

Poetry Express

The Survivors' Poetry Quarterly Newsletter

Spring 2008 Issue 26

Tim Grayson on Wakefield Writers DVD

Featured Artist Colin Hambrook of DAO

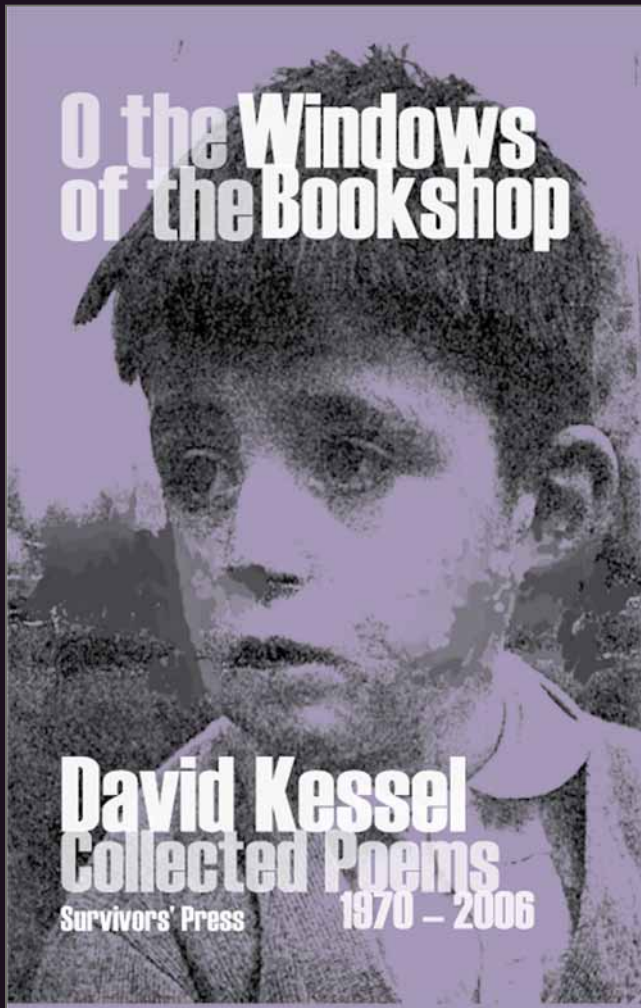
SP Patron Debjani Chatterjee MBE

Peter H. Donnelly on Curing Negative Hearing Voices



Survivors' Poetry still seeking funding, with only part time staff and volunteers; shoestring funds for the office, Outreach, and workshops but Events still going strong see Events page...

promoting poetry, prose, plays, art and music by survivors of mental distress



Cover design and edited by Alan Morrison

Poem of the Month October 2007

Hillside, Llangattock

We think with our shoulders.
On the lime-quarried hillside
down a stony lane lined with ash and hazel
a poor disused chapel where
fierce hymns give men courage.
Hardship on this hillside, riven
by lime and bracken, thistle and scree.
A cold, slow rain on a cottage in the dell
mortared with the blood of quarrymen hill-farmers.
Sheep grieve above the oak wood
where a mistle-thrush storms hell.
A feral cat hunts the black redstart; so rare, so shy.
November beeches aflame, as many
fallen leaves as slain quarry men.
Resistance of pain in the chest and spat gob.
From a dry-stone wall, Jenny Wren's song
holier than remembrance.
Dangerous to take the sheep track at dusk.
The blessedness of February wind
through an old goat-willow.
Here men pray with their stomachs:
the gnarled upland cabbage in a broth with barley.
The language of hunger: an alcoholic's lack.
The crow and the fox pick the dead lamb clean.
Springtime in the valley and the hawthorn blooming.



SURVIVORS' POETRY

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.

Editor: Piers Marter **Assistant Editors:** Simon Jenner, Blanche Donnery (BD)

Sub-editing, design and layout: Blanche Donnery

Cover Image: 'Hanging Man2' by Colin Hambrook

Back cover Image : on book: Mich Maroney

Featured images: Colin Hambrook

Poetry Express (PE) when published is mailed free to all members: contact us to join our mailing list. We welcome Submissions: Poetry, articles, news items, and other matter which may be of interest to our readers. We cannot guarantee publication and reserve the right to edit contributions. The views expressed in this publication are those of the individual authors, and do not necessarily represent the views of Survivors' Poetry. All Poems/ Artwork printed herein are the copyright of the authors credited. PE 26, only available in PDF format

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Moniza Alvi, Debjani Chatterjee MBE

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Guest Editor *Trustee Piers Marter*

This is the second time I have edited *Poetry Express* and will now be passing the editorship into the capable hands of Phil Ruthen.

The experience has given me greater insight into the survivor community. There seems to be no end of evils that the world can throw at people, but people do survive. And this is the essence of Survivors' Poetry: for every poem there is a survivor. *Poetry Express* is about survivors sharing their experiences, writing movingly, and through their writing lessening evil.

Message from the Chair *Marius Jankowski*

Welcome to our latest Spring edition of *Poetry Express*. If you are new to our publication you may not be aware that we are able to produce our newsletter due to the many contributions from the survivor community. People from all walks of life seeking to express their individual experiences of life with distress. We hope you find them thought provoking and a source of inspiration.

I would like to express my gratitude to our trustee Piers Marter for acting again as Guest Editor and wish him well during his sabbatical in France with his job; he will be returning to us in 2009 though with new technologies we will be keeping in touch with him on a regular basis. Also we are grateful to Colin Hambrook from the DAO - Disability Arts Online, for allowing us access to his stunning artwork which I hope will find a new audience. Also we are to congratulate our Patron Debjani Chatterjee for her New Year's Honour of an MBE to Literature award; a truly deserved tribute.

Thank you to our staff, trustees and many volunteers for their tireless work keeping Survivors' Poetry going during our continued funding crisis.

We are still looking for individuals interested in becoming trustees and welcome any enquiries.

Donations are also welcome particularly as we need to find funds to publish our newsletter, so if you know of a kindly benefactor please do spread the word about the quality of our work.

Update from Director Dr. Simon Jenner

It seems like no time at all since I last wrote, but since we resumed a more regular appearance events have moved speedily too. It's like moving to Warp Factor 6, or being buffeted by the morphic resonance of so many Olympic practice runs; we seem able to sprint at last too, in training for a real jump, and not the jog-trot of survival on a Red Queen square. The end of last year's ACE announcements left us thankful at having regained Regularly Funded Status from the Arts Council. It was particularly gratifying to be able to convey this to our founders, Joe Bidder, Frank Bangay, Hilary Porter, and Peter Campbell, who all read on our Founders Night, appropriately on February 14th this year. Thanks to Xochitl Tuck – as ever - for organising it; and Blanche, the designer of this magazine, for publicizing this too.

First, our heartfelt congratulations to our Patron Dr. Debjani Chatterjee on her award of an M. B. E., in the New Year's Honours Lists. This is more than richly deserved, and comes at a time when her own health, thankfully, has shown an almost miraculous improvement. We sincerely wish her a happy and fulfilled 2008.

With our own RFO status restored, we must also reflect on the fact that both Lapidus, our sister organisation, and LDAF (London Disability Arts Forum) who had a settlement of £131,000 last year, have lost their funding. Twitching with survivor guilt, as it were, I can only offer both these organisations my support, which I know is endorsed by all SP staff, board and volunteers. We know what it feels like.

Virtual Survivors

But for Survivors' the way forward this year starts in the way you're reading this. We hope to be able to print first a few, then more *Poetry Express* copies for those who can't access it this way. We've already topped 2,500 downloads of PE 25 in two months. It suggests that many of you who received PE in the past are now accessing it on-line. Quite a few of you aren't. We want to address this, and if you know of anyone who isn't able to access this themselves, please let us know who they are. Yes, I know there's a real temptation to nominate oneself, but we'll consider all these figures and I hope by this time next year or soon afterwards we'll have more fully restored PE to its print glory. It'll be a selective printing, of course. Many organisations for instance have already found us again. It's those hard-to-reach individuals, as the government would delight in putting it, that we're anxious about.

Even more exciting, though, is the opening up of our website to all the things you now see on it. Together with elements like breaking news, and features like Poem of the Month, we have writers' blogs and emerging elements over the year, like our planned uploading of many of our archive recordings. Blanche and Co are working together to try and develop this. It isn't easy - there's little funding for this as yet - but it's one of the growth areas that marks a new phase for us. Keep tuned to the site. By the time you read this, more will have happened to it.

Mentoring Programme

We have a nearly full complement of new mentees after the closing date of February. Thanks to all who applied. If you haven't yet, there's always time to apply for the next round of mentoring link-ups. We've

been lucky with our new mentors this year, too, and are drawing an increasing number of distinguished poets to liaise with those selected. Our criterion here is simply to judge if a poet is ready for the kind of mentoring our professionals can offer. There's stages of both timetables, to fulfil our own funding criteria: these only effect scheduling and never numbers. And there's the judgment call on readiness. Ripeness is all.

Again, we hope to be able to update everyone on the progress of this. It's now one of our core activities, along with re-connecting with our survivor groups around the country. Some of you reading this have already contacted us with news and we hope to post much more of your own news in future. I'm writing this with a heater on as we approach Easter. That's never happened before and I hope isn't a cold blast of negative funding. Next time we meet, it'll be somewhat warmer, as we move into early summer and a gulf-stream of (we hope) green-backs. More importantly, by then we'll have seen more of you who are reading this. Roy Birch is still planning his visits, and some of you have heard from him.

Launches

In addition to the booklet launches, we have one impending full volume release, designed by Blanche and co-ordinated by Roy again. This is the Maudsley anthology of poetry. It's written by patients resident in the imminently closing Felix Post Unit, for older people. The closure is a scandal and the book has reportedly worried senior management who worry that the book is either a protest vocalised (no, just eloquent testimony to the writers) and possibly of real quality. Well, they're right. It is, and it'll be available soon.

 if you wish to

make contact and respond to anything you read in these pages or if you wish to submit works please either email: info@survivorspoetry.org.uk or write to:

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Colin Hambrook: Artist's Statement

I grew up and have lived with mental health issues since early childhood. I have dealt with differing symptoms and have had different labels at different times in my life. It took me a long time to accept that I would never be 'normal'. Like a lot of disabled people, I spent a lot of time wishing it away. I grew up damaged by the experience of psychiatry and scared of mental illness. I was convinced they were out to get me, and changed address an average of 6 times a year for the first 15 years of my adult life. Being unsettled has become a habit that's hard to break.

