

Poetry Express

Newsletter # 44



Featured Artwork by Members of the bohemi Project in Thanet



LOTTERY FUNDED



*promoting poetry by survivors
of mental distress*

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

Live Events

Monthly performances at the Poetry Cafe and Tottenham Chances continue to flourish. The December 12th Founders Day at the Poetry Cafe featured **Joe Bidder**, **Hilary Porter** and **Frank Bangay** – **Peter Campbell** unfortunately was unable to attend. A visiting Arts Council representative gave it a highly favourable Artistic Assessment (as had another Assessment Panel given to PEN #43). January 9th at the Poetry Cafe, went off with a swing, **Kath Tait** being the main act.

A high spot for the New Year was the Holocaust Memorial at Tottenham Chances, a collaborative event organised by Survivors Poetry and Mad Pride, the first half emceed'd by **Razz**, the second by **Jason Why**. This was an event of astonishing vitality and variety.

Lucy Lyrical and **Maggie Swampwino** with ukulele and bazouki, did a spirited satirical set – including inspired new lyrics to the oldie *I Know Something About Love*. Some anti-monarchy sentiments in their last number.

Jessica Lawrence prefaced her reading by a rendition of the *Shemah* – the quintessential Jewish prayer – thousands of years old, whose first sentence when translated reads “Hear O Israel, The Lord your God, The Lord is One” She read *Blood, The Dancer who Shot Schillinger, Margalit, The Man He Carried. Gradowski* and *Emanuel Ringelblum* (texts on p10). These were all accompanied by the backing track of *Kaddish*, a violin solo by Ravel. *Kaddish* is the Jewish prayer recited at funerals and over the dead, and often when visiting Auschwitz for example as there are so many who died with no one to say Kaddish for them. The track was played twice throughout the set, accompanying all the poems, it has a resonant poignant melody. Here is a link to the recording:

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dhgdh_o53a0

Kathy Toy performed with intensity and imagination. Mainly her own compositions, but her version of Aaron Zeitlin's *Dona Dona* brought a dormant song back to life for me. Yes: I was around when Joan Baez's first album was released. It is an allegory of the Holocaust, written in 1941. Her other covers were *Cruel Fred* by The Tiger Lilies, and Lieber and Stoller's *Is That all there is?* (Kathy's lyrics on p15)

Some great floorspots too, including some inspired jazz balladry from **Carol**, with **Keith Grey** on piano. They opened with a superb rendition of *Don't Explain*, one of Billie Holiday's high spots – new to me; I was most enlightened. A Welcome spot from **Abiba**.

First-rate collaboration between Mad Pride and Survivors Poetry. May there be many more events like this.

Dave Russell

Rocking it at Tottenham Chances

(First hand from a main spot) 05/23/2013

Hello Good people!

I just came back from my **Survivors' Poetry** gig hosted by the most wonderful **Razz** the performance poet/emcee at **Tottenham Chances** and had such a great time. I love playing at the Tottenham venue. I got there with such bad stage nerves, but after a little while, the atmosphere and the people just made me feel totally at ease – like you could go on stage and do anything, as long as it wasn't boring – and you were being yourself.

In the other room there were three punk bands, whom we could hear fairly loudly in the background: they looked stupendous – hard core punks! One band was from Germany and I think possibly **Wasted Youth** were playing. Anyway, in the main bar we were having our poetry and eclectic music, including a couple of South American bands and a great outfit called **Iron Meat** who reminded me of the early jazz stuff from Gong (although **Iron Meat** are not psychedelic at all) and Stonehenge festival bands of the 80s.

Anyway, my stage nerves disappeared in the general mayhem (we also had a dog bouncing about the place – including on stage) and the wonderful crazy people in the audience. But we could hear loud punk screaming in the background a lot of the time. I had prepared one of my quiet and sensitive music sets, but the atmosphere was different with the imminent full moon and this general feeling that anything was possible, and perhaps the spirit of the recently departed **Xochitl Tuck** was in me: she always encouraged everyone at **Survivors'** to just go for it, so I decided when I went on stage to do not my quiet sensitive stuff, but rather my loud songs with definite rock and punk influences, I just rocked it on the guitar and in my singing and just obliterated the punk screaming in the background by being louder.

Oh My God (sorry that is a trite thing to say but anyway . . .) OMG!!! – I had such a great time and it was so easy I just let the adrenaline in my system pour out through my hands and throat and rocked it.

Afterwards **Madeleine**, another **Survivors' singer-songwriter**, who always says lovely things to me, commented “**Don't take this the wrong way but . . . you play the guitar like a man, but you sing like a woman**”. No I didn't mind: I was trying to play the guitar like **Jimmy Page** after all, I wasn't trying to sing like anyone else although I guess **Maggie Bell** from **Stone The Crows** has been a big influence on me.

Anyway I am now really looking forwards to my next two gigs (June 3rd and June 6th – See concerts or my previous post) where I will do a mix of acoustic guitar songs and semi-improvised electronic material where the other acts will all be fantabulous and innovative both in Stoke Newington. Let me know if you want to be on my emailing list, your emails will not be passed onto other people or companies.

Wishing you all love and peace and music in a crazy world – Veronique Walsh

Palaces and Revolutions

It was certainly a surprise to be invited up to Buckingham Palace for a Celebration of Contemporary British Poetry on 19th November, and just as certainly I wasn't given a vast advance of time. I discovered a little later ACE had been involved. That was kind – something of a 'golden handshake' – I thought with a wry smile. And we were not the first: Victoria Field and Joe Bidder celebrated her succession as Director (from Joe himself) in 1997, as she herself has just eloquently summarised: "Someone sent me a link to the photos (1000 plus) taken of people being presented at Buckingham Palace – and I was thrilled to see you there, Simon. It felt like Survivors Poetry was on the map. Back in the days when I was appointed to SP, Joe Bidder had been invited to Windsor Castle to a reception to celebrate the arts and I accompanied him – in the week before I took up the post – so it feels a bit like full circle."

The first people I did meet were **SP Patron Debjani Chatterjee** who gave me a hug and then my friend **Patricia McCarthy** who'd just won the National Poetry Competition a few months back. We had been processed through the various gates with the green card. At the last of these a new one had been prepared for me and my old one ritually torn up. I explained that **Anna** the Master of Household had changed it. I pinned on the plastic holder with my name correctly slotted on to it. Such is the progress of bidden guests.

Patricia told me of an awful sexist man as she termed him writing to her re a dizzy ash blonde in a major Poetry Festival, and copying in me. 'I'm not a strident feminist but that's so sexist a term – 'He's not quite as bad as that; my friend Kay who disapproves of most men, liked him.' Handing in my coat scarf etc. including phone, I was given ticket 422 my sometime bus route, and cheerfully asked Patricia if she'd do me a *real* sexist favour and be Lady of the Flies. She laughed and I explained my flies might explode. She agreed, ensuring that domain was presentable for several minutes on a watching brief.

First a milling point of paintings, a **Poussin** – I thought initially a Ricci – one of storm, a horde of minor domestic Dutch genre pieces, nestled with a Caravaggio boy, a Rubens self-portrait I knew, and a splatter of **Claude Lorraines** looking the most modern in that chamber, where beyond in some vast state room a door's half-opening gave on to a monumental **Van Dyck Charles I**. We drank two flutes and were told we couldn't take the latter drinks with us – so we shot them down quickly, with cashew nuts.

The palatial rooms dazzling with Ionian white and gold one might say are remarkable for their height and ornate bleak splendour, warmed with the accoutrements of artefacts – vases etc. which last time in 1980 I darted past and almost knocked over. So many paintings crowded walls in the old fashioned manner that even **Kenneth Clark** when Keeper of the King's Pictures hadn't been wholly able to dislodge them, partly because there are so many. I think Anthony Blunt must have placed the Poussin in such an eye-catching position.

We filed in and it was clear we'd be presented like a line of Debutantes into a further chamber, where the Queen waited on our left, and to her left the Duke. We were presented one by one as our cards were called in. We saw **Jeremy Reed** just ahead astonishingly still wearing his beret. I'd been prepared to lay all even bets with other poets. Then Patricia went before me and

explained before being spoken to that her bandaged right wrist made it difficult for her to shake hands, and did so at a length that became faintly alarming. The Queen's expression also changed to the faintest alarm and the attendant next to the Queen positioned behind announced my own name twice, so I thrust myself an inch and a half forward so the Queen was able to see she could transfer to me swiftly. It was all the matter of seconds, Patricia moved on and I inclined, said quietly 'Your Majesty' and moved on with the faint handshake the Queen used so as not to exhaust herself. At 87 she looks astonishing. I was duly surprised she looked quite as well as she did on those occasions one sees her in the news. She was incidentally empurpled with one of the most interestingly detailed dresses I've seen her wear. **Pam Ayres** was behind me. *Wasn't the same dress?* No . . .

Beyond her the craggy Duke still crackled erect with energy. 'Survivors of *what?*' he barked cheerfully. 'Mental distress sir' I said without ceremony and smiled. 'You might prefer my cousin's beer you sampled recently at Harvey's and my history of 22 Squadron' I added quietly and he was still smiling – it might mean he won't avoid me in the later milling I thought, and I might then be able to tell him what we *were* about. I suspect his views could be advanced.

We were then progressed through to the ceremonial place itself. This resembled a vast chapel with much burgundy colouring in seating and furnishings. Patricia and I sat on the left towards the rear, and Jeremy who finally signalled recognition over on the right slightly behind. It was our only contact. He vanished soon thereafter. That came as little surprise, Jeremy perhaps loath to debase his coinage by ever appearing long in a place where he's not a king in exile, like Lawrence's Snake. And to write more: he has a good point.

The MC was **Ian Macmillan** who mute-trumpeted a fine job of introducing the musician whom we didn't hear, Andrew, then the five poets. First off was wispy **Dr Sinead Morrissey** who represented Northern Ireland. I couldn't make out much of her work this time, but know it's probably distinguished. Next came that canny absorber of homage **Gillian Clark**, now Wales Laureate (surprised she succeeded and didn't precede Gwyneth Lewis) with a poem about 1955, which I just made out.

These matted in comparison to **Liz Lochhead** who barked out a poem jokily of Scottish poets (Makars) and childhood, in Lallans and English, making all laugh. To cap that the South was the Lewesian as he riposted to the Queen asking his origins, Queen's Gold Medallist **John Agard** and a poem I saw him recite in March: *An Alternative Anthem* exalted tea in the dimming of empire which he required us all to refrain – I'm not sure if the Queen did. We did so amidst genuine laughter when we could. Agard pushed a few boundaries – one reason I've asked him to consider being a patron of SP which he's getting back to me on. It was like Lochhead a triumph of a fine comic turn over mild excellence.

Finally the Queen of this, **Carol Ann Duffy**, read out *The Crown* – which again I couldn't quite follow nor people near me, and which later on people commented on as the poem she had been obliged to write. I have to say the following as it's necessary to point out what many aver over the recitation of poetry. Duffy thus delivered in that famed monotone; and I mischievously recalled the time when several of us in 2010 at Chichester in the front row – creative writing tutors too – fell asleep in the hot June room as she recited some fine poems of hers, waking only for *Second Best Bed*.

It was over, and we filed out. The main state room was awash with attendants and I was again struck how friendly and obliging they were, none of the frozen gentility of the old days, somewhat formal but the women in particular were a delight. Patricia and I chatted a while and then were joined by **Debjani**. This meant we could all talk a while as Debjani was able to introduce me to a Newcastle based Indian poet and I proposed a filmed interview with them both with **Benji Pollard**. This and discussion of mentees was the most homing part of the evening.

I spoke to several people about mental distress, and was asked courteously by people like the Bloodaxe Archivist – and a range of others whose names I couldn't always see – what we were about. I had no time to seek people out, I seemed like a kind of exploding honey-trap for bees. Is that the same canapé, Mr Panther? Well why not? Debjani was never far away; we swapped emails and possible meetings for mentees past and present.

One **Andrew Frencham**, head of the Hardy Society chatted soon. We talked at length of **Martin Seymour-Smith** and his scandalous but not truly ill-judged Hardy Society talk of 1984. Martin's biography was by far the best but crippled by the absence of notes, which I undertook to add at some date – having worked on the original. I suggested Waterloo might republish, and he brightened up at that. I mentioned my own subject Lionel Johnson and Hardy. Two people who wrote about mental distress with excoriating accuracy were Hardy and, in a modern context, Martin himself, both carer for someone with tragic distress clouding her brilliance, and in many of his books where he moved to psychiatric abuse and writings on it. I determined to ask **Robert Nye** if we could ask his daughters to extract some of Martin's writings to use in SP at some time.

Debjani and Patricia bade farewell as I saw someone I knew just as the Queen who had her back for some of this, fledged by. Certainly I wasn't going to chase her and talk like **Kiri te Kanawa**: 'always live in the fast lane darling' as she exhorted other singers (who repeated this on Radio 3).

This lady I knew then asked me after a few reflections about nominating people for a practical reason: could I suggest names? Yes, and we discussed methodology, criteria, dates and protocols. It was perhaps the finest honour all evening, and my track record recommended me: I'd represented people impartially before and wasn't found wanting. We ended on that as they were processing out. I left, drained another full but cruelly abandoned orange juice there as well as having taken tiny canapés of duck, miniature pasties and other delights, passion fruit in chocolate several times and tiny brulées throughout the evening, about twenty, thumbnail seized. They got used to me: 'and my excuse is I've not eaten all day' I smiled. Useful, as easily eatable if the Queen etc. approaches.

I progressed out, collecting attire and into the night. At St James I heard people talking of the reading and as I looked one Nick smiled: 'you were there too, can you believe that happened?' and we swapped notes, about Carol Ann reading with my jokes on the vitality of Royals and flaccidity of poets. At Victoria I carefully directed them for KX, still buzzing so they'd almost missed the turning.

