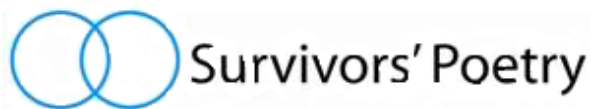


Poetry Express Newsletter #52

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



Wall – by Michelle Eva May



*promoting poetry by survivors
of mental distress*

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

Registered Office: c/o Central & North West London NHS Foundation Trust, 1 St Mary's Terrace, W2 1SU

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LOTTERY FUNDED

Another great evening at **Poetry Café** on **March 10th**. Main acts were **Jessica Lawrence**, who recited against a musical background – Schumann and Villa Lobos, while **John Peacock** showed his supreme progressive jazz and bossa nova technique, as well as some sensitive lyricism.

No slackening of pace on **April 14th**. Through the instigation of Razz, main spot this evening was **Paul Butterfield Junior** – quite a surprise and a revelation to me: I had been half-expecting the Blues in the style of dad. Instead, I met a thoroughly explicit and provocative experimental poet. There was an interesting polarity between his polite, soft-spoken charm and the substance of his verses. He explained how his writing had started from simple beginnings, and then gained more depth and complexity. His opener was Summer Grief. This was followed by *Inspirational Nightmare* and *The Dark Wank*. These were followed by an impassioned letter to Allen Ginsberg, and the stringent self-appraisal of *Am I Just A Lie*. Do sample his video: <https://youtu.be/TPk3rJh4dGo>

Razz's songs were greatly enhanced by the electric violin virtuoso Antonio. **Jessica Lawrence** sustained the wave of sensuality recently released by Tara Fleur kicking that door open. **Sophia Jackson's** contribution was *Exile to a Special Needs Hell* – her creativity seems inexhaustible! A great indictment from **Wendy Young** of the trials and tribulations afflicting coal miners.

Some interesting new faces.

May 12th no less animated, and deserving a much larger audience.

First main spot from **Frank Bangay**. Great conflation of the legends of Jack Frost and Humpty Dumpty – the resilient and the fragile! *King's Cross at Night* expressed deep compassion for someone driven by desperation to violence. *1994* took me back to those far-off days when bedsits were in abundance. Frank also recalls waste grounds and bomb sites. *Homerton Train Station* celebrates a scene of inner urban

desolation, against which trees, flowers and plants make a splendid struggle.

The other main spot, **Helmut Scholtz**, excelled himself as ever on the violin, and worked in more of his delicate, sensitive poetry. The animal kingdom was explored in *Seagulls* and *Old Primate in a Tree*. *75th Birthday Fantasy* touched on the pangs of conscience experienced in advanced age. There was also a very touching love song to his instrument – ‘beautiful curves . . . tiny golden spirals at the back . . . I love you mystery fiddle’. And to think he flew over from Frankfurt, especially for this event! Helmut also gave his usually raunchy backing to Razz’s songs.

Sophia Jackson’s contribution (read by Razz) was, firstly, *Perception out of Tune*. This certainly faced a stark universe with reference to ‘disappearing into a vortex of nothingness’ *One Butterfly Rescues another* – some very delicate imagery exploring the idea of wings; a benign partner helped them to recover from serious damage. Razz, as ever, did a brilliant job as interpreter.

A nice spot from **Peter Brown** and **Markiza**, on one of their visits to London, with *Path of Love* and *Blues*. More declamation from **Tara Fleur** with *Treadmill*. She claimed to have abandoned most of the standard props of life in 1998 – bar hatred; an utterly outspoken statement of desperation. **John Arthur** sang *Cyrenia* (inspired by Jacques Cousteau) and *Subjectivity*. **Wendy Young** read her ‘response to a rant on Facebook’ hitting out against poverty, cruelty and speculation, followed by her dedications to **Lemmy** (of Motorhead) and **David Bowie**. I still marvel at Lemmy’s constitution, that he could have lived so long with such ‘dosages’. Other Spots included **David White**, with a surreal image of a Rolf Harris mask; interesting portrayal of someone being seduced by a Jehovah’s Witness, and *For Richer, for Poorer* – “I’ll do DIY as long as I don’t miss my football match”. **Jessica Lawrence** read *Golden Frog III* (dedicated to David Attenborough), followed by a plea for sparrows, threatened by the decimation of hedgerows. She concluded with her lovely *Naked Water*, published in her collection *Dreams of Flight*. Further interesting contributions from **Lucy Carrington** and **Paul Riley**. The evening ended with an **Edward**’s eloquent plea for the homeless – condemning discrimination against non-alcoholics/non-drug addicts, and an indictment of the shortcomings of Job Centres.

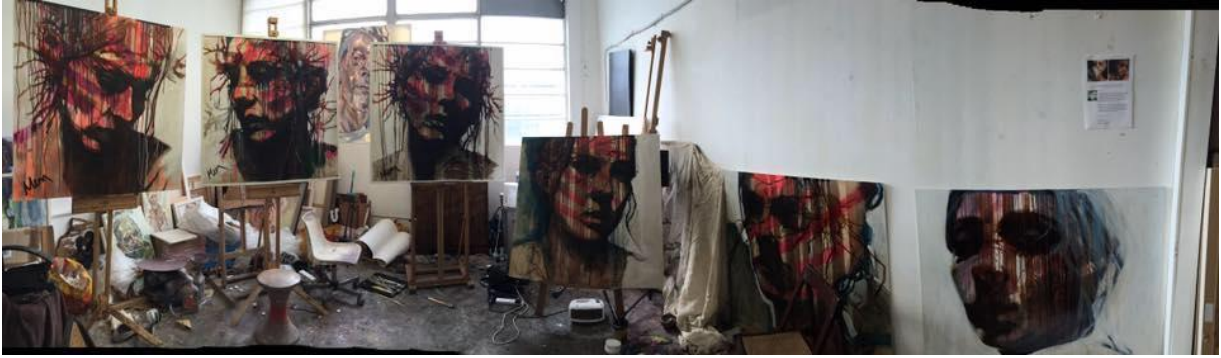
Riotous evening at the poetry Café on June 9th. Main acts were **The Plank Walkers** and **Wendy Young**. Wendy made a pretty savage indictment of BHS Green. **Jessica Lawrence** did a dedication to **Sylvia Plath**, on whom she is a great authority.

July 14th was the last session at the Poetry Café before the start of refurbishment of the premises – estimated to take 4 months or so. Razz was noticeably frail, sustaining a truly brave face in the light of severe health problems. We all hope for special treatment and cure. The session was partly in his honour – Open Mic, the venue crammed to capacity, the atmosphere charmingly chaotic and uninhibited.

Razz did a ‘spoken word’ version of his new song *Playful Day*; he is still working on the sung version. This was followed by his empathetic reading of **Sophia Jackson’s** *Flying Away*. **Christina** made an eloquent protest about the patronizing attitude of her carer, who blocked her from expressing herself. Further, powerful, protest from **Jessica Lawrence** about Exon Enhanced Cat Scans, followed by some of her tender lyricism. Some nice melodic sensitivity from **Chris Goodchild**. **Heidi** told of her experiences in Cornwall, looking after her father, who suffered from Vascular Dementia. Customary wild fiddle virtuosity from **Helmut Scholtz**, followed by his tender ‘love song’ to his fiddle. He later joined Razz, Lawrence Renée and a castanets player as **Baffled Angels**.

Shakhim spoke of his diagnosis of paranoid schizophrenia, and his finally successful struggle to overcome that condition; he made a highly perceptive comment: “I would rather die from looking than be blind.” **Madeleine Smith** performed *Elephant Sunday*. **Tara Fleur’s** *City Life* was full of her customary candour: “I smoke too many emotions . . . diarrhea full of dreams . . . all the books in the libraries are dying (an issue which merits depth debate); the audience was rapt as ever. Some old-time music-hall with an impeccable rendition of *Burlington Bertie* from **Huma Sibtain**. John Arthur did a 50-year ‘retrospective’ with *The Keeper of the Fiery-Throated Wyverns*. Further contributions from **Stephen, Joe** and **Brian Morrissey**.

A moving conclusion to the evening from **Veronique Walsh**, with her *Prozac* song – this took me back to the days of the World Oyster Club at Bunjies.



MICHELLE EVA MAY BIO 2016

Michelle Eva May is an artist who lives and works in North London and whose work harnesses the power of paradox and complementary opposites. Her large-scale mixed media compositions counter the traditional notion of portraiture, presenting a contemporary cropped window into the dark and light world which she captures as a 'construct' of her own emotional journey.

She studied fine art in Johannesburg, South Africa, at the National School of Arts and has been living in the UK since 2000. She has a rare ability to present an emotional connection to the real world, through a combination of vulnerability and strength; Michelle also portrays the dreamlike state of mortality and the subconscious.

"Before I start a new piece I spend a long time looking at my subject. I allow 'feeling' and 'emotion' to guide me, and try not to be too analytical. It's important for me to feel a sense of connection with a person or myself and the environment I live in. I rely on intuition and instinct to lead the way.

There is a lot of self-exploration involved in the work I produce . . . Having a 'voice' as a woman is very important to me. Ultimately beyond the vulnerability and emotion, you peel back the layers and behind it lies a classic and strong individual/woman. I think our battle scars are all part of the overall beauty of a person.

At times I feel very 'alien' and vulnerable in relation to life and to my environment, so painting has become an outlet and a form of therapy for me. A journey and expedition to try and make sense of this world I live in.

I mostly on work large-scale pieces as it makes me feel connected to my work, because it allows me the opportunity to move freely and feel less inhibited. The physical act of movement creates a sense of freedom and passion in itself and is part of the dynamic process that brings my work to life. I believe it takes the work to a different dimension, elevating it by 'letting go', both physically and mentally.

My technique is expressionistic, yet I combine classical art with a contemporary approach. Looking deeper and working in this expressionistic approach is key to my work. Working 'too perfect, precise and realistic' in technique and style removes some deeper sense of 'soul' in my work. I want to capture the essence of the subject. I also think it's what I'm trying to achieve that dictates the approach. Every layer of paint I apply is done in anticipation of the result.

There is a lot of self-conflict and self-exploration going on and it becomes apparent in my paintings. I also recognize this in others. I see 'darkness and light' in all of us and attempt to capture this in my work. The one cannot exist without each other – a metaphor of life. My pieces are an expression of what I see in my subject beyond his/her surface. It's a visual representation of what lies beneath – people are complex!

There's a consciousness and sub-consciousness involved when I produce a piece. I think the 'calm after the storm' is a great way to describe my work. It tells a story (of my journey in life thus far and others') emotionally and visually which I cannot express enough in words . . . Darkness and light, conflict and peace, and ultimately hope!

There's always a story to be told and the use of mixed media and multi-layered technique allows for the story to surface. It brings the piece of work to life – makes it 'breathe'. I sometimes feel like I'm just a vessel and the pieces become their own entities. Existing freely and powerfully. My art is a construct, like film. I'd say I play a director's role . . .

