The Finders of London* she read *The Flats, From Paul's Wharf Stairs, Lower Marsh Speaks, What is More Beautiful than a Road, Tawkin' to w'Annie*. Her vista embraced the vicinity of St. Paul's Cathedral and Lower Marsh - which calls up a memory of those 'armed with bags and medals.' In *St. Paul's Wharf Stairs*, she expresses her sense of affinity with the Thames: "We are fluid, gilled, long-bodied (We've been fish) . . . this is how we map our city." One highlight was her longer poem *The Flats*. This has strong reminiscences of the immediate postwar years, when the washing line and pawnshops 'our common ground', when doors could be left unlocked. She recalled photos of the VE Day celebrations in the background, and through *Tawkin' to w'Annie* she showed her regard for accent poetry (dialect poetry).

From *Portraits of Women* she read - *East London - 1888, Cross Bones, and Learning to Listen on the Thames Beach*, Interesting historical perspective: according to her, the first account of the flats dates from 1903 when, from a contemporary record, "instead of windows it has mirrors". *Crossbones Southwark* refers to an unconsecrated graveyard. East London 1888, set in Whitechapel, honours five of Jack the Ripper's victims. *Learning to Listen on Thames Beach. What is More Beautiful than a Road?* Is based on a quotation from Georges Sand, touching portrayal of a locality as a focus of memory:

"It's raining. We talk, here, where we always talk. Where the pavement flares roundly in front of the Action Centre.

Next door is a caff; we never go there.

The rain started as you told me what the worst thing is for you.

It was gentle then but now we are really wet and you don't seem to have noticed.
At my shoulder are my Grandmas and behind them, their Grandmas.
They stand, a long line of women getting wet on street corners.
None of us are dreaming of stairs."

She concluded with *Agnus* (lamb); some moving lines:
"All winter I wear black . . . trees under our pavements are dead . . . fragrant lamb, give us peace."

Tobias Hill made the initial statement that poetry is 'more of an inclination for musicality'. He read from his forthcoming novel which has the provisional title of *What Was Promised*. This was based in London from 1948 into the Fifties, with all the ethos of World War II austerity, including ration books. This was the time when the works of George Orwell were available at 'threepence a read'. He also read from his *Nocturne* collection, starting with a quote from Emerson: "Cities give us collision". He concluded with pieces from his sequence of 12 poems - one for each month. He made a specific reference to the Coronation, and referred to the 'duppie' market in Watney Street. This to him, was a place of redemption: "no-one is out of place here." His November poem refers to a firework display, which echoes the Blitz: 'guns echoing through the fog, fireworks at night, rockets falling in the river'.

Iain Sinclair referred to 'Psychogeography'. Like Tobias Hill, he said that poetry is a memory system, which can be put 'into a structure of musicality'. He began with a resume of his journey through Oregon and Washington in the States. During this, he took a long walk, where he witnessed 'ancient, eloquent trees - of epic immensity'. The found a logging town there. On his return to London, he reiterated his pattern, made a walk of comparable length through Hackney. An important landmark for him was the village of Helpston near Peterborough, famous for its garden centre, which he associated with 'stations and war and brass bands'. He described it as 'a microclimate of suspended anxiety, leaving an older self behind, non-denominational places of worship. Most of his contribution concentrated on the London metropolis. Some of this is terrifying: 'apocalyptic killing fields . . . city shudders . . . arranged obelisks . . . the death camps of the future'. There is, for him, a 'mood of communal hallucination, an intoxication with blood and flag rhetoric - still unappeased psychic damage.'" Iain maintained that the T S Eliot *Waste Land* zombies were part of the 'necessary ritual of convalescence', but complained of 'unnecessary realism'. The river motif arose again, this time the Fleet river. Thomas Hardy had worked near there as an architect; Shelley met his Mary in a nearby graveyard. He also read brief extracts from Blake's *Jerusalem* and Rimbaud's *Illuminations*, followed by part of his own King's Cross essay (*Fallujah London*) from *London, City of Disappearances* (Hamish Hamilton, 2006). A major focus this evening was on the King's Cross vicinity. St. Pancras Old Church is for him evocative of Blake's Jerusalem. Iain has some attachment to Royal College Street - in which the house where Rimbaud and Verlaine resided has been preserved as an Anglo-French Cultural Centre, feeling also that a 'Rimbaud coda' had been imposed on much recent London architecture. He found the Euston arch was 'an

attempt to rewrite mistakes of the past'. In an extract from his unpublished book *Ghost Milk*, he expressed some reservations about the venue in which he was performing: " . . . Twenty minutes inside King's Place . . . was the outer limit of human endurance. There is a low-level electronic hum, enough to keep the nerves on edge, before stoking them with a caffeine hit . . . Temperature is cranked up that notch too high: the building doesn't need you, keep moving . . ."

He referred to complexes 20 times as vast as Hampton court, where 'scale is annihilated'. Stadia can be 'spaceless', moving 'away from geological absolutes'. The audience was treated to an extract from his forthcoming book *Ghost Milk*, (to be published July 2011).

Elaine Feinstein opened with *Wartime Leicester*. She remembered this time as being quite exciting: the streetlamps going out at night, electric sparks from the trams, air raid drill at school, nibbling raisins and chocolate blobs. It was a time of growth and enlightenment: "her chrysalis conceals the girl I am."

She talked of going up to Cambridge in 1949, the first year after which it had become possible for women to take the Tripos. The place seemed really exotic to her at the time. It had variegated cultural strands: she spoke both of wartime dance bands and madrigals, Soho Jazz Clubs and Raymond Chandler. She was initially very Christian and pious, but then came to read Donne and Herbert. Initially, the secular world was denied. But then a Fulbright student (American?) in her words, 'rescued her with mockery', made her appreciate the sad erotic beauty of an ancient culture; he taught her new truths in the shades of willow trees.

Elaine proceeded to describe her sojourn in Paris, then the centre of the Bohemian literary world. There she discovered her fascination for Edith Piaf, with her 'Dietrich eyebrows', who inspired the poem *Piaf in Babraham* : 'the glamour of a woman who never had safety to lose', who 'learned to sell her ordinary life for applause'.