The process of painting, drawing and writing is introspective. It has been a search for identity through mental and emotional breakdown; an expression of the fragmentation of ego that occurs in otherworldly states my condition imposes on consciousness. I have followed a range of different styles and approaches to the work. For many years I worked exclusively with dreams, visions and hallucinations on a project called 'Dreams of the Absurd' which was exhibited in various one person and group shows through the 1990s. More recently I have been working in a detailed 'meditative' style of drawing which is mostly rooted in landscape.

They are an attempt to capture the sense of freedom that can be found away from the urban and domestic landscape. They are also an expression of an inner



'Electroshocked'

landscape, a place where I can be at one with the materials at hand to give life to an internal process of finding the boundaries between what is inside and what is outside.

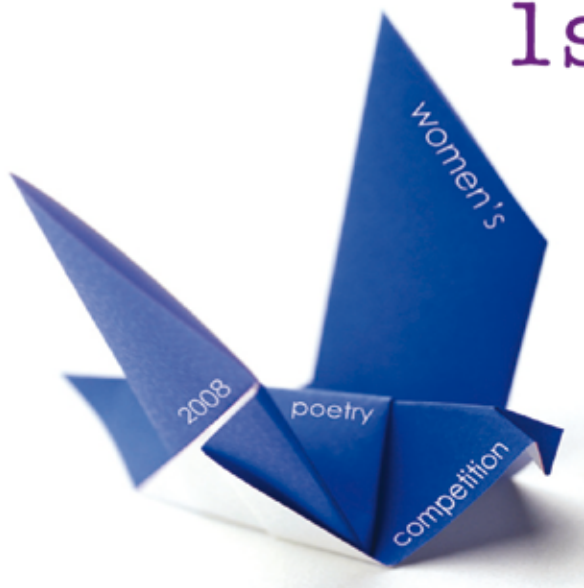
Colin Hambrook currently works as editor of Dada-South's monthly newsletter and manages DAO (DisabilityArtsOnline) an Arts Council funded online project promoting Disability Arts.

<http://www.dada-south.org.uk/home.php>

<http://www.disabilityarts.com/site>

Women's Poetry Competition

Judged by
Carol Ann Duffy



1st prize £1000

2nd prize £500

3rd prize £250

22 other finalists
will win £25 each;
all winning poems
published in *Mslexia*

CLOSING DATE: 25TH APRIL 2008

For full details, or to pay for entries online,

VISIT: http://www.mslexia.co.uk/menu/stop_press/poetry_comp.html

Poetry Broadsheet

L o c u s a m o e n u s

They wandered quickly by the Nervion,
a cold and dirty river, aptly called,
as nervously they bullied the conversation
into banal mouthings. Coherence stalled
as he fought his dry throat, her onward stare,
sick to the stomach with his hope and need
to walk the plank of 'what?', 'why?', 'do you care?'
More terror he felt than he who breaks a creed.
And then, with the sun still high, they succumbed
to a cafe table in an old square
where the drizzle of a drink helped him refer
to a longing, of ages born. He plumbed
the dregs of his muted, false-faced desire,
and knew she'd only take the other liar.

D Gareth Walters

S e e d s

The egg's for in and out, which is
the pivot the world turns on when,
a plate, it spins. Stick men and women
morph and walk the slippy globe,
looking for bread and love.

In the beginning the word fell,
adhered, and multiplied to these
our babels. Cry as our sad seeds
grow to such weeping planets.

Brendan McMahon

C r e p e

Pancakes form creamy continents,
their golden promontaries, spread to limits
imposed by mass, viscosity. Heat's
their moment, black a second away.
Faces in the fire, the holy name
hidden in puddles, aubergines.

They leap the pan and cry, we're fucked,
but God speaks, and the rain.

Brendan McMahon

This Poem

This poem walks into parties
With nothing to say
Gets ignored and leaves
Sadder and no wiser

This poem is a newspaper
Cross-word, half undone and left
In a bin on a train
To an unknown destination

This poem mews like a kitten
Weaned too soon, drools and
Paws the family secrets
In a relentless search for healing

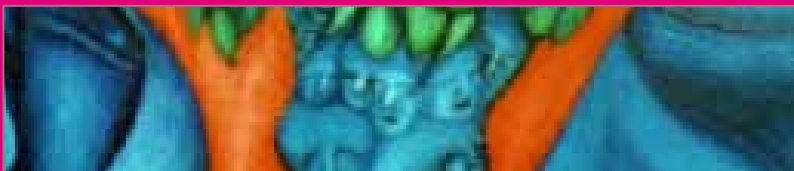
This poem huddles in shop doorways
Isn't allowed to speak to strangers
Sips cups of lovely coffee
In a greasy spoon asylum

This poem is persistently advised to leave
The past behind, as if it
Had a choice, as if it could
Turn night to even more night

This poem keeps cropping up
on the tide. It sticks like oil,
leaves a taint of that vain
urge for a better world.

This poem has no excuse
Save the draw of self-expression
Like love and the wind
It refuses to be held responsible

October 2007



This Poem, Art within Poetry
Broadsheet, and Front Cover by Colin
Hambrook, by kind courtesy. Poet and
Artist, see also pgs: 4, 25-26

Gardener of the Year

Most summer days
Spent in alcoholic haze
Sitting on edge of allotments
Watching gardeners
Living his dream,
If only anger could run
From hoe handle
To ground
Hoeing his frustrations from sight.
But bottle beside him
Drenched his dream
In delayed depression,
A clearer moment of well being
Revealed completed scheme,
Tall runner bean canes
In kiss cross formation
Saluting him
Gardener of the year,
Dampness of a tear
Brought realisation
He was crying into his beer.

Pat Bidmead



'Oak Tree I'



'Cuckmere Haven'

I wonder on whose mind
led to you being purchased

was it a birthday? forget-me-not?
or even a thank you

Did someone depart for pastures new
or was it to symbolize forgiveness sought?

You were graceful & dignified
in your bloom
bright and heavenly sent
seducing the senses

was it remembrance
anniversaries, death, marriages
just a simple bouquet to brighten up a room

for whatever intention

did you deserve to lie
broken, worn, dried and tired
on the ground of a bus shelter

I wonder what story you would tell

Alison Smith

When I was T h r e e

He sat me in the cab of his old Green lorry once
and drove off with me to see the ocean.
The town was Weston-super-Mare.
Once there, he had the notion
to show his girl some fun.

The circus was in town with a fair down on the sands,
and he quietly said to me "How do you feel
about a ride with me, up there,
on the Big Wheel?"
I nodded "yes" and climbed aboard.

An iron bar to my front, his arms clamped tightly round my waist,
a creaking judder, and then up and up we soared.
We reached the top, and there we stayed.
In the summer breeze we swayed.
salty tears dripping on my cheeks.

I said I did not like it and I wanted to get off.
He laughed and clutched me tighter 'till I screamed. "Enough! Enough!"
Eventually, on solid ground, I drew a ragged breath.
He coolly gazed around, then led me off.

He probed my face with dark flint eyes, then said:
"Look, Sweetheart; Shall we keep our ride... a Secret?
Of our own? After all, I do not want my big girl
as a scaredy-cat be known".

I bent my head, said "Yes" once more and climbed up into the van.
The engine turned. He, grinning, said; "Wave goodbye to the sand".
I was glad the day was done. I wanted to go home.
So home we went,
the daughter and the man.

Deci



'Dream Wood'

A Different Kind of Marble

Nature and architecture merge; life evolves
to cope with man's progress. The trees grow up
through the tarmac, ivy clings
to roadside railings, and the moss infests the sick-stained gutter,
as we lie and look out at the bars,
cohabiting with prayers and scars.
Redemption, (since man craves such concepts)
lies in the fact of the returning sun,
its ambiguity in playing with everyone,
the stone fingers and the paper leaves
are shadows the quick mind needs.
That the lion and the bird are caged now are cold metallic facts.
There are different lions. We are different birds.
I walk and I poesy but all is words.
They are inadequate. I do not love my words
enough. They are jealous of me and I of them.
I do not take poetry to bed.
Occasionally I have to leave it in the margins,
in my notes, on the desk.
Occasionally I have to walk out between the trees
and loose the leaves upon myself
in order to glean the sun's greener sounds,
and impose an artificial order.
I do not work with marble of the same kind
as those who carved the great ideal forms
of archaic worship; I run, and seek flux in nature:
redemption in the recycling world.
No idols for now, but signs and labels
punch into palpable keys, into my brain
before the thoughts can reach the page, they too are caged
and I do not run free as let-loose dogs.
I turn away, change my mind, retreat
from the screaming toddler and his mum in the park,
from the midges that fill and fly in the sun,
from the animals that weren't put into the ark,
and go home to build a different kind of unicorn.

David Younger

My Story

Clean cut.
Fresh blood.

Bleeding hell.

What d'you wanna do that for?
Bleedin' stupid bugger.

Feels good though.
Feels clean.
Squeaky clean.
Clean cut.

Pure
as the driven snow.

Red
as raw meat.

Broken dreams,
Bleeding from her
clean-cut life.

Deb Hunt

Give me a Chance

Give me a chance,
A bright, gleaming, shiny chance
Like a new minted dollar.

A fresh start, golden opportunities.

Give me a life where nothing goes wrong,
This one's all spoiled
All fucked up.

No-one's fault of course.

No-one's fault that I wasn't one of the lucky ones,
One of the shiny, happy, plucky ones.
The ones who go through life
Oblivious,
Regardless,
Depression-less.

I just wasn't one of the lucky ones.

Deb Hunt

C o p i n g

Wind in the Willows
Monkeys in the Bath
Rabbits in the Toilet
This is how we laugh

DB Morgan

Easter 1966

Fifteen years old
I graduated
into the working world.
Momentarily I avoided
digging roads
humping boxes
unloading lorries.
I became a messenger for a shipping company
a glorified tea boy.