Contact Details

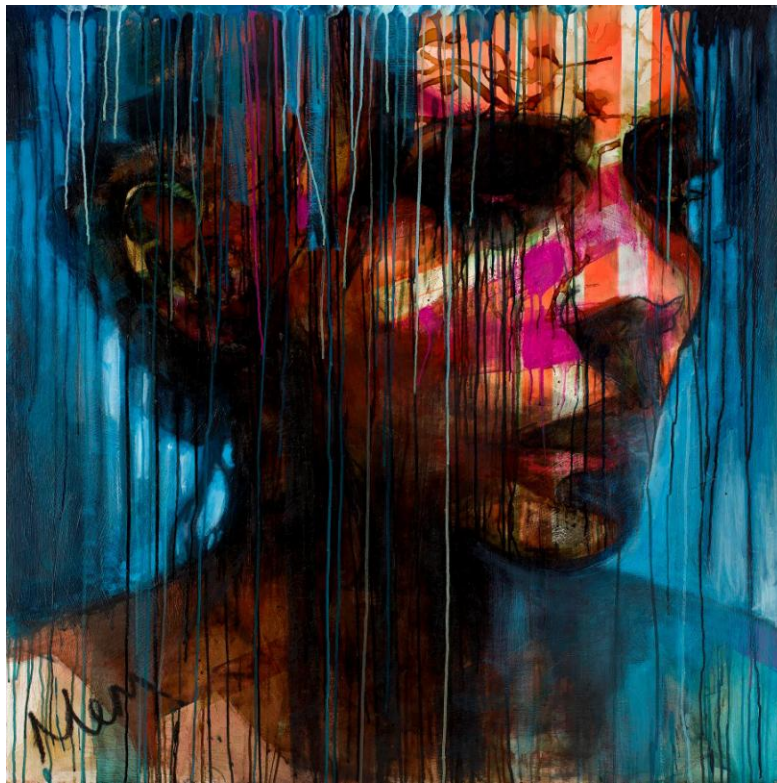
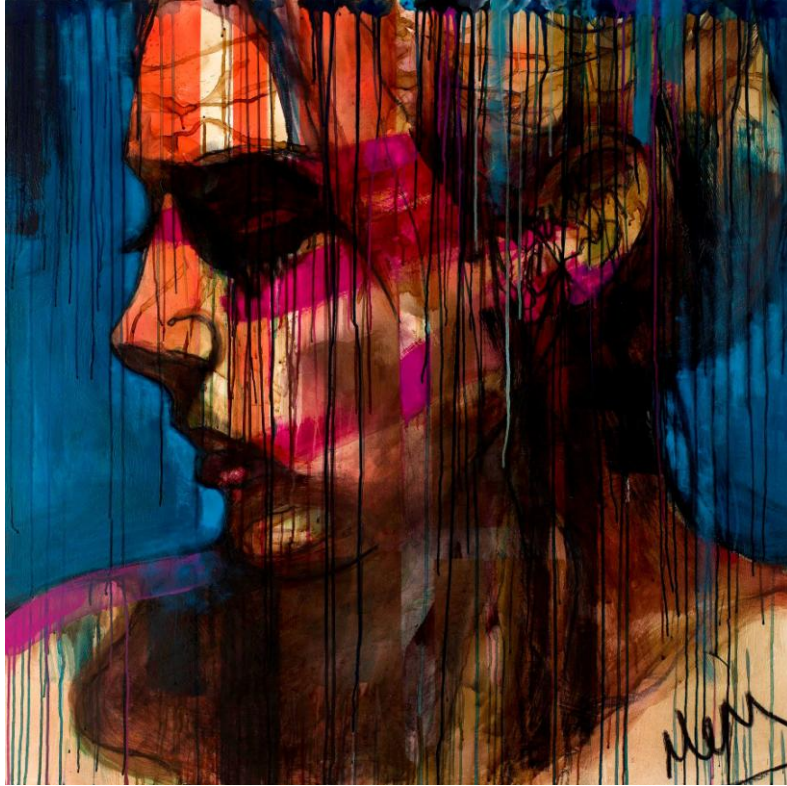
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Michelle Eva May



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On Poetry and Song

I discovered these pieces of music (Schumann, three songs from *Schwanengesang* [Swan Song] on cello and piano) and Villa-Lobos, *Bachianas Brasilieras*, No 1, Complete, at a recital at St James Church, Piccadilly in January. I attend their lunchtime recitals fairly regularly and have discovered some exciting composers and compositions as such; then I go home and find a recording on the internet and 'match' up some of my poems to the piece. I let the music be my guide rather than the other way around, but if I am performing with acoustic musicians which has been the case in the past, and they feel confident about improvising; then we work together to create a unique piece which is composed around the tone and rhythm of the poetry and is inspired by the underlying voice and ambiance of the written composition primarily. I like to perform with stringed instruments but have also incorporated flute and saxophone. The cello and viola are most compatible with the human voice in my opinion, harp harmonizes well also, violin can create an edgy, ethereal atmosphere and I have performed to solo violin when I feel the poetic intent would be heightened by added tension and anticipation.

Music can also serve as punctuation marks, to enhance the meaning and facilitate understanding of a poem; if each poem is akin to a Rubik cube, it could be broken down into segments and sections where each colour would represent a feeling, an image, a meaning or a sound and while no one wants these layers to simplistically interlace, they also don't want a poem to be too convoluted to the point of incomprehension, so music can be used as a way to accentuate and clarify meaning.

In the past music and poetry were seen almost as inseparable entities and I think I believe this also. My poetry has always been very lyrical and the rhythm naturally leans to that inherent in Latin languages rather than northern European ones. I am probably one of the few poets whose native language is English, who feels that English can be a poor language in which to express emotions. It may have many nouns and adjectives –

BUT there is no way, when addressing an individual or individuals, to differentiate between an intimate relationship or someone of unfamiliar acquaintance. I also love the fact that nouns are 'male' or 'female' which endows them with certain attributes but in a flexible and fluid way in poetry, like Ying and Yang characteristics. I think the reason I love the Spanish language poets, like Pablo Neruda is because their use of language is so onomatopoeic and the whole sense of the poem is enhanced by the musical quality of the language. I cannot say I find English so conducive to this and so perhaps I make up for this deficiency by incorporating music into the fabric of the poem.

Jessica Lawrence

Shoddy Treatment

On Wednesday 8th April, **Leeds Survivor Poets** performed at the launch of an art exhibition in Leeds aimed at highlighting the increasing difficulties people with disabilities face as a result of current government policies and welfare benefit cuts. The theme of the exhibition was 'Shoddy', and 19 disabled artists or groups of disabled people interpreted the theme using textiles to highlight different aspects of their experience.

'Shoddy' was originally a type of cloth invented near Batley in Yorkshire in 1832. It got a bad reputation during the American Civil War thirty years later, when uniforms made of shoddy tended to deteriorate quickly, and the word has come to mean sub-standard, or second-class – like the way disabled people have been viewed in this society, as well as the way it seems we are treated at the moment.

A few days before we were due to read at the launch I had an exhilarating if slightly heart-stopping moment as I flipped through the Sunday Observer and found an article about the very exhibition.

<http://www.theguardian.com/society/2016/apr/03/disabled-artists-use-skills-to-highlight-shoddy-treatment-over-benefits>

Suddenly the fact we hadn't managed to have a proper rehearsal, were still uncertain who would be able to make it, and what exactly we were going to be doing became burning questions. Some of which were not answered until the hour of performance. In the event everything fell into place. Over a hundred people turned up for the launch, the biggest crowd we've performed in front of for many years, and all were very enthusiastic. We kept it short and to the point, using **Liz Helliwell's** poem *Upcycled* with a brief introductory piece I'd written.

We're on tenterhooks
The government is spinning us a yarn
They're pulling the wool over our eyes
At the same time as they fleece us
It's shoddy
But luckily we've been
Upcycled!

(LIZ) Grandpop was textiles,
discovered polymer something fancy.
He was shoddy,
he was deaf.
That's why we all speak
(all) LOUD.

Mum paints textiles,
founder of society of floral painters.
She is shoddy,
she is blind.
That's why her paintings are
(all)VIBRANT.

Brother wears textiles,
accountant in a smart suit.
He is shoddy,
blind and epileptic.
That's why he is my
(all) HERO.

And me?
I am a textile
of all of them.
I was abused,
now upcycled to
(all) SURVIVOR.
Proud to be
part of a very
shoddy very
loving very
strong

(all) FAMILY

All the work shown at the exhibition was fascinating, and also very attractive to look at, and/or touch. This was really helpful to me, since some 'Conceptual Art' really winds me up. It's not always very pleasing to the eye and then you have to work hard to figure what it's about. But this exhibition was great to look at, and when you found out what it meant you liked it even more. For instance Gemma Nash & Jenny Bryant's 'A Womb With A View' was a glorious deep purple hanging, in silky Ann Summers style, and when you got closer, a recording coming from inside mused on the womb as a defining feature of a woman, while stitching on the side questioned the attitude that disabled people are asexual, and shouldn't be allowed to reproduce.

I can't really do justice to the whole exhibition, but other things that particularly caught my eye were *Group Portrait*, a brightly coloured hanging that was the joint effort of many people, and Katy White's 'Kicking Up A Dust', where we were invited to sit in a comfy chair to watch a film that involved the process of making shoddy, on the basis that 'the standard gallery aesthetic is disrupted by introducing comfort'. I loved 'Shoddy Utility Nests' too – a series of cosy little nests made of shoddy with various objects inside, the 'nest' being a perfect symbol of recycling, or using materials that are otherwise waste, to make something nurturing

My personal favourite of the whole exhibition was *Tatterdemalion*, by Kirsty Hall – 225 stones 'encased in recycled white cotton'. You could pick up the stones from the heap, always a plus, and each one was exquisitely hand-sewn into its own little jacket, made up of several scraps of material. I'm not sure what the artist intended but for me it said that each of those stones, like each of us is a unique individual, a different shape, a different size and weight.

Gill Crawshaw, who organised the exhibition, has been a long time supporter of LSP. She was instrumental in getting us a grant for our first anthology, *And The World Really Had Changed* twenty years ago, when she worked in the Equal Opps department of our local council. (I still have a few copies of that by the way – get in touch and make me an offer if you'd like one.) More recently, a couple of years ago, Gill organised a counter-exhibition by disabled people when a Grayson Perry exhibition was shown in the city at a venue without full disabled access.

Terry Simpson

tezbeulah@phonecoop.coop

John McMahon Writes

Hello, I'm **John McMahon** 32. I'm from a small town in Scotland called Dumbarton and I have been suffering from various mental health conditions for most of my life from OCD to Bipolar. I've been in hospital once and every day is struggle to keep myself from going back there. Writing poetry and other creative writing forms has giving me a release. I'm serious about my writing and I feel I struggle to reach my full potential because of my issues. I'd really like to be considered for your mentoring scheme to be mentored to reach my full potential. Here some of my poems:

A Promotion He Said . . .