Later she went to Budapest, under the auspices of the British Council; this experience 'drew 3 novels from me'. While she was there, Hungary was still in the grip of the Soviet authorities. This period inspired *Budapest lyric 2*, and *Prague*. In Budapest, the Turks had whitewashed the frescoes. She was fascinated by the 'night life' of those locations, 'the pink-lipped past of velvet drapes . . . enchanted unfamiliar world . . . permissive shabby splendour. She remembered the cuisine, containing too much pork and seasoned with paprika. There she was turned on to Eastern European writers like Polinsky Janov (translated by Ted Hughes). A very powerful indictment of cruelty and oppression in *Persecution*: "His parchment face, fleshless lips shrewdly curved - men harnessed to a cart to watch an execution . . . he longs for the lord to bury him in his embrace."

She also read two poems from *Talking to the Dead: Widow's Necklace*
Friends try my stories on their teeth or
with a match: are they plastic or amber?
My children say I must have forgotten
how I used to turn to them so very often,

repeating your words and begging reassurance.
Why should I now recall a loving presence?
But so I do: my story as a wife
is threaded on the string of my own life,
and when I touch these beads, I still remember
your warm back as we slept like spoons together

This was followed by an expedition to Singapore, on a 'bum boat', 'to buy metal hooks for bookends', travelling with a disabled husband - an arduous undertaking as celebrated in the poem *Wheelchair*.

This poem shows full savouring of the local colour, and suitable cultural nostalgia foci: "while the ghosts of Maugham and Coward haunt the new Raffles hotel". But then there is an intense exploration of the special features of disabled travel:

"Most people would have had more sense, but we were both surprised to find it rather soothing. And one day we surmised: you needed an attention that I hardly ever pay while I enjoyed the knowledge that you couldn't get away."

This idea could possibly have merited a series. Quantitatively, London predominated, and much of that was retrospective, the folklore of the post-World War II period. But the quality of the contemporary and cosmopolitan contributions helped to redress the balance.

Dave Russell

Flarestack Poets

Mario Petrucci: *Nights.Sifnos.Hands*

ISBN 978-1-906480-24-0 { £4.50 }

Laura Seymour: *Herb Robert*

ISBN 978-1-906480-25-57 { £4.50 }

"Poetry that dares outside current trends, even against the grain . . . collections that aren't bus queues, from poets forging their own linguistic connections with the root-ball of experience."

Mario Petrucci: the *Nights* section depicts nights of different colours - red, black, green, white and blue. Disturbing imagery - "some sky-god pissed light and blood . . . chase the planet's rotation, wishing home". *Red Night* depicts nightmare air and astral travel, with one crash into tactile banality: "Are mango in its/syrup slow-sliding from metal - into that inverted bowl// of Jamaican molasses iced to near-night." Ambiguous conclusion ". . . get that thinning vein pumping again - without a parachute." - make a decision threatening ones own life, in order to restore vitality? *Black Night* gives a global dimension to migrained insomnia: "- it's that thump-shift in your temple as it/sweeps in sudden with another continent . . . elemental wheels that pull so fast it keeps/with earthly spin - " *Green Night* - strange imagery of hunting tree frogs, and speculation on the nature of colour - "as though this fringe of suburban forest distilled from gnat and gas a yellower/shade of itself. *White Night* reflects on the nature of light and darkness: a full moon illuminates - ". . . noon/as illusion.

Little more than difference/in degree . . . sidewalks whose turned-up volumes/of light push back from plate-glass enamel". *Blue Night* concentrates on lightning.

As explained on the back cover, the *Sifnos* section of the Petrucci selection has been taken from the larger *I tulips*: "*I tulips* surges from its American modernist influences into fascinatingly British timbres of expression. Characterised as much by tenderness as verve, these poems offer a uniquely nuanced experience for the discerning reader. It is not often that an established British poet becomes so profoundly involved in poetic invention in pursuit of such original Anglo-American outcomes. No half measures here: this is a stirring, lyrical poetry that can authentically bridge the Pond while speaking to all."

"*Sifnos* is an island municipality in the Cyclades island group in Greece." (Wikipedia) Some sensitive minimalist portrayals of an exotic locality. The temple of Aphaia is one of the most famous Doric temples in Greece. *I dream myself* - interesting concept of conjuring up ones own locale through the imagination. French Symbolist-cum-e e cummings minimalism - most effective. *I dream myself* - the imagination can create an ocean. Good exploration of the double nature of the squid and octopus - the delicious dish/that which can draw one to ones doom. Petrucci brings a feeling of sound poetry into his work by breaking up words at line-ends. *Let this apple*: the poet longs for apples to fall on earth; a bit of a comparison to meteorites: "may sun burrow slowsliding eddies to lava these marrows . . . crater moons with looking". I get some sense of their being considered as a purifying force: "spangle through sin/-us as if mica shredded/through my waters -". *Friend take me* is a plea for direct personal communication. The first four stanzas reject abstracted book learning - 'half-minded thought'. He longs for turning 'with planetary certainty to this evening', to contemplate the full significance of the stars, with all their elusiveness: "in//that long watching we choose/ where what one needs/of friends//lies rest-/less to the eye &/tenuous//as the dark between."

In *what stirs is this* the poet speaks through the persona of a small organism facing the terrifying elements. As to what sort of organism, we have a clue in 'palp': "An elongated, often segmented appendage usually found near the mouth in invertebrate organisms such as mollusks, crustaceans, and insects, the functions of which include sensation, locomotion, and feeding. Also called *palpus*" (*Free Dictionary*) Some striking language here: "that cr-/inking ribbon-cirrus for outcrops headless with ocean . . . this hourglass sac of self/i believe i am . . ."

The looked-at at seems an expression of excessive voyeurism, wanting to know someone's interior with X-ray obsessiveness: "each whim-crystal as it slenders/ down her neck gets bar/coded in camera" . . . "she sends cameras to whose flash i mistake for//lightning yet". In comparison with its predecessors, *one sailing* is straightforward and literal, though with some phrases cracking the literal framework: "this steady light of boat/ruddered upward through/night by flame . . . hands prayed with water . . . my white sliver/ adrift with dark . . . slight curvature of space." *I have a bay* - Mario envisages himself as a land mass; in his metabolism there is an inlet, which draws in and tames the tides "one spireless geometry/ushers this body/to its cooler. The internal dusk of the mind meets external dusk, in which he can see his lit candle.

Hands is subtitled *fifteen variations & no fugue*; it is a minimalist effort making poetry/music analogies: one word = one note in a staff notation score. It also traces, verbally, a musical map: 'a city of/hair-trigger archipelagos' . . . 'four-finger archipelagos -/diminishing island/strands' (interesting play on arpeggio and archipelago). Symbolism of the piano: "white hand/above the keys/knows what black/hand within/does" . . . "one hooked finger -/hawk hovering/over its prey". Finally, musical notes are transformed into all media of notation and recording: "every note/ever written smitten/with blood sharpened through/bone.