Simon Jenner

THE SURVIVOR



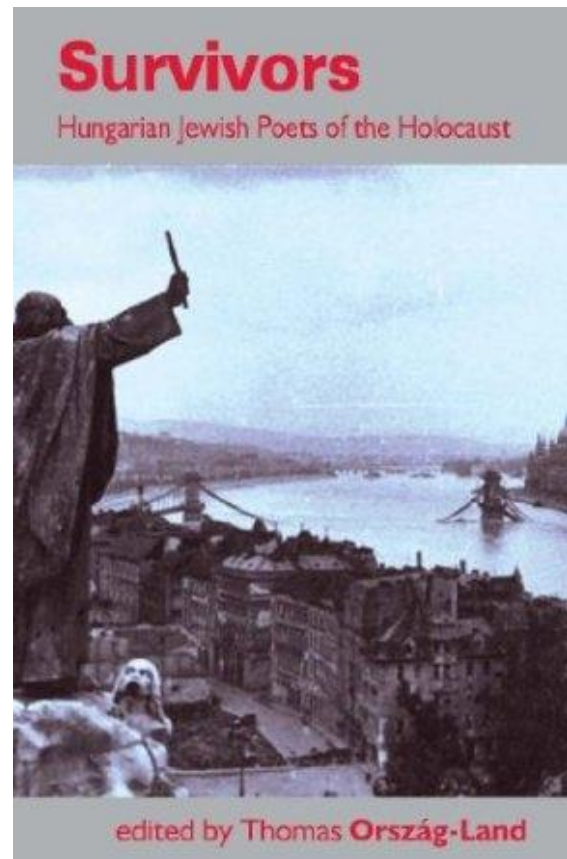
András Mezei
(1930-2008)

Holocaust Poetry of our Time

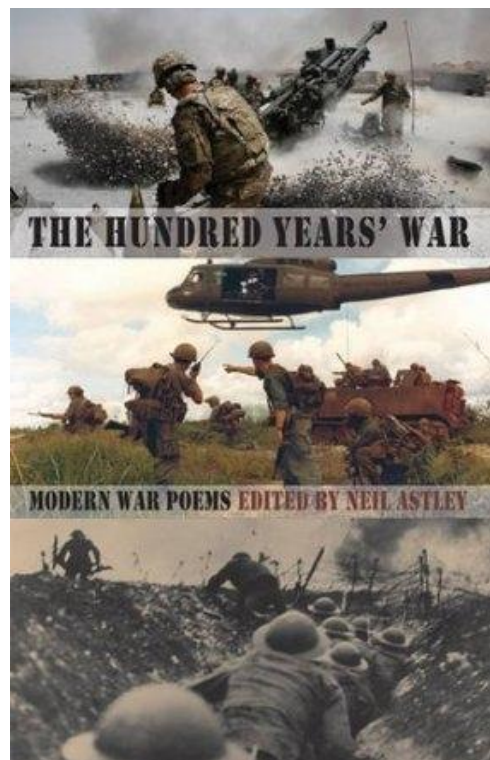
*Translated from the Hungarian
& Edited by Thomas Ország-Land*

This is the title piece of THE SURVIVORS, an anthology of Holocaust poetry for our time in Thomas Land's English translation, to be published by Smokestack Books in 2014.

THE POETRY of András Mezei (1930-2008) mourns the murder of some half a million Hungarian citizens committed by the Hungarian state in collaboration with Nazi Germany at the close of WW2. The following pieces will be included in *The Hundred Years War*, a landmark anthology to be published by Bloodaxe in April. More poetry by Mezei, a major Jewish-Hungarian writer, will follow in *Survivors*, a Holocaust anthology in Thomas Land's English translation, to be released by Smokestack in June.



<http://www.amazon.co.uk/Survivors-Hungarian-Jewish-Poets-Holocaust/dp/0992740924/>



<http://www.amazon.co.uk/exec/obidos/ASIN/1780371004/wwwbloodaxdem-21>

Hanged: A Sketch

He held a fiddle in his left,
a goose brought down, its long limp neck
hung black in death – and to this day
I sense its silenced vocal cords.

What he was not allowed to say
what we can never comprehend
is played out by a hoary bow
upon the slackened silver strings

drawn by the Angel of Good Death
in flight above the snowbound fields:
blue frost upon his grizzled beard
and bunkers and *Arbeit macht frei* . . .

And still that violin plays on.
Its melody will never cease.
I see a bald, a silver skull.
I bless my father's silver bones.

II

My Father: A Legend

That very death
that very corpse
defines the district
like a plumb-rule
in true suspended
perpendicular.

That measuring-cord
of all of life,
its snowbound plane
and stark protrusions,
projects all human
suffering through

a line across
eternity.

This line so straight –
like weighted down rope
or stretched out cord
or lifting smoke,
a yearning darkened
silver line
through which the body
may rise to reach
its incarnation.

And as a single
beam of light
remains to hold
the tilted head,
the dazzling ray
refines itself
and gains in sharp
intensity.

The beam describes
the path for this
spectacular
one-way procession
of fateful signals:
thus the body
must meekly follow
the faithful breath.

The tightening throat –
the rattling cry –
the fleeing breath –
they liberate
the bursting soul
to rip its road
of focused light
towards the stars,

and cleave apart
our firmament
of deathly darkness,
and find a rest
upon the columns
of air supported
by the Children
of the Light.

The jawbone points
towards the sky –
the shoulder bone
has lost the fiddle –
Above the earth,
beneath the sky
abandoned hangs
a broken corpse

that would not soar
above the hill
of scaffolds, nor would
sink below,
and occupies
the light as though
it were supported
by the soul.

The joints are loosened.
Every bone
acquires its own
and separate weight.
The neck, the limbs
grow elongated.
Like the stars,
the vertebrae
inevitably
pull apart.

The sagging burden
of the arms
weighs down the shoulders.

The heavy wooden
prison clogs
hung from the feet
extend the ankles,
stretch the knees,
reshape the body.
Death is accomplished.

At last, the final
script of symbols:
The opened mouth,
the hanging tongue
blue like a flower
on a winter twig.
The busy stripes
of the prison garment
come to rest.

Beneath the sky
before the heaven
the flesh, the bones,
the prison rags
disintegrate
and, effortlessly,
the corpse dissolves
within the picture.

Over the desolate
wire fence,
above the fiddler
glows a gentle
protective hand.
Five shafts of light
direct my gaze
towards the City.
And . . . *Here I am.* *

III

Love in Auschwitz

Birdsong, dusk. Departure from
Auschwitz.

Resurgent love steps out from the gates,
immortal love whose skeletal essence
could never be consumed by the flames.

Past soaring hopes, reality
slowly settles from the smoke:
the heat of incandescent mess-tins –
a dented spoon beneath the earth –

and like that mouth, that Gothic cavity
that spewed them, gods and fantasies
decompose amidst the dental
gold extracted from the dead.

The gas decays. The bunkers crumble.
The deportation trains withdraw.
And . . . *Here I am*, and here the arms
to hold the living world in . . . love.

For love redeems the fence of death:
I share your being and you mine
together in the light and silence
beneath our gagged and distant stars.

=====
=====

*The Bible/Isaiah 6:8 – “Then I heard the
voice of the Lord saying, *Whom shall I
send?...* And I said, *Here am I. Send me!*”

GUSTAV!

Feinstein, a Jew from Memel,
recognized his neighbour
in the execution squad.
And he cried out to him:
*Gustav! Aim
straight between the eyes!*

LETTER FROM NUSI

And now at last we are quite certain
we shall be taken shortly – but where?
Kolozsvár? Várád? Újfalú?
And then the wagons? Where from there?
But you don't need to fret about us,
outside, the bags are all prepared,
the basket of food, a pot of honey,
a pair of backpacks, the bedding linen –
the cart is waiting by the portal
for grandma's ride (poor gran's old feet!)
and mum has sent a card to dad.
No time left. Still, what really matters,
the place is tidied up for winter.
Sanyikám, darling, I take my leave.
And tell our father he's in my heart.
Whatever our lot, we shall be safe –
God shall provide.

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 machine gun.
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?

ROBBERY, NAKED

You won't be needing these, said he,
and flung my mother's photograph
among his booty, and my shirt.
I still retained heaped on my blanket
the things I had to bring: a mess-tin,
my boots and socks, warm underclothes,
a bar of shaving-soap – and I had
that irremovable mark on my finger
in the place of my looted wedding ring.

STATISTICS

No cry of anguish, no manner of wailing
is more heartrending than the sheer
numbers:
147 trains
for the transportation in 51 days
of 434,000
provincial Jews by 200 SS troops
aided by 5,000 Hungarian
gendarmes and hundreds of volunteers –
they were detained at first in the
ghettoes,
they were then taken into the brick-works
already stripped of their family savings,
then caged in cattle-trucks, 80 in each,
and
conveyed without water and food to
Mengele
from the first day of the occupation –
processed by people obeying orders
who never outdid the German commands
but willingly obliged the commanders –
Nearly half a million provincial Jews:
Nearly 10% of them stayed alive.

TOWARDS THE DNIESTER

As the marchers dragged themselves
forward,

the bare-footed peasants by the road
picked out the choicest boots and trousers
and, at their bidding, the guards
shot down the occasional well-clad
prisoner
in exchange for a handful of notes.
The deathmarch stumbled on towards
Orhei.
The peasants collected their wares.

TALLY

Counting heads at the gate,
the Düsseldorf guard kept tally.
Beneath a detailed statement
about the deportation,
1,007 lives
are described on the sheet
by groups of vertical lines
crossed out.

Sent by

Thomas Ország-Land,
P. O. Box 1213,
LONDON, N6 5HZ
Thomland@Externet.HU

THOMAS ORSZÁG-LAND is a poet, as well as being an award-winning Foreign Correspondent who writes on global syndication from London and his native Budapest. His last book was Christmas in Auschwitz (Smokestack, 2010).

Poems for the Holocaust

Blood

Blood

Tomato red, pressed
Through a sieve
The flesh of the fruit
Pulped through a mesh
And the seeds
Crushed.

Smashed like sperm
In a scrotum

Delicate and small
The spermatic cord
Unwound like
Intestines.

Hiding the secrets
The mysteries
The memories

What individuals
Would have sprung
From this man's
Legacy –

Maybe a midwife,
Carpenter, teacher,
An aviator of his people,
A leader like Moses
Perhaps who would
Have led the masses
To emancipation
From slavery.

Who could imagine
The magnitude of
Such criminality

To crush the life
Like a nutcracker
From the hearts of so many
6 million some way
I say 6 million and
One.

It was their
blood, he said, the
Soldier who shot the
families, the small
children and the babies
in the back, standing
in front of the
pits they had dug,
it was their blood,
Jewish blood he said
and the reasons
for killing them were
good.

He said how could you do
Anything with them
so shocked and
frightened they became
docile, pliant,
and he felt
decent because his
aim was good, as so
many crying, convulsing,
vomiting blood.

He remembered
a tall man, with
light brown hair, who
was asked if his
Grandmother, Father,
Aunt or Uncle,
Was Austrian,
German, anything
But Jewish and the
tall Jewish man said no
because he would not lie
and he would die

comforting his children
and his wife –

The soldier reached
For a cigarette, tired
After he had shot them.
Blood fountained spurt onto
His fingers, convulsing,
Glistening, throbbing
With life – the blood of
The tall man's wife.

Jessica Lawrence

The Dancer Who Shot Schillinger

Dancer I do not know your name
But I have not forgotten you
Nor your act of bravery in the
Face of annihilation.
I know you did not escape
The chambers of gas
Nor blistering evisceration.
Your lithe body reduced to
a wheelbarrow of ash.
But dancer I extol your dauntless act.

After days on a train
Without water or sleep
And nights upright battling
To breath, crushed in a deep
Freeze container with
People praying, fainting
puking, intercepted only
By snatches of unconscious
reprieve.

After you stumbled
Off the train and were
Truncheoned on the way
to the antechamber of hell
where you were forced

to strip naked before
entering the waterless well.
You danced like Miriam
Leading the Israelites
From Egypt, then you leapt
Like a fleet gazelle,
And grabbed a pistol from
A Nazi's hand and shot him,
then Schillinger,
a savage sadistic man.

Dancer I salute your
Courageous act, your
Poised and beautiful hands
Grabbing a pistol and
Killing an odious man.

I have not forgotten you
Nor your act of bravery in the
Face of annihilation –
Blistering evisceration.
Your body reduced to
A wheelbarrow of ash,
But dancer I extol your dauntless act.

Jessica Lawrence

Margalit

Daughter of Israel
And daughter of Gella
beloved daughter
whose father boasted
of her when he wrote
his last will and testament
discovered in 1946
unopened till he buried
it with the assistance of
David and Nachim
Two teenagers who also
perished with the
Lichtenstein family in the
gas chambers of Treblinka . . .

Israel said “I want my little daughter to be remembered” and told us how gifted she was, how at nine months old she began to speak clearly and now at 18 months spoke Yiddish fluently her acumen equal to a four year old’s, he said “this lovely little talented girl . . . deserves to be remembered.”

Margalit
you are cherished and remembered, I speak to you in a different language, one you would have mastered as you grew older and fulfilled your destiny robbed from you brutally.

Jessica Lawrence

The Man He Carried

Death, death, death. Death at night, death in the morning, death in the afternoon. Death, we lived with death, how could a human feel?

He carried a dead man on his back, a scrawny angular sack, no different from moments ago, when he was worked to death in his carapace of bone – addled flesh kicked out of the cuckoo’s nest.

The man who carried him said bodies piled like leaves, collapsed like tents in the faintest breeze, death bubbled up like water

from a spring, bodies bulged like bulbs from the ground, mounds of corpses were tangled like trees. (Thousands oozed with lice and disease, sleeping on frozen concrete, what the Germans did you would not believe).