Paranoia came knocking at my core;
shuffled in as bold as brass and said.
"Hey boss can I get a promotion?"
I looked at him and I said . . .

"Well nowhere is safe and everywhere is safe and you do your job with malicious flare. You're paranoia in a nutshell, or a banana skin, constantly crawling within. You're hungry I'll give you that. I did employ you for your creeping and crawling parasite nature that's for sure. But you sprawl around like you deserves pride of place and that helped me lose many a race in life. But you're right you deserved more gratitude but you are so bloody numb to the magnitude of how unwelcome you actually are around here . . .

"So I think I'm actually going to demote you to a lesser title: caution perhaps? Yes caution! It's less pay, but the work is easier I guess . . . He said "I'll take it boss" and mumbled as he left. "It's not like anyone else would employ me!"

John McMahon

Frozen Roses

They grew amongst times of darkness;
their thorns were sharp solid ice that
melted and seasons change as
they have always done and they grew

strong and beautiful together but all
the way through their shivering stems
they prayed for just one more season together . . .

That was many moons ago and now
only two petals remain dishevelled and
wrinkled up like a dying lung . . .

Holding each other tight and praying to breathe in the beauty of those fresh
frozen roses one more time . . .

John McMahon

If I Die Today (Let It Be Like This)

These hills so alive with nature's beautiful hues. I swear she must have let her paint palette spill over this landscape; the greens of the lush grass, the vibrant reds and lilacs of the roses and Lilies. If I die today let it not be in a place as glorious as this. Let it be in a dark dingy place where the crevices breathe dust and the only thing that lives are the eyes of the rats that flicker open and closed. Let me die undignified there. My only care in the world would be that I got my beautiful death.

Climbing tall trees to reach the canopy and under it count the stars in the sky through the gaps in the leaves; count those stars that she meant to be wishes, a million or so little shining kisses on the eyes of those who dare to dream. If I die today let it not be watching something as glorious as this!

Let it be with misery and decay around me. Mother Nature – do not spare me: divine unity, equality has escaped me. Let me slip away from your artistic eye. Let me die in non-pixelated black and white. Like a silent movie where the actors' screams are not heard.

Roll the credits again without my name . . .

John McMahon

My name is **Stephen Philip Druce**. I am a poet from Shrewsbury in the UK, submitting three poems that I hope can be of interest to you. They are as yet unpublished, and all my own work. I have been published previously with *CAKE, MUSE, SPOKES, MESSAGE IN A BOTTLE, PULSAR, INK SWEAT AND TEARS, THE TAJ MAHAL REVIEW, SHOT GLASS, HERMES, FADE, ART VILLA, CENTURY 121*, and *THE WRITE PLACE AT THE RIGHT TIME*.

Flowers Grow On The Moon

Laced velvet pink, bee-stitched
celestial lemon rays to un-thirst
litter-wizened thorn dust
in stemmed prayer,
ice flake trample crimson collide
apple fleet – trumpet panther light,
quickened jet peach, soft thunder shuffle
lilac, old turn liquor pouring chalk,
bloom barking seed rainbow orchards,
unclasped waterfall of cherry-winged
blueberry swans stroking the void,
the marble earth,
the unknown us.

Stephen Philip Druce

Tigers In Cloud Ships

Clad in spiked plummet –
stilled vapour rip
as cotton ball angels drift,
sail scratch prowl –

circle bird cluster
in snow coat applause,
suited cream orchestras
abandon scarred circus skies
in chorus salute,
and tigers in cloud ships
roar unmanned –
their sweetest melody.

Stephen Philip Druce

Sun Snakes

Stirring sword tongues brew
coiling crackle blaze gaudy,
choking rattle slither-peppered
pierce scorch and grip,
splashing bowl of sticky twitching
poison fire sip –
and the sun snakes shout,
they hiss and shout – keep out!

Stephen Philip Druce

Rob Knowles Writes

I became aware of your organisation while reading 'The Writers Handbook' and trying to find a publisher for my unusual poetry.

Without going into masses of detail, I stopped taking the steroids after only four days and the following day I experienced some sort of mental breakdown and ended the day being evaluated in the local hospital. I became convinced that the world was going to end from an imminent asteroid impact! This was coincidentally

exactly one week before the Chelyabinsk meteor event.

My initial poems were all about how I was feeling about the fact that we were all going to die and that we should all try to be nice to each other meantime. They were all fairly short as the ideas were really exploding from my mind, in fact sometimes I couldn't write quickly enough! After I got to hospital they got longer and deeper as I started to feel paranoid about what may happen to me. I literally thought I had discovered a massive secret and the powers that be would try to 'silence me'! I was also concerned that I wouldn't last long enough to witness the end of the world!

I think I used poetry as an outlet for my overwhelming feelings as someone had recently told me that Winston Churchill had done the same! I hadn't written any poetry for over 30 years until that day, not since school!

Once I left the hospital, the thoughts kept coming, but at a much slower pace and I just started writing about whatever was on my mind at the time! Hence they are on all manner of subjects such as galaxies and wormholes, my dog, my wife, Ricky Gervais, Brian Cox and alcohol! Finally towards the end of my creativity I experienced a great deal of existential angst and worry and wrote poems called 'Death' and 'What do we do in Heaven' to name two!

Anyway there is more to tell, but for now I will give you some examples. The second poem I wrote is just called *Money*. I was thinking about its importance in the big scheme of things, especially as we were all going to die in a week's time!

Money

What is money?
A device created by us
To help us
Cope with our lot

Some have too much,
Some have none,
A lot have a lot

Does it work?
I want a little
So that I can eat,
Shelter and maybe
Explore
Our beautiful planet,
Before it's gone.

That's all.
Not a lot.

Rob Knowles

Another

I want to save the world,
But I don't know how.
Does anyone?
Is there anyone
Who cares?
I hope, someone

Rob Knowles

Then three I wrote while waiting to be examined in hospital. They are all very bleak as this is when I felt the most paranoia.

Alone

I don't know if I'm alone
In this world,
Or if there is a chemical imbalance
In my brain?
Whatever it is,
I just know it's scary
And I don't want to be
Alone.

Rob Knowles

Harmless

My biggest worry
As I write,
Is that like Jesus,
Man will try to silence me.
Pretend I never existed
So he doesn't have to face
The distinct possibility
Of our annihilation.
Please don't,
I'm harmless.

Rob Knowles

After a while I became uncomfortable waiting on the bed and got a blanket and lay on the floor, I then wrote this:

I think I'm Going Mad

I think I'm going mad,
As I'm trying to feel
The Earth spinning
Beneath my back.
I'm lying here,
Contemplating
The meaning of life
And the thought that
'History' means 'His Story',
The story of Man.
Who invented that?
Have we got enough water?
And when is that asteroid
going to kill us all?
Maybe I am
Mad?

Rob Knowles

Then finally, so I don't outstay my welcome, I'll leave you with my favourite existential themed poem, I simply called:

Why

Why are we born?
Why must we die?
Why must we suffer
Such trouble and strife?
These are questions
Many have asked,
No one has answers
We need them fast!
We need to know
The meaning of life,
If we're to progress
As husband and wife,
Or mother and father,
Brother or sister,
We must know the reason
Why we exist eh?

Rob Knowles

China Cups

Passivists use up so much energy choking on the lumps stuck in their throats trying desperately to be words of desire, words that spark a match or burn a whole kingdom to ash, or just a flash of fire tamed to a whimper, and leaves tears on tea leaves . . .

They turn those angry lumps into sickly sweet sugar cubes and drink the storms from china cups . . .

Even the best of people with the best intentions will allow the cruel hand of human intervention to open the door to a little war of words, or worse go off like a firework; be a modern day Guy Fawkes!

China cups, although beautiful crack over time, but will always hold tea.

John McMahon

Doubts

This poetry lark skydives into the deepest reaches of me and breathes heavily like love or the idea of love and lives inside my head and heart beating lustfully beating.

My blood is ink and it bleeds red for the pain I need to feel real and sometimes the colour blue blotches

out the little confidence I have;

I mean I hardly bleed in rhyme. I don't stick to a meter, yet I have the audacity to call myself a poet! then the blues fade slowly; I stab the page to kill the ideals of a dreamer like me.

Then in a clearing beyond the carnage and anger is an intensive light followed by a cool wind that confirms to me that I'm a poet – well I'm today.

I think . . . I know . . . do I?

John McMahon

Baby Steps

With intense desperation and the wonder of a newborn baby he smelt the grass; watched in awe as innocent dew dripped off leaves quenching his dry tongue.

Taking steps, slow steps, a quivering branch. It was progress but each flicker of movement burned his bones and he prayed for a cold winter. But for now he was walking again; the images of the accident are fading:

Black to grey, grey to white.

John McMahon

Suicide Diary

February –

I smoked so much weed
I thought I could fly.
Or at least I wanted to
because deep down inside
I knew I'd die . . .
I pondered falling.

April –

I heard some bad news
my mind goes over
the issues.
Used tissues
drenched in tears . . .
I pondered falling.

June –

I had to seek help to keep
these thoughts at bay
I can't live this way.
The end was near
but I held no fear in
my bones . . .
I pondered falling.

August –

I took up reading poetry
read those words the poet's
were bleeding on to the page.

It didn't hush the rage
that roars inside . . .
I pondered falling.

November –

My birthday came and went
another year older
thoughts getting bolder
formulating a plan . . .
I pondered falling.

December –

A court case,
a conviction is my
prediction
ticking over like a watched
clock ticking
ticking
ticking
I pondered falling

Life Is What You Make It

I'd love to tell you life is good: full of
colour,

Angels and sunshine that rains down
on every moment. I'd love to tell you
it's spinning cartwheels on glorious
beaches where you'll spend most of
your days.

God, I could count the ways I would lie

about birds flying high, strangers saying hello, instead of goodbye, as they go passing by.

Life is mainly hard around the edge and glass sharp in the centre. It has holes that you may fall through at first and eventually you will just like everyone before you! It's not a thrill, but a bad pill taken at a party where everyone hates you and knows you by your first and last name.

Either that or you go through it a shadow, finding that daylight hurts your eyes. It's full of traps. Traps for the soul. Traps for mind.

All this confined within a snare of fear! They say life is what you make it – I say life makes you, breaks you when it steps on your back and cracks your spinal chord and your brain explodes with the insane madness of it all . . .

John McMahon

Dark Skies

Just because everything appears to be okay on the outside, doesn't mean if you peer under my skin, there is a bright shining beacon of hope and love and laughter within that beams optimistic light.