Laura Seymour was a Foyle's Young Poet of the Year in 2004. Her opener here, *Running Over the Pianist's Fingers* is akin to Petrucci in that it draws on piano imagery. The musical undertones continue in *Young*: "Bach (tinned by the nurse)/played at his birth." Into the biological area with *Waiting for his Death*. A Jabiru is a species of large-winged stork to be found in Central and South America. The bird may have flown to its death in some mountains, and become embedded in ice; the poet wraps it in a shroud, presumably to bury it. There is a sense of honouring life while respecting the dead: "I alternate rock with melting". *A Time* is a lugubrious portrayal of an elderly relative. *Film* - strange reflections on an icon 'squat chocolate Pharaoh'. Living human beings support, and are supported by, their icon: "Humans crank my insides . . . stickle my inner ovens with dry straw/and mud slapdash of boxed bricking." They give the subject a preview of a future film, where she is reanimated, and then drowns herself. Two interesting abstruse references here: 'bird-third eyelid' (The third eyelid or nictitating membrane contributes to tear formation and distribution. This light-pink structure normally rests out of sight in the inner corner of the eye. Sometimes the third eyelid will cover both eyes and make it appear that your cat's eyeballs are disappearing.) 'Hobbididence' is the 'Prince of Numbness' referred to in *King Lear*, Act IV (are the Hobbits derived from the same source). 'Pleached peach trees': Pleaching is a technique that may be used to train trees into a raised hedge or to form a quincunx. Commonly, deciduous trees are planted in lines, then shaped to form a flat plane on clear stems above the ground level. Branches are woven together and lightly tied." (Wikipedia). Footnotes to this poem would not have been amiss. How Did The Moon . . . ? a mythical bird-creature: "I laid/one egg like/myself . . ." The egg is a non-quantity: 'breeding/nothing, only dimming.' It may in the future be unearthed as a meaningless relic in 'pocky Hoover's dust-bag'. *From Endymion* - the subject here seems to be the reverse of a visionary Keatsian heroine: 'her memories pared un/cyclical, her head a toenail' (interestingly, a sage's toenail was referred to in the previous poem). The final stanza has considerable contrariety. She is posited as becoming a seed-pearl in the night sky (risen) then compared to a necklace cast down. Then: "The lost sequential necessity of words. Not that she ever wore any". Does she lose significance/coherence by becoming immortal (breaking the bounds of mortality)? Then there is the ambiguous distinction between her wearing a seed-pearl and being a seed-pearl. I have yet to nail down Keats's seed-pearl references. *Cycles Of Earth From Moon* - some cogent surrealism, drawing analogies between the cosmos and everyday activity in the kitchen. I like 'undecimal askew

regularity'. Interesting comparison between blocking off an unpleasant odour and using a life-giving oxygen mask. *Don't Worry* I find, frankly, obscure. Is the imminent ram the zodiacal sign of Aries? Is it coming to the rescue in some shape or form? I found the choice of 'alidity' a little strange; yes - I could find it in the dictionary, but might not pneumonia or hypothermia conveyed the meaning more effectively. Nail imagery again - 'nails clots'. The image of the cisterns is juxtaposed with the reference to the deceased husband. What is the connection: was the body thrown into the cistern? Is the bank a rivulet/stream one, or a financial one? *Santa* - surreal gloss on Christmas stockings. Appropriate organic/ecological reminder of the source of goosefeathers. A loaded stocking is compared to a menstruating woman. Flapdragon: 'a ragbag of possibly amusing and occasionally informative stuff about words, dictionaries and reference books, along with assorted frivolous nonsense and bombastic rants.' Ursids are meteors originating from the constellation of Ursa major. Bizarre linking of stocking with mahogany sleigh. *Satan*: dialogue of good and evil: someone prefers the vitality of evil "even do I crave/a mouthable gag of searing/brimstone rather than a hypothetical/Heaven. 'A jasper-gold tiger/devouring a semi-conscious human being'? This seems to derive from Hindu mythology (though with a suggestion of Aztec). Again some abstruse vocabulary: 'Anch' may be short for 'anchorite'; 'knowtweed' seems to be a corruption of 'knotweed' a Japanese herbaceous plant. Again, more detective work is necessary. *Pygmalion* is a novel reworking of the classical myth: here the two protagonists are birds - the iconic figure is a peacock ('stands for femme fatale'), its admirer a fieldfare. There's no overt portrayal of the fieldfare as equivalent to the sculptor. And the icon is far from perfect: 'the glitter of her/lies on her dipping eyes . . . false carnation of her cheek'. And the idyllic garden is full of wooden flowers. A cynical slant on ideals of beauty. *Legs*: weird indeed - a suggestion that in a previous incarnation the person addressed was a cuttlefish - with horizontal legs. When they are vertical, life gets complicated: "now it boils vitreous against your sockets" - is this referring to an overweight person? I can't quite relate the figure of the prince to the earlier part: is he a casual observer from a safe vantage point? A helix (pl: helixes or helices) is a type of space curve, i.e. a smooth curve in three-dimensional space. It is characterized by the fact that the tangent line at any point makes a constant angle with a fixed line called the axis.

Oils embraces art and music. The first stanza deals with oil painting restoration, including a reference to the use of egg to revitalise the oil paint. But with the last line we read "I reached out and ashed all works". In the second stanza there is a switch to a child chorister (presumably in the same sort of locale as the former oil paintings: "the lifted child's/voice is tubular as a letter pushed into a pipe." The poet is given a mark on the forehead from the child's shoe. This seems to have been taken from Sikh mythology, reiterated to some extent in *The Wizard of Oz*. In the third stanza, the child is spirited away, entwined with a sycamore 'propeller', having an unrestricted passage into the void because of its non-value, "since it was no-one's/true gift unworded". *Odyssey Beginnings* suggests an ultimate state of death: "The still megapolis/where God died". The second stanza suggests the building of a funeral barge, to be rowed by 'the last human'; the third masses of people who have been drowned and encased in sediment.