Bermondsey Street
near London Bridge station.
I liked the smells
of the neighbouring spice warehouses.
Walking round the city of London
in the snow.
It snowed a lot that Easter.
My youthful feet
took me all over the city
from Aldgate to Ludgate Circus
from office to office
I enjoyed the discovery.
Then there was the office typewriter
that got me the sack.
I had never used a typewriter before.
A trip down the labour exchange
and I graduated
to humping boxes
unloading lorries
in a warehouse.

Frank Bangay

The No Sleep Blues 4.40am (Dedicated to the late Marilyn Monroe)

Insomnia is a long dark and lonely tunnel
A time warp of horrific proportions
Or else phone calls
Transatlantic
And I see the bills soar.

I stare at the walls
I stare at the cat
Is there comfort in that?
Fleetingly
But lucky pussy
Deep in slumber
My partner too
Snores contentedly
And I heave a heavy sigh
I eat sleeping pills
As if they are going out of fashion
Not all at once
No
This is not a bid for suicide.

Insomnia drives me mad
Tears my nerves to tatters
Nothing else matters
But to get to sleep.

But suicidal thoughts
Do present themselves
Oh yes
At least I'd sleep
The big sleep....
No it mustn't be an option.

The temper is frayed
Like an old counterpane
In the loop of addiction
To sleeping pills
As my Mother before me
I think
Well
I can't think
Far to weary
For that
But I do think of the poor mess of Marilyn.

Come sleep come
A rat a tat tat
On the window
Of my very being
My very exposed self
For sleep
You will be
Welcome
Most welcome
So
Come
PLEASE

Laura Bartholomew

D e u s L o c i

Between the water and the forest
Stands a house. In the house lives a man.
He writes about journeys across the sea
In ships where the crews have
Complicated tasks, concerning
Computers,
Charts,
Engines,
Ropes,
But he will never leave, He is busy writing.
The earth has grown over his feet,
The elder-tree holds berries over his shoulder
Highways approach and run past him,
He has disappeared by staying,
The moon chants to him at night,
The sun hums to him by day,
And stars sustain him through a powerful flight
Propelling him towards stasis.

John Abrahams

The Drive By

You're going in the wrong direction

She stands assessing, her first impressions,
Vulpine man, in a van

Sure you don't want a lift?

She did, she did
And so much more,
She shook her head

I would like to but...
Unseen moon

The conversation
Of cannibals and love
Unsaid

Awkward silence instead

And the sad wry smile,
He nearly smiles

Drives away, dark profile

When will he come
When will he come,
She asks of the city-bleached skies

Lucinda



'Devil's Dyke'

De Sperati and the Peasant Roo

'In 1942 Jean De Sperati was charged at Chambéry, France with producing counterfeit stamps. The 500-odd different types of rarities he forged have a value of over \$4 million on today's market, if genuine. The great problem in detecting Sperati's forgeries lay in the fact that many were part genuine.' From *The Australasian Stamp Catalogue*, 20th edition, pg. 4.

In philately the ID is much repressed, all that gloss and striving, progress and achievement, doesn't sit well with the melancholy that fosters self-analysis. The ID is always retrospect, we shiver at the sight of Hitler stamps, or pictures of China's red hordes - heroic or murderous? - invading Tibet.

The collector's fascination with shadow is revealed by a love of faults, flaws and forgeries - deviations by intent or accident, from the official narrative.

Jean De Sperati liked stamps, he forged hundreds of them, one was the £2 Kangaroo, black and red - first watermark (or soul?) - a British crown atop an 'A' for Australia.

By techniques alchemical, strangely Medieval, De Sperati faded low value Kangaroos - only the postmark remained - next he printed the £2 black and red, that aristocrat of Australian stamps, atop his vanquished peasant roo
some would say
a simple change of clothes.

The result
a changeling stamp, upwardly mobile and ambitious, but also mischievous - neither wholly legal, nor wholly forged. The soul stuff - paper, perforations and watermark - legitimate enough, likewise the post-office smudge, only the image is corrupt, the persona, if you like,

And thus equipped he presents
as royalty - as Emperor or King -
a confidence trickster, to those in the know,

mocking right breeding and the divine rule of kings.

Even the capitalists are duped,
how fragile the old-school tut-tut, for
with a little theatre we all can move,
like Jesus, between the classes. Even
currency - God made manifest in trade -
proves insubstantial, pliable,
a mere scrawl on coloured paper.

Today, his status
unmatched by even the genuine article,
Jean's peasant kangaroo sits all-atop
the social heap. More prized
than almost every citizen kangaroo, more prized, even,
than later £2 black and reds.

I think of De Sperati now,
and know that to each
their own peculiar path

My own days -
soul beneath a mere hap-hazard
of garments however
finely spun.

Ian Irvine

USER or S u r v i v o r

Be a user but don't be used by the psychiatric system or any other people for that matter.
Be a survivor. Be a nine-liver.
Keep bouncing back again and again.
Pain comes and goes. Deep depression emerges time and again.
Even friends cannot just listen at times.
You have to survive. There is no alternative in the long run but to survive.
Go on show them what you're made of!
Show all the social workers, psychiatrists what you are made of.
That you can be well; that you can do well.
But most of all don't rebel in a way,
Most of all show yourself
You can be happy well and survive
Are you a survivor?
I am a survivor
We are all survivors.

Milan Ghosh



'Oak Tree 2'

Good Queen and Pegasus

Everywhere a brilliant green light heading for me with "GO".

Waving more defiantly than years of brownie scoring.

Ex-babe routinely summonsed, innocuously humdrum.

And then Good queen comes along. Good queen, pleaser of everyone and no one.

In her hidden selfish cave she unites us, blackening my character again and again.

Jewelled in fatigued patience and without any hope of being saved.

Heart, cornered.

Laura Jane Stanton

U n d e r R a i n b o w s

Life is like trying to walk under rainbows

Grasping for colours that slip through your fingers

Hunting for that elusive pot of wish granting gold

Dancing madly with leprechauns that never were there

Embroidering the silver lining on runaway clouds

Falling into receding oceans as deep as your mind

Flying in skies higher than day dream aspirations

Strolling through forests as dense as intensity

Finding meaning in something as simple as rain

It's appreciating the tears along with the laughter

Smiling at strangers, being open to share

It's everything you ever wanted it to be

And nothing more than whispering shadows.

Mark Williams

I U s e d T o B e M e



'King's Wood'

I used to be me
But now I'm not.
At times I'm a robot
At others, a monster.

People remember me; say I'll be back;
They say that I helped them do this and do that?

But time passes on
I come only in glimpses.
A moment of art, of exercise
Or just being nice.

Do I ask too much to expect it to go?
Depression, alienation, sadness galore.
Do I expect too much just to see me in the mirror?

Lesley Farnan

I Q B a t t e r y , K i n d n e s s L i v e s O n

The IQ of this strange mortal is glowing in this pallid house.

However you crawled in please stay a while.

Drink tea with me, smoke your trumpet cigars.

Walk faster so worry lifts from these scars.

May I paint an impression of this strange acquaintance?

She swims like a poisoned waterfall and with contemptuous snobbery.

Giving away nothing.

It was surely a devil paw that held me close. God - forgive.

Laura Jane Stanton

Asylum **Bed**

Asylum, jumping this bed for the states,

For the taxpayers, for anyone, but you.

You are taking too much, are too much, too soon in my young mind to consume.

This bed, it hurts, when I lie down next to you and want to curl up so tight, to be invisible, to halt this bizarre parade of minds.

This bed, which you came to make, which you could walk away from,

Your power left me dead, and gave me away to the wolf's den

And to the pretty career girls.

Laura Jane Stanton



'Reach for the Moon'

B h a b i

Stiff in my embrace,
I wanted to loosen you
as I do my braids at night,
to comb out the tangles
of wanting to be held
but having no practice.

We spoke quietly:
you alert and taut,
I willing your melting
in my warm arms,
aware of your desires,
aching for yielding.

SPIDERS

I found it in your smile,
pouring pleasure
through a stiff body
of which only your head
snuggled slightly, briefly,
on my departing neck and cheek
(cheek!)

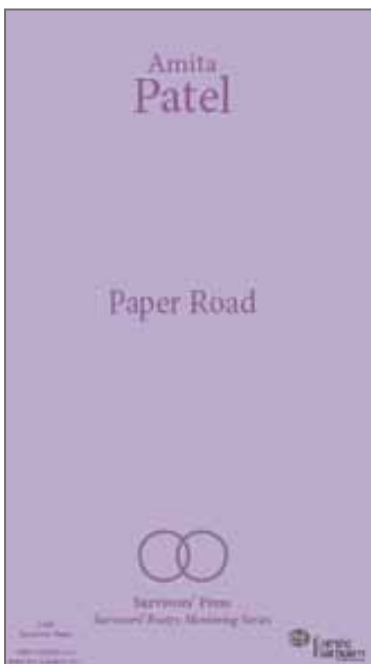
Embarrassed,
our eyes did not meet.

Notes:

Bhabi means 'sister-in-law' in several north
Indian languages.

Amita Patel

*(from Paper Road, published as part of Survivors'
Poetry Mentoring Scheme)*



Do you still dream of spiders
Scuttling, scurrying spiders
Crouchy, pouncy spiders

Or is it just one solitary spider
Dark, hairy and huge
With its many eyed stare directed at you

Creeping, crawling spiders
Hissing, spitting spiders
Incy wincy spider

Do you still dream of spiders, spinning silken nests
Do they bind you and hold you fast in a thousand sticky threads
Fanged, fat bellied spiders laying glistening eggs

Grey dusty webs
In dark comers and gloomy places draped

Webs amongst pink roses, dew drop encrusted
Shimmering gold and tremulous
Nebulous in the sun

Webs stretched from heaven and hell
Intricate and invisible
Covering the world

Do your agitated fingers mimic spiders
As you scratch in your sleep
And dream a little spider
Softly brushed against your cheek

Now it gradually and stealthily
Crawls underneath your sheets

Do you still dream of spiders,

I dream of love

Lucinda

Hunger!