Because inside me It's always night full of fright fighting the wrong fights with the demons of my dominion who dominate the depressive state, like guvnors of hell towns, with bones for buildings and black clouds fill the sky of the interior prison walls. The thoughts like inmates dying to get out, but they are not allowed out, because you see the face is my morning look, the real crook of my make up . . .

If I was to let even the slightest thought dance around the iris of those idyllic eyes, it would be the demise of me, it's better that I reside under dark skies: It's safer that way.

John McMahon

When they are out the cage

Oh no, my face is showing signs of danger. The cars that are my thoughts are driving along my tongue, going through red lights and racing into the atmosphere . . .

It appears they are going to run over my reality, because they want me to remain in a state of paranoid fear. They hear my happy humorous voice fill their dark world and they are going

to kill any happiness that has come into my life.

I shut my mouth but they squeeze out slippery lips. I need to get a grip of my insides before the world hears my true roar, a pack of wild lions I've been storing up for years. it is my nightmare that I become them . . .

John McMahon

Out the cage and on the run

So there you go the rabbits out the hat fucking its way around the meaning of me, and the hunters are coming now, with guns, shooting bullets of misunderstanding.

I pick up my rabbits and ram them into the burrow brain. To borrow a phrase from Buggs "What's up doc?" it's just me without the mask I tell them, but they don't trust me.

They look at me with disgust filling their sad little faces and thrust a pitch fork into my heart, as I part from their world, I see those damn demons dancing over my corpse like twinkling evil stars.

John McMahon

Morning face in the cage

I'm somewhere dark now, somewhere where all happiness has been sucked out of the sky.

But wait: I recognise this place from my memories, that's it, I'm inside my own head, the outside has reversed the morning face now stares at prison walls, that hold the light at bay and keep the darkness in.

Could I rearrange the darkness into light?

John McMahon

The Working Class

Bury the Dead

This poem was written after I had read An East End Farewell by Harry Bowling. I was interested in the notion that undertakers started as carpenters, as they made the coffins.

I had previously noticed that long-standing Bermondsey undertakers – 'Albins' – seemed to have working class accents. They were the subject of a TV documentary series called 'Don't Drop the Coffin', and are the ones used by my family.

So I wrote this poem about how country carpenters became London undertakers

*Who buries the working class,
Who lays down their sweet head?
It's the working class
Who bury their dead*

And all of the dead

Comes the day, comes the night,
Comes the man who
Carves the green wood
By early day light

Comes the peasant carpenter
To the sweet forest green
Who cuts the moist wood
By birds-eyes only seen

*Who buries the working class,
Who lays down their sweet head?
It's the working class
Who bury their dead*

And all of the dead

Comes the craftsman carpenter
To turn the green wood
Into chair and table legs,
And all that he should.

Comes the dawn, comes the day,
The thatcher stacks the hay,
The carpenter cuts the wood
That makes up the Ingle Nook.

*Who buries the working class,
(And all of our dead)
It's the working class
Who lay down their sweet head.*

Comes the evening, comes the dark,
Woodcutter up with the lark,

To build the village cabinet last,
And lay them out before the task.

Comes the day, weeks and years,
With it come the paupers' tears,
Cleaved by enclosure from the land,
You have to understand.

*Who buries the working class,
(And all of our dead)
It's the working class
Who lay down their sweet head.*

Comes the stench of city air,
With it come the poor man's cares
Comes the peasant carpenter
To do his share.

Comes the deep, moody dark,
Comes the Capitalist's mark,
Come the overcrowded streets
Where all the mothers weep.

Comes the foggy gloom of morn
Where the carpenter lays out the dead,
Where he lays down their sweet head
Now in these foul streets instead

*Who buries the working class,
Who lays down their sweet head?
It's the working class
Who bury their dead*

And all of the dead

Sally Smith

Night-time

Her darkness whispers softly
Her black satin climate embraces me
with silky arms.
Will I suffocate in her embrace?
I'm blind; her calmness forgives,
Her patience creates acres of space when
there is none in daylight.
Trapped in the corners of my own minds'
fears, claustrophobic and gasping for air in
my darkness. My own oppressive climate,
I'm struck with the terror of my isolation,
I lie motionless on my bed rock while my
mind whirls, screams and spins in
somersaults.
Her quiet breathes comfort,
She has one single benign task for me. to
close my eyes and rest my mind in her
peacefulness, she wills me on,
Her winds are gentle but the sirens echo
through her leafy streets reminding me of my
distance to the world, to anyone but myself.
Surrounded by her soothing mist
Let myself descend into her peacefulness,
My bed boat sailing into her calm waters,
She will allow me to rest in her leafy shaded
forest, to forget,
For the same 8 hours she breaths new life into
me ready to face the burning, deafening
morning sun,
She's there again, when daytime passes, open
armed.

Julia Garcia

Reflect

We sit here, look – the world's in action,
Shining lights, shouting, sirens, attractions,
And here we become awash with passion –
grateful, suffocated by our own subtraction.
How did we get here? When so much has
proceeded this?
We burst, we ooze, we drip this disbelief, this
pain, this beauty, this bliss,
We drift into the jaws of this deep abyss.
How can we be here, among the sounds and
smells of normality?
When we started all this was just the fantasy,
Sometimes gratitude weighs, like cement,
cracking, it's reached maximum capacity.
Adoration for those we love – the urgency grips
like corsets fastening.
When all around are normal happenings,
Here we are, what we experience is
enlightening,
But how can enlightenment have an air that's
troubling?

Are we drowning in the waves
and depths of the sea?
I'm scared of no we and instead just me.

Julia Garcia Stars' talk

Yes, we keep an eye on her,
Sitting among us, is her father,
A gentle man, kind, still loves her everyday,
Feels close to her when she prays,
He's come on leaps and bounds,
When he left, his soul had run right into the
ground,
Only needed a little bit of Northern's light

For his soul to re-alight,
His reached great heights,
Now he can light up a whole sky at night,
She loves feeling our watch,
When we shine on her she feels known,
wholesome, in her heart it glows,
I am Pollux I watched her being born,
Felt protective ever since that morn,
I will sometimes watch her through the
whole night,
Then I am sure to keep away any fright,
She feels our understanding, our familiarity
our care from up high,
Whenever she feels lonely comfort exists in
the sky.

Julia Garcia

*I was born with HIV and Hepatitis C and spent
some time in hospital growing up. I'm studying
Counselling and Work in a shop in north London.
It surprises me that I'm living a normal healthy
life and 'reflect' is about some the feelings and
thoughts I have when I'm around the City.*

The hushed voices murmur in the skies,
Soft and delicate like its heart,
She passes kisses to the trees,
Pecking them with a gentle touch,
She waves to the sun,
Placing it on her chest,
She brings it close and laughs with it,
For her and the sun are friends today,
For tomorrow she is at rage with the sun,
And welcomes the rain
with its loud pitter-patter,
Against the trees form,
Hard, loud and close,
She begins to cry but tonight the sun
welcomes her.

Sophie

Little objects of stability,
Into my cobalt blood they pump,
Pressing the remote of my mind,
Pausing my inner recklessness,
Which levels out with these minute tinted
ovals,
Into my gullet they go,
Descending down freely,
Into my gorge they drift,
Into the river Thames they go,
Recycled into my petite structure,
I digest them,
A bird being set free from a trapped cage,
Levelling out like a calm sunset,
Travelling from dawn to dusk,
As I become unrestricted,

And still I love to live.

That is I.

Sophia Jackson

AUTUMN

Leaves falling

Or the corner eye glimpse
Of someone dancing

The sound;
a gentle sigh

Judith Highcock

SUICIDE SONG

What meaning do I hope to find
Here in this lost wilderness of words

Wandering through the desert of
Desolate destructive emotions

Like the Egyptian harlot
Eremitic holy woman in
Sackcloth and ashes
At days dead end
Seeking sanctuary and sleep
In the arms of a stranger

Ferocious visions awaken me
As ashen faced ashamed
With no grim gleam of hope
A dark shadow crosses my mind

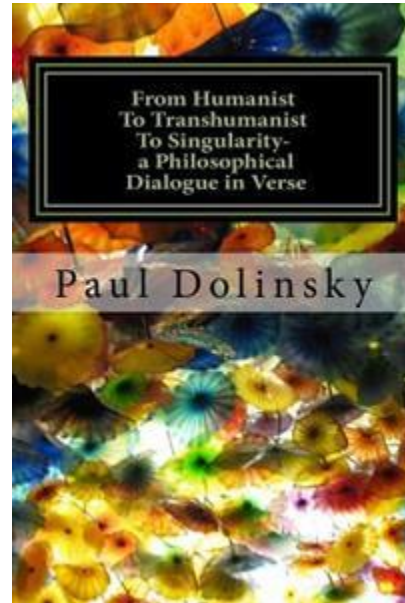
Soaring up to consciousness
Tempting me to worship
Frantically and fanatically
At the altar of despair

To speak in tongues now
Turning sentiment into salvation
As words become suicide songs

Judith Highcock

From Humanist To Transhumanist To Singularity: a Philosophical Dialogue in Verse

by **Paul Dolinsky**; ASIN: B01FP2Y12K



Fusion & Fission of Objective & Subjective!

What a combination of Greek Drama, philosophical debate and lyricism. I love the idea of a 'supine' supreme power, and the central struggle of stasis and kinesis. Paul Dolinsky has brilliantly fused the romantic/erotic with Physics, and with the speculative. Becoming 'transhuman', ie developing to the full one's human qualities through science and technology, can lead bodies and souls into cold abstraction; as a counterbalance, there are impassioned pleas for flesh, mortality and sensuality. There is exploration of 'escapable' black holes and 'white holes'. I am really honoured that Paul was inspired by my prose-poem *Speakfeel* when writing his conclusion.

This debate is set in the form of a Greek Drama with a controlling chorus. It is a heated, rightly chaotic gathering where every philosophical persuasion has its say, and at the conclusion, there is no sense of one dominant viewpoint prevailing over any other. The speakers both answer and interrupt each other, and the reader is often forced to question the boundaries of response and interruption, as in any heated argument involving parties given to monologues. The sequence of arguments seems cyclical rather than linear, echoing the physical processes of fusion and fission. This seems to be consistent with the 'real' universe's state of flux. This state of affairs could be desirable: "The multiform worlds celebrate with glee the unity of the one and the many."

The opening makes a confrontation of the static view of the universe, as propounded by Plato, and the kinetic view, propounded by Aristotle. Astutely, the author, in the guise of **Being As The One And The Many**, describes a secure, fixed Godhead as 'supine' – absolute power being concomitant with negativity: "Atop all being it sits, unable to perform . . . lacks reproductive power.". Of Aristotle's idea, he says "Being, on no cloud, actualizes things, is alive within them." **Kant** referred to *antinomy* – an unsolvable choice between two alternatives.