Lemon-Scented Geranium defies critical analysis. Again some specialist vocabulary: a 'barrow-wight' is a wraith-like creature stemming from Tolkien's Middle Earth; a carbonado is a massive, opaque, gray, brown, or black variety of diamond used as an abrasive and in rock drills. A ghaist could be derived from a creature in H P Lovecraft's *Dreamlands*, or a floating jellyfish-esque mob that shoots fireballs from its mouth. Reference to 'the alchemist's stair' and some creatures flying above in the background of 'the glacial oceans' new-born stars . . . the rent ozone/over Australia . . . the whole cloth/of the pimpled sky.' (Dream transference from an English garden to Australia?). The garden assumes cosmic proportions; the author seemingly sees herself as a super earth-mother: 'so many eggs from my ovary . . .' Great organic perspective: "aloes distil blue sweat to crocodiles".

Epidemic laments the fragility of human life in the face of disasters. This poem seems incomplete to me, or have I not yet twigged the subtextual significance of 'though from my win'?

In Laura Seymour I see a major, highly erudite and perceptive writer. I feel that this selection could be the precursor to a really substantial collection. I do think more words of explanation, preface and footnotes, would be extremely helpful to the reader. On my reading, I constantly used the Search Engines; it is not fair to expect every reader to do this.

This is a highly opaque and challenging collection. Flarestack poets have indeed touched on some highly substantial writers. In view of this, it would be beneficial to have introductions - without which these pamphlets could be excessively daunting to the non-specialist reader.

Dave Russell

Hamza Hassam Sheikh

Museum of Reminiscence (Poems)
Naqshgar Publications, Rawalpindi

This is a sequel to Hamza's first collection, *Some Moments of Love*, which gained wide critical acclaim in Pakistan. Accolades given to the former certainly befit its successor. "The presence of your native tongue rhythm in English makes each poem a pleasing experience to read." "The first collection of Hamza is the evidence of revivification of romanticism and reinvention of symbols, imagery, subjectivism, joyous and painful thoughts, unfulfilled desires, pangs, perforations and deed ecstasy of a lover."

In the Preface, Hamza both criticizes and venerates romantic ideals: "In life, some figures turn into idols; they behave rudely, cruelly and with much hatred and abhorrence. But yet you tolerate all this atrocity and abhorrence and love them. When they go out of sight then the heart aches and the eyes corner wet . . . Whenever you open the pages of your heart's diary then the pages written by the feather of imagination and ink of tears remind you of the past. Your wounds become evergreen and the bleeding starts. Museum of reminiscence keeps a

person connected with his past as well as the memories of nears and dears." Sometimes such feelings are reflective and retrospective/retroactive. "Strolling in the starlight or rambling in the moonlight, these memories kindle to embosom a fire inside you, and then you open the door of the museum and hug these idols. When all around is quietude and the whole world is unconscious from surroundings. You adore these idols with the blessing of your dreams. Gradually your nights begin to pass in such a way and these idols become soulful and grief-sharer. Then you become the sculptor and sculpture the idols of stones in the glooms of light."

The implications of these statements are explored in the opener, *The Moon*. The lunar entity is initially present as a benign lover. She has to withdraw her presence, giving the child both pain and a source of inspiration, leaving him alone with grief and pain, and then inspiring him, illuminating him with her distant rays. *Antimony* seems to proclaim the essence of pure, 'natural' love. I see from Wikipedia that "stibnite was used in ancient times as black eye makeup". This means that artifice an reflection draw a boundary-line, restrictions around the boundless purity of an elemental gaze. *My Scattered Dreams* - beautiful slant on the theme of painting a portrait of ones love: the 'real' idol approached like an elusive butterfly, the painter/poet made a desperate grab; the precious artwork was destroyed (the memory probably remains intact). Great second stanza in *To Some One We Love*: "When they go out of sight/Shining eyes dim/And flood of water overflows/In the shape of gems." The tears of separation are precious, the dimming eyes a sign of deepening spiritual vision. Similarly, in *Sorrows*: "Sorrows/the companion too/These endear every moment." In *Eyes* he makes the comment: "speech of eyes is undefined". Then an 'elusive' snow princess; she grabs the poet's hand. *Cut Kite*: minimalist portrayal of a girl who tried to run for freedom, laying herself wide open in the process. *Abhorrence*: being hated by a beloved turns one to hate oneself. *Diamonds* is a profound reflection on material and spiritual wealth and poverty. The rich man is impoverished by being confined to guard his hoard of jewellery; the poor labourer can take a 'throwaway' attitude to wealth. Could this poem refer to some area of open-cast diamond mining, where the uncut stones can be picked up at random from the ground? *Memories Flame*: in the bleak, frozen present, memories of past love revitalise, reheat. In *Name On Wet Sand*, the beloved compares herself to an ocean swell, who also writes her love's name in the sand. The surge of her passion in his direction may wipe out his name, and he may be replaced by another. *To See You Again* refers to a deceased love, a cause of distress as a living being, a source of solace and illumination as a dream entity. *Status* is a lament from someone rejected. For the present and the immediate future, all hopes are dashed to the ground, with one barbed comment: "Poor man! Bring your status/To my level/And then love me." The poet laments that "love is chained too in shackles of status". It might have been interesting for him to add some comments about his potential for improving his status. The cold, dismissive Glass doll has potential for reincarnation as an organic entity. *Ideal* - unattainable love figure within the confines of a repressive society 'Behind the secret veil'; the 'vague siren' regenerates and validates the world. *Arid Desert* - the poet's heart is an arid desert rather than bring lost in one. *A Transition*

of Love is fairly simplistic bitter cynicism, an interesting contrast with the whimsical charm of The World of family - where the poet is happily lured into the 'paradise of naiads'. Novel comparison of solitude with a scorpion (Scorpion). In *Departed Leaves* both parties are depicted as leaves, and shown as being equally vulnerable to the elements. In *Museum of Reminiscence*, a cold, malignant goddess turned into an 'Unforgettable statue'. *Love's Errand*: a charming conceit: "Now if you see a whirlpool/ Think that/These may be love's messengers/Seeking for their love." His veneration for idols is not unqualified: at the end of *Valentine's Day*, he can say "I was just an idol,/heedless of love." *Lost Love* challenges the jilting beloved to arouse his passions again, after she has rejected and seemingly destroyed them. *Prisoner* portrays another callous icon. Very painful conclusion: "I was hanged/On the noose/To face her again./Who wanted to kill me/Daily/With a dreadful death/by her glimpses". *Iris* concerns a vindictive figure who spreads flames of vengeance, but maybe these flames represent her search for love. In *Future Generation*, the next generation is a brutal figure of revenge. Unusually for this collection, the imagery of war and devastation is uppermost here.