Filthy flies in babies eyes
Licking tears that hunger dries,
Pot bellied, empty space
Caviar - a damn disgrace!

Paupers down in shantytown
On rubbish heaps they mill around,
Searching through the rich mans waste
Spoiled food an acquired taste!

Third world disorder - here and now
Silver dollar - sacred cow!
Millionaires, mansions and fancy yachts
Taking more, sharing not
Showing off what they've got!

Disproportionate distribution of the world's wealth
Tipping the scales through cunning and stealth!
Obese nation, fat cigars, gas guzzling cars, stripes and stars
Follow suit, grab the loot, there's a body back there in the boot!

Carry on, as before, it's easier to ignore
We can live with the smell
Stocks and shares buy and sell
Their heaven is a baby's hell!

Mark Williams

Henpecked Husband

Me and my wife walk through automatic doors,
My wife takes control of the metal trolley and me,
First thing she sees is Tampax and tells me to take the Tampax
From the shelf I am embarrass then we trail through suits
And trousers passing dresses until my wife stops at the
Knickers and bra row, my wife rifling through knickers
And bra row. I'm feeling uneasy because the women
Are looking at me strangely I just want out yet I love her
Even though she nagging at a henpecked husband to get
Cornflakes while she talk to a friend.

Martin F Holmes

Fleeting warmth, Sea of Contact

Wind blown leaves, rustling
Down the streets of London,
Life's path - staggeringly painful.

Love reaches out to;
Stranger, encountered,

Openness expands;

A smile exchanged
Warmth of eyes, shine
Lovingly, words of interest
Melt away differences
Soft peach of conversation, dances
Laughter, flowering blissful sun
Momentary aeons of space
Seconds, minutes, evaporate
Time doesn't exist,
Present, joyfully explored!

Until;

We
Depart, separate,
Dissolve into crowded life

Heart full of other,

Fleeting warmth,
Sea of contact,

Washes away, attachment

Wind blown leaves, rustling
Down the streets of London
To-day is every day, beautiful joy.

Nick Satornetti-Portway

from Madness and Masterbation

(i)

I am inside the bleakness of my bed,
And fidget my psychotic cock till late-
For hours, the boring hours, ahead;
I am mindless, and so I masturbate.

No pleasure but this, in my night of dread,
Amidst the snores, the farts, and so I wait
For the dawn, which has all the hue of lead,
As grey as slush, as grey as any hate.

A stain on the sheets, and the nurse will frown:
'More thorazine, since this odd brute must wank,
'This filthy patient...' Nurse wants me to drown
In my own sour semen; I'm a blank,
A brainless zero, under Nurse. Head down,
The morning medication, then say: 'Thanks.'

(ii)

Psychotic fingers next morbidly play
In the dungeon of the pottery group;
I soon work out that I am like mere clay,
Moulded by them- above my thing, I stoop,

My twisted work/mess, formed in the wrong way.
How I would like to scream and bawl and whoop,
Kick round the chairs and tables in some fray.
My head is down, and, miserably, I scoop

More slimy substance to shape as a...what?
A warped brain, taken over by the drugs,
Contorted into grim knot after knot,
Then baked in chemical flames? How she shrugs,
The therapist, and I wish she would rot,
The condescending bitch, with worms and slugs-

...

(iii)

Then, at lunch, my psychotic mouth must deal
With soggy beef and vegetables like scum.
Around the grimy canteen, my eyes reel,
And I watch the other' patients who come.

She ignores me, that girl who tends to squeal,
Who talks to walls, in this hospital slum-

Beneath her brown skin, I would like to kneel,
And kiss her pussy, with the tang of rum,

Juicy flavours of flesh. The orange squash,
As bland as ever, makes me want to puke.
I go to the toilet; I piss, and wash-
I have no butler, since I am no duke.
But Nurse attends, with a chemical cosh,
Chemical cage, and chemical rebuke.

Zekria Ibrahimi



'Olive Tree'

The kingdom under the stairs

When I felt the need to be a king I would go
To the kingdom under the stairs.

With a label from Brighton still attached,
But it was mine, all mine and I was sovereign
Within its walls.

The royal standard hung from a rusty nail and
Was torn, frayed,
Crown, I had no crown just my uncle's beer stained
Flatcap.

Here as ruler I would command my toy soldiers to
Fight all my wars.

Then I would hold court and give the spoils to the
Poor with kind heart,
Passing laws to protect my subjects and granting
Public holidays and banquets.

A king of all, without prejudice or black and evil
Intent,

I would knight my loyal, imaginary friends with
A wooden sword.

Raise a plastic beaker for the loyal toast and pay
Homage to your head of state,

You live in the kingdom of the free, a land without
Hills or valley.

Swear your allegiance with a blood oath before the
Obelisk to our battle dead,

Then with a tear of regret I, your king returned to the
Real world.

A commoner, no throne, orb or regal robe of lovat
Green.

I will return when backs are turned and I can find
The time,

Again we will wallow in the splendour of the kingdom
Under the stairs.

From deep bitterness to joy that knows no way to stop
Itself,

How easy for me to find an escape and with it gain power
And respect.

My kingdom and my subjects that no one knows in my mind
Exists

'Q u a z i '

Tactless school girls
at the back of the bus
in short pleated netball skirts,
pony-tails dangling with beads and ribbons,
satchels slung over their slim shoulders,
tormenting the physically afflicted
and socially inept -
'Look there's Quazi,' they say, 'Quazi...'

He's just got on,
a rucksack of his most treasured belongings,
emery boards, a toothless comb
and some nail clippers
which he acquired from his mother
while she slept in her invalid wheelchair
he thinks he's beautiful, meticulous,
in the Arsenal base ball cap he's placed on his
head backwards, soggy blue tracksuit bottoms
and scuffed trainers
he may well be a dribbling top lip mental case,
lacking in refinement, shunned by polite company,
With a hump and bells ringing in his ears,
but he thinks he's beautiful, meticulous,
with enough money in his pockets for beer,
cigarettes and the return fare home -
he's on familiar terms with all the trainee drivers,
telling them their routes,
one all the way from Bulgaria
who he calls 'Uncle' after one of the Wombles.

RA Longstaff

'Go on Quazi, give us a kiss,' they say to him,
showering him with glitter and pouting
their glossy red lips.

He's preoccupied by the Basingstoke Canal
restoration project he's on,
promising to take part in a thirty-two mile
charity walk along the banks
for prostate cancer
whether he's got the sponsors or legs –
exhausted already, he's spent the best part of
his day painting the hulls of barges,
fishing shopping trolleys from the reeds,
clearing generally unruly vegetation,
old boots with spaghetti wriggling inside them
instead of toes, murdered bodies.

'Go on Quazi, give us a kiss...'

Simon Robson



'Tree of life'

F I a t

im in the best possible place,
no need to run,
if i were banged away
in
a
nuthouse,
then i would be in Hell alright,
then i would be in hell.

i have a flat on the council,
2 years running straight
ive dwelled here,
its a piece of piss,

just pay the rent,
pay the bills,
go shopping,
masturbate,

and make some friends,

i guess im like
tom, dick and harry
down the road,

nowhere to run or go,
this is it,
this is all im gonna get and to be fair,
i dont care,

just me and the flat
and the psychiatrist
once every 6 months,

and when i think of the times ive spent homeless
eating out of bins,
im having a laugh,
36 years down the track
there aint no looking back,
its just me and my flat,
and a coffee on my coffee mat.

Tim Weeks

FREIGHT TRAIN, FREIGHT TRAIN...

The train shot past and then no more

The line was closed for Death was found

They couldn't say whether male or female,

The blood on the tracks of her tears down her face,

So the line was closed in Death, Amen - The roses

On the tracks to oil the wheels of the Modern Age

Where nothing heals - no prayer, no Friend

Of thought leads to when the car just missed, when

I found he'd never hold me again. . .

But behind the steering wheel an old lady smiled

And slowed her car, which jabbed my heels,

And saved me from wheels of the Modern Age

Where Grief is bandaged in pills and nothing heals,

Except Time which kills all pain and winds the Shroud

Around GRIEF.....

Angela Mokoros

Nurse of the Glass House

The deafening tones
Of these
Flies.
That jars and mocks
And creates.
Havoc unspoken.
Make the nurse's scream
With the terror of what they could become.

So they project onto him, onto her.
Throw deceit
And
Medicines
And Jargon
And live in glass houses
As spite lets them linger there,
Watering their attitude and discontent.

To inflict, to capture,
Their youth,
By knocking her out.
Impaling
Her soul.
If it is entertainment they are after there is a theatre in town.

In the burning,
Ridiculous solitary
Confinement
Of
This
Illegal ward.
This frightful, decadent,
Malicious
Ward.
Where to speak, feel and be, is a crime, or at least an illness.

Laura Stanton

In My Quiet Garden

In my quiet garden
There is nearly peace again

Breaking out,
All the things I can't change
All the solace of the new morn.
In my quiet garden
I can rebuild and be renewed
The old pains are more distant and less framed.
In my quiet garden
There is fresh bud, new song
Late blossom, unseen seeds.
There is nearly peace again.
New worlds, new life
Breaking clear.
Of all the things I can't erase
All the sadness of this loving page.
Of my quiet garden
A world away
From you and I
I and everyone else.

Peter Vealey

In a Wild Garden

In a wild garden.
I will build my world again.
From a life gone by.
You can only forget.
I will build my heart again
In a wild garden.
Where life grows in abundance.
I will not desecrate
With concrete dreams.
In a wild garden.
Where time is precious and forever.
In a wild garden,
The tender heart never seizes
Just to please.
In time passing,
The earnest soul
Must renew it constantly.
Even amidst stained tears.

Peter Vealey

FEATURED ARTIST:



*Top left 'Weary of Demons'
Bottom left 'Hanging Man 3'
Right top 'Shocked Mother'
Bottom Right 'Conflict'
Next Page 'Dirge of the Brick Man'*

Dejani Chatterjee MBE

SP Patron Dejani Chatterjee is one of the UK's best known internationally renowned Asian writers, also an editor & community publisher, with over 50 publications to her credit including poetry, prose, bi-lingual, translations, plays, and children's stories. Her work has appeared in major



anthologies and been broadcast on radio and TV and she has enjoyed a number of residences, including the Poetry Society's Poet-in-residence at Sheffield Children's Hospital (2000). She has won numerous awards (visit her website link at

end of article); culminating this New Year with an MBE for her services to Literature; for which SP offers her hearty congratulations.