The conflict is expressed in physical terms by **Reason and Faith in Unison**: "Do we two lie supine upon each other, or do we incline towards strife, which we favour like a feast? **Being As the One and the Many** protests: "If stasis lived, I would be its nightmare." **Cosmic Quester** expresses some anxiety about the volatility of kinesis: "Truth's capacity for opacity leaves me breathless and hungry, since things as they are elude me . . . Finding no firm ground

anywhere, this processional covers us with flimsy firmament; I step in it and I'm gone." **Speculative Naturalist** asserts that "Cosmic energy requires no persona, divine person of final cause". **Deist** believes in "Explanation of phenomena by the purpose they serve rather than by postulating causes."

The work bravely makes analogies between philosophical/religious systems and the principles of Physics and Chemistry, fusion and fission: "Incessant change, wearing time on its belt, samples the range of experience and tries things on for size. Things vie to be the bride of time, even as time fills each things, then leaves it dry . . ."

"The primal unity of perfection breaks down when it refuses to celebrate its static perfection alone." "Is creation necessary, or is it aberrant?" There is much reference to the cycle of mutability, the processes of growth and decay: "Feeding on stunted growth, being falls into decline and bust, relaxes into decrepitude, like lost Persephone, retreating into her dark prison." Just a thought here: one of the reasons for Persephone's 'withdrawal' was that she was a goddess of vegetation, and so went 'underground' to nourish and renew the soil, furthering organic growth.

There shines forth a brilliant fusion of the erotic with the philosophical and religious. **Artistic Imagination**: "When art reared its beautiful head and looked round for inspiration, it found only clouds, and decided to shift perspective, step outside its frame . . . exchange the perfect and changeless for what is wobbly and filled with change . . . perfection of line seeks amplitude of breasts . . . the sensationless and emotionless seeks sensation and its subtleties,

accompanied by the thrills of saintliness and sin.”

“Creation, which concerns gestation, regeneration and all things erotic, proceeds from a primal principle that is as sexy or sexless as you choose . . . Is creation God’s own physique, matter in motion, agitated, as it multiplies itself in things . . . the invitation only dance of sex, in which matter is the afterglow . . . In sex, multiform matter celebrates itself beyond descriptions, and beyond Platonic forms!” A further observation: “Fertility is but foreplay, and its own forfeiture is endless.”

‘God’ can even speak for him(it?)self in these terms: “Worship me – my body is for you to worship, darling humans. In you, I see from where I came – from Eros, primal parent of all.” Eros goes into physics: “I see atoms with infinite expansion and infinite diminution.”

Indeed the whole universe may be suffused with the essence of erotic foreplay: “Maybe nature is God playing dress-up with make-up. The world looks more like footloose horseplay.”

It seems there could be a fallible, malleable God. **Zeitgeist** can proclaim “Wrapped up in temporality/rapt by eternity, I’m everybody’s favourite mall girl.”

Transhumanist Philosopher challenges the ethereal, abstract ideal of ‘full evolution’. “Human, once, in my ancestral life. Now my virtuality seeks a return to the physicality of human love . . . Our encounters in flesh take me toward new lineage . . . If you try out flesh, what hybrid will emerge from the union, what shape of will adorn a landscape to be lifted up, borne aloft, rest in more earthly lines . . . Human flesh is not redundant; its subtleties are necessary for experience; sensation is not

monocular; it is multi-form.” **Crude Materialist** adds a caveat: “The human spirit may evolve, but physical bodies devolve, back to their elements. Creatures that feed, are fed upon . . . Humans, who once faced the world thinkingly, face it again, in death unthinkingly.” Spiritual growth and transcendence is still constricted by physical mortality.

Naturally enough, **Contemporary Scientist** appears on the scene, with the assertion that after the ‘big bang’, “the universe settles into predictable expansion . . . matter and anti-matter circulate between ‘black’ and ‘white’ holes, which appear as destruction and creation, or as cyclical and eternal.”

These factors, and awareness of them, could have serious repercussions for humanity: “As things speed up, will there be more accidents, disasters? Will we improve the world, or wound it with our tractions – we, who’ve put the world in traction . . . Beings who could perceive outburst from primary outflow might be too martial to tame. Lesser beings may find circumference more pleasing than centre and venture out onto the outcropping of things non-identical with themselves. On those outsourced bad lands perception ventures forth, but goes away . . . grasps things not as they are, but as they appear.”

Cosmic Will sees the dark side of Transhuman evolution: “Like galley slaves, planetary beings are stuck with limited range and amplitude on the vessel named finitude. Enscorced in individual consciousness, they seek multiplicity and community. Though individuals perish, their whole species may survive.” His standpoint is supported by **World Spirit Speaks As Suffering Nature**: “Pulp bodies subside into larger, less bite-sized things . . . Whole units of living and

non-living beings get snatched up, consumed and subsumed into larger planetary wholes.”

Poetry plays a vital part in universal awareness: “We must cultivate the words, draw them forth from their hidden spots, so the mind does not get stuck between itself and other places.”

Technopoet can postulate a fusion of poetry and technology: “Semiconductors conduct and insulate, insinuate the new, incinerate the old . . . not on our shoulder, our chips connect to the sockets of time.” **Rebirth the Lurker**: “Are scripts shredded like threads, then stitched back together again?”

The role of art is explored in depth; its main spokesperson is **Artistic Imagination**: “I am no slave to Zeitgeist and require no divine teleology. I weave sensation into will, to form tapestries of love or misery . . . in art, humans rewrite themselves as they will, into tableaux of their dreams, stitch with the lei lines of the mind. . .

It bravely explores the implications of computer technology for the future of thought and humanity, including the possibility of making ‘virtual’ humanity. In the words of **Technopoet** “computers speed us beyond thought.” **The Chorus** rightly queries: “Could virtuality replace spirituality? Could the concept of a spiritual afterlife be replaced by virtuality?” “Computer technology can push toward the unchangeable through the virtual.” **Transhumanist Philosopher** reflects on that hypothesis: “Human, once, in my ancestral life. Now my humanity seeks a return to the physicality of human love.”

This point is echoed and extended by the **Chorus**: “If art replaces depictions of physicality with those of spirituality, or the sheen of virtual

computer screens, then Artistic Imagination will miss flesh, and want back in, to re-experience the physical world as a source of inspiration.” And from **Reason**: “Art chronicles this tryst between change and changelessness.” The spirit needs the flesh as ‘percussion’.

The attainment of love may be a mirage, or supra-sensory: “You gaze at me, and you gaze right through me, toward the place where I am perfect without blemish. We move ever closer, to that place from where we came. It takes you with me, and we are gone.”

At the conclusion, there is a feeling of a human maelstrom: “Like a contagion raging through the corridors of remissions, omissions, transgressions and skewed reflections of beings who move and forever calculate how they will survive and thrive, with other beings who do the same . . .”

Dave Russell

Mirror

All the items,
we could have owned,
from the years we missed.
The battles are many,
but my white flag
is covered in dust.
I surrender only,
to the memory,
of you.
The lines of our letters,
written with my blood.
Your name – scratched
deep into the desert
of my heart.

Yet you hide,
in flowers,
in the meeting of hands,
dancing between the notes,
in the symphony of sex.
I'll wait for you,
here,
behind your high bone walls.
Until you have healed
and you can scale them,
or knock them down,
to set me free.
Present for the greeting,
but never the farewell;
it's something to be seen,
but never embraced.

M.J.Mellor

The flames lick my feet and spit at my face,
the burning wood cracks as it glows.

In winter, the fire loves me.

Smouldering with a human love,
the kind that's shared between a father
and his mistress.

Bites, cracks,
fits, starts.
It burns.

Scorched here:
I threw my longing into the ashes
while hope skipped away in the smoke.

Hands beckon in the blaze.
A narrow shallow skin-deep heat.

I won't try to return autumnal leaves to their
rightful trees.
I've learned:
how to laugh without lungs,
how to love without a heart.

M.J.Mellor

Vase

A dropped vase
a million pieces
pick them up
glue them back together.
It takes time
for them to set
it'll be a while
until it can hold water
and flowers.

Dropped it again,
a million pieces.
Couldn't get all the pieces.
Glued it together
now there are holes
more time for the glue to set.

If I want it to hold water
if I want it to hold flowers
then I must hold it
and nothing else
for endless hours
so here I stand
with no free hands
trying to hold it together.

M.J.Mellor

Freeze Thaw Action

Though I have come in
from the cold, I am still
breathing icy barbed wire
air into my lungs.

My skeleton, under the fat
and muscles, chatters.
My eyebrows and hair
full of frost, snow builds
up around my feet.
I am wearing winter.
Freezing.

Each icy barb breath
slices deep into my flesh.
I cannot see the blood
escaping from my secret
lacerations but I feel it
trickle and ooze inside of me,
and out of me. Ice fills the
cavities before they can
heal naturally. Freezing
pain and healing in time.
The ice swells, soon follow
taunts that I'll be swallowed
Whole.

My skeleton rattles,
trying to shake the ice loose.
Exposing my blood so the
wounds can heal.
The body, the shell, desperate
in its desire for healing.
Before I can clot and cover,
before my icy reprieve
first there must be warmth.
First the wounds must
Bleed.

Thaw

Here, in this land of brilliant white, it pours a
treacle thick

heat onto the pure blank canvas. The
perpetual blaze burns

with renewed strength. Shelves and cliffs
glisten;

whispering cracks permeated by deep
thudding shifts.

The ice is breaking.

Through the early rumble of thunder comes
the ominous

promise of great waves and rising seas.

Arctic winds

rage – gnawing at the ice, forcing it to cry
iceberg tears

into an angry wash, seething and heaving.
Few will ever know

the ice is weeping.

Bitter with cold, the water rises, foaming
with clouds of

frozen needles that dance merrily in the
melee. The rising

writhing tide casts a dark look of stormy
anger. It whirls

and thrashes throwing forth a putrid froth
threatening to

terminate the ice.

Joyous summer images happily shatter this
wintry armour,

killing the old way. And I, as a fragile fleshy
sack of seamless

feeling, only know the present. The past
crumbles – as it

should – and I've heard tomorrow's vows, yet
I still fear what lies

beneath the ice.

M.J.Mellor

Look

All hearts break.

They'll keep beating until
eventually, they burst.

You dressed me in hate but now
I am naked and you no longer know me.

If I could use my hands I'd lift the veil from
your face.

My bent fingers are your compass, if you
want to see truth.

The grit I gather alone,
carefully aimed, lovingly thrown
into your waiting eyes.

No, this won't make you blind.

How many more candles will you light?
The missing children aren't coming home.

M.J.Mellor

This Topsy Turvy Life

Frank Bangay, Core Sounds 2014



Frank continues to experiment, to explore the resources of the Core Arts Studio. In this album there is skilful use of echo, reverb and multi-tracked vocals – Rockabilly embraces the avant-garde. *Mad* is given a great atmosphere by the effect of a Babel of voices, and footstep sounds suggesting a desolate waiting room. The number phases into Frank's slide guitar work.