The *Secret of Moments* sequence concentrates on crucial, traumatic moments which leave a permanent impact in the memory: "My recognition died away/And I was called 'insane'". The shock gives the poet a sense of 'My hateful personality'. In *Moment 3*, the beloved has a mass of 'secret admirers' with whom she shares laughter. It concludes: "In these joyous moments/My memory never blazed you". This is novel phraseology indeed; is he referring to his memory's power to penetrate, and establish contact with his beloved? Or should that phrase be revised? In *Moment 4*, the 'tables are turned'; the formerly aloof beloved will descend to the lover's condition, and be in need of his emotional nourishment. *Gem* celebrates the treasured memory of a love wound in an 'ocean of grief' heart.

Peace: this is a state which a human soul can outlive. There are some homages to courage, such as *Alexander the Great* and *Hawks of Air*. Wildlife is celebrated in *Sparrows*. I have to say I found *Corridor* obscure, perhaps intentionally cryptic. The poet seems to be on some nocturnal walk in a tomb, contrasting himself seemingly with 'The paupers senseless of everything'. The night is dismissed by a slogan of 'Haq'. This seems to be an Islamic term. An explanatory footnote would have been helpful here. *Cemetery*: a reflection on human selfishness reaching as far as the grave (and beyond?) The mourners leave the grave after the ceremony, but no one seems to die for others. Life describes life as 'God's deposit'. *The River Bank* is devotional: ". . . there embraced earth and sky,/O! Lord from your nature who can deny. *Promises* is cryptic: there is a sense of desolation about broken promises, combined with desperation about being the prisoner of a promise: "You are confined in love's cage/ While I roam in the lone streets." *Poor Child* is deeply compassionate, the image of the child speaking for the masses of humanity who are oppressed throughout their lives. By way of comparison, *The Journey With Life* traces the life cycle, culminating in the frustrations and sadness of a weary old person.

Simple sense of wonderment in *I Wonder. I Never Dreamt* seems a departure from most of his utterances, which

seem to treasure dreams and long to preserve them. But here he desires the prerogative to obliterate them. I have not mentioned all the poems in this collection, as I found some of them to be ephemeral. However, these are far outweighed by the substantial contact. Hamza bravely faces the contradictions of the benign and the malign, the valid and the invalid, the transient and the permanent.

**Hamza Hassan Sheikh *Thirst all Around* (novella)
Daffodil Publications, Islamabad**

An utterly charming portrayal of adolescent love problems in the context of a university campus in Pakistan - 'the frolic spring of youth'. It is overall understated, with only one passage approaching explicitness. Some western readers may find a hint of archaism in its style, which also seems to be present in Bollywood movies. According to the blurb, "The novel is about love that is mysterious and above any definition, yet is an important aspect of every human. Hamza is a craftsman who knows how to use the tools of fiction to sketch blackmailing and man's lust for woman."

His own preface shows great perceptivity: "Love is unknown passion for unknown person for unknown reason. A person can be a silent but not senseless of animations. It is possible: he may have better ideas about someone than the talkative one. I read faces silently and peep into eyes to find the realities because I believe in feelings more than words."

A strong sense of mystery and speculation pervades this work, which is strongly observant of the surface manifestations of others: '*the changing faces always have different stories behind different veils*'. The opening exquisitely captures a new undergraduate's sense of strangeness and trepidation, followed by the blossoming of a shy man's first crush. The whole work is an acute exploration of shyness, set into counterpoint against a high degree of blatant, aggressive sexuality, its patterns enriched by the portrayal of parallel flirtatious couplings, a gossip grapevine and cross-couple confidences in the of a closely-knit student community, where jealousy periodically rears its head. Interestingly, at their first introduction on a bus, she asks to see his writings. Academic coursework and original poems are ice-breaking components of the opening of erotic innuendo; at one tender point, both parties are writing simultaneously, in full view of each other.

The author states that "The atmosphere of university was brimful of romance" and later refers to the '*Public University of marriage and love*'. But there is no real reference to any of the participants getting married and living happily ever after on the basis of meeting at university. Nor is there any portrayal of their home and family backgrounds - against which the students are presumably reacting while at university. It is also noticeable that the only academic references made here are to English Lit - what about the other subjects?

The girls on campus are 'Roamers', 'hunters of handsome guys'. There are portrayals of girls making overt sexual overtures by email. However, they retain a certain amount of old-fashioned prudishness, wrapping their copies of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* in plain covers. They practice free love, and then wear their Pupatta veils to cover their shame; that self-same veil is elsewhere described

as a 'mask of nobility'. Authoritarian families lurk in the background. There is one comment: "If I had not been engaged, I would certainly marry you!" - a hint that arranged marriages are still around. Some interesting gender politics, with a rape accusation consequent on an apparent seduction. Some radical dissent: "It was the custom of here that the women with big hips and hanging boobs used to fight for the rights of hot girls . . .: Astute observations of the 'hard-to-get': '*She celebrates parties with others while with me she is ceremonious.*' "Shiza was too much frank with other guys." Jealousy about potential rivals assumes a prominent role. Tensions between love and friendship are described with great subtlety. She is also more academically precocious than he is, and he underachieves through lack of staying power.

Passion gains in intensity: "Now love began to touch those limits where the sharing of love became intolerable." So besotted was the hero that he gave his love his email ID: some exploration here of the niceties of 'Netiquette' - sending messages when addresses have been surreptitiously obtained.

There is a degree of sexual explicitness in this work, including auto-eroticism and a group sex session. But this is used very sparingly, and, for my preferences, is tastefully understated. In spite of some blatant attitudes of the participants, the dominant tone remains that of romantic fascination, with much psychological insight - speculation, reading the innuendos of body language etc.

The conclusion is worthy of Hamza's poetry at its best: "In the shadows of trees and moonlit nights, the souls wander to feel the essence of love and parch on the warm sand of solitude. There is mirage in the desert of loneliness and thirst increases the intensity of love. The thirsty souls roam daily to search the cool shadows of each other and want to wash the wounds of the heart."

I feel that if this novel had been published in England, it might have been put in the 'Young Adult' category, as it seems to speak to a student subculture very conscious of its independent status, offering me great insights. All readers should be aware of the barriers and categories of ageism, and be prepared to surmount them.