Born in Delhi and educated there, in Japan, Bangladesh, India, and Hong Kong, she later enrolled at the age of fifteen to the American University in Cairo where she was to become a student-reporter for the university newsletter Caravan and also worked part-time in the library. Moving to England in the 70's Dejani continued her education being awarded an MA in English and American Literature, from the University of Kent at Canterbury in 1977. She was the President of the Asian Society & Co-editor of Continuum poetry magazine. Dejani continued in education culminating in a PhD from Lancaster University. At Sheffield Hallam University she gained a PGCE in English, Drama & Religious Education and in 2002 she was awarded a honorary doctorate from the university.

Her first full collection 'I was that woman' (Hippopotamus Press, 1989), was followed by mini collections in 'The Sun Rises in the North' (Smith/Doorstop) & 'A Little Bridge' (Pennine Pens), and a second full collection 'Albino Gecko' (University of Salzburg Press, 1998). She edited the groundbreaking 'The Redbeak Anthology of British South Asian Poetry-My birth was not in vain', selected poems from seven Bengali women, and co-edited 'Rainbow World: Poems from Many Cultures and Masala', Poems

from India, Bangladesh, Pakistan & Sri Lanka.

'Who cares? Reminiscences of Yemeni carers in Sheffield', a noted community publication funded by Sheffield Carers' Centre, Sheffield Town Trust and the Yemeni Economic and Training Centre, was written in conjunction with Jameela Musaid and Abdul Razak, detailing stories from carers in the Yemeni community in Sheffield. 59 registered Yemeni carers highlighting their relationships with those they cared for, providing an historical account of the Yemeni community, available in both Arabic and English. Twisting Yarn Theatre toured her multilingual play for children 'The Honoured Guest' in 2000 & 2001. Books for children include: 'The Elephant-Headed God & Other Hindu Tales', selected for Children's Books of the Year 1990, 'The Snake Prince & Other Folk Tales from Bengal' and 'Animal Antic'.

Apart from being Patron of Survivors' Poetry, Dejani Chatterjee has been and continues to be involved with various educational and community organisations including: being a Director of Sahitya Press, which Dejani co-founded with Safuran Ara, also a founder-member of both Mini Mushaira (multilingual performance group), and Bengali Women's Support Group, for whom she has co-edited several bi-lingual anthologies, including 'Barbed Lines', which won the Raymond Williams Community Publishing Prize in 1990. She chairs the National Association of Writers in Education, is Associate Editor of Pratibha India and Tabeed International magazines, is an Arts Council of England Literature Adviser & Chair of its Translations Panel, and a PLR Adviser. Her prose & poetry translations include:

Rabindranath Tagore's 'The Parrot's Training', Safuran Ara's 'Songs in Exile' and an oral history book 'Home to Home'. She has also translated work by Kazi Nazrul Islam, Nasir Kazmi, Basir Sultan Kazmi & (with her mother Tara Chatterjee) Uma Prasad Mukherjee.

Since 2006 she has been a Royal Literary Fund Fellow at York St John University and has also enjoyed participating in Sampad's award-winning Adopt-an-Author project (2004).

After working in the steel, education and community relations industries, she is now a full-time writer living in Sheffield. Dejani enjoys performing poetry & working as a writer-in-residence.

<http://mysite.wanadoo-members.co.uk/DejaniChatterjee>

image courtesy of Dejani Chatterjee

Wakefield Community Writers DVD

During January 2008 Wakefield Writers engaged in a series of training courses with Steve Truelove at the Yorkshire Art Circus in Glasshaughton, West Yorkshire. Over a period of 3 weeks we learned how to use filming equipment, setting up scenes and script writing. We used Steve's equipment and our own and got to appreciate the complexities of making film and the awareness of how we (as performers) are perceived by others. We as a result made a 16 minute drama where 4 members of our group read poetry and included an interview. In fact we did film considerably more material but this was academic and only for personal use by the individuals who each took home a DVD of their own work.

Jan Holliday said; 'It was a new experience and was apprehensive at first but Steve took us through the process step by step and once I had begun to relax, I really enjoyed the experience. It's another way forward for my writing. It's a weird feeling seeing yourself as others see you? It's also quite a shock and I feel that there's a lot more work to do on improving my performance but I feel a sense of achievement'. Paul Gough said; 'The training was as good as it could be in the three hours filming time we had and I feel that I will improve as a performer with practice. It was a challenge to make the film and we will develop more confidence the more we rehearse and improve by memorizing our poetry to avoid reading from literature. I still prefer to perform my poetry to a live audience'. Jason Hiscock said; 'The training was very good and the finished film was a real achievement'. Paul Hazzelwood who saw the film said; 'It was very impressive'. Everyone was delighted with the finished film which would have not been possible without the editing skills of our trainer Steve Truelove. We all agreed that we would like to make more films but Jan said that we need a tight script and more rehearsal so we can show better our abilities'. I personally felt that there was more mileage in honing performance skills because it is a scary business but if you can put some humph into a poem then it will reap rewards. Jan said that we didn't get much time to learn how to use the equipment. We agreed that next time we use our own film camera, in our own time and location and so beef up the rehearsals.

We plan to send funders our film and show the finished film to service users of the mental health system. Steve said the film was good but I need to get more feedback before I can say more. After we've shown the film we can start making copies of the DVD in order to make the film available for people who are more interested in our group. If you would like to have a copy of our DVD you can contact me on 07847176817 or by email on:
timg@touchstone-leeds.co.uk

We are in a position to continue to make more films in future and we will only need money to edit film. This is because, the editing of film is the most expensive and advanced part of making films because of the technology required. Those of us who did the training gained not only insight but thoroughly enjoyed the experience. We welcome new members to our group who could also take advantage of not only writing but publishing, performing or simply make friends.

Tim Grayson (Wakefield Writers)

Comment by Dr. Simon Jenner

Thinking back to sprints and the Olympics I invoked in my Editorial, it's the Chinese Year of the Rat. A political year, apparently. Certainly for the arts after the McMasters Report ('risk and innovation equals excellence') and DCMS Review, the sequent ACE funding settlement has proved the most controversial of recent times. This is because, in a resoundingly effective argument, ACE managed to secure an additional £50 million to its previous £417m. When you realize this is an extra eighth, and we'd expected a possible 5% cut, the jubilation amongst the arts communities was immense. Not least because ACE had proved they could conduct a stimulating debate, partly initiated by them over a year previously. It proved the efficacy of ACE over and above any fabled merging with DCMS. Never mind that its new CEO Alan Davey has crossed the divide from DCMS to ACE himself. Nor that arts ministers arrive and depart with bewildering speed in the wake of Gordon Brown's first reshuffle in January. James Purnell was replaced (or after his digitalising photocall, perhaps airbrushed) by Andy Burnham. Purnell, the Ofcom inventor, had left a real mark in his seven months. Burnham, a rising minister, can oversee a departmental storm.

Storm it is. With all its extra funding, ACE cut a swathe of RFOs, to make way, they suggested, for 90 new ones. This included, dangerously, 15 of the UK's 133 theatres, including the Bush on what now transpires wrong information. The then CEO Peter Hewitt, braved the luvvy lobby and was given a vote of no confidence for his pains. Nevertheless, subsequently, that funding to the Bush, and some other funding across the board was restored. But the collective gnashing of virtual e-teeth around the country, and of course the brevity of time given to prepare for disinvestment, has infuriated the arts, particularly the - understandably - vocal theatre lobby. How did ACE, people ask, snatch defeat from the jaws of victory? In fact I asked it of one wry Literature Officer who's always been unfailingly helpful and good-humoured.

Sir John Tusa, outgoing CEO of the Barbican, and a critic of ACE in his time, pointed out in a January Any Questions on Radio 4 that decisions were taken in private consultation with peer arts organisations who would not publicly have dared to criticize their colleagues. I take his point, but some of those cut off - the London Mozart Players who've just released yet more successful CDs, or the City of London Sinfonia (who record with the same label, Chandos) - seem odd candidates. One recalls the farcical attempt to streamline London's orchestras in the 1980s. This round, however, strikes at those specialized chamber orchestras who often brave new or revived repertoire.

For the literary world there remains the translation house Dedalus, and more visibly that small twined swathe of senior literary magazines. These were scythed, seemingly in favour of one or two edited by younger people. That's the legend. It also echoes the 'shake-up' that some at ACE have characterized this round as addressing. Occasionally a magazine exudes a mild odour of complacency, and its editor does too.

But there's the counter charge of change for its own sake. I can imagine spiky personalities played some part in this ('what's a damned monitoring form?'), but the sheer level of A-list casualties is alarming. Youngish editors with months of activity before them, and



who've never known anything but the strange consensus of the past thirty years – the exile of modernists, the marginalised old left – can often seem sexy but in a sense even more conservative. Not so much *épater les bourgeois*, but *épater les artistes*. Attitude now can mean annoying other writers, though often not the ones who matter politically, or might matter; and accepting the artistic and wider world much as it is. That's a fatal cocktail if repeated. We can amuse ourselves to death.

By the same token I can see where some established magazines – including several not receiving ACE funding – have hardened a little at the edges themselves. And some of the newer magazines exist because some genuine innovations aren't taken on board, so the bright assistant editor marches off to found their own magazine.

And I can equally see what Sir John means in some instances. Certain organisations lose key staff or CEOs and their whole complexion changes. Others simply don't get part of the arts dialogue, let alone the ACE one. Usually worrying noises are made in the Annual Review meeting, undertaken by officers who themselves don't know who'll be in or out, but know when organisations are definitely trekking from what they can see as progress. Having been through that one I know what they mean. The lamented Gary Mckeone, lately Literature Officer of ACE England, in fact came to talk to us personally. He was at a disadvantage of one remove from the decision-making process – but he made the effort.