He stares into the distance, hears the screams of the girls as they were driven to their deaths terrified and naked, their screams carried on the wind, blending in with the music he was forced to play on their way to the crematorium.

His soft voice hovers over the loudspeaker’s guttural din, the dog’s snarling, the machine gun sniping, over the howling of the tortured and the torment of the dying.

And he explained how he carried the man like a bundle of twigs and dumped his body in a stinking pit,

stoic in his recounting of it. His obligation he said, Is not of forgiveness, But of the carnage And injustice to bear witness.

Jessica Lawrence

Gradowski

Gradowski

tells how the dead were
pulled from the chambers
and dumped in the furnace
and the flames leapt out
like hungry tongues

He wrote how the
Belly exploded
In the heat, and intestines
Burst out like
Coils of burning rope

And of children
Piled on top of one another,
like logs stacked beside
A kiln.

Jessica Lawrence

Emanuel Ringelblum

I wish I had known you
Emanuel, before you
succumbed but never
surrendered, refusing to
leave your son and so
both of you, and your wife
were shot by the Nazis.

Emanuel, I feel I know
you well, a scientist and
historian, poet and philosopher
putting the needs of others
before any needs of your own

You could have
Escaped in 1934 when the
élite were leaving Poland
you could have saved your

own skin and gotten out of
prison, but you
would not leave your son.

“Because of him” you said
“my heart is breaking”
And you succumbed
To execution, after years
Of starvation and persecution.

Emanuel – you were in
Switzerland in '39
But returned to Warsaw
via Hungary and Italy,
faced the enemy with his bull
whip and his barbarity
saying “not everyone has
the right to leave.”

In subhuman conditions
You organized kindergartens
Committees and soup kitchens,
You kept the light of hope alive.
When every day life was
Being extinguished.

I stand in awe at your
achievements, your
resilience in face of
annihilation, privation, starvation.
Emanuel, a redeemer of the Jewish nation.

Jessica Lawrence

About These Poems

Several years ago I read about the Oneg Shabes archives which were being created in the Warsaw Ghetto under the direction and inspiration of Emanuel Ringelblum a rather remarkable man who, being free in Switzerland after escaping Nazi occupied Europe, snuck himself back into the Warsaw Ghetto in order to help those imprisoned inside

its confines in the most dire and subhuman conditions. Despite suffering from starvation, extreme deprivation and facing deportation to a concentration camp at any day, Ringleblum and Lichtenstein (whose little daughter Margelit is memorialized in one of the poems) organized scouts and interviewers to take biographical and social histories of anyone and everyone they could in order to record the experiences of people in the ghetto as they themselves experienced and witnessed it, the archive also captures the incredible humanity and compassion that people exhibited under such extreme conditions.

I am writing/collecting prose and poems inspired by the *Oneg Shabes* archives which were written by Jews living in the Warsaw Ghetto who wanted to document the realities of their lives. These extensive archives were hidden in milk cans and tin boxes and buried by Israel Lichtenstein with the help of two teenagers David Graber and Nachim Grzywacz. All of whom perished in the gas chambers shortly after burying the documents. They were unearthed after the war in 1946 but some have still not been found. Emanuel Ringleblum organised the writing of the archives, returning from the safety of Switzerland to join fellow Jews in the ghetto stating "not everyone has the right to run away, someone has to stay behind and lead." He was unbelievably courageous, returning to Poland via Italy, Yugoslavia and Hungary in 1939 and stayed in the Ghetto organising soup kitchens, schools and the collection of information. He was shot by the Germans in 1944 along with his wife and young son.

The *Oneg Shabes* archives demonstrate the resilience, determination and bravery of Jewish people who did not view themselves as homogenous victims – often how history portrays them.

Jessica Lawrence

Cruel Frederick

Went out to drink one sultry day
Well he had scarcely wet his lip
When cruel Fred snatched up a whip
He whipped poor Tray 'til he was sore
And then he whipped him more and more

At this poor Tray grew very red
And he bit Fred
And he bit Fred
'Til he bled
'Til he bled

Well then you should have been by
To see how Fred did scream and cry
He had to go to bed

His leg was very sore and red
The doctor came and shook his head
Fred
Fred
Fred
He was dead
He was dead
He was dead
He was dead
Dead
Dead
Dead
Dead
Fred was dead

The Tiger Lilies

TARGET CULTURE

What is your target for today, teacher?

What is your target for today?

I want twenty words spelt correctly,

Eight equations done,

I want to learn about the nearest
planet to the sun . . .

But who are these troublesome children
Steering the ship off course?

I want to let my wild thoughts
fly, miss

Where do I go when I die,
miss?

But I can see the whole of the
sky . . .

What is your target for today, doctor?

What is your target for today?

I want the waiting list cut to one
week,

The follow up to two,

I want to show the trustees the
atrium, it's so shiny and new . . .

But who are these troublesome people
Steering the ship off course?

Please take this pain away,
nurse

I haven't had a drink all day,
nurse,

My wife shouldn't have had
to die this way . . .

What is your target for today, officer?

What is your target for today?

I want zero-tolerance for car crime,

Hobos off the streets,

I want a hundred percent take up on
the feedback sheets . . .

But who are these troublesome people
Clogging up the nick?

(Don't fill out the form, son
If you don't know which box to tick)

This is a target culture,
We can all achieve success
In a target culture
Just try not to notice the mess . . .

Katherine Toy 2013

ROUND AND ROUND

Round and round and round they go,
Locked together, can't let go,
How come the others get it right?
Haven't got energy left for the fight . . .

She tries to change him constantly,
He ends up stranded, kite in a tree,
Hoping that duty grounds his desires,
Does for a while but doesn't inspire . . .

Round and round and round they go,
Locked together, can't let go . . .
She fell in love with a boy that was wild
Loved sharing good times, having a child,
Can't bear the thought that she drags him
down
He drags her down too . . .

Round and round . . .

Endlessly talking, sorting things out,
Try to be reasoned, try not to shout,
Things start to pick up, then they crash down,
Like a wheel, goes round and round and
round and

Round and round . . .

He goes astray to lady with lash,

She gives him excitement, he gives her cash,
Bliss afternoon, his body reels,
She finds him cute, is love what he feels?

Round and round and round they go,
Locked together, can't let go . . .
 Maybe it drives us all underneath
 Can't have the pleasure without the
grief.

Katherine Toy

Dona Dona

On a wagon bound for market
There's a calf with a mournful eye.
High above him there's a swallow,
winging swiftly through the sky.

Chorus

*How the winds are laughing,
they laugh with all their might.
Laugh and laugh the whole day
through,
and half the summer`s night.*

*Donna, Donna, Donna, Donna; Donna,
Donna, Donna, Don.
Donna, Donna, Donna, Donna; Donna,
Donna, Donna, Don.*

“Stop complaining!” said the farmer,
Who told you a calf to be ?
Why don't you have wings to fly with,
like the swallow so proud and free?”

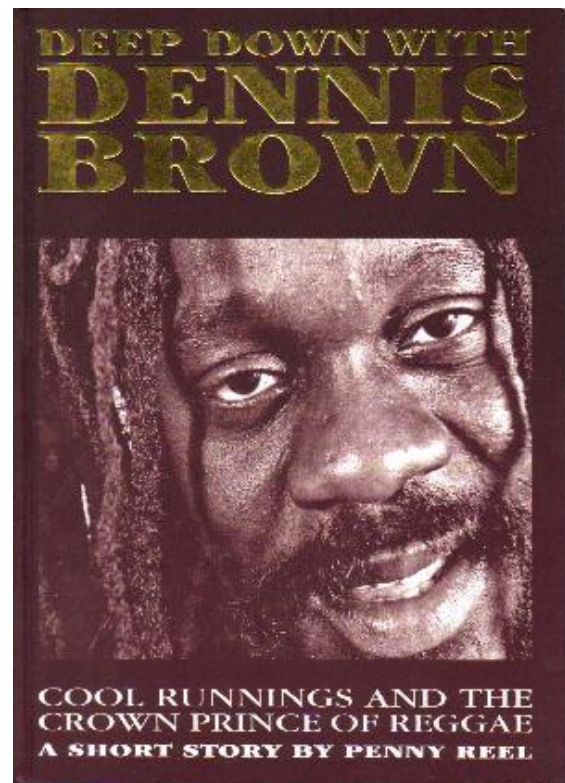
Chorus

Calves are easily bound and slaughtered,
never knowing the reason why.
But who ever treasures freedom,
like the swallow has learned to fly.

Aaron Zeitlin

Deep Down With DENNIS BROWN

by Penny Reel



This book was published early this century. However, I am reviewing it because I bought a copy earlier this year, and have enjoyed reading it. Also it is still available on the internet. I remember reading Penny Reel's writings in the NME (*New Musical Express*) during the 1970s. He would often be singing the praises of reggae artists who were little known outside the world of reggae. Penny Reel also wrote for other magazines of the time like *Black Echoes* and *Let It Rock*. Before this he wrote for the underground magazine *International Times*. This book is subtitled *COOL RUNNINGS AND THE CROWN PRINCE OF REGGAE*. (A title given to Dennis Brown by Bob Marley). During the 1970s whenever Dennis Brown was in England he would

spend time in conversation with Penny Reel. As this book shows Dennis Brown was often in England during that decade.

On the back cover it is explained how the sudden death of Dennis Brown in 1999 sent shockwaves through the world of reggae. In this book Penny Reel traces Dennis Brown's career from his days as a child star to his hit with *Money In My Pocket* in 1979. In doing so he digs below the surface with this gifted performer. Dennis Brown's career started at the age of nine when he became known as the boy wonder. Between school he would be recording and performing. At the age of 14 Dennis Brown fell ill and was hospitalised. There were rumours going round that he only had one lung, though he denied this rumour. A whole supporting cast appear in this book. They get brought into the story at relevant places. In this Penny Reel introduces us to a number of little known reggae artists. I found myself going to you tube to check out their work.

An added bonus to the story is Penny Reel's knowledge of London's history. For example early in the story when talking about Colombo's night club in Carnaby Street he traces the history of the club back to the post war years. He also traces Carnaby Street's history back to that time. Describing what the area was like in the days before it was transformed by the 60s fashion revolution. Indeed in this book we get taken to many parts of 70s London. At one point in the story we get taken to a sound system clash at the Four Aces club in Dalston. Penny Reel's account of the events that took place there are extremely visual. You can picture the scenes that took place. Adding to the books descriptive nature are the photographs concert posters and record labels that accompany the text.

As the story progresses we see Dennis Brown approaching adulthood. He attends a meeting of the Twelve Tribes of Israel

and joins the Rastafarian faith. He makes many trips to England to set up his label DEB records. We see him producing and promoting fellow reggae artists, and having many records released himself. His creative output is extremely prolific. *Money In My Pocket* appears on a number of occasions in this story. It seems that the song was around in various forms over the years before it became a hit. Towards the end of the book Penny Reel gives a history of Jamaican music in Britain. In this he shows how the music has been compromised and marginalised over the years. Either by putting strings on the music, or by novelty records. He explains how many hardworking artists have been unable to get played on daytime radio. He also readdresses the popular notion of Bob Marley being at the centre of reggae by explaining that while he had won over a rock audience, his records were rarely played on the sound systems. The story ends on a cold February day in 1979 when *Money In My Pocket* was in the pop charts and Penny Reel interviewed Dennis Brown for the NME (including a front cover photo.) This is a wonderful story that leaves you wanting more. This is also essential reading if you want to learn more about reggae music, and many of the artists who helped to make the music the inspiring force that it was in the 1970s.

Frank Bangay June 2013

To buy this book visit xraymusic.co.uk and go to Dub Vendor mail order.

Or visit www.regaeregaeregae.com

Or www.ukrockfestivals.com

Other articles by Penny Reel.

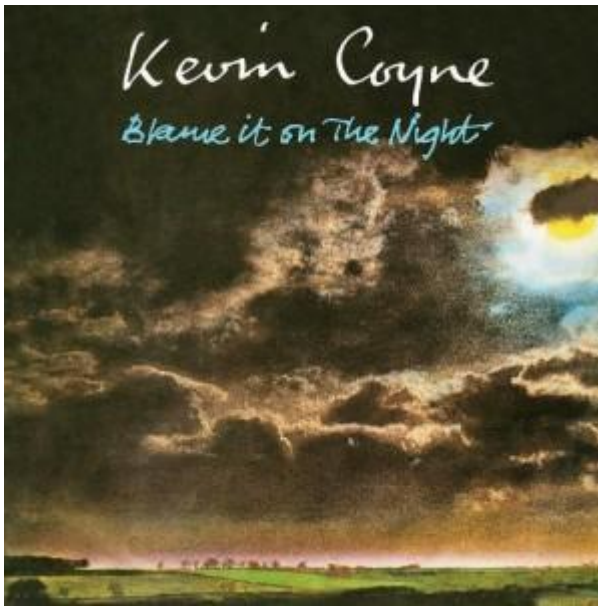
A Dread Tale at www.firecorner.com

The Yong Mods Forgotten Story at jackthatcatwasclean.blogspot

Penny Reel Is the title of a reggae song from the ska days. Recorded by Justin Hinds and the Dominoes and Eric 'Monty' Morris. I imagine this might be where the author of this book got his name.

BLAME IT ON THE NIGHT

Kevin Coyne: Turpentine Records



Released July 29th. for £10.99

In the early 1990s Kevin Coyne's Virgin back catalogue was reissued on CD. However for some reason *Blame It On The Night* got forgotten about. So it's great that Turpentine Records have now made it available on CD.