Tough Guy is the lament of a desperately lonely alcoholic, with raunchy slow blues backing from **Tunde Busari**. *Johnny Rocks On* feels like a flashback to the fantasies and aspirations of the 50s – the time of my formative years!

That Place on the Hill is one of Frank's most eloquent pieces – about a psychiatric hospital that was almost a home to him (now there are 'shuffling feet in the past'), and whose building was converted into luxury flats. The place was gruesome, with its ECT facilities and its watchtowers to detect escapees, but "such nice grounds the Victorians gave to the insane"

Our Melody is a straightforward up-tempo love song.

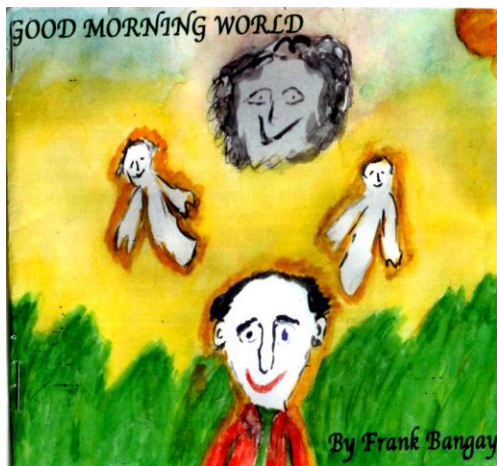
The Twelfth of Never, a hit for **Johnny Mathis** in the 1950s, is an outstanding example of a folk song becoming a pop song – originally being called *I Gave My Love a Cherry*. The latter was part of the repertoire of the late **Smiley Sims**, and included in his posthumous album, also recorded at Core Arts; this fact probably prompted Frank to investigate the song further, with guitar, fiddle and harmonica backing.

Vision harks back to the days of lonely bedsits, again alcoholism and fear of going to work. Some tasteful keyboard, drum machine and bass from **Jane Hall**. *The Park Song* expresses Frank's sensitivity to nature blending into the urban environment. Tunde does some sensitive triplets on 12-string guitar. *Prayer for England* reiterates his love for, and concern about, that world, with interesting vocal harmonies from **Sophie Mirel**.

Dave Russell

Good Morning World

Frank Bangay, Core Sounds 2015



Frank's collaboration with Core Sounds has lost none of its momentum. *A Prayer for England* – this is a 're-take' of a track included in *This Topsy Turvy Life*; an interesting contrast, achieved through **Neil Muldoney's** work on guitar and bass. "I was encouraged to write this. It was well-received. It is a prayer for this country, the troubles that too often seem to dominate, the ever-growing rich/poor divide, and the beauty that still exists beneath it all."

On the Edge – some banter with 'silly pigeons' – 'written in the days before the London Overground'. From then to now, Homerton station retains its character as a supremely desolate piece of inner urban landscape. Frank admits to having 'a soft spot for pigeons'; he is also an enthusiast for all forms of plant life. Nature certainly struggles hard here to take the edge off the gloom.

Looking For A River – from **Kevin Coyne's** album *Beautiful Extremes*. "Kevin said the song is about canals and polluted waterways. I always felt there is something deeper in the song." Perhaps something symbolic and subterranean, like the Styx. Some interesting tempo changes in this arrangement. Frank is extremely well-attuned to Kevin Coyne's material; his many cover versions do justice to the originals. He also knew Kevin, and did one of the last interviews with him before his decease.

The Ballad Of Stan And Jack – wholesome, honest-to-goodness Stan is plagued by the accursed jinx Jack Frost. This is a blend of fact and fiction: "It is a made-up story but based on things I remember.

Smile – Some great piano from Neil Muldoney, and backing vocals from Sophie Mirel, who co-wrote the song with Frank. The song is

enriched by a verse from Kevin Coyne's *I only want to see you smile*. Kevin is certainly a powerful influence on Frank.

Greed or Love speaks eloquently of the callousness of those in power towards the weak and the vulnerable.

Peace and Love – great tremolo electric guitar and harmonica. It expresses concern about the way in which anyone who appears different is alienated, treated with suspicion – whether or not there is any apparent political or medical justification.

Foreign Heads Human Hearts – this song concerns press coverage (often spurious) about immigrants and asylum seekers. This is insidious propaganda which can, wrongly, take over people's minds.

Urban Muse – In the big city, we are surrounded by noise and chaos; but happily there are enclaves of peace and quiet in parks and the like.

Jack's Summer Vacation/Paradise – some near-classical piano. Interesting exploration of Australia as the 'land of upside down'. Stan is left in peace to watch his garden grow.

Paradise – "Is a celebration of the parks and open spaces that can mean so much in the busy city.

John the Revelator – of course I remember Son House introducing this to the British public in 1967-8. Did he pioneer our awareness of a cappella? Frank has captured some of his essence, as well as that of Blind Willie Johnson.

In Heaven We Will Sing – this was inspired by Blind Willie Johnson's *Trouble Will Soon be*

Over. This is a choice item from the treasury of YouTube, whose coverage of blues and gospel classics often includes wholly suitable documentary (often b&w) footage of the hard life of the Deep South. Charming conclusion with Frank's take on Vera Lynn's *We'll Meet Again*. Another splendid cultural blend.

Dave Russell

Sarah Wheeler –

An inspiration to us all

Survivors' Poetry here reproduces text from 'An announcement by Mental Fight Club', to further enable people across the world to know, recognise, and remember Sarah Wheeler, alongside friends and colleagues at the Mental Fight Club:

It is with deep sadness that we share the news that our friend and colleague Sarah Wheeler passed away in the early hours of Tuesday 19th April. As you may know Sarah was diagnosed with cancer in 2013 and it was only recently that she moved into a hospice. Throughout her illness she remained engaged in many activities and continued to speak up for those with lived experience of mental illness.

Sarah has been an inspirational figure to many of us personally and also across the mental health sector and wider community. Sarah was that rarest of human beings, a visionary. Sarah's friendship, her vision and her ability to create and communicate will always be remembered, and she will be greatly missed. Mental Fight Club (MFC) and the pioneering Dragon Café are her legacy to us all, and we will be continuing to develop and expand the important work that MFC does.

We hope that in Sarah's spirit you come along to The Dragon Café soon and celebrate her life through the many creative interactions available.

Sarah's love of poetry and the inspiration she took from Ben Okri's poem 'Mental Fight' is evident in many of her creative endeavours.

Here is an extract from the epic poem called 'Turn on The Light':

The new era is already here:
Here the new time begins anew.
The new era happens every day,
Every day is a new world,
A new calendar.
All great moments, all great eras,
Are just every moment
And every day writ large.
Thousands of years of loving, failing, killing,
Creating, surprising, oppressing,
And thinking ought now to start
To bear fruit, to deliver their rich harvest.

Will you be at the harvest,
Among the gatherers of new fruits?
Then you must begin today to remake
Your mental and spiritual world,
And join the warriors and celebrants
Of freedom, realisers of great dreams.

You can't remake the world
Without remaking yourself.
Each new era begins within.
It is an inward event,
With unsuspected possibilities
For inner liberation.
We could use it to turn on
Our inward lights.

We could use it to use even the dark
And negative things positively.
We could use the new era
To clean our eyes,
To see the world differently,
To see ourselves more clearly.
Only free people can make a free world.
Infect the world with your light.
Help fulfill the golden prophecies.
Press forward the human genius.
Our future is greater than our past.

.....
Welcome! The Dragon Café is Mental Fight Club's latest creative project: a relaxing café and imaginative space, open to all, located in the **Crypt of St George the Martyr Church, Borough High St, SE1 1JA**, opposite Borough tube station. ([Map](#)). Open **every Monday** (but only on a Monday) from **12 midday to 8.30 pm**.

<http://dragoncafe.co.uk/>

The Dragon Café provides a simple, affordable, healthy menu each week, and a wide range of creative and well-being activities, all of which are free and open to all. No enrolment is required for groups, just turn up and take part, as much or as little as you like. Click [here](#) for next Monday's programme (latest version put up each Thursday).

<http://dragoncafe.co.uk/contact-us/>

If you would like to support The Dragon Café you can also go to our [mydonate page](#) or use JustTextGiving and text DCAF10 £5 to 70070 to donate to Mental Fight Club and make a difference today.

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POETRY AND HEARING VOICES

OPPORTUNITY TO DELIVER A HALF-HOUR TALK AND ANSWER QUESTIONS

Mind in Camden is looking for a poet, who is also a voice-hearer, able to present their work in an engaging and entertaining and thoughtful way – to a meeting of HEARING VOICES GROUP facilitators in January 2017.

Find out more about Hearing Voices Groups here: <http://www.intervoiceonline.org/>

We are looking not just for a poetry recital – in fact, not primarily for a poetry recital at all – but rather for a personal explanation of how the experience of hearing voices can form the basis and inspiration for a poem. The *London Hearing Voices Network* aims to validate and explore, rather than medicalise and stigmatise, the voice-hearing experience. Creativity is a natural and universal pathway to discovering positive value in experiences which the medical establishment tends to regard as symptoms to be suppressed.

The *London Hearing Voices Network* receives no funding and we are therefore unable to offer a fee for this engagement. Reasonable travel expenses will be paid.

Your audience will consist of about 20 facilitators of Hearing Voices groups across London. Some will be voice-hearers themselves, some won't. Some will be mental health professionals. We meet together every few months to celebrate what we do, and to have in-depth discussions about the work of facilitating our groups.

Expressions of interest always welcome. **Please contact John Wetherell**, Project Assistant, Mind in Camden Hearing Voices Team.

EMAIL jwetherell@mindincamden.org.uk
PHONE: 020 7241 8978

Call for Articles on the Practice of Unrecovery in Everyday life under Policies of Austerity for Eleusinian Press

Eleusinian Press is a small publishing company working in an interzone, a space that is part of and separate from, on the edgelands of; academia, music writing, mental health activism and left-wing politics. We are looking to curate a new collected volume on unrecovery.

What is Unrecovery? It is the practice of living with one's mental distress in everyday life, living with one's mental health history in a time of austerity, where the 'choice that is no choice' is rammed down our throats on a daily basis. When you ask for support and are only given CBT. When we are told that we 'can recover' and then rather than a 'personal journey', it has to be a pre-navigated outcome measure. When the possibility of recovery that has been fought for against the bio-medical model has turned around and bitten us on the arse and become a means to explain why we failed the WCA whilst our housing situation turned shit because of the bedroom tax and the subsequent homelessness is a lifestyle choice. It is being sanctioned because you missed your appointment because your voices made you agoraphobic five minutes before you were due to leave the house. When the constant nudge unit in charge of nudging units makes our inner worlds a shit shower of dystonic buzzing. Unrecovery is a reaction to this.