Dave Russell

letters & emails

Letter from Slovenia

Dear David,

You asked me what I am doing - after my husband died, after leaving London, 10 years ago, I have been doing pretty much the same things, just in another country and with much less enthusiasm. I just can't see the sense, there is no real reason or excuse to be an artist, water, air, food are in short supply, people can well live without pots, paintings and poems ...

Sometimes there I see no reason to live all together ... but I carry on, suicide is one and only thing I like to postpone for some other time. I am not joking, please, don't misunderstand - what I am saying is, that a thought of ending life is often on agenda, but turning it into decision to live is actually a demonstrative action. I am always relieved when life opens up like a flower and I notice it as something beautiful. Might be a birdsong, might be a snowdrop growing out of a concrete path ... it takes so little to see sense, even if it is only a glimpse. Isn't the attitude of the Survivors showing this? This is what I got out of being part of the movement - I didn't come often, but I remember every single time, every single person I spoke to.

I live in Ljubljana now, Slovenia: writing, painting and working with people who have head injuries. Meanwhile I nursed my mother, last seven years I was preoccupied with her, and I saw my father die. I met him only later in life and I was getting to know him during the last year. My story is complete now. I am trying to live slowly, hoping to have a few years to live. I would love to do more painting, more writing. I go walking, Slovenia has wonderful mountains. But last Summer I fell and damaged my knee. Now I walk less, still in pain, but not giving up, not yet.

I know you are mainly interested in the volunteering work of mine. I go to my group, not absolutely regularly and not often enough, I admit it, to work with clay. This is a group of people who come during the day to so called work therapy. They are learning to use their hands, to gain coordination, but also to talk, to socialize and to relearn abilities they might have lost - mainly because of accidents. Getting clay out of the bags and getting fingers dirty is only the first stage of the gathering. More important is talking, listening, being attentive to each one separately.

People ask me why I am visiting these people. There are about twenty of them there each time I come. I do not remember their names, not all of them. But they remember mine and I am always moved by their greetings. I feel loved and appreciated. When I say this I almost feel selfish. I am coming because I need love! But nothing is wrong with this. I am giving mine passionately to them, too.

I was "initiated" by you, when you invited me to join the writing workshops with the Survivors. Was it 20, 25 years ago? It was because of the Survivors and also because of all the encouragement from Michael Horovitz that I wrote one poem in particular in English: I used to be a girl. I write about child abuse. I read it at the Survivors meeting and I realised there were other women in the world with similar experience. This was the beginning of my gradual recovery. The poem has recently been used by a chanson singer in Slovenia Vita Mavric. She is touring the country singing it and lifting a lot of dust. Child abuse is not written so much in my country, not yet. I am often called to give interviews on this subject, risking my family being continued on pg44

John Sinclair

by Dave Russell

Based in Detroit, John stands out as a supreme example of a truly politically involved poet who also embraces music - leading light of the White Panther Party a radically anti-racist white group supporting the Black Panthers and the Civil Rights movement. In 1970 the FBI described the White Panthers as 'potentially the largest and most dangerous of revolutionary organizations in the United States.' He was also a rock musician and manager of the MC5 group. He had in fact started from rock musician and DJ roots into grass-roots politics. John graduated in 1964 hailed as 'The Hardest Working Poet in Show Business' (Ben Edmonds, San Francisco Chronicle) and 'The Last of the Beatnik Warrior Poets' (Mick Farren, Los Angeles Weekly), John Sinclair is likewise a music journalist widely recognized as one of America's leading authorities on blues and modern jazz. Based in Amsterdam since 2003, his weekly podcast of the John Sinclair Radio Show has served as the flagship for the internet station Radio Free Amsterdam since 2004.

In 1966-67 the jazz poet, downbeat correspondent, founder of the Detroit Artists' Workshop and underground journalist joined the front ranks of the hippie revolution, organizing countless free concerts in the parks, White Panther rallies and radical benefits. Working closely with lead singer and songwriter Rob Tyner and the members of the band, Sinclair brought the MC5 to local fame, national attention and a contract with Elektra Records. The first MC5 album, recorded "live" at Detroit's Grande Ballroom in the fall of 1968, was accompanied by a declaration that Sinclair, the band members and others had formed the White Panther Party to oppose the U.S. government and support the Black Panther Party.

Closely allied with Abbie Hoffman, Jerry Rubin, Ed Sanders and the Yippies, the White Panther Party spearheaded the short-lived "rock'n'roll revolution" of 1968-69, and Sinclair's writings for the underground press both chronicled and analyzed the revolutionary events of the day in the light of the WPP's focus on "Total Assault on the Culture" by any means necessary, including "Rock'n'Roll, Dope, & Fucking in the Streets." Theory and practice were united in the White Panthers, *the only American political party ever formed by a rock'n'roll band*. The White Panthers not only preached revolution, they lived the revolution in communes and tightly-knit conclaves of revolutionaries who lived, worked, fucked, smoked dope and dropped acid together while they carried out their radical cultural organizing and educational work among fellow hippies. Sinclair's antagonistic rhetoric coupled with the incendiary performances of the MC5 inflamed ever-growing crowds of rebellious youth throughout Michigan and the Midwest.

His intellectual and political pursuits led him to prison. He was given a 9½ to ten year sentence for handing a couple of joints to a woman undercover agent for the Federal Narcotics Bureau who infiltrated

his poetry class. Sinclair does a lot of his time inside for his efforts in organizing black prisoners to advocate for better education programs. Such racial solidarity may seem inconceivable in the slammers of the twenty-first century, but check Sinclair's roots in I Wanna Testify:

"I came to Detroit in 1964 as a refugee from white American society attracted to this teeming center of African American culture . . . the birthplace of the Nation of Islam and the hotbed of bebop, the place where you could hear jazz all night long and cop weed or pills whenever you wanted to. The plight of black Americans was known to me from the street level, as I had the honor of spending a number of my formative years in Flint, Michigan, under the direct tutelage of some of the fastest young hipsters on the set, intense young men and women who held Malcolm X and Miles Davis in equal esteem and who introduced me to the wonders of daily marijuana use as a means for dealing more creatively with the terrors of white America." Sinclair was released from Jackson Prison when the twenty nine month campaign to gain his freedom climaxed in the mammoth "John Sinclair Freedom Rally" at Crisler Arena in Ann Arbor, Michigan on December 10, 1971, where John Lennon and Yoko Ono, Stevie Wonder, Allen Ginsberg, Phil Ochs, Bobby Seale and others performed and spoke in front of 15,000 people. Lennon wrote and performed his song, *John Sinclair*, later released on his *Some Time in New York City* album. Three days after the concert, the Michigan Supreme Court released Sinclair, and later overturned his conviction

Following his release from prison, John got back into music management and promotion through the Rainbow MultiMedia Corporation, managed Mitch Ryder & Detroit and several Ann Arbor bands, and produced the historic Ann Arbor Blues & Jazz Festivals while serving as Chairman of the RPP (Rainbow People Party) and directing its political organizing work in Ann Arbor. He hosted popular radio shows on WNRZ and WCBN, founded the People's Ballroom, the Free Concerts in the Park program, and the Ann Arbor Tribal Council, and played a leading role in the success of the local Human Rights Party that resulted in the election of two City Council members and the institution of the legendary \$5 fine for marijuana possession in Ann Arbor.