Originally released in 1974. Sandwiched between Kevin's Virgin debut *Marjory Razor Blade* and the hard rock sounds of 1975's *Matching Head And Feet*. *Blame It On The Night* became something of a forgotten album. It is true that at the time some reviewers preferred the more conventional rock settings of *Matching Head And Feet* and in particular Kevin's next album *Heartburn*. Now is the time

for *Blame It On The Night* to be properly appreciated.

Featuring a band lead by guitarist Gordon Smith and some tracks with Kevin on his own, this record shows Kevin going deeper into the tangles that he sang about on the *Case History* track *My Message To The People*. The opening track *River Of Sin*, is a song about Catholic guilt. Driven along by a slide guitar and a saxophone, it is said that this song was an influence on John Lydon. Listen to the laughter at the beginning of the track. John Lydon would address the issue of Catholic guilt himself, in *Religion* on the first Public Image album. The next track is the acoustic *Sign Of The Times*. This is a disorientating song. Towards the end of the track Kevin sings "My hands are clean, they are never dirty, I wear something and it hurts me". We then bounce into *I Believe In Love*. An upbeat love song with female backing vocals. It was released as a single at the time. After this we are back to the acoustic ramblings of the disorientating *Don't Delude Me*.

The title track is an acoustic song with some strings coming in about half way through. Personally I felt the strings added something to the atmosphere of the song. The following track *Poor Swine* rocks and is lyrically interesting. The song is about a mining disaster where seven miners die. But Kevin still manages to show compassion for the boss of the mine, who while being

heartbroken by the event, has to face the wrath of his workers. In another song *Light Up Your Little Light*, Kevin sings "Your past history is well known to everyone in this particular home". Was he referring to a past spent in a psychiatric hospital. Near the end of the record is a song called *Witch*. This is a disturbing song, especially the screams at the end. The song features some nice Spanish guitar playing. The next song *Right On Her Side* is an upbeat number. It is about lady who's "never been known to swear, what would she do if a man was there". However, later in the song Kevin sings "you never see the wheels, the life scars that don't heal".

One thing that strikes me about this album is that there are some catchy upbeat tunes to some of the songs. Kevin's band of this time had an organic feel and warmth. While they could rock really well, there were acoustic guitars in the sound too. They were also very close to the blues. An example of this being the harmonica driven *Take A Train*. Kevin liked to look beyond the neatly cut lawns of suburbia. Beneath the masks we wear in an attempt to be "normal". He does that really well here. I feel that *Blame It On The Night* is one of Kevin's best albums.

The bonus tracks are *Queen Queenie Caroline* which was the B side of *I Believe In Love*, when it was released as a single. Then there are two versions

of *Poor Swine*. The second version comes from a 1974 free concert in Hyde Park. The closing track is a version of *Marjory Razor Blade*, also from the same concert. These two tracks show how powerful Kevin was live.

Disc two is titled *River Of Sin*. This was the working title for *Blame It On The Night* back in 1974. This disc includes different versions of the songs from the record. *River Of Sin* and another track *Wanting You Is Not Easy* have different lyrics to the album versions. There is a slower version of *Poor Swine*. There is a version of *I Believe In Love* without the female backing singers, and *Witch* is even more disturbing than the album version. The bonus tracks are: *Another Drink* - a brass-driven rocker. An acoustic version appeared on *Nobody Dies In Dreamland*. *Heart And Soul* is a catchy number that I like a lot. *Stoke Your Oven And Light The Fire* lasts for twelve minutes, and is a fitting closing number for this second disc. Let's welcome *Blame It On The Night* to the world of CD.

**Frank Bangay
November 2013**

To buy this album visit Turpentine records at
www.kevincoyne.co.uk

For Kevin Coyne's website visit
www.kevincoyne.de

For Pascal's fans website visit
www.kevincoynepage

bohemi

<http://bohemiproject.blogspot.co.uk/>

The **bohemi Project** was founded in January 2013: its intention is to create a scope for creativity available to all levels of talent, skill, sex, background and age.

This hub of creativity provides training, classes, rehearsals and events to nurture and flourish people's interest and talents. bohemi is flexible – to bring in or take out whatever is needed or not needed by its members. Currently, bohemi provides:

bohemi Drama Group

Using writing of our own members, we put on plays, Burlesque and Cabaret performances, dance shows and comedy showcases. Members are either complete novices or experienced. We train them for what is needed in a fun atmosphere with an underlining discipline.



The Soph Dance Group

The Sophs have three branches:



The Sophs performance Group.

This is purely for stage and performances. The group performs beautiful dances which are a mix of Classical Persian Dance mixed with the Sufi/Dervish twirling. These dances have a mesmerising and elegant quality that can't be described and must be seen.

The Gentle Soph

This is a programme for the elderly or the disabled, it can be done sitting down. It is a form of Story Telling via gentle movements. The class participates telling the exotic stories of 1001 nights and similar Eastern mythologies. This develops a better lymphatic circulation and with its therapeutic elements alleviates anxiety.

The Persian Party Workout

This is a more energetic form of class, for those who wish to have a keep fit workout while moving their bodies in the linear format of Persian Dance with exciting Persian music.

bohemi Weavers



An informal group for any local crafter and artist who is involved with any kind of

weaving (Crochet, knitting, needlework, felting, tatting etc.). We meet on a weekly basis, sharing our skills and knowledge and chatting over a cuppa while we are doing our art. We are planning for an annual exhibition/fair starting this year showcasing our members art and craft.

H.U.G. (*Healing Under Guidance*)

This is a free support group for the sufferers of depression and their companions as well as just an opportunity for anyone lonely or sad to come, have a free cuppa and chat to non judgmental and compassionate group.

Magic on The Rox

This is available for outside bookings. Teaching crafts in local establishments. The teacher is **Roxana Riaz** (Founder of bohemi) who is a multi-media artist with over twenty years experience specializing in Needle Tatting, Crochet, paper-craft and polymer Clay – she also dabbles in painting, sculpting, jewellery making and recycling/up-cycling arts. She mainly teaches in the local Adult Education Centre as well as doing talks in various local events. The purpose of Magic on The Rox is to create funds for bohemi's various projects. (Please see Magicontherox blog:

[\(http://magicontherox.blogspot.co.uk/\)](http://magicontherox.blogspot.co.uk/)



Cast adrift . . .

(To my wife Gail, who suffered from Dementia; she died in December 2011)

Cast adrift in your mind's sea,
the currents take you out
beyond headlands you remember -
there the white house your friend lived in,
into open water.

Nothing to hold onto: a long swell,
grey rain, wind getting up.
You cry out, too far out,
not even a seagull to answer.
What way land, dark coming in?

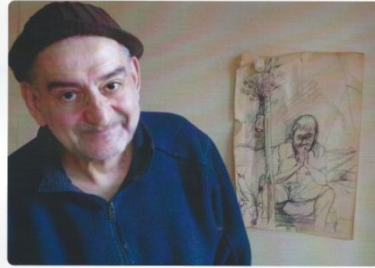
Around you those who would help
listen, speak to you, say 'Hello'
from the shore, a few steps away.

Will you look at them from your mind's sea,
startled, know you know us who speak,
or drift on, through sunshine and storms,
until you reach that shore from where
you shall find your release.

David Andrew



Ravaged Wonderful Earth
A Collection for David Kessel



outsider poets in collaboration with F.E.E.L.

Stepney July 2013

Magical Leaves

by **Maria Ní Mhurchú**

ISBN 1 903896 44 4

The main theme of these poems seems to be a sensitive, vulnerable person's search for love. *The Boy from Sweden* tenderly evokes that universal teenage angst, that fumbling misinterpretation of overtures, those wistful thoughts of might-have-beens. *The Shroud of Turin* makes ingenious use of that relic as a metaphor for a lover, or object of obsession, who squeezes the life out of her. The 'partner' throws her a cloth (bearing the Christ image), and makes her, somewhat aged and saddened, feel like the once crucified. *Words*: the urge to escape house-bound isolation, with a true lover to the rescue.

The Robin Red Breast is a touching religious poem. Maria assumes the persona of a bird who ministered to the wounded Jesus on the Cross, and is now herself injured. An exceptionally powerful image in 'Lay me gently within your open wound'. When her wounds have healed, she will fly forth again to do the Lord's work against his enemies. If injured again, she will return to the sacred hospice.

Blinded by Love – a continuing obsession with a ‘passing stranger’, a postman who stole from the poet when she was seventeen. He is ‘celebrated’ in a tattoo on her hand, with a globe in the background, heading towards the sunset. In reminiscence she stumbles over a clouded hillside, feeling that she is blind.

The Statue seems to be an indictment of a cold-hearted fortune teller, who appears to know at heart whether she is going to have a ‘fulfilled’ married life or be committed to a mental institution. She is not made of stone, but he, metaphorically, is. *A Stranger is a Friend* – the wedding that might have been; bizarre image of a wedding dress kept in a rucksack and then refreshed in a shower – dream picture of walking up the aisle, veiled. Final reflection on what might happen: “Strangers are friends/We’re waiting to meet.”

My Whispering Willow: the willow is a charming metaphor for a lover, elusive or imaginary. In *Africa* the poet is deeply affected by the sight of an emaciated local woman wearing a colourful dress; the attraction of that dress gives her a crisis of conscience.

The Waiter – young love angst again. She is deeply attracted to the waiter, who may have made the coffee too hot, as a kind of practical joke. She is desperate for him to leave, presumably for fear that her attraction may cause her to make a fool of herself. ‘Sacred’ and ‘profane’ love are blended here, as a visitation by the Holy Spirit engendered her obsession with the waiter.

You Made Me A Promise – a typical ‘knight in shining armour’ fantasy, with the corresponding reality of someone who could send a postcard or an email. The poet was heartbroken, but a character strong enough to pick up her own pieces. The splintered pieces made her bleed; she approached the waters to wash her wounds and then, seemingly drowned, and given her passport to Eternity. The most highly developed imagery in this collection.

The White Stallion is another charming fantasy poem. The stallion preens himself before her; she mounts him to ride the Golden Mile. *The Little Robin* tells of bird and animal peace and harmony, a bird landing in a benign dog’s water bowl. Such a touching story; such a shame the young ones do not want to know. They are only interested in worms!

The Thief – sublimities of young love. The poet sees a beautiful young man in a church. Could he be some sort of acolyte, licensed to sprinkle holy water? A beautiful spiritual/sensual image in “I can see the angel/Ready to loose one of her wings.” The dreamy sequence ends with the offer of a real life date; off they go, hand in hand.

The Viper is an intense statement of a potential vendetta. The malignant entity is scary, but she slithers off into the distance. The poet feels safe again.

The Big Exam opens with a statement of despair, at ageing and loneliness. But she finds solace through writing and drawing; these activities recall the good times of her life. This ‘therapy’ comes to full

fruition with the teacher walking into an examination room.

Carefree Days of Youth – one young at heart speaks for herself. *The Funky Dunky* is an interesting piece of black irony. ‘Dunky’ is a wordplay on ‘donkey’ and reference is made to the ass which bore Jesus into Jerusalem. There is a weird introductory stanza about the ass having a parachute around its middle – as if it had been jettisoned from the sky. “Where have you come from?/Down from Heaven – I’d say/But you don’t have a cross on your back” but later there is a comment that “Donkeys with crosses are donkey wannabees!” The Donkey in this poem is some kind of sacred messenger, with power to stay the violent movement of the elements – another proposed ride down the Golden Mile.

My Helper is an entity who is probably a figment of the poet’s imagination, but may have external reality. The contemplation of that possibility sometimes reassures, sometime causes total despair. She aches for the helper to show him/herself.

Death has many aspects; those of desolation, those of the splendour of a funeral, those of hope for a better life beyond the grave. *My Aunt is a Gem* describes a touching get-together with an elderly relative. The aunt has a failing memory; she cannot quite recall whether her brother is alive. But she remains astute enough to be critical of a painting of Christ: “How in the name of God do they know/What he looks like?”. . ./Sure there were no cameras in Jerusalem/Two thousand years ago?”

Santiago de Compostella presents both sides of a pilgrimage: ‘A wonderful adventure for some/A week of vomiting for others’. The last stanza blends Christian and Pagan imagery. ‘The galloping unicorns’ may menace the pilgrims but guard the mariners. “The Dingle pilgrims may ride/On the backs of the sea-horses . . .”

The Pres Girl 2007: There is a flashback to happy schooldays, then the poet turns away from the happy throng to visit the Sisters’ Graveyard. She pays her homage to the statue of the Sacred Heart, begging him to cure her of her mental illness. She then joins the happy throng, but her secret remains deep within her: “I can see the red heart of the Sacred Heart/Pulsating/Telling me that everything is in his Hands/And I keep my secret in my heart.’

The Third Secret is a homage to the Virgin Mary, far greater than any earthly celebrity – the only entity with the power of eternal youth. A bitter indictment in “Will the future lamb clothed in a white robe/Be martyred?/Because of our celebrity worshipping society/Or will life go on as normal?” Mary remains humanity’s chief hope.

Be Not Afraid – the poet is a prisoner of dark thoughts. She is, metaphorically, handcuffed. She finally does an impulsive somersault into peace of mind. Good barbed comment in “courage is fear holding on a minute longer”.

All in all beautifully tender, lyrical and heartfelt.

Dave Russell

Remnants of Another Age

Nikola Madzirov

Bloodaxe Books 2013

ISBN 978-1-85224-989-2 £9.95



Supremely, Nikola Madzirov speaks with the voice of his country – Macedonia, part of former Yugoslavia. This is an area extraordinarily torn by conflict and destruction, and extraordinarily rich in ancient monuments, with many still to be excavated. So anyone writing from these conditions will have a hyper-acute sense of physical insecurity, and a need to explore confusion to find definitions and approximations, and a finely developed sense of history. These qualities proclaim themselves from Madzirov’s works.