It is practices, like making noise, walking an erratic path to escape the microfascist nomos police, cooking up a Storm, researching the

hex-files, scating back at the top down semio-therapies, unflagging the behaviourist order word semaphore, rewriting the signing in-book.

It is about solidarity, building mad unions, it is about training up the activist community to help with ever more punitive benefit forms, it is looking at housing, it is looking at protesting policy. It is looking beyond individualist psychology that is designed to turn us into efficient working subjects for capital. It is about biopolitics, it is about Das Swamp Dog Ding, it is about eluding control. It is about making a stand. It is about fighting back. It is about respecting our concrete situations. It is about the lay of the land. The map not just not the territory, the territory is not the terrain. Territory is about capture. It is no longer the fish getting off the hook from the Mental Patients' Union, it is escaping the trawler's net. As Daedalus said, as Nemo said, keep swimming down, down, down. And wrestle the Minotaur to the ground. The Minotaur is the language of profit, and its stench has saturated the ideological labyrinth. It has saturated the language of mental health recovery. And in the crisis of capitalism that is intentional, permanent austerity, the Minotaur is fascist.

The Eleusinian Press is looking for stories and articles from 4,000 words up. The pay is 4p a word based on work published in the volume. We will be having a kickstarter next year, but we are looking for articles from now.

Please email alastair@eleusinianpress.co.uk

MEMORY LANE

A New Musical

A HISTORY OF THE MUSICAL'S DEVELOPMENT

After my sister, Sharon Goldman, and I co-wrote the script for *Memory Lane, A New Musical* in 2012, and secured a copyright that same year, we self-published the musical in digital and paperback formats on Amazon at <http://amzn.com/B00GBJWFIO>. We believed that publishing the play in a professional format would enhance the opportunity to get it produced.

Sharon created the cover artwork concept, depicting the pink stucco façade of Memory Lane, the art deco adult style day care facility on South Beach (Miami, Florida), which can be incorporated in an initial “look” or curtain design for the musical.

We have written music and lyrics for 14 original songs and three reprises for the musical. Working with a studio in Orlando, Florida, we had professional sheet music and piano recordings completed for all of the songs as well as a demo with Orlando professionals singing the music. We also developed a medley of parts of six of the songs—musically arranged and performed by singers in Orlando, to give potential producers a flavor of the music. We're dealing with a serious subject, but the music evokes a range of emotions — from heartbreaking to upbeat.

Sharon and I appeared on a weekly radio talk show called *Toula's Tips for Caregivers* in Jacksonville, Florida, hosted by Toula Wootan on WBOB Radio AM600, which featured our project.

A local Atlanta theatre will be presenting a staged reading of *Memory Lane* this fall.

Hopes for Future Development of Memory Lane

Bringing Memory Lane to the Next Level

Our next step is to move the project forward by showcasing it for potential producers and collaborators and ultimately get it produced on stage. We hope someone will understand and share our vision and be as excited as we are to get *Memory Lane* produced.

SHORT SYNOPSIS

Take a trip down *Memory Lane*, a new musical about Alzheimer's that takes a light-hearted, but poignant, look at this global epidemic.

Memory Lane, an Art Deco Adult Day Care facility for Alzheimer's patients on South Beach, will soon be just a memory. Budget cuts have forced the county to sell the valuable property to a real estate developer who wants to turn it into upscale, high-rise condos and turn away the seniors who depend on their home away from home. Enter Sunny, a high school senior with an attitude, reluctantly working as a summer

intern at Memory Lane; her feisty boss and mentor, Memory Lane director DaVonda Jones; a couple of caregivers who take a second chance on love; and a cast of lovable seniors who help us remember that some things, like love, are impossible to forget.

Expanded Synopsis

ACT I

The play opens when defiant 17-year-old, high school senior Rae Sonnenshine (Sunny) – [Think a teenage Reese Witherspoon] – and her grandmother Lilian walk up the aisle and onto the stage, grouching about being **Trapped** as they arrive for Sunny’s first day on the job as an intern at Memory Lane. Memory Lane, an Adult Day Care facility in an Art Deco building on South Beach in Miami, Florida, serves seniors with mild or moderate cases of Alzheimer’s. Both are unhappy about being there. Sunny’s mother has forced her to volunteer at the center for the summer and Lilian feels she’s not old enough to be confined there during the day. However, Lilian suggests it might do her granddaughter some good to volunteer. As she shuffles off into the facility, Sunny delivers a snotty rock rendition of **Don’t Wanna Do Good**.

Rae is welcomed by charming Chuck Langdon or “Lucky Chucky,” – [Think Joel Grey] who asks if he can take her luggage. Chuck confuses the name Sonnenschein with Sunshine and dubs her Sunny. Turns out that Chuck is not a doorman or even an employee of the facility. He’s actually one of the

seniors at Memory Lane. He has served as a concierge his entire career at the Flamingo Las Vegas Hotel. But since he lost his longtime partner, Jean-Pierre, and his sister moved him to Miami, Chuck has trouble recalling names and places and he’s lost the ability to retrieve the words. He hears the word Flamingo and he thinks pink, the color of the façade of Memory Lane. Las Vegas Hotel is now simplified to hotel. So he serenades Sunny with **Welcome to The Pink Hotel** upon her arrival. Blissfully confused, Chuck thinks he still works in Vegas, where he was happiest and the “go-to” guy on the strip. Chuck is trying to remember something important that happened to him, but he can’t quite recall the memory of his last night with Jean-Pierre.

Miss DaVonda Jones – [think Queen Latifah] – Director at the facility, warns Sunny to watch out for the senior standing by the front door because **Mr. Mathers Wants to Escape**.

Miss Jones introduces Sunny to the seniors, specifically the chorus (also known as The Three Harpies – [Think Golden Girls] – and they, in turn, introduce Sunny to **Memory Lane**.

We meet three caregivers (relatives of the seniors), who visit Memory Lane on Sunny’s first day. DaVonda Jones discusses the vagaries of the conditions of senior Stanley O’Leary with his son, Brett, and his wife Grace, and of senior, Bessie, with her daughter, Julia, in **Good Day, Bad Day**. Grace is frustrated with the deterioration of

her husband and the demands of being **The Caregiver**.

A large hanging blackboard signals the change of scenes at Memory Lane from Ballroom Dancing to Bingo and other activities throughout the summer. One character, The Sleeping Senior, remains slumped over in his wheelchair throughout the play, but pops up periodically to fill in the blanks for seniors who can't remember thoughts they were trying to recall. For example, when the Harpies are watching the movie, "The Apartment," and trying to remember the name of that actress whose brother is Warren Beatty and who is also an author and has red hair, the Sleeping Senior suddenly wakes up and shouts out, "Shirley MacLaine!"

The Love Story

Russian ballerina Svetlana Anakova instructs the seniors in ballroom dancing and DaVonda helps Stan dance with Grace to **Let Me Call You Sweetheart** on the occasion of their 65th anniversary. Julia, whose husband left her because he couldn't take the stress of her mother living with them, and Brett, a widower, also dance to the song. Brett admits to his mother he has been interested in Julia for a long time, but he's afraid to make his move. Julia and Brett sing **I Think I Remember Love** (bittersweet since they are surrounded by seniors who really can't remember anything) and wonder if they could be falling in love.

In another scene, the seniors play a raucous game of Bingo that ends in the group accusing the blind Mrs. Clark, who wins repeatedly, of cheating. Depressed about his condition, Stan sings a glum rendition of "Edelweiss," and Sunny, who challenges, "Aren't you Irish?" hears Stan come back with the first few bars of "Danny Boy," and she plays the piano and sings "When You Wore A Tulip," a song her grandmother taught her, to entertain him. Sunny raises Stan's spirits by suggesting a little "alternative rock."

In the next scene, it's Fourth of July and time for a picnic at Memory Lane, where Sunny tries to push Julia and Brett Together. (After all, Sunny reasons, "The Fourth of July is a great time for picnics, holding hands and fireworks.")

The Villain and the Ticking Clock: The Overarching Plot

But there's not much to celebrate. Because of government budget cuts, and the skyrocketing value of the property in South Beach, Memory Lane is for sale and about to be scooped up by villainous real estate developer Monty Stone [Think Nathan Lane]. Memory Lane will turn condo at the end of the summer and turn away all the seniors for whom Memory Lane is a home away from home and a solace for their caregivers. Soon Memory Lane will be just a memory. So, as the seniors struggle with losing their memories, the clock is ticking and they are in danger of losing a place that has taken on great importance to them.

Sunny wonders, “Isn’t there anything you can do? Like have a fundraising drive? Make an appeal to the government? Occupy...something?”

Developer Monty Stone has big plans. Even his plans have plans, as he outlines the grand vision for his new development in **Over the Top**.

Act I ends on a cliffhanger: What’s going to happen to Memory Lane and the people who depend on it? Chuck shows Sunny a picture of Jean-Pierre, the “man behind the man.” He recalls how they met and the morning after when the spirit of Jean-Pierre materializes and sings **What Do You Like Best About Me?** Chuck reminisces about his days in Vegas and says he knows where all the bodies are buried, which gives Sunny an idea of how, with Chuck’s help, she might be able to save Memory Lane.

ACT II

As Act II opens, Dr. Max Wilson from the local University reviews memory building strategies with the seniors and sings **Let’s Jog a Little Memory**. The seniors disperse for lunch, and as Stan’s son Brett tries to jog his father’s memory by sharing a story of how his dad taught him to drive, Stan sings a poignant **I Can’t Remember**.

The Black Moment

Sunny, whose attitude has shifted during the summer, attends the weekly caregiver’s support group meeting and listens with dismay as the stressed out caregivers express

their concerns, share experiences, and receive emotional comfort. Grace wonders if she shouldn’t just end it all and if Stan wouldn’t be better off dead. Sunny’s optimistic attitude shatters as she becomes frustrated with her inability to effect change. She is in danger of losing hope when faced with all these lovable people in the twilight of their lives plagued by loss of memory or mistaken memories. DaVonda wonders where the years have gone and how she has stayed at Memory Lane for so long. But she advises Sunny, **Don’t Try to Change the World** (All in One Day).

The Transformation

Memory Lane has transformed Sunny. Before her arrival, she didn’t know what she wanted to do with her life. Instead of fulfilling her parents’ plans for her to study archaeology and travel to faraway places and then on to Law School to join her father’s practice, she can’t seem to get the faces of the seniors out of her mind. She has truly bonded with them. They’ve brought something to her life and she to theirs. This connection to Memory Lane changes her in a way that helps her find direction. Sunny decides she wants to be just like DaVonda and devote her life to working with seniors, which reinforces DaVonda’s life choice. Sunny sings an upbeat version of **I Wanna Do Good**, a positive variation of the song *Don’t Wanna Do Good*.

On the eve of Sunny’s last day, she says goodbye to Stan, her favorite senior, and he sings a lilting rendition of **Sunny, Goodbye**.

Everyone wonders where they'll be at the end of the summer.