I've been contacted by a number of organisations recently, who in some instances might have looked sadly at us in the past. This whole process is like a wrong-way telescope swung back on the viewer, and such a reversal requires sea legs. So now it's my turn to commiserate and offer what suggestions and experience we as an organisation have garnered in the past three years. Largely this consists of responding to requests to help restore specifically ACE funding. I was sometimes told that a perfectly viable fund-raising strategy already existed. Fine; but I still maintain my luck was in finding John Ellerman's, for instance, who in three weeks turned round a yes and tripled the amount originally asked for. This impacted on an already positive bid with Lloyds TSB. I merely repeat our experience and commend it to others.

In the short (and very long) term there has to be other funding and we all have to look to foundations and in some instances government-funded initiatives. Most importantly, there's ACE's own Grants for the Arts which everyone can still apply for. There's no easy way back to the ACE table except in talking: not just to the officers in charge, but in those whose departments concern you. I've long maintained that ACE need to initiate a warning dialogue, and in our case, in all fairness, they did. We didn't much like it at the time, of course. But to anyone out there who might be reading this in the light of disinvestment: keep talking, as the old BT ET ad has it. If you've had your funding cut, then don't mourn for more than a month publicly. Protest vigorously, publicly, but cogently with a sell-by date in mind. In private, keep requesting meetings and challenge ACE to make the first scratch on the return map. They gave us a route-map back.

How I cured myself of Negative Hearing Voices

I first started hearing voices when I was 23. At least that was when I started hearing negative voices, as I have vague memories of being lonely as a child of 5 years of age, and of sitting outside and talking to a positive and friendly female voice in the sky who responded to me. If I thought hard, I could hear a positive female voice, and to me this was like a trick I could achieve with my mind. I didn't think that the voice was God/Goddess or any supernatural force.

The voices I first heard when I was 23, were brought about and triggered by abuse, harassment, and stress, and after I had been using cannabis quite heavily, and I heard negative voices, one of which was a junior school teacher who used to pull my hair and shout at me for no reason. I took Stelazine for the hearing voices, but it didn't do much to alleviate them. When I told my social worker that I was hearing voices, she said that I was lying. Then when I did convince her that I heard voices, she said that I was psychotic, and she told me to go onto a very high dosage of Stelazine, and which I did for a few years.

There were no hearing voices groups available at that time, although if there had of been they would have been a great help to me. Some years later, I wrote my voices down to analyse the content and structure of them. One negative voice was of another child at secondary school who used to bully me. Previous to experiencing this I'd had counselling, and the negative voice existed alongside two positive voices, and which were of the counsellors standing up for me and defending me against the child who bullied me.

After writing the voices down, I was able to separate the negative from the positive voices in my mind, and after this I only heard positive voices. I'm not sure exactly how this process worked for me, but it did work. I achieved it mostly by ignoring the negative voices, and talking with the positive ones and developing good loving and respectful relationships with them. Maybe this was my way of achieving good self esteem, or of establishing good relationships with the opposite sex, and which didn't exist in my social life in terms of having love-relationships.

Now I only hear positive voices, and which are always one, two, or three female voices. The voices don't have names and wish to remain anonymous to me in that respect, but they are very intimate and friendly with me. One female voice is quite assertive, although not domineering, but a bit questioning and sceptical, and another female voice is softer and more receptive and reassuring, but they all make suggestions and ask questions. The voices speak both separately, and in unison at the same time.

What is interesting to me, is that the positive voices are intelligent, but not intellectual voices, although they are more down to earth and pragmatic, and they ask me more practical questions in terms of my thoughts, writings, and articles. Maybe this is a side of me which is unconscious, or which I have suppressed with my more lateral and intellectual thinking.

I received a year of psychotherapy from two different female counsellors, and their voices became internalised and which I heard as positive voices too. This is why I am convinced that positive therapeutic relationships, with professionals or non-professionals such as family, friends, or lovers, are essential to changing voices from negative into positive. Good friendships and relationships are essential to some kind of recovery.

For a few years, I actually stopped hearing voices altogether. This was not a good thing for me though, as my voices care for me and help me to think about things more practically and clearly. Without positive voices I would be devastated. So I had to focus my mind, in order to re-create the voices. I still don't know exactly how I did this, other than setting up a dialogue in my mind, and talking to my own thoughts, and then imagining hearing them (like thinking of a tune or music), and then I could hear them with my ears, and they became somewhat independent of my conscious thoughts. Thus, I combined my thoughts and integrated them with my imagination and senses.

I would like to know more about how the mind creates hearing voices, and more importantly teach others how to hear positive voices, because I believe that hearing positive voices is a gift, and that it is hugely beneficial to having good thinking and good mental health.

'The Zig Zag Woman' by Maggie Sawkins

In the introduction to her first full collection, Maggie Sawkins invokes Philip Larkin's 'coastal shelf' when she talks about 'the difficulty of breaking away from the weight of the past'. Larkin's poems, often too narrowly read as merely pessimistic and gloomy, are shot through with veins of hope and optimism that confirm his humanity. So in Sawkins' poetry, where the 'weight' is leavened by inspired moments of wit and the surreal.

The 'darkness' in Sawkins' poems, as she puts it, is drawn principally from problematic relationships with her parents, and a daughter who was diagnosed with a serious mental illness in 2001. In dealing with much of this material, the poet frequently takes the stance of an acutely observant child who finds herself on the front line of a combative adult world that she may not fully understand, but that she is determined to report to us without artifice. In straightforward language that is rarely unpoetic, she handles deftly the juxtaposition of benign details with the sudden shock of pain and suffering. Taking celery soup to her mother, she finds that the 'steam warms her face but she doesn't smile / because every Friday they burn her skin / and they've taken her breast away.'

As for her father, she wishes 'the gravy / on your shirt wasn't there.' But the poet deals with these everyday disappointments by fashioning a marvellously surreal world out of the relentlessly ordinary one that surrounds her. This is a child (albeit one with very adult sensibilities), who is making up stories for herself in order to make the world safe again. In this light, she reimagines the family home:

And we'll start again
and the roof will fly
from the top of the house
and our laughter will fill the sky

will lighten our blood
will lighten our bones
will carry us up to a nest made of
stars.

Here is a poet whose language is like a multi-coloured kite: she knows how to let it fly and swoop, but she never lets go of the strings. Sawkins doesn't let the words out of her sight because she knows only too well that to become too flowery or elaborate would be to do a disservice to the events that have shaped her life. When she revisits the hospital inhabited by her father's ghost, we 'meet instead this tall young man / in a blue satin dress / who doesn't notice my heart / as it stalls.'

It is an occupational hazard for any poet to disappear under the weight of their emotions. But we are frequently reassured to find Sawkins armed with a killer sense of humour. In 'After Dostoevsky', she seamlessly transfers the murky world of the Russian novelist's 'Crime and Punishment' to a contemporary setting:

Only the pawnbroker's boxer dog
sits up and growls as she swishes
past
in her surplus store raincoat. An
axe
tucked neatly under her arm.

Sawkins has her own metaphorical axe tucked under her arm. In 'Red Geranium on an Isolation Ward', she relates her mother's death in tender terms, but with a barely concealed anger – both at her mother and death itself for taking her away: 'even the sun pushing / its fist through the window / could not coax her.'

But there is far more to this volume than family trauma. Sawkins turns her hand to fairy tale to swat a certain type of man, and in 'Under a Stone' a microcosm of the natural world becomes the vehicle for a shift in emotions; what she calls in the introduction her 'coming through' – a leaf trapped for a lifetime under 'the cold slab weight' of a stone that 'one skipping day / a child will come / and kick away'. Sawkins kicks away her own dead weights in a final section that fizzles with witty and inventive poems, brought home by skilful use of extended metaphor. There is a touching memorial for a friend, and a superb finale in 'The Zoo Keeper's Song' where the subject admires the giraffes under his care and voices his desire to come back as the leaves, 'to be devoured / by those magnificent tongues.'

John Mackay



"Help us, Somebody"
The Demolition of the Elderly

Bob Dumbleton

The London Press, UK 2006
<http://www.thelondonpress.co.uk/>
Social comment
Price: £5.95 Pages: 180
ISBN: 1-905006-14-4

One of those points in time of convergence found me listening to the Rt Rev. James Jones on Radio 4's 'Thought for the Day', just a short while after re-reading Bob Dumbleton's important living document and collective indictment on contemporary 'urban regeneration', social reform and social housing. Demolition of 1940's pre-

fabricated housing is and has been occurring across the UK within the 'urban renaissance' of town and cityscapes. The various factory constructed and assembled on-site houses were erected largely as the response of the incoming Labour Government to a housing crisis at the end of the Second World War, with well over 150 000 being built, and an expectancy of short-term usage only. Many communities exist today contentedly living in these original pre-fabricated buildings. Writing on the general tenet of replacing 'obsolete' or 'unhealthy' housing Bob Dumbleton acknowledges that in almost every respect it's a progressive move, but "for others it is an upheaval too far. These are not easy deaths. Fear is a cause. Drawn out anxiety aggravates the diseases of age. And people get very tired as the process takes several years", (Introduction p 1). This publication addresses another socio-economic taboo – regeneration can be bad for your health. And foregrounds the 'd' word – resultant death.

The testimonies, and therefore evidence, presented in "Help us, Somebody" informs of the ironic 'use of state power to make unequal people more unequal – as in ill, and dead', (p 151). The author, collating alternate evidence and experiences of people primarily in Newport (Gwent), and Bristol since the late 1990's, presents a systemic picture of institutional abuse (my term) toward people, particularly elderly people, placed in horrendous dilemmas concerning the roofs over their heads, where corporations' choices become non-choices.

Bob Dumbleton, as volunteer housing activist from the 1960's, socialist, radical and retired academic from Cardiff University, advisor to the Welsh Tenants Association, has extensive, deep-seated connections with and of real people in real life, converse to the sense of webs of disconnection spun by local authorities' implementation of state housing plans.