The Berlin International Literature festival wrote, “Madzirov’s poetry is striking in its lightness. It plays with everyday objects, deconstructing their self-evident meanings

and associations in order to question established thought patterns and explore new sensual worlds.” In a recent interview, Madzirov said of his own work: “Silence and darkness are the two halves of the core of the universal code of understanding. In silence all sounds are equal, in the darkness all objects are the same. However, poetry opens new spaces for inhabiting by means of the words and the light of individuality . . . In order to be able to write it is necessary to travel both through the world and through yourself.”

This is a bilingual edition. The opener, *After Us*, seems to evoke the situation of a refugee, someone who has been put up in emergency accommodation, where actions like laundering and ordering of furniture are impersonal, suggesting transitory residence. Or perhaps someone’s formerly ‘permanent’ home has been requisitioned in an emergency. *When someone goes away everything that’s been done comes back* – a cry from the heart of an uprooted person. Those deprived of a familiar environment will have a heightened long-term memory of its familiar aspects. *I Don’t Know* continues the theme of problems of recollection: “The distant reality every day questions me/like an unknown traveller who wakes me up in the middle of the journey/saying *Is this the right bus?*” The hope of recollection must spring eternal “. . . people believe so as not to sink/and step so as not to be forgotten.” *Shadows Pass Us By* refers to people separated by catastrophe having a tenuous chance to meet again. The fragility of such potential is reflected in such an image as “We’ll meet one day/like a paper boat . . .” There is a feeling of desperate desire, balanced by fractional hope: “One day every shadow/will pass us by” – and sunlight will reign supreme?

The Hands of the Clock – recommended exercises for time-transference and long-term

memory. In all the world's fluctuations and mutations, a clock's hands remain a constant, a yardstick. Great images of flux and mutability in ". . . the silence/that expands and contracts/like a flock of birds in flight . . ." and ". . . the irregular snowball/and the drops that run/down the line of life." *What we Have Said Haunts Us* – the essential randomness and tenuousness of trying to apply names and definitions to the universe. To me, the clinch verse here is "We've left words/under stones with buried shadows,/on the hill that guards the echo/of the ancestors whose names are not/in the family tree" The location of those names embraces the unnamable.

Flying – fascination with the stratosphere. In the reverie of the night, a land-bound human can negotiate that element – "you will sneak out towards the branches/like a rare bird/from the other side of a banknote." In reverie, a designed and manufactured representation can assume animate form and break biological barriers.

When Time Ceases – the opening line is the same as the book's title. The poet identifies with the wealth of ancient relics around him. The ultimate significance of the relationship between past and present will not be understood until time ceases – with its concomitant fluctuations. 'The landscapes of tamed solitude' suggests safer and more familiar environments.

The Shadow of the World Passes Over My Heart is a desperate expression of despair and negativity, someone truly reified – perhaps reduced to those straits be the processes of history – "My absence is a consequence/of all recounted histories and deliberate knowledge. But though feeling in many ways like a thing, he retains an underlying humanity: "I have a heart pierced by a rib. Fragments of glass float through my blood/and clouds hidden behind white cells."

Things We Want to Touch – when people are uprooted from familiar surroundings, or when those surroundings are destroyed, they become deeply attached to the internalised memory images of those things and more dependent on other individual human beings: ". . . our words/become a non-transferable heritage . . ." "We're like a shoe carried off/in a struggle of stray dogs,/we hug each other/like close-twined cables through the hollow bricks/of houses where no one lives."

Revealing – someone constrained by conventions and categories – 'the strict inheritances and vows . . . the harmony of obedience'. Could an individual discover his/her true identity if the social fabric behind those categories is severely damaged? *It Was Spring* – the ravaged and the traumatised – "the invader burned the deeds to the lands. Such traumas induce change – "the world has changed many things in us". As for 'butterflies/existing only in old biology textbooks' – presumably they are among the many vanished species.

Perfection is Born – some initial wistful feelings about sensations fleeting or unattainable, such as 'the incense that smells best/as it vanishes'. "I believe that when perfection is born/all forms and truths/crack like eggshells" . . . "Only . . . the perfection of magic lands/can postpone the secret/migration of souls." The migration of souls, in the poet's terms, is an aspect of imperfection. The poet goes and returns with his imperfect body.

We Reveal the Times – "We exist when the windows/and the secret documents are open". Secret documents are 'open' after a secrecy ban is lifted; they could also be 'opened' in a situation of war and devastation. Our general attitudes tend to be casual, our utterances inconsequential. A disaster may be necessary to give them

substance. *Awakening* – the everyday actions of people and the elements give a sense of the temporal, the transitory. In the background is a church, which proclaims Eternal Love.

Fast Is the Century – effectively hyperbolic. The poet longs to be the wind, the element of gold, the moon. He seems to be striving for the enlightenment of a cosmic vision, putting temporal crises into perspective: “Wars don’t exist, since someone wounds our heart every day.” Then “If I were dead, everyone would have believed me/when I kept silent.” There are many who do not respect the reflective silence of the living. *I Want Only That* – “God’s uncertainty is my path” the only certainty for the poet is his adoration of a lover, for whom he would like to make elementally hyperbolic gestures.

I Saw Dreams – under the cloak of invisibility, the poet had apocalyptic visions, fusing the organic with the inorganic ‘streets with open arteries . . . volcanoes asleep longer than/the roots of the family tree . . .’

Presence – hyperbolic exhortations, reminiscent of ‘Go and catch a falling star’ – to ‘overreach’ oneself, and gain full stature: “Be a dream, a mezzanine . . . Be alone, but not lonely,/so that the sky can embrace you . . .”

Ruined Homes is an impassioned attempt to hold on to the trappings of a relationship in a context of destruction and refugeedom – “I will cover the day . . . with the still flag of territories that have witnessed our presence . . . Our e-mail letters cannot fade, our addresses remain the same even when we run away from here, from ourselves, from the wideness of our ancient dependence.” Some surreal imagery, some ‘dreamscape’ of life ‘after all the official wars’. Needless to say, the devastation has a profound effect on the poet’s articulacy – “every rejected word

covers my eyes with silence”. The devastation is also part of the flux of history – “Our ruined homes were a move of the world”.

Thoughts on the Weather – “I know that my voice/is influenced by atmospheric conditions”. Accepting the power of the elements can give strength and equipoise “. . . compassion peels away/like the bark of a tree/from which ancient tribes/once built their boats . . .” through being ‘peeled away’ – ultra-ambiguously, compassion can be a source of strength and mobility. “Calmness is a belt/that holds history upright” – through calm, one can evaluate history, come to positive terms with it, and transcend fatalism. “See the sky/in an open tin can/on the shore” – sublimity can be reached by close attention to the everyday.

Everything is a caress – love transcends spatial realities, and also depends on them for its deeper definition. The elements disperse souls and unite them – “our homeland could be the rainbow/that joins two gardens/which don’t know of one another . . . spoken words were disappearing/and reappearing like shards of glass on a sandy beach –/sharp and shattered.”

What is to be Done? – Hope must spring eternal; one must struggle on ‘without reason or necessity’. One must be all forgiving ‘. . . embrace the offenders/liberated from love’; one must be tenacious in embracing heaven and earth ‘to open the rusty door of the world/and depart with airy footsteps’.

Usual Summer Nightfall – 1. Unusually delicate and wistful for this collection, though with one profound comment on the interpretation of history – “. . . someone else falsifies the exoduses/of the Balkan and the civil wars/in the name of universal truths.” 2. Some apocalyptic hyperbole: “The waves throw up bottles enough/to hold the whole

sea,/the arrow on the one-way road sign/points to God. A bit of metaphorical Armageddon with “The town combusts in the redness of the moon”, and hyperbole with reverse direction in “. . . the fire brigade ladders seem/to lead to heaven, even then when/everyone//is//climbing//down//them.”

New Lands – the destruction of familiar surroundings is used as a metaphor for expansiveness: “New lands should be invented”. That expansiveness involves a warm humanity: “One should be/a round mirror in a half-open palm/and reflect each other’s embraces/as sharp as scissor blades which touch each other/only when there’s something to be cut.”

Towns that Don’t Belong to Us – the ultimate resilience of the refugee, ‘our thoughts wander calmly’ in strange surroundings’. ‘Like a second earthquake that merely/rearranges what is already ruined’ –further destruction does no more than convulse the rubble.

From Every Scar on my Body – some self-recrimination here – ‘a beggar who lacks the courage/to beg charity from himself’. Lines and wounds stem from ‘the unfulfilled caresses’ and ‘the illicit excavations of love’ – the euphoric can be wounding. But still, he is ‘running fearlessly/towards the depths of origin’.

Before We Were Born puts humanity soberly in the context of the ecosphere. *Eras of Longing* – wistful reflections on living in the perpetual future in a relentless universe. In *Two Moons* a woman envisages herself as an iconic figure: she ‘looked at her reflection/in the town’s translucent fences (does this refer to some military or prison architecture?) “. . . her gaze brought together the ends/of worlds already explored, and “From the hollow/between her hip and her rib cage/light streamed out each night.” *Light and Dust* –

human ephemerality – We are the light of a burnt match/which turns to dust/when touched.”

Returning suggests a return to the home environs after devastation – now it feels like a strange environment – “. . . the echo of the unfurnished room/is faster than me. The new-found vacuity is, perversely, enlightening: I realized myself/in several layers of memories,/my soul is a womb palimpsest/of a distant mother . . . I would expand the space with a step/to multiply the grains of dust . . .”

Outside of Time – hyper-existential ‘the contours/of our souls’ negatives’. The poet and his like are ‘far away from time’; they have also acquired the power to ‘take eternity and give it back’. They have broken the tyranny of schedules: “We have been living for year/within circled dates, via/agendas of cold joys.” Their ancestors have long been statues – frozen into permanence?

Days When One Ought To Be Alone – here the poet is a spokesperson for nature: “. . . the town/sprang up as the consequence of a lie . . .”. There is some suggestion of a town being evacuated/deserted (perhaps in the course of a conflict), and that the inhabitants feel incredible bathos and desolation on their return.

Silence – is unnatural; Monks have created it. *A Way Of Existing* is a critique of the conventional writing of history, which overlooks the apparent ‘trivia’ – all of which have their rightful place in the universe. Very powerful image of ‘a toy dug up by a bulldozer’. Life is ultimately beyond man’s control – “Traffic lights cannot stop time/and our uncertainty is just/a way of existence for secrets.” The poem ends with a profound reflection on the nature of fire: fire’s illuminating qualities are fully acknowledged, but their organic concomitants, such as falling

soot and the smoke of a candle, are ignored – a one-sided interpretation of life.

An Involuntary Conquest of Space – the estrangement of two lovers feels apocalyptic – analogous to being bombed out? “Every waking outside of our bed/will be condemned,/every filling and emptying of the chest/will become an involuntary conquest of space.” In both contexts the mundane ‘grasp on reality’ is transcended. Togetherness becomes equivalent to apartness: “When the sun and moon eclipse with a touch, they are still apart . . .”

The One Who Writes seems mildly critical of some writers living in a comfortable world of abstraction, and avoiding some of real life’s stressful realities. I have to reflect further on ‘the believers/sleeping with their hands apart’.

Home suggests a long lived-in but incredibly run-down, neglected town – ‘Cobwebs held the walls together’. The poet left home at a time of peace, but still feels perpetually uprooted: “. . . voids have clung beneath me/like snow that doesn’t know if it belongs/to the earth or to the air.”

Separated is a statement of a total exile, an absolute refugee: “Now my blood is a refugee that belongs/to several souls and open wounds.” The poet’s self-detachment means some kind of quest for another: “I separated from myself, to arrive at your skin/smelling of honey and wind . . .”

There are vastly more depths and nuances in this collection; my commentary only touches on its surfaces. As a final reflection: In destroying our present, we create our past; through our wanton destructiveness we create the archaeological sites of the future.

Dave Russell

Graffiti Board

The One Thing Which Brings Out The Good In People

Today, when I feel lonely and alone,
Following the break-up of my relationship
with Lee -
And anxious prior to returning to work for the
first of my five contracted nights tonight,
Knowing I face another challenging week at
work ahead,
I feel overwhelmed by events beyond my
control
And as though, I am sinking ever deeper into
a lake of quicksand instead -
I am mindful of (and grateful for) the
consideration of others in this group
Of the offer of a listening ear,
If I need someone with whom to share
My thoughts and feelings, particularly when
they are anxious or sad,
And stubbornly refuse to disappear.
It is all too easy when, like me, one lives
alone
To withdraw unto oneself and feel one carries
the woes of the world upon one’s shoulders,
Without appreciating that the company of
others
Can often temper one’s fears
And put things into perspective when they
grow bolder,
Reminding one that the one thing which
brings out the good in people
Is their offer to help, in what limited way
they can,
Which helps bring light and warmth
On a cold, dark and damp day, like this.

Christopher Lukes

Yes, we should do this again...

Would you like to meet tomorrow?
Would tomorrow be too soon?
We could meet outside the metro stop,
Shall we say noon?

Tomorrow? Oh I can't tomorrow!
I'm busy all the day.
Next weekend maybe, maybe not;
I'll ring you yay or nay.

Next weekend, I think aghast,
I might be dead by then,
By the time so many days have passed,
Who knows we'll ever meet again?

In a week, a second-by-second week,
Time is quiet and slow,
Boredom drip-drops off the walls,
The pain that never goes.

The need I have inside my chest,
Around my collar-bone,
Towards the bottom of my neck,
An aching, silent groan.

I need you friend! I need you girl!
You turn around and twirl your twirl.
You have so much to fill your time,
I want to make you mine, but...

You're slippery as an eel,
You're slippery as a fish,
You can't pin down a raincloud,
Nor make come true that wish.

A week? A week?
Why don't you say a year?
Why don't you see we'll meet in hell?
Though technically that's here.