In 1975, following the resignation of Spiro Agnew and Richard M. Nixon and the termination of the Vietnam War, the mass movement declined. He disbanded the RPP and returned to Detroit to life as a poet, journalist and urban cultural activist. For the next fifteen years he raised his family in Detroit and worked as editor of the *Detroit Sun* newspaper, founder/director of the Detroit Jazz Center, professor of popular music history at Wayne State

University, artists' manager and concert producer, director of the City Arts Gallery for the Detroit Council of the Arts and editor of *City Arts Quarterly*.

Sinclair moved to New Orleans in 1991 and joined the volunteer staff of WWOZ radio, winning *OffBeat* magazine's reader's poll as the city's most popular DJ five years in a row (1999-2003). In 1992 he formed his band, the Blues Scholars (founded in Detroit ten years earlier), recorded his first CD in 1994 and began to tour the United States as a performance artist backed by jazz, blues and rock ensembles.

Sinclair first visited Amsterdam in 1998 as High Priest of the Cannabis Cup and relocated to The Netherlands in the fall of 2003. One of the pioneers of podcasting, his weekly internet program, The John Sinclair Radio Show, is the flagship of Radio Free Amsterdam. He is now touring Europe, solo and duetting with guitarist Mark Ritsema, in Detroit with the Motor City Blues Scholars, and around the United States with a wide range of collaborators. John was recently honored as the International recipient of the prestigious Targa Matteo Salvatore in Foggia, Italy. He's appeared at the Festival Internazionale della Letteratura Resistente in Tuscany and been featured at major events and festivals in Rome, Milano, Tokyo, Amsterdam, Rotterdam, Paris, Seville and Santiago, Chile.

His new Headpress book *It's All Good: A John Sinclair Reader* (ISBN: 9781900486682) is a collection of twenty two poems and twenty two essays covering the author's forty four years as poet and writer. The publisher's motto is: 'the gospel according to unpopular culture'. Included in the package deal is a CD featuring his live performances with diverse backing Musicians. *IT'S ALL GOOD* includes poems from Sinclair's epic works in verse always know: *a book of monk* and *Fattening Frogs For Snakes*: Delta Sound Suite along with writings on Jack Kerouac, Iggy Pop, the Art Ensemble of Chicago, John Lennon, Robert Lockwood Jr., Sun Ra, Dr. John, Willie King, Irma Thomas, and more. also illuminates Sinclair's legendary period as a cultural revolutionary, marijuana martyr and political prisoner, founder of the Detroit Artists Workshop, manager of the MC5, Chairman of the White Panther Party, producer of the Ann Arbor Blues & Jazz Festival, Editor-in-Chief of the *Detroit Sun*, Director of the Detroit Jazz Center, Editor of the *City Arts Quarterly* for the Detroit Council of the Arts, NEA Expansion Arts panelist, recording artist and record producer, and community arts broadcaster and program producer. It was described in *Detroit Life* as "a transcendent, philosophically tough-minded journey forged from one writer's mating the New American Poetics with America's blues-jazz tradition and its rock-soul-funk-punk permutations".

A tale of such enthusiasms needs historical context. Headpress put the material in chronological order chronologically reveals Sinclair's various responses unfolding their own logic. The first essay opens with John Lennon's 1971 lyrics-"It ain't fair, John Sinclair / In the stir for breathing air," (p 12) and Sinclair's release from prison thanks Michigan state legislature re-classifying pot possession as a misdemeanor only days before John Lennon's sell-

out concert brought attention to his cause. Sinclair candidly reports, looks back, updates and muses upon his various roles. Sinclair has complementary abilities in both prose and verse. So hats to Headpress for wisely taking a three-pronged approach: the numerically matching poems enrich the essays and vice versa, and the spoken-word-with-music selections add another dimension to the written verse. For example, these lines in "everything happens to me" may read maudlin on the page-"race traitor & renegade, / beatnik, / dope fiend, / poet provocateur, / living from hand to mouth / & euro to euro / sleeping on the couches / & extra beds of my friends, / a man without a country"(p 105)-but with Jeff Grand and the Motor City Blues Scholars hunkered into a groove underneath him, Sinclair's gravel voice bends those vowels so ironically, one can't tell if, like double-masked Papa Legba greeting you at the crossroads, he's laughing or crying. That's Sinclair's true identity: he's a signifyin' bluesman, not a village explainer.

Unmetered, mostly unrhymed verse is not easily singable, but Sinclair, with his mind on Monk and Muddy, half in bop and half in the Delta and its electric children, bridges that gulf. On Monk's *Dream*, he emits total joy, wit and wisdom. On the upbeat blues, *Fattening Frogs for Snakes*, his he uses Sonny Boy Williamson's lyric to tell the story of the music coming up from out of the Mississippi fields and juke joints travelling north upriver from spooky acoustic to an even spookier electric sound. "He produces such oracular momentum and incantatory brilliance - he "sounds" like William Blake draws or the Book of Jeremiah reads-thaton "brilliant corners," with just a single repeating guitar phrase from Mark Ritsema, he held this listener in rapt attention through six pages of verse celebrating the bebop experiments in Harlem meeting the writers around Columbia, especially a "hip football player / & would-be sportswriter / from Lowell . . . so well known at Minton's / . . . that the musicians on the set / named a song after him, / 'keruoac.'" Weaving in the lives and works of Ginsberg, Cassady and Burroughs, Sinclair concludes, " & a road out of the stasis / began to open up / & out / in front us - / & we followed it,"

As for Sinclair's musical essays, they are documents of respectful brevity, especially his slant on Iggy Pop, his interview with Irma Thomas, his love of the MC5 and his message in *Getting out from Under*. Moreover, the range of the musical material the essays cover in *It's All Good*, the quality of his poetry and his remarkable gifts as a performer reveal his immense value to us. He is a national treasure, a vital link in a literary-musical lineage that might be America's greatest cultural export ever.