To find a publisher for this book, however, was another task in itself, the rejection slips accruing as the text was viewed as 'falling between two stools' - neither stridently political, nor polemic, or being an academic thesis. I think these rejections - although unwelcome of course - show that the book's careful stewardship of contributors' words and lives has not been compromised. The personal and political are there, the analysis is there. The perspectives of coming to terms with an undaunted complex system imposing its own pressures on its staff to deliver up the regeneration projects, the local people's responses and resignation, and the lessons not learnt from recent history provides a documentary good faith. As does the author's own chronicling of opposition or despair directed at him from tenants at times, for being a seemingly powerless advocate.

"Time's moving on"

Memories

Can I wrap them in soft tissue so they don't break

Can I box them up

Can I take them all with me.

Will I still remember

When I don't hear my creaking floorboard

Nor my gate, which gently creaks

Or my dripping tap that helps me sleep

They will be gone

Today, I will move.*

The unacknowledged causes of death from regeneration and demolition, and widening associations of people enduring 'the unreasonableness of modern encounters' gave me the means to link the theological argument of James Jones to radical politics. God, shown by his reference to saiah, requests a relationship with mankind based on reason and debate, as "to be given space to explain yourself and to be understood is the oxygen of life". The right to articulate a defence against being suffocated from systemic

pressures enforced by officials, capital-based personal and company interest, formalistic law and complex technological mapping inhibiting human contact becomes all the more vital. When rights are ignored or are just not there - whether the right to stay put, or for personal health and well-being considerations to be put foremost, for example, un-reasonableness can enter.

There is a stark message that regeneration can kill; can cause illness. And the extent of this, now, and over past generations is difficult to say, because governments and researchers have done little work in this area. The debate - according to the canonical or 'established' authorities in statutory power and academies - is largely uninformed. But uninformed by whom? Where have the funds been directed to find out? Where are the funds, and the will to find out? Who have they listened to, read about, visited, 'followed up'? There is a body of evidence there already, in papers, articles, and in the mass of projects and communities, but alternate evidence means a need for its appraisal, and a consequential change in regeneration cultures. A step too far perhaps for the Government, local authorities and developers to consider? Similar situations arise in the re-settlement of, for example, people from psychiatric institutions into supposed community care - probably in contemporary times and in as recent times as the 1990's. Few of the lives lost and the causes were fully recognised and the documentary evidence largely un-collated.

I think of the London News programme on TV last week, the campaign by worried residents in London Borough of Lewisham to protect their rights to maintain their lives in the pre-fabricated buildings erected during and after the Second World War. Quickly becoming aware of more examples of similar 'clearances', Bob Dumbleton's book is timely, and necessary. And, to echo a phrase from this evening's BBC TV Newsnight debate,

'authenticity is everything':

'.....Time's running on now not long to go
I've tried to cope
But I know when the door knocker hits the
metal door
This will not be my home anymore'.*

**Extracts of poetry borrowed from a poem by Jacqui Handley, Newport, as printed on page 179.*

Review ©Philip Ruthen 2007

Declaration of interest: Philip Ruthen was a student and tutored at UWIST, Cardiff, 1983-1987 by Bob Dumbleton, and paternal grandparents lived in a prefabricated house, now demolished, in Hull.

This review published 09 January 2008 by 'The Recusant' – <http://www.therecusant.org.uk/>

On-line non-conforming literature and politics journal; and reprinted 14/02/08 at www.poetsletter.com edited by Munayem Mayenin, by kind permission of Alan Morrison: thanks to both editors and publications on this April 2008 reproduction.

References:

Thought for the Day Date: Wednesday 12 December
Presenter: James Jones Subject: To be given space to explain yourself and to be understood is the oxygen of life.

Canvassing prefabs in Lewisham Sunday, August 26, 2007

Posted by The Brunswick Blog at 6:55 PM Paul Elgood
Liberal Democrat Councillor for Brunswick & Adelaide ward of Brighton & Hove City Council and former Parliamentary Candidate for Hove & Portslade in the 2005 General Election.

How we built Britain – Modern south: Dreams of Tomorrow
Ep6/6 Sunday 15 July 9.00-10.00pm, BBC One

Residents Calling For Prefabs To Be Saved (from News Shopper) Lewisham
Online Edition News Shopper
<http://www.newsshopper.co.uk/> by Samantha Payne
2007



SURVIVORS' POETRY ETC., 24 JANUARY
2008, MAGGIE'S BAR N16

Poetry impresaria (sic) Xochitl (pron. Zoh-shul) Tuck has been curating Survivors' Poetry, a showcase for "new and nervous" poets and singers, at the Poetry Cafe, Covent Garden, for some eleven years, and many of the performers she has nurtured over the past decade-and-a-bit are now seasoned veterans. On Thursday 24th January she promoted her first-ever show in N16, the queen of postal districts, at Maggie's Bar (formerly Stage B), Church Street. It was really a rather magical night out. As a venue Maggie's is a good choice - it allows the audience to move around, buy drinks etc. without causing the disruption and noises off that can wreck a live performance in a small venue. Maggie's is developing a reputation as the place in Stokey for new and local artistes and is well worth a visit most nights of the week.

The evening had a very able compere in Razz, who moves proceedings along nicely, switching deftly between standup and performance poetry. The show operates on a sort of rota basis, with no top-of-the-bill as such, but the centrepiece of the evening was Sylvia Rox's set. Most of her songs were written by Victor Jara and Violeta Parra, figureheads of Chile's nueva cancion movement that was ruthlessly shattered by the murderous Pinochet regime in 1973. She has real mastery of her material, gets inside the heart and soul of the lyrics, and shows that popular song can be a weapon of empowerment as opposed to bland background music. Sylvia closed the first half and played several reprises later in the evening, accompanied by the excellent Flaquito on accordion.

The quality of the floor spots was universally high. Singer/keyboardist Elizabeth Anstey's claims of nerves and stage-fright were neither coyness nor a plea for the sympathy vote - this really was her concert debut - a Maggie's world exclusive! Her set was short but well-rehearsed and there is a quiet strength about both her and her material that suggests we shall be hearing more of her soon.

The stage lighting had the unintended but slightly disconcerting effect of making Scots-born, East London-based poet Stephen Watts look as though he was wearing a halo. He read his marvellous long poem *My Grandfather Worked in Pizza Express*, which digs down through the many layers of Soho, with a passionate intensity which was entirely appropriate to this narrative of family history, change, loss and "regeneration" (as in the euphemism for demolition).

Another fully-qualified survivor is Dave Russell, who performs mostly self-penned songs with the odd cover such as *Manuel*, which hints at forbidden love between a woman and her servant. His punchy, percussive guitar playing is well suited to his often polemical, hard-hitting lyrics. He closed with a Survivors' "family favourite" - *Burglars of Britain*.

I feared the worst when Jeff Wass took the stage with some unique musical instruments which he described as being made from objects found in skips, but the sounds he conjured from wooden poles, copper wires and what looked like plywood coal scuttles were nothing short of extraordinary. In the best possible way it was quite unlike anything I have heard in the last twelve months or more. You simply had to be there.

N4's gentle giant of the traditional fiddle

Nick Warner (half of the Crouch Hillbillies) made a brief but welcome appearance, demonstrating with his fluent switching of styles that Appalachian music has deep roots in English country dance.

My apologies to anybody I missed due to bar downtime etc. In view of the success of tonight's show Survivors at Maggie's has become a regular event. The next one is planned for Thursday 27th March, and it is not too early to put Thursday 24 April in your diary, though the clocks do not go forward for another couple of weeks. Survivors will, of course, be keeping its slot at the Poetry Cafe on the second Thursday of each month. Enter with an open mind, leave with a head full of new ideas, sounds and emotions. It certainly had that effect on me.

Chris Douglas

see **Events** on pg 39



if you wish to

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Wakefield Writers by Roy S. Holland

**Wakefield Writers, 3 vols., May 2006,
January 2007 and November 2007**

Wakefield Writers have produced three collections of poetry by their members, several of whom, to judge by the content, could be described as survivors. Andrea Chell, their organiser and fund-raiser used to be secretary of the Leeds Survivors' Poetry Group.

There are some interesting illustrations, but it is quite difficult to read the poems which have been printed over illustrations, if your eyesight is not too good.

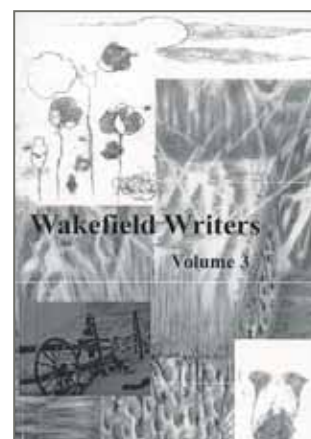
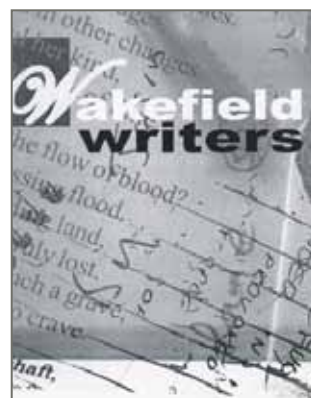
Leafing through the second volume, I find poems with mental health content by Paul Gough, 'Behind the Mask' and 'Psychosis', alternating with urban and nature poems such as T. Grayson's 'Another God' and Samantha Whitworth's 'Hear the Thunder Roar', neither of which however is in the least pastoral. Jason Hiscock's 'Summer Girl' is a love poem, while on the opposite page Paul Gough concludes 'Let's ditch the Social Security pill'.

Andrea Chell's 'Treachery' progresses from 'Murder' to 'Love' by way of 'Scream', 'Boredom' and 'Sunshine'. It will appeal to all sufferers from SAD. 'Crista', also by Andrea, describes the protagonist as 'a very old thirteen years of age. Her eyes stare resilient determination.', ending 'Deafening fire her waking dream/ Her hopes are to live'.

In the third volume, Adam Bailey's 'Haiku: Subject - Catastrophising & Clean Slate' has a poignant ending, 'The pit at age twelve/ Nursing home at eighty four,/ Broken back, still poor.' A picture of a Japanese pagoda suggests the form rather than the content.. Francis John Duncan's 'Whitby

Ways' gives a strong impression of the town, rather spoilt by the archaic line 'But still to Eskdale I will wend'. Vicky Laver's 'ABC of me' is extremely sad, ending 'Z is for Zest ... of which there is nothing left.'