I am intense, ferocious love,
I need the cloud to come to me.
And when it rain upon my head,
I need it there to be.

I am a river on a plain,
Soon to dissolve in all again,
My waters made of sorrows are,
And week long droughts, and many stars.

Seb CP5

Ian

The stench in my bedroom is overwhelming

My heart
Torn from my chest
And flung into a bin
That I haven't emptied in years.

No!
Don't stop now!

"You love me, I love you and so it goes
On and on and on and on..."
How many?
Ooooooooooh
My poor head.

Time and time again you begged me to stay

No!
Stop right there!

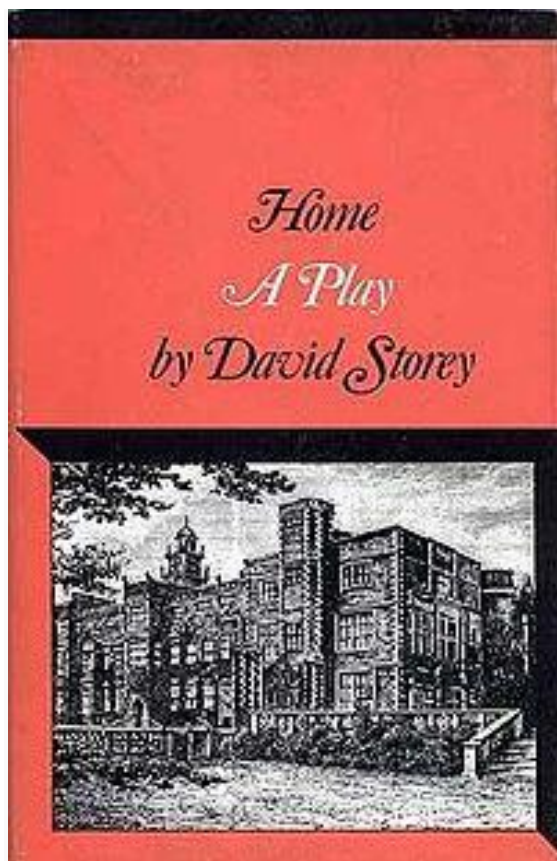
And I broke two hearts
At once

But darling Ian
I couldn't watch you watch me suffer
Turning off lights that never came on
Answering doors to hosts of ghosts
Fleeing into the night from tropical moths
And watching devils on Coronation St.
Gorging on human flesh . . .

I love you Ian
With every bit of my heart in a basket
But I am a basket-case
And I'm running out of steam
And your baby blue eyes were too innocent to
see through me
And that's the reason I turned you down,
My tall, blonde, handsome man
My whispering willow
My reason for saying
noooooooooo.

Maria Ní Mhurchú, 19/11/2013

The Asylum of Theatre



So what's *Home* about? On what would have been my father's 90th birthday, I like him in childhood looked over an old-style asylum wall. He grew up talking to people doing physical jerks, claiming they were Napoleon, King John (a woman) and taking rightly this as a form of normality. It had an effect. After designing aircraft, he later on refused routes to chairs in psychiatry and psychology, scorning what he felt were still crude over-diagnostic methodologies for his own. He used these in neurological studies in ophthalmology, his own professorship's domain. He asked people questions, so he could refuse his own answers. He thought his psychiatric colleagues were often ill, and cited abuses.

The physical fitness invested with much ferocity in the 1920s returned fictively from the 1970s, and with the narration.

David Storey's 1970 play *Home* harrowed out its sinewy slow pace. So I saw it in 2013. My parents both saw this at Brighton's Theatre Royal prior to its West End run, with Gielgud and Richardson. My father was very impressed as my mother quotes him: 'almost to a state of psychic contemplation as to what it offered of a view of a future of – also currently undiagnosed – people too... a devastating concept . . . I think there are deep psychological connotations with *Home*; it's both brilliant and profoundly disturbing. There are questions to be asked about what 'sane' is.' I'm reporting here verbatim what my mother has quoted to me. My mother added 'It's as you get older – Paul was 47 – with a view of age to come as one possible avenue to mental distress, that you also negotiate with as he again said, 'the settled bleakness on you'... a mantle of hoar-frost.'

Let's look at it as a play first, since this is what we apparently have: actors and audience and the notion of asylum treated by a playwright – which can grate or not, on many who've suffered mental distress. But as Storey knew then, this is about more than asyla, and less than an indictment. Its context however morphs into a wider culture of portrayal, and this needs looking at.

The refined Harry sits, reading, and is joined by the opinionated Jack, cheerfully dapper, umbrella'd and hatted, as if visiting him. They recite parts of their lives, as ordinary fusilier and RAF ground crew (both in the war), none of these lives seem more than mundane, and the point is that they're probably true in part and the actual fictions – was one a fridge salesman or not? He was something else last week

Marjorie points out – are indistinguishable from probability. No King John asked where s/he hid his jewels in the Wash.

For only gradually is it apparent that these two men are both in fact in an old-style genteel asylum, and their gentlemanly bonhomie only shattered when two women the flirty Kathleen and lemon-tongued Marjorie turn up. You feel it's going to be a duetting play (like *A Month in the Country*), but this is broken into a quartet, where the women's far greater explicitness and ability to face their torment, highlights the fact that they're not even allowed a small amount of shoe elastic, in case they might hang themselves.

With Alfred charging in and out almost hurling tables at the audience and stealing chairs menaces with his own uncertainty, you know you're in an unreformed place. It is finally the men who break down in tears, but still as gentlemen extend arms as if out in the Strand. It's an intensely moving play. This version ran straight through hurtling softly at 105 minutes to its conclusion.

Leaves strewed themselves all over the central space; in the round or rectangular square the Arcola 80 seat was very small full and hot, but with Amelia Sears' direction Jack Shepard Paul Copley *et al* were able to shine.

Can I imagine this even more intense, with the original Gielgud/Richardson duo? Yes, a notch; but it's easily the best I've seen Jack Shepard play, the cast all consummate.

Paul Taylor praised the greater psychological truth of this performance to the 'viola and oboe' partnership of

Richardson and Gielgud which I never saw, Amelia Sears' direction, and Naomi Dawson's designs with real leaves so audience and actors alike crunched as they sat.

That was true. **Paul Copley** is a disarming (so 'normalised') parody of Jack the Lad in age, to the ruminant Harry of Jack Shepherd, the poetry ceding a little more to psychological realism, but with that creating a finer balance. So Sears has understood what needs to happen to story's narrative, and allow for a greater truth that doesn't reduce or even oboe and viola-ise the realities of a bygone culture of asyla. It suggests time passes with a few taps of late tea sunlight.

Tessa Peake-Jones and **Linda Broughton** performed their own duet, lewd and shrewish in turn, desperate with their own kind of courage. Alfred (**Joseph Arkley**) persistently breaks up the space by stealing chairs and menaces with thrusting tables above his head, occasionally hissing out his operation-damaged lines.

I felt the pace went as fast as it could and perhaps the two acts being run together defied some musicality, and a sinking-in of silences orchestrated in the original, but I also enjoyed in particular the way the intimacy – we're never more than a few feet away from a poet here – enjoined complicity, non-judgment and a hint of danger as the poor brain-damaged Alfred ranged and charged round the set just as some did in the asylum next door to where my father and his siblings grew up – this was where I was again reminded it's his 90th today, the man who as a child perched on a wall to witness all this and deem it normal, even though he'd been schooled otherwise; and who asked awkwardly of

adults; and continually asked questions of those who were called inmates.

This and SP's relevance and vice versa makes this a topical thought for the week or decade, because it's a history of a vanished abusive culture which yet allowed conversations people often can't have now, between themselves in particular. The leaves were crackling all around us, the brickwork was stripped back and were in garden seats as it were in a rectangle around the central flag-stoned in a sunlit autumnal garden at this time of year, perhaps a shade earlier dependent on clement weather and much else.

What's changed? The decline of Britain (and Empire, very 1970) was not going to work quite as a trope, though the detritus of lives piled up the beginning as Harry and Jack seem to have an endless supply of previous lives and relatives, is a neat metaphor. Too much antiphonal exposition for me perhaps, and perhaps I'm impatient.

This is of course far less exuberant than Peter Weiss in his *Marat/Sade* or Dürrenmatt in *The Physicists* would make it, and of course it's less of a classic since it doesn't take asyla as tropes to be strangled into brilliant plays about respectively inmates. Or in *The Physicists*, sane self-referring inmates using an asylum to hide their deadly discoveries and 'acting' mad, strangling nurses who recognize their genius and sanity and dangerously fall in love with them – which could expose their deadly knowledge which conquers even mutual love. All is in vain. The typical Dürrenmatt anti-heroine in charge knows who they are and they'll work as slaves for her to rule and end the world.

This is chillingly brilliant, though offers few true responses to the notion of asylum, which one might suggest has been mightily abused by such brilliance. It tells us how society might permit a dramatist to utilize all such ideas of an asylum, popular and even cultured ones, as a dramatic trope.

Storey's *Home* is of course infinitely more humane and truthful and should serve as an antidote to those brilliant plays. It came shortly after they did (both around 1962) and also poses the question of where we are now with this literature. No further than Joe Penthall's superb 2000 play *Blue/Orange*. In other words, this play about medication, supervision and individual freedom treats from several perspectives the facts of mental illness by the diagnosers as well as the labelled and misdiagnosed. One apparently liberal doctor is in favour of letting a patient back into the community, but because of economies, the revolving door. The younger doctor bullied by the older one (I saw Robert Bathurst bully brilliantly) opposes this too easy diagnosis, and by being the one who cares is cast as persecutor, and threatened with dismissal. The switch-backs in plot as each outwits the other doesn't distract from the helplessness of the central but mute character. Penthall in 2012 felt that in the 12 years since, very little had changed and indeed recently had got much worse. *Blue/Orange* doesn't obtrude with tropes, it doesn't also record the condition and interaction of inmates with such infinite pathos. By 2000 the asylums were closing and the possibility of interaction itself was fading. Just the point perhaps where *Survivors' Poetry* comes in.

And I wasn't much more than six feet from a poet. With Jack Shepherd afterwards was Tony Harrison, where we exchanged memories of Leeds, Martin Seymour-Smith and the excellence of *Poetry & Audience* where he published Barry Cryer's verse. He told me my copy of his 1964 *Earthworks* by T. W. Harrison (no less) was worth hundreds . . .

But one has to ask, what are we six feet away from, each day of our lives? My father loved Dürrenmatt's *The Physicists*, but he said that was political theatre, just as the same dramatist's *The Visit of the Old Lady* was (where my father delighted in quoting the lines of his own 'castrated' brother who once played in it). *Home* was a truth to haunt and penetrate. It disturbs the settled bleakness of things, and the boundaries of what refuge and diagnosis is; since unlike even the superb Penthall, *Home* also might be lying in wait for anybody, in a horribly contemporary guise: chrome, plated smiles and (Dave Russell's words) governmental disinfectant.

Simon Jenner



'Hymn Series - Green Shrouds (detail)'
by David Storey - Oil on canvas

I Am Nothing

those words ring in my ears,
resurrect my fears
I am nothing
but a weeping mess
and no one could care less

my crumbling body
collapses
I am nothing
but a pile of ash
with no soul

my tears
start to drown me
and wash away
in the gutter, 'til
I am nothing

Paola Borella

Autumn leaf

tears in my hair
roll down my face
leaving a trace
of the pain
I'm trying to wash away,
for each day
that I cry
I live a moment longer
but the sorrow is buried
so deep
that when I weep
it grates my insides
filling me with fear,
draining my appetite,
I wither away
like an autumn leaf
trampled,
discoloured,
lifeless

Paola Borella

Field of Tears

my heavy head
rolls like a boulder
in my gentle hands
while a stream of tears
quenches the grass,
the light catches glimpses
of painful scenes
on the tear stained blades,
flashing like explicit moments,
colourless
but filled with angst

my blood is grey,
dirty and impure
it oozes with
a putrid smell,
I scrub and rinse
my tainted skin
but the odour lingers
and I pass out
under the setting sun

Paola Borella

Shrinking Violet

buried in the depths of my mind
is an eternal fear
mouldy and rotten
but not forgotten,
unearthed,
exposed of its rancid insides,
I retch,
bitter particles remain
in my mouth
curbing my appetite,
stealing my words
transforming me into
the shrinking violet
I once was

Paola Borella

That name

hollow
no word can describe
the pain,
my mere existence
is slowly fading
into a bleak abyss,
soon I'll be nothing
but fragments of bone
and flesh
carved with that name

Paola Borella

Venomous Vase

Poison spills over the edge
and dribbles down
ceramic skin,
blemishing it with
curdled mud,
suffocating the beauty beneath

I wish that vase would
eternally close
and allow that rose
to bloom and thrive.

With petals so dull
that weep every day
the rose becomes weak,
nearly dies
until someone hears her cries
and plucks her from
the obscure depths of
that venomous vase

Paola Borella

Alan W. Jankowski is the award winning author of well over one hundred short stories, plays and poems. His stories have been published online, and in various journals including *Oysters & Chocolate*, *Muscadine Lines: A Southern Journal*, *eFiction Magazine*, *Zouch*, *The Rusty Nail*, and a few others he can't remember at the moment. His poetry has more recently become popular, and his 9-11 Tribute poem was used extensively in ceremonies starting with the tenth anniversary of this tragic event . . .

Neon Sign

I guess I really can't blame them.
How could they be expected to know the truth,
When all they see is some well-rehearsed smile,
That I have been putting on in the morning,
Like a clean shirt.
I think I have it down to a science,
I've been doing it for so long.
I've polished my act to where I almost fool myself sometimes,
Yet at times the sadness slips through to the world.
My mother asked me the other day if I was doing drugs again,
As if that ever really worked,
Things should really be that easy for just once,
I think to myself, 'How could they not know?'
And yet at times I think maybe I should just tell them.
But, how do you express the hurt that goes deep inside?