John did an inspired spot for Survivors' Poetry at the Poetry Café on May 12th, as part of the regular (2nd Thursday of each month - expect August) open-mic nights.

letters & emails

continued from pg41

hurt, sad, and even angry with me.

My latest poems don't talk of child abuse anymore. Writing about it helped me to be able to put it aside. I don't walk like an abused woman anymore, I say no to men, who want what I am not offering – which happens less and less with me getting older and also with me giving different signs: I am not here to be walked over anymore.

David, I am sending you a few of my poems in English. Translations are not edited, but you might find one or two interesting enough to pass it on to your readers.

Best wishes, Ifigenija Simonovic

See Broadsheet pgs xx for Ifigenia's poetry

E-mail: Dear Survivors' Poetry

In praise of Razz ... I would like to praise Razz for his excellent hosting of the Survivors' poetry nights – he uses judgement, compassion, humour and inclusively and also writes very good work himself. You should let him know he is valued – truly wonderful people like Razz don't come along that often. In these times when a human's worth is valued more and more by what they earn, we should celebrate a kindly, supportive, intelligent troubadour. Give him an award – or publish him! Katherine Toy

competitions

1. **The Manchester Writing Competition** –Deadline 12th August 2011 for a short story (max 3000wds). 1st Prize £3000, each entry fee £15. As many entries as you like. Do not put your name on your story, use entry form. Judged by Heather Beck, John Burnsied, Alison MacLeod & Nicholas Royle. Contact James Draper, PM for the Manchester Writing School at MMU, +44 (0) 0161 247 1787 / j.draper@mmu.ac.uk, or enter online: www.manchsterwritingcompetition.co.uk/fiction

... items of interest

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DCBzDRLGGds>

I used to be a punk rocker and was called Nick Name this is from my Nick Name Tube channel – it's a program writer Jeanette Winterson made for Radio 4 about the moon. I used to live on the same street as Jeanette in the 70's. Finally I have a very "mild" virus on the memory stick I put these poems on – but don't worry this virus is very weak and can be wiped out using all basic Virus software – just incase! Nigel JAM aka Nick Name.

Name: : John Hoggett

Email: : speakoutagainstpsychiatry@gmail.com

Message: SPEAK OUT AGAINSt PSYCHIATRY

Psychiatry does more harm than good.

Anti-Depressants and Anti-Psychotics are dangerous and do not cure.

Electro-convulsive therapy is dangerous and not very effective.

Community Treatment Orders are a human rights disgrace.

Diagnosis does not help.

What people who are mentally distressed need is intense social support.

Things have got to change.

Tell the psychiatrists what you think of them. 4 – 6pm on the 27th July 2011 outside the Royal College of Psychiatry, 17 Belgrave Square, London, SW1X 8PG.

Gather in Hyde Park afterwards for a picnic, bring food to share, and to plan more action.

Further details at www.facebook.com/stseemless.d.a#/event.php?eid=211203888908921

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

Equilibrium Haringey's Wellbeing magazine is looking for feature contributions. Check out their latest publications, it's well worth a read: www.haringey.gov.uk/equilibrium_spring_issue_2011.pdf

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

Hillside Clubhouse,(N7 Islington) have a project for people with mental health issues, run a number of projects including a Kiosk and Catering Project. They have new menus and prices. Contact rubrown@hillsideclubhouse.org.uk / Telephone: 020 7700 6408 / enquiries@hillsideclubhouse.org.uk /

notes on authors

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

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

Leeds Survivors

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

Bristol Survivors

Contact Steve Hennessy
email: cd2007g8825_2@blueyonder.co.uk
www.steppingouttheatre.co.uk

Manchester Survivors

Every Mon 4-6pm workshop
Common Word, 6. Mount St.,
Manchester M2 5NS

Contact Jackie Hagan
email: jaclynhagan@hotmail.com

GROW - east sussex

Meet every Tuesday except during school
holidays at The Children's Library
Robertson Passage
Hastings

Contact: Ashley Jordon
email: jordan72uk@gmail.com

High Peak Writers

Works in association with The Grapevine -
a local mental health charity. Located in
Buxton

Contact: TBC
email:

Stevenage Survivors

Meets up every other Friday at The Friends'
Meeting House, 21 Cutty's Lane, Stevenage
7.30-9.30pm

Contact: Roy Birch
email: royb@survivorspoetry.org.uk

The Bread is Rising Poetry Collective

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

The Poetry Cafe

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

Dates Features

NO August Date

- 8th Sept *Jessica Lawrence (poetry)*
Copping & Musgrove (singer-songwriting duo)
- 13th Oct
- 10th Nov *Heartsong (original music and poetry)*
- 8th Dec *Alain English (performance poetry)*

Dave Russell & *Razz* feature on a regular basis

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

North London Survivors
every fourth Thursday
of each month



399 High Road
Tottenham
London
N17 6QN
Tel: 0208 365 0653
<http://www.multimap.com/s/y6qTi6v8>

Open Mic Dates: 8pm start

22nd September, 27th October, 24th November and
22nd December

email: xmtuck@hotmail.com
Tel: 07796 831 935

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

<http://vimeo.com/survivors>



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

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

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NEW Survivors' Poetry Vimeo Videos:

16. Flystrike by Lydia Hill
15. The Last Sheep by Lydia Hill
14. Power by Hilary Porter
13. Drummer Boy by Joe Bidder
12. Winterlight by Barry Tebb
11. Leeds by Barry Tebb
10. Barbara Grace by Brenda Williams
9. The Indictment of Boris Johnson by Brenda Williams
8. To the Left Honourable Allen Ginsberg
7. If I Could by Ingrid Andrew
6. Who Will Accompany Me? by Ingrid Andrew
5. Dear God by Razz
4. Night Lights by Dave Russell
3. Crackdown Tribunal by Dave Russell
2. Jason Harris performs on National Poetry
1. Rat Trap by Steve Tasane

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if you wish to

make contact and respond to anything you have read or if you wish to contribute, please either email info@survivorspoetry.org.uk or write to

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Studio 11 Bickerton House
25-27 Bickerton Road
London N19 5JT
Tel: 020 7281 4654
www.survivorspoetry.org
Office Telephone: +44 [0]20 7281 4654

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