The Resolution With Chuck's help, Sunny comes up with a plan to save Memory Lane. She approaches Monty Stone with a concocted story that she's done some research and has been digging on the property and found some ancient artifacts suggesting that the ground underneath Memory Lane might have been an important, sacred burial ground—an historic site. And since her mother is the head of the South Beach Historical Preservation League, she threatens to call a press conference and arrange a candlelight vigil with representatives of the local Indian tribes, who, along with the seniors, will march on Memory Lane holding placards that read:

Save Memory Lane!
Stop Construction on the Condos!
Don't Displace Granny!
Power to Seniors!
Let Our Ancestors Rest in Peace!

Monty Stone, who's been burned by 'do-good activists' before, backs out of the project.

(Something like this actually happened in Miami on Miami Circle)

Throughout the play, Chuck forgets he has been carrying around a letter, which Miss Jones finally reads to him. It is from a law firm in Las Vegas with a bequest from his former lover Jean-Pierre. It seems that on their last day together, Jean-Pierre won a mega-jackpot at the slots, which was what

Chuck was trying to remember. Jean-Pierre's note says, "I think I hit the jackpot when I met you. Promise me you'll do something wonderful with the money."

When DaVonda sees the zeros in the check, she jokes, "Chuck, you can afford to buy this place!" Chuck takes her seriously. He's always wanted to own The Pink Hotel. Sunny has set the stage for Lucky Chucky to save the day by putting up the money so Memory Lane can continue to operate.

The rest of the cast gathers to give Sunny a sendoff as they **reprise, Sunny Goodbye**. Sunny notices that Stan is missing and DaVonda, who hasn't wanted to ruin her last day, is forced to reveal that Stan has died. When Sunny wonders if a distraught Grace has taken matters into her own hands, DaVonda assures her that he died peacefully in his sleep and that Julia (who is now dating Brett seriously) is comforting Brett and Grace in their time of loss.

On this sad note, Sunny notices Mr. Mathers is also missing and discovers that the code to the keypad has been taken out of her purse. She blames herself for his disappearance. She's already lost Stan and she's not going to lose anyone else. Sunny leaves the facility in a frantic search of the area and walks off the stage down the steps, where she finds Mr. Mathers seated in the audience. She escorts him back on stage and as Sunny waves goodbye and says she'll see everyone next summer, the cast **reprises Memory Lane**.

CURTAIN

Can poetry confront the evils of our time? Frances Spurrier, Reviews Editor of the British literary forum *Write Out Loud* and herself an award-winning writer, teacher and critic, considers some recent poetry issued by Thomas Ország-Land, a Jewish-Hungarian poet and foreign correspondent, and she interviews the author.

1. A Review



‘Kindle the wind and stir up the storm,’ instructs the narrator in ‘The Reed,’ the opening poem of this new E-chapbook. The poem celebrates the ‘wonder of wounded nature.’ It has the feel of an eco-poem – but the storm here represents also a passion for life that the collection praises. And what is ecology but a passion for life?

*Reading for Rush Hour:
A Pamphlet in Praise of Passion
By Thomas Ország-Land
Snakeskin/England, 2016*

This pamphlet follows on from Thomas’ earlier, ground-breaking work writing and translating an anthology of poems entitled *Survivors: Hungarian Jewish Poets of the Holocaust*’ (Smokestack, 2014). Some poets included in it, such as Miklós Radnóti, are becoming anthologized and widely quoted in Britain; but others such as Tamás Emőd, György Faludy, Eszter Forrai, and Hanna Szenes are still much less known. The book gives them a voice in English for the first time and foregrounds the uncomfortable truth that, during the Second World War, many Jewish Hungarians died not at the hands of the German Nazis but on forced marches perpetrated by the regular Hungarian Army.

One poem in the pamphlet, ‘The Lion Tamer,’ asks who among us is behind the bars and who behind the mask. One line in this piece – ‘I have outfaced the adulating crowd’ – puts me in mind of

Frost being acquainted with the night. Thomas, who survived the Holocaust as a Jewish child and participated as a journalist in the 1956 anti-Soviet Budapest uprising at the age of 18, has got as close to that night as most would ever wish to be. This is a poet who knows the value of life.

In the title poem ‘Reading for Rush Hour,’ the cast of characters includes ‘reliable Richard’ with his ‘tranquilized, loyal wife I (cannot help knowing)’ and ‘Orgie Porgie... so well imitating the shades in the money profession/he managed to die of repression.’ And we meet ‘Thomas Wonder-Land, Esq./a master of gaining the gullible graveyard’s affection/for any truth without actually being a liar’ and ‘property agent Alec so good at selling/he can disregard the essential use of a dwelling.’

Where have these characters emerged from? ‘Reading for Rush Hour’ becomes reading the rush hour.

The work is quite formal, with a strong sense of rhythm and rhyming as well as humour in the treatment of even very serious themes. In ‘*Life Insurance*,’ for example, the narrator requests ‘a policy to answer every threat/in life from passion, treachery and debt.’

My verdict: A very enjoyable and well-rounded pamphlet from this poet and distinguished translator.

2. The Interview

FRANCES:

You wrote, translated and edited the anthology *Survivors: Hungarian Jewish Poets of the Holocaust* (Smokestack, 2014). The book has been described by Dr. Zsuzsanna Ozsváth, Chair of Holocaust Studies at the University of Texas in Dallas, as a pioneering work in that, until now, there has not been a substantial anthology of Hungarian Holocaust poetry. What were the special challenges in producing this volume?

THOMAS: I wanted to write good English poems true to their Hungarian originals in meaning, form and spirit. To achieve that, the translator I believe must be equal to the poet whose work is being translated. That’s not very easy... because the authors whose work appears in this collection are truly great poets.

Originally, I would not have dreamed of taking on such a challenge. I set out merely to learn the craft of English poetry by translating the work of my betters from my native Hungarian into my adopted English. I saw myself as an art student in a public gallery copying the paintings of dead masters in order to comprehend their techniques.

But when a translation works – and the translator knows when it works – it soars to give the original composition new life. Eventually, it gave me enormous pleasure to dig the literary remains of great friends and teachers out of their premature graves and to

introduce them to the living current of world literature. Indeed, I have never stopped.

There is the greatness of the work, and the indisputable courage of those who wrote it, often in extremis. Can poetry make the changes the world needs, or do we poets and academics hope that it can because for us there is only the pen and not the sword?

I am a journalist as well as a poet. I recently came to Jerusalem, ‘the navel of the world,’ in the hope of making a difference. I have seen the pen – mine as well as the others’ – succeed far better than the sword. Weapons can only frighten, maim or kill people. If we want to change the world, we must seek to change the minds of the living. The best poetry, in my experience, can be more effective at that than the best polemics.

In an interview with David Cusco I Escudero, the Editor of *El funàmbul (The Tightrope Walker)* you said that *humanity must look to the future and cannot afford to despair*. That is true. Yet it is also true that *humanity cannot afford to forget*. Do you see the role of Holocaust poetry changing to encompass this balance?

All our accumulated experience, even the most painful, improves our collective chances of survival. In our best interest, we must neither despair nor, as you say, forget. I believe that good eyewitness poetry, more than anything else, may perhaps enable humanity to remember by re-experiencing the horror of the wrong turns in our modern

evolutionary history without actually repeating them.

We know now that any artistic representation or public discussion of the Holocaust was banned in Hungary after 1949 at the personal instruction of Stalin. Today, there are new pressures for denial. How do you respond to them?

Perhaps the most horrific events of the Holocaust took place in Eastern Europe. Many governments, institutions and private citizens there happily participated in the process that divested people of their humanity and – as Zsuzsanna Ozsváth put it – turned them into ashes. Many enriched themselves, at their own initiative, by plundering the personal and communal assets of the victims. They became, literally, grave-robbers.

After the war, when the region came under the Soviet yoke, its new Communist administrators sought under Stalin’s orders to shift all blame for the Holocaust on the defeated rule of Nazi Germany. A quarter century after the Soviet collapse, many East European countries today abuse their nascent independence as well as the truth by pretending still to have been victims rather than perpetrators of the Holocaust, shirking any moral or financial responsibility for their deeds committed within living memory.

My own response to this is one of outrage. My Holocaust poetry, both translated and original, confronts the lies. But that is very far from being my sole purpose. The lies will be swept away in time as they

always are. I want to erect a living memorial to a monumental, tragic folly of humanity to ensure that it should never recur.

There is a simple humanity about some of the poems in *Survivors*, an essence of humanness, almost – perhaps as poetry may be our last response to the incomprehensible. Do you believe some people are afraid of poetry, particularly Holocaust poetry?

Poetry at its best reaches deep into the soul and may stir and even liberate long-suppressed memories and emotions, with unpredictable effects. They are suppressed for a reason – guilt in the family, for example, in the case of the Holocaust – a potential source of great pain that people quite reasonably might not wish to confront. However, a suppressed load of guilt can weigh down and cripple the soul.

Tamás Emőd’s poem *Message in a Bottle* included in the *Survivors* anthology sounds the following worryingly modern note.

**‘...you in whom we have placed our faith and hopes
in vain, for we shall never reach your shores:**

**‘free shores, our home ever since the centaurs’ idylls,
cultured Europe, our ancient, classical cradle.’**

Is this the wrong kind of timelessness, or perhaps the only kind? I

Also note that you refer to the current refugee crisis in your pamphlet...

You’ve picked up the very lines from a Tamás Emőd poem that caused me to translate several of his pieces for my book. The poem is a desperate cry by a writer who could foresee the horror that was about to engulf his world and who knew that neither he nor his poetry would reach sanctuary on England’s free shores – except perhaps in the distant future, as a message in a bottle.

His message has at last arrived. I am honoured to be the messenger. I am also deeply troubled by it. What has become of us – Emőd’s ‘cultured Europe’! – if we can ignore the fate of vast populations on the move across the seas who are prepared to risk everything to escape war and destitution?

Is a different state of mind required for translating the work of others compared with writing your own?

Not for me. I am more interested in poems than in poets (myself included). Every poem, for me, is a translated poem in the sense that it embodies a recognition of some manifestation of the world originally conceived in a pre-verbal state, which is then allowed to assume the most suitable form of expression in mature language. The better the poem manages to describe that original perception, the closer it is to the truth. I really do not care whether it is my truth or somebody else’s.

You write that, after leaving Hungary, ‘I switched to English as soon as

I could.’ To a writer, that must have been particularly hard...

I dropped out of high-school at 16 to become a professional writer. I left the country two years later, after serving as a cub-reporter on the staff of *A Magyar Függetlenség* (*The Hungarian Independent*), the flagship daily newspaper of the revolution. I was by then entirely committed to a life in letters – but I had no hope of ever returning home. I declined the option of becoming an emigré writer. My sudden inability to communicate gave me probably the biggest shock of my adult life.

Your last pamphlet seems to