How do you express how you really feel?
When you don't know how you really feel yourself.
Sometimes I just feel so numb to the world,
Or maybe, it's just the fear of the unknown,
As if it could really get any worse.
Maybe I'm just afraid of giving up my hurt,
When at times it seems that hurting is all I've got.
Perhaps the only thing I do well.
Yet at times I'd really like to tell someone,
But how could I make them understand?
Sometimes I think I should just hold up a big neon sign,
That says 'Hurting' in big, bright letters.
All electric blue with just a tinge of blood red,
And then maybe someone will notice,
And then maybe someone will care,
But then again, why should they?
Why should they care?
After all, it's not their job,
They don't get paid to care.
But wait...I know what I'll do.
As the storms begin to build inside my head,
Like a thief robbing me of any peace I might have had,
And as the thunder starts to clamor in my mind,
It's very dissonance drowning my every thought,
I'll walk boldly into those very storms,
With my neon sign held high above my head,
And as the thunder bursts around me,
And the pouring rain soaks me to the

skin,
And when the lightning bolts brighten
up the sky,
I will no longer fear a thing,
For as the lightning strikes my neon
sign,
And the electric shocks surge through
my rain soaked body,
And the pain overtakes me from head to
toe,
It will be the first time I've really
felt anything in years,
Perhaps for the first time ever.
And as the last bit of life drains
from my wet body,
I will be free at last.
And as my soul leaves my lifeless
form,
To venture forth into the unknown,
And the unknown will welcome me with
open arms,
Taking me in like a true friend,
And the unknown will provide me with
shelter and comfort,
Perhaps for the first time ever.
And as the rains continue to pour down
upon me,
All the hurt shall be washed away,
And all the pain shall be felt no
more,
For all my struggles shall cease in an
instant,
And every unrequited love shall remain
so,
And every broken promise shall remain
broken,
And all the hatred directed towards me
shall miss its mark,
And every resentment harbored shall be
set aside,
And every tear shall be forced to find
a new home,
And as I look down upon my dead body,
I can watch all my so-called friends

gather round,
They'll probably rummage through my
pockets,
And fight over who gets my new
sneakers,
Then again, why should they care?
After all, it's not their job.

12-13-10.

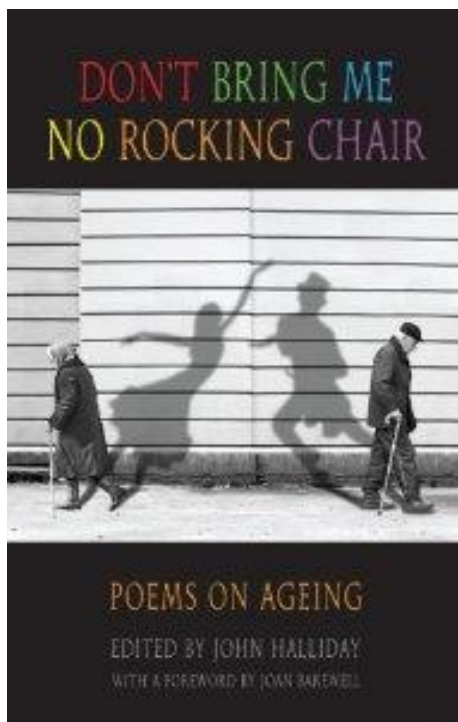
Guilty Of What, I Do Not Know

The darkness descended upon the night,
So heavily you could hear it hit the
ground,
The birds still sang their songs by
day,
But I could no longer recognize the
tune.
My feet ran furiously,
But I gained no ground.
I reached out,
But no one was there.
I looked upon the faces of the crowd,
But no one seemed to know me.
And the truth was,
I barely knew myself.
I got down on my knees and begged
forgiveness,
Guilty of what, I do not know.
My emotions seemed frozen into place,
Like the time that appeared to stand
still around me,
Every minute that passed seemed like
hours,
And days crawled by like eternities.
And yet I knew the journey had just
begun,
For I am at the entrance to a long,
dark tunnel.
And as I stand before the cold
darkness,
My thoughts weigh heavily upon my

mind,
 Like the heaviness in my heart,
 But venture forth I must.
 For I must escape this place that
 holds me,
 With every fiber of my being.
 And things will never be the same.
 I pray that things will never be the
 same.

Alan Jankowski

12-22-11.



Don't Bring Me No Rocking Chair

Poems on Ageing, edited by
John Halliday

Bloodaxe Books 2013 ISBN 978-1-85224-
987-8 £9.95

'Ageing through the ages' is a good
description of this book, 'struggling with

ageing' perhaps better. In the words of the
Editor: "I believe poetry offers us a fresh
language which can help us recognize, tackle
and ultimately embrace our ageing." This
sentiment is echoed in **Joan Bakewell's**
Foreword: "But among all this flux, one thing
abides . . . the power of the word to move us,
above all the power of poetry to distil what
happens to the human spirit." Some
perspective on mortality too: the editor
quotes existential psychotherapist **Irving
Yalom**: "Whereas the physicality of death will
destroy us, the idea of death will save us."

The collection has 5 sections: 1. **Ancient and
Modern**; 2. **Individual/Body**; 3. **Mind/Social**;
4. **Spirit/Archetypal**; 5. **Older Poets**.

Ancient and Modern goes as 'modern' as
1800, which the editor considered to be a
'cutting off' point, because that coincided
with the publication of Wordsworth's and
Coleridge's *Lyrical Ballads* and the beginning
of Romanticism. Poems in this section are
predominantly prejudicial and ageist. They
take a sanguine view of ageing and favour
living for the moment. As to be expected,
there are several 'old favourites' here,
Shakespeare – both sonnets and extracts
from the plays, **John Donne**, **Robert Herrick**
and **Thomas Gray's** *Elegy Written in a Country
Churchyard*. The most positive, anti-ageist
poem in this selection is **William Cartwright's**
*To Chloe, Who Wished Herself Young Enough
For Me*: "There are two births; the one when
light/First strikes the new awaken'd
sense;/The other when two souls unite,/And
we must count our life from thence . . . Love
makes those young whom age doth chill,/And
whom he finds young keeps young still." Some
polemic against the ruthlessness of Time from
John Milton.

Individual/Body: **John Halliday** considers
Walt Whitman's *I Sing the Body Electric* (1955)

as a turning point in attitudes towards ageing. This section is far more stark and challenging than its predecessor; as a composite, it faces the full facts of bodily change and decay, as experienced by the poets for themselves, and as observed by others. One (perhaps too rare) 'world' poem – *Anodyne* – from **Yusef Komuntakaa** – main point of optimism in the collection: "I know I was born/to wear out/at least one hundred angels." **Lucille Clifton's** *poem to my uterus* incorporates the womb into a comprehensive life vision. **Sylvia Plath**, in *Face Lift*, makes a disturbing comparison between cosmetic/plastic surgery and mummification. The operation is 'successful'. "I grow backward." But there is an ironic edge to the restoration of youth – 'my fingers/Buried in the lambswool of the dead poodle.' Combat with death in **Marilyn Hacker's** *Cancer Winter*.

Mind/Social: "The poems here explore some of the influences both personal and interpersonal to which we are susceptible when it comes to ageing." One issue raised here is that of the mental freedom associated with old age, such as in **W B Yeats's** *Why Should Not Old Men Be Mad?* There is the concomitant of staying young at heart; when one grows old, one becomes free of social obligation, as outlined by **Seamus Heaney** in *Of all those starting out*. Some discussion of mental time-travel in relation to ancient documents in **Gregory Corso's** *I Held a Shelley Manuscript*. Life is ironically commodified and reified in Peter Porter's *A Consumer's Report*. In *The Other House*, **Anne Stevenson** ingeniously uses the imagery of houses as being associated with the various stages of life. The final 'house' embraces contrarities: it is 'Infinitely huge and small'. It faces the totality of the elements rather than being a shelter against them: "Beneath me, infinitely deep,/Solidity dissolves./Above me, infinitely wide,/Galactic winter sprawls." **Peter Porter**,

in *Ranunculus Which My Father Called a Poppy*, reflects on the significance of the remembrance plant. Peter's father made a desperate attempt to cultivate a bed of poppies which he could observe, and be sustained by, from his nursing home – but "ranunculus are hard to grow from seed." Death can be abrupt and cataclysmic, as described in **Philip Larkin's** *The Explosion*. **Wendy Cope's** *Names* touches on the phenomenon of second childhood. Somewhat similarly, **Lawrence Ferlinghetti** tries to revisit childhood to gain intimations of immortality. In *When I Grow Up*, **Hugo Williams** makes an ironic stand for geriatrics' masochistic rights. Larkin, in *The Old Fools*, tries to get into the geriatric mind: "Perhaps being old is having lighted rooms/Inside your head . . ." The most complex piece in this section is **Sean O'Brien's** *Elegy*, which makes a life panorama of an old man approaching the periphery of mortality. Longevity and reality are both strongly challenged here: "It seems that history does not exist:/We must have dreamed the world you've vanished from./This elegy's a metaphysical excuse,/A sick note meant to keep you back/A little longer . . ."

Spirit/Archetypal: This takes as its starting point Nietzsche's famous assertion that 'God is dead'. "It is also clear that for each individual their own pursuit of what they consider to be spiritual or archetypal is crucial. Hence this section ranges widely from those who adhere to a Christian framework to those whose beliefs lie elsewhere." An impassioned plea for a struggle against ageing with **Dylan Thomas's** *Do Not go Gentle Into That Good Night*: "Old age should burn and rave at close of day;/Rage, rage against the dying of the light." This section presents both sides of the debate about "Should an anthology about ageing seek to offer consolation?" – with **Louis MacNeice** and **W H Auden** representing the extremes of

pessimism. Some positively aesthetic cynicism in **Chase Twichell's** *The Condom Tree*. Through the imagery of surgical litter apparently defacing a maple tree, the poet explores the idea of sex as a rejuvenator, and boldly queries the intrinsic beauty of the tree: "was it beautiful,/caught in that dirty floral light,/or was it an ugly thing?" **Denise Levertov**, in *Variation and Reflection on a Theme by Rilke*, reflects wistfully on what life would be like if the 'swing of cause and effect/would come to rest' – and the ageing process stop dead in its tracks, but realizes that flux and motion must be lived with: "What we desire travels with us." **Sharon Olds** tries to construct her post-mortem perspective in *Heaven to Be*.

Older Poets: an appropriate concluding section, featuring still living poets who live and write on in their old age. A not wholly inappropriate inclusion of *Abide With Me*. A great double perspective with **Roger McGough's** *Let Me Die a Youngman's Death* and *Not For Me a Youngman's Death* – the first from the perspective of relative youth, the second reflective from that of advanced age. One of the greatest retrospectives with **Seamus Heaney's** *The Railway Children*. Seamus' *Miracle* seems to refer to taking a corpse to a mortuary. *Fanfare*, by **U A Fanthorpe**, celebrates the life of the poet's mother, who seemed to have been an incredibly stalwart support through adversity: "You were good at predicting failure . . . All your life you lived in a minefield,/And were pleased, in a quiet way, when mines/exploded." Through her pessimism she was a source of optimism: "You always had some stratagems for making/Happiness keep its distance. Disaster/Was what you planned for." She was abstracted in her dealings with people: "Well-meaning neighbours/Were dangerous because they lived near.//Me too you managed best at a distance." In the

penultimate stanza, the poet suggests that mother willed her own time of dying: "You foresaw/Us approaching the Delectable Mountains,/And didn't feel up to all the cheers and mafficking." **Ruth Fainlight** reflects on the reality and totality of ageing after a lifetime of speculating and writing about it. **Derek Walcott's** *Sea Canes* laments the fate of those who perish at sea, and takes no consolation from the earth's limp assurance that "I will make you new ones". In *Lives by* **Derek Mahon**, the poet takes on the contrapuntal personae of the long-buried skeleton, and the anthropologist doing the excavation work. The poem ends with an indictment of human vanity: "I know too much/To be anything any more;/And if in the distant//Future someone/Thinks he has once been me/As I am today,//Let him revise/His insolent ontology/Or teach himself to pray." Significantly, that poem was dedicated to **Seamus Heaney**, whose *In the Attic* concludes this collection. It is a retrospective on Seamus's childhood, which was deeply influenced by *Treasure Island*. As is well known, Seamus was recently deceased and deeply mourned. I find this poem a fitting conclusion to the collection.

All in all, a valiant attempt to expunge age of stigmas and pejorative associations. "This anthology may not console but it can widen our perspectives, helping us to change what we *can* change: our attitudes." In some sense it is a guide to the reader's personal struggles with ageing: "Through our own personal experience as we age we shall indeed find out but along the way the words of these poems may offer us some clues as to what we might encounter along the way."

Dave Russell

Beyond by Sarah Wardle



Bloodaxe Books 2014

ISBN 978 1 78037 097 2 £9.95

“Let London be a city of love/Beyond its competition and isolation!” (intro).

Having reviewed *Score* and *A Knowable World*, I find that *Beyond* marks a further progression towards hope and optimism. The opening poem refers to the decease of Constance (Sarah’s mother?) and seizes on the positive aspects of a decease as an opener to the afterlife: “while we live, we sail alone’/may all of us keep each of us in mind/beyond this world, beyond the ends of time, to give us hope as we travel the road,//as on the morning after you had died/you gave me strength to follow the horizon . . .”

Chinese Calligraphy is an acute exploration of symbolism. In Chinese script, music is indeed the same as peace. Phenomena such as the past, eternity and the city are given colour codes. “Heart

needs more strokes to make it forget” (= needs perseverance to generate resilience?)