The three Wakefield issues will sustain your interest in a variety of moods, and we should be supporting small survivors presses, so do order copies please.



One in Four



One in Four refers to the fact that one in four of the population - people from all walks of life - experiences some form of mental distress at any time. The number of those in Britain currently experiencing mental health difficulties has replaced unemployment as being of greatest concern to the country's health and well-being. A beautiful publication of stories, poetry and painting depicting experiences of mental distress available from Survivors' Poetry online shop.

Available for £2.00 p&p until stocks last

Editor: Jane Thompson, Principal Research Office NIACE

Design: Oliver Newberry

Advisory Grp: Roy Birch, SP; Kathryn James, NIACE; Jay Mullard, Totton College.



Joe Bidder DrummerBoy

The drummer boy comes once more,
prances downstreet into my life.
Captive to his magic rhythm
I dismiss caution, grab some sticks
to beat in slavish syncopation.

The drummer boy subverts
sycophantic fellow travelers,
slyly advances the downbeat,
increases tempo, demands obedience.
And like a vassal, I follow.

The drummer boy runs amok,
clashes cymbals and high-hats,
pounds tom-tom and timpani
until life is a screaming wall.
And like a vassal, I follow.

The drummer boy has left town,
torn down the symbols of time,
leaving chaos and creation
in bizarre symbiosis.
Gone the delicious frenzy
gone the ecstatic high.

The road is strewn with ticker-tape and tinsel
evidence that someone had a good time.

Now I stare at drumsticks and snares,
trapped in lazy cross-rhythms.
I remember the drummer boy,
the excitement of dancing on the altar,
frightened of his return
When like a vassal, I will follow.

Will Saxton Fast Enough

This picture speaks of the struggle to exist on a manic depressive spectrum and my belief that directing our self-destructive energies into art is the best medicine.



Date	Place	Featuring
10th April 2008	The Poetry Cafe	Alastair Murray - <i>Singer</i>
24th April 2008	Maggie's Bar	Ken Hughes - <i>Singer</i>
8th May 2008	The Poetry Cafe	Michael Horovitz - Poet
22nd May 2008	Maggie's Bar	Kath Tait - <i>Poet Singer</i> incl. Hayden - <i>Poet</i>
5th June 2008	The Poetry Cafe	MENTORING LAUNCH & A tribute to Keving Coyne - <i>various</i>
26th June 2008	Maggie's Bar	Viv Youell - Singer & Peter Brown - Poet Singer
10th July 2008	The Poetry Cafe	Two Scottish Poets: Peter Campbell & Stephen Watts
24th July 2008	Maggie's Bar	Sylvia Rox & Eduardo - <i>Poet & Singer</i>

Open Mic is a wonderful opportunity for new and more experienced poets 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. We do not have a finish time for the event and this very much depends on 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.

We are a Nationwide Literature and Performance Organisation dedicated to promoting poetry by Survivors of Mental Distress through workshops, performance, readings and publications.

For further information contact or updates visit:

<http://www.survivorspoetry.com/pages/home/event-calendar.php>

or email:

info@survivorspoetry.org.uk or
xochitl@survivorspoetry.org.uk

Maggie's Bar
 98-100 Church St.
 Stoke Newington
 LONDON N16 0AP
 tel: 077321 77553

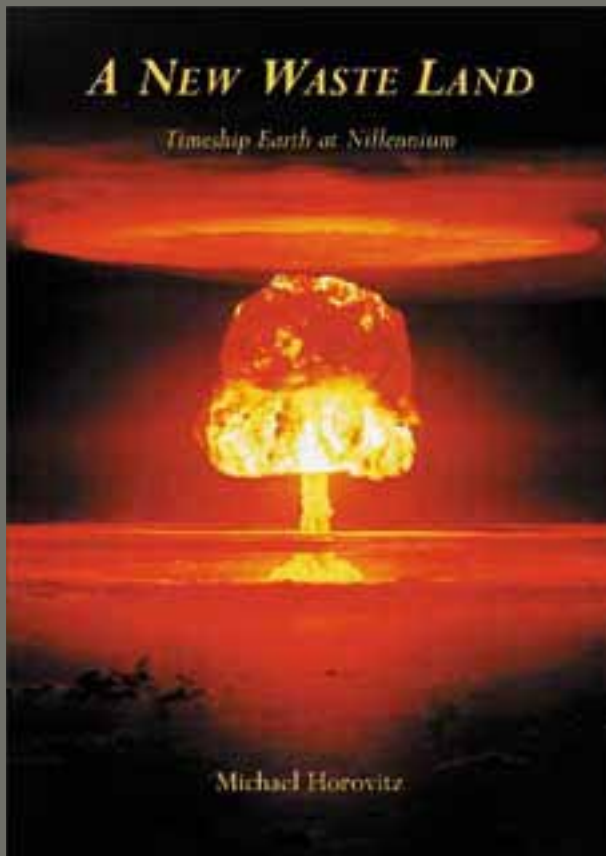
The Poetry Cafe
 22 Betterton Street
 London WC2H 9BX
 tel +44 (0)20 7420 9880
 fax +44 (0)20 7240 4818
<http://www.poetrysociety.org.uk>

• £1.50 floorspots, £2.50 conc., £3.50 audience •

F E E D B A C K

Survivors' Poetry always welcomes feedback or reviews about our work. We are particularly interested to receive reviews about our mentoring pamphlets; please either write to our office or email: info@survivorspoetry.org.uk

Michael Horovitz at The Poetry Cafe on 12th May, 2008



Michael was disappointed that the hopes raised in 1997 by New Labour were so quickly dashed, and even those who never expected much find it hard to believe that it went as badly wrong as it has. His style is brilliant, using historical quotations, pictures, cartoons and poetry laid out in a way that elevates it to the level of art. This year marks the 250th birthday of William Blake, and Blake would be proud to read such a clear re-statement of his principles which will have a permanent place in the libraries of the world, and in the minds of those who read it. – Tony Benn, Time Out

This lavish bran-tub of political deconstructions, cultural restorations and visual delights presents the fruit of ten years' gestation by Michael Horovitz. Its publication marks 85 years since T S Eliot first published *The Waste Land* in 1922. The first 240 pages of *A New Waste Land* adapt Eliot's poem as a template from which to scrutinise the planet at the turn of the 20th-to-21st Centuries. The second half is made up of detailed analytic notes and polemics which challenge, amid much else, the duplicitous arms and war promotions of Bill Clinton, Tony Blair and G W Bush (www.poetryolympics.com)



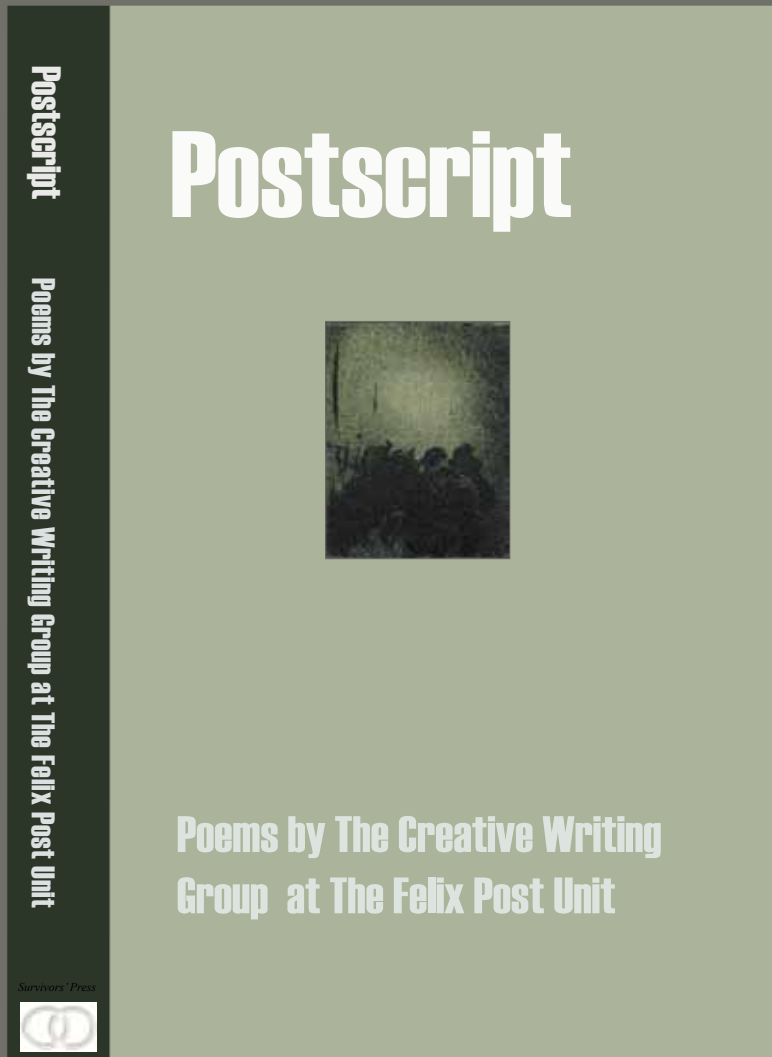
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Coming Soon from Survivors' Press...



Cover image by Mich Maroney, Edited by Roy Birch

My Memory

Your discussion was always about
Insight.

What I wanted to talk about
Was what I had created.

Flowers from the flower shop
And the feeling of rain.

by Alice Haycock

The poetry group at the Felix Post Unit began as a means of trying to address a more holistic approach to mental health. We, as nurses, instinctively knew the value of creativity, and the value of writing creatively, but were uncertain how to put this into practice.

The group evolved from reading poems to writing poems. Our members had very strong ideas of what a poet was, and felt that whatever it was, it wasn't them. However, this changed as confidence grew within the group, and members began to see their poetry written and read out.

This volume is the result of a collaboration between the Felix Post Unit and Mental Health Literature Charity Survivors Poetry, and came into existence as the result of an initiative created by Nik Maroney of Felix Post and Roy Birch, National Outreach Coordinator of Survivors Poetry. Pictures by Mich Maroney – Mich is a painter and print maker living and working in London. Poetry and music have always been an influence on her work.