Watching a Ta’ziye – “This title [*Ta’ziyeh*: Indigenous Avant-Garde Theatre of Iran] is deliberately controversial. But it is, perhaps, the most accurate description of the only indigenous drama engendered by the world of Islam. The *Ta’ziyeh* of Iran is ritual theatre and derives its form and its content from deep-rooted religious traditions. But although it is Islamic in appearance, it is strongly Persian, drawing vital inspiration from its special political and cultural heritage.

Its genius is that it combines immediately and flexibility with universality. Uniting rural folk art with urban, royal entertainment, it admits no barriers between the archetype and the human, the wealthy and the poor, the sophisticated and the simple, the spectator and the actor. Each participates with and enriches the other.” (Peter Chelkowski)

Witnessing this spectacle was obviously a root experience for Sarah. It seems to bond together a crowd as one body. It seems to transcend time, embracing Ancient Greek and medieval European drama. Contemporary spectators “become imitations,/copies of the original audience”. There is a further aesthetic experience in the expressions of the spectators:

“There is silent music in their expressions,/sincere as symphonies.” The composite of spectacle and audience may have been videoed.

Beyond the Ends of Time reiterates the title/opener. As she has progressed through life, Sarah has rejected Heraclitus’ philosophy in favour of love, though she finds this hard to prove. But she decides that if one taps into compassionate love, one finds a source of ‘Heraclitean water, which may lead to fulfilment – “. . . the point where love rests and life stops,/and ice is the image that conjoins them,/the point of death and of lack of motion./Then may my love for you be like the winter/at true and magnetic north.” The icicle of that winter is dual – the icicle/of warmth, the dagger’s stab of love’s goodwill”. It is absolute

and eternal 'beyond melting's temperature'. This truly affirmed love will 'outlast the universe'.

Beyond Metaphysics asks the incredibly profound question ". . . is the metaphysical beyond, or within . . ." Sarah passionately favours the latter, the sense instead of the superficial sign, the truly felt reality of ethical issues, as against 'textbook examples'.

Kitchen Garden makes brilliant analogies between human endeavour and agri/horticulture, the most cogent of which are "take despair as if it were manure,/use dissatisfaction like peat".

Field Work is an admirable expression of humanity's connexity with the tangible universe – 'truth is present in all things . . . world is linked', and its durability – "you'll know you sew a line you'll never unthread,/as life's material becomes embroidered." The reader is urged to ask 'how and if' rather than 'who or why' to be acknowledged by the universe.

There follows a sequence of poems concentrating on the ethos of London. *Night Music* – a panorama of the inner urban wasteland – powerful portrayal of desolation "Rain is singing a litany/for all the lives that look as though they're lost . . . the city is paved with dog-shit, not gold – the troubled woman jumping into the street,/will be ferried not on the Thames, but Styx." The root cause – materialism, is nailed: "Its hearts are overpriced, and bought and sold./Its desires accelerate like engines." In *Night Watch* a lonely but comfortable person reflects on the lot of those truly deprived and desolated, while in *The Listeners* that same comfortable, detached person is jolted into awareness of the lot of the deprived. *City Walk* offers some consolation and exhortation for those feeling down – to get out and about, and put oneself in context, appreciate that there are those better off than oneself, and those worse off. I was very struck by the phrases 'fertility is boiling dry,/and friendship fading like a dye,/and youth sinking like a bad joke.

Midwinter – reflection on the cycle of the sun, which seems to perish when it sets. Great concluding optimism – "you rise even at the winter

solstice, promising midsummer's radiance. *Twelfth Night* is a reflection on Sarah's mother recovering from a serious operation. Drift – life's treadmills are indeed dreary, but "That London links us is a consolation." *Keeping Going* – another plea for perseverance, blended with a flashback to Sarah's days at Oxford – "I caught a crab while I watched/the swans" indeed. A highly positive outlook – you don't need antidepressants "Morning sun is enough", and you can be assured of positive feedback. *Credo* – dogged perseverance again – "I won't chase life, but go at its own pace". Perceptive conclusion in "evenings are for now but metaphor".

Then a series of poems reflecting on the individual's relationship to the metropolis (actually, section headings might have been a good idea here). *Commuters' Pentameter* – "Are you a separate body, or part/of the Leviathan, the lungs? . . . Can you hear yourself think out loud,/or are you suffocating in the throng" It challenges the authoritative power of the city "Should there be an opt-out clause/for those who don't want to be confirmed/into the mysteries citizens learn . . ." The final couplet interestingly compares the humdrum rhythms of city life with the iambic foot, which may or may not be invigorating and consoling. *Citybreak* – the sun rising on many a metropolis always bears optimism: "the sun represents the highest octave". *Breakfast Soliloquy* – the rhythms of machines and routine utilities are in tandem with the pulse of the universe. *Rural Calm in the City Centre* – one must never forget the tranquillity of bustling business areas outside business hours; one small blessing of commuterdom.

Single encapsulates the universal feelings of people who want to escape from the city by train, and observe the urban sights through the carriage window. The observer feels some affinity with the web of activity and human drama she passes by, "but you realise there's no plot to lose,/no other author on whom your scripts depend" – she is glad to get away. *Full English* – reflection on the old age of an enduring couple (full English breakfast?).

Progress is the first poem in this collection with antique historical reference – to the classical Greek period. There is a sacrificial ceremony in the course of a war between Athens and Sparta. A concluding reference to a trader selling vases with images of gods throwing spears: “His kind will see the city rises from ruins.” Presumably after braver souls have perished.

Hope has as its subtitle a reference to George Frederic Watts, the famed Victorian painter, who did an allegorical painting called *Hope* now on display at the Tate Gallery. It is a picture of a young woman slumped over a lyre with broken strings, and could more aptly, perhaps, have been called *Despair*. “He painted blind Hope seated on a globe and playing on a lyre which has all its strings broken except one. She bends her head to listen to the faint music, but her efforts appear forlorn; the overall atmosphere is one of sadness and desolation rather than hope.” (Tate Gallery). This is a lament for someone led on and discarded, by Zeus or a man, who has lost self-confidence. But the woes may have been self-inflicted. It ends with an exhortation: “Your hands are untied. Let in the light!/No more melancholy. Sing of life!”

On Lambeth Bridge is a sound survey of the commercial metropolis; most telling phrase here is “the Eye revolves/like economic cycles”. *The Passage* shows the down-side in the form of charity soup kitchens. *Freshers* – wistful reflections on undergraduate times, some words of encouragement for the next wave – “they’re all in first place”. In *Management Logic* Sarah is writing from the perspective of a lecturer, against a background of student protest. *Dairy farm* is a little patronising towards the students, comparing their black and white graduation attire to black and white cattle. *Awayday* is a eulogy to enlightened, contemporary ‘interdisciplinary education’. There seems to be a note of irony here; the rhetoric appears a little too good to be true; I may of course be completely wrong. *National Speed Limit* – success in later life recalls school-day experiences.

The celebration of *Country Life* seems a bit double-edged. Many dark significances could be read into

the white-garbed umpire saving the village from the black-frocked vicar. Of course there is tranquillity and empty space – no ambulances, no fire engines; but what would happen in an accident? *The Doctor* concerns the hard life of a country doctor battling against the elements, and experiencing some failure and frustration. It is dedicated to the late Victorian Social Realist painter Sir Luke Fildes, whose works include *The Doctor* (1891) and *Applicants for Admission to a Casual Ward after 1908*.

Sunday Morning is a routine description of an urban sunrise; most memorable phrases here are “The office block across the street/emerges like a coastal shelf” and “those who went before/who’ll survive metaphorically”. This central selection of poems, to me, lacks the depth of the other poems.

Lock-in is, deservedly, one of Sarah’s best-known poems. It concerns dialogue with a psychiatrist who confesses to some authentic humanity, with a hilarious anecdote about how he got locked out of his flat. Great rapport – very reassuring for the patient/examinee. *A Defence of Blue* celebrates that colour as representing peace, harmony and permanence. *Concert for Anarchy* – dedicated to Rebecca Horn, a surrealist artist who, reputedly, creates machines with souls. Salvador Dali would have loved this poem. A grand piano is suspended from a ceiling, upside down. It assumed a life of its own, and makes its own music “. . . wresting expression and control/from the romantic composer’s genius” All the other orchestral instruments, and even the office photocopier and telephones assert their independence; this is true music.

Hunters portrays the inner urban jungle, with full analogies – pedestrians are the prey, buses are the predators, cyclists feel vulnerable, like wildebeest; an unconscious beggar feels like carrion for vultures and hyenas. *Vole* is a moving story about a child who rescued a vole from the elements, and took it to a vet; it perished shortly after being returned to its natural habitat. *10/10/10* is a routine old to autumn; one distinguished phrase in ‘trees undressing to their bark’.

Gift is dedicated to Dorothy Wells, presumably an aged relative of Sarah. She has survived wars and struggles bravely with her ailments. Dorothy/Doris is a great source of inspiration to the poet. *Give* pursues the theme of old age, “. . . when you know all the answers,/but nobody asks you the questions . . . happy memories are plasters/for poverty and isolation”. Old people have valuable experiences, but younger types tend not to want to know. The reader is exhorted to remember, and tend, those older and needier than him/herself. *Wish* contains some words of consolation: one cannot turn the clock back to the times of youth, but one can reflect, and be grateful for only being half way towards old age.

Apples celebrates the durability of apple trees, and honours loyalty to a blind grandmother’s recipe instructions. *Hand-me-downs* honours the older generation’s attire and value judgements. In *Diamond Jubilee*, the power of the celebrations open up a rich historical panorama for the poet. *Biology* is a nice, simplistic piece about identifying with the benign flora and fauna. Natural Science – Scientific terminology defines and described natural phenomena, but does not capture their essence as experienced by a sensitive human being. *All Where Each Is* celebrates love as a universal generative force, sustaining all organic life. *Freeman* honours the liberating pulses of the Metropolis. *Finding* left me a little puzzled. When trying to track down Aidan Williams, I found one reference to a feminist socialist; the rest of the poem is a charming description of finding piece of mind in the presence of a horse. It would be great to know how the two connect.

Flying concerns someone’s experiences as a co-pilot, during which ‘I dived and deliberately caused turbulence’. She comes to value the ‘meditation of concentration’ and equilibrium.

The collection concludes with *Beyond the Fallacy of Nought*, the exploration of philosophical depths, challenging the concept of zero as a fabrication by mathematics and religion. The universe is a boundless poem. Some profound observations: “the entire world is a prime number . . . and endless as a curve with infinite numerals . . . the

existence of the time-space continuum/cancels out cause and explanation . . . there are no reasons, just rhymes,/pairs of positive and negative charges . . . there is force of argument,/yet is, was not, nor will be, a decimal point,/only fractions versus units, tens, hundreds,/a balance of assonance and consonance . . .”

Though there was some unevenness of depth in this collection, it shows a true progression in the development of Sarah Wardle’s art.

Dave Russell

Write On The Edge

Entry: Free

Contact:
razzpoet@yahoo.co.uk

Survivor-led Poetry Workshops

Just bring a pen, paper and your imagination (plus photocopies of your poems).

We provide the inspiration.

Venue Details



Tottenham Chances Club
399 High Rd, London, N17 6QN

2:00-4:30pm

Show On Map

Fortnightly Event
(Usually held every other Saturday)

Click to **LOOK INSIDE!**



Test, Match, Day, Room: *Jasper Ward - The Sequence* [Kindle Edition]

By **Philip Ruthen**

http://www.amazon.co.uk/Test-Match-Day-Room-Sequence-ebook/dp/B00I59I7P8/ref=sr_1_7?ie=UTF8&qid=1391185722&sr=8-7&keywords=ruthen

Kindle Price: **£1.53 includes VAT*** & free wireless delivery via Amazon Whispernet

Length: 30 pages (estimated)

Format: Kindle Edition

Publisher: PalamidiPress(London); 1.0 edition (31 Jan 2014)

Sold by: Amazon Media EU S.à r.l. •
Language: English

ASIN: B00I59I7P8

Text-to-Speech: Enabled

File Size: 953 KB

Print Length: 30 pages

Test, Match, Day, Room – poetry for absent friends – a history of our

own times: Written ‘in situ’ during the summer of 2003, this short sequence of poetry responds to appalling conditions endured by myself and people ‘held’ on Jasper Ward, Sutton Hospital, an acute admissions ward in south London for people experiencing disabling mental distress. To the people I met in those circumstances – and for those where ‘acute’ stays often meant months, sometimes a year or more, unnecessarily - as before and elsewhere for their inspiration, and camaraderie - sincere thanks and respect.

This is the first time these poems have been collated into their original sequential form – all 6 poems appear in my 2009 and 2012 collections *Jetty View Holding* and *Apple Eye Feat* respectively, published by Waterloo Press (Hove) www.waterloopresshove.co.uk

Jasper Ward, I understand, lies empty now, nearing dereliction after millions spent on refurbishment, succumbing to Legionnaires disease scares, and public disquiet.

About the author: Philip Ruthen now lives and works in south east London, his poetry, short fiction, book reviews, and associated articles have appeared in a wide variety of publications, in the UK and abroad.

Take Warning!

Clause 118 of the Care Bill, dubbed the 'hospital closure clause', is being rushed through Parliament hot on the heels of Jeremy Hunt's high court defeat over his attempts to close the very successful Lewisham hospital.

No English hospital will be safe from financially driven closures – no matter how successful or financially viable, if there is a failing hospital nearby.

than in patient care. Local people, doctors and councillors will not be consulted in any meaningful way. It's an affront to democracy.

Don't be silenced, the decision whether to close our local hospitals or not cannot be at the whim of a Westminster bureaucrat. Local communities must get a say. Whatever happened to the mantra used by the coalition to sell the recent NHS reconfiguration to us all – 'no decision about me, without me



We won't get a say; the decision to close will be taken by government appointed 'special administrators' alone more interested in balancing the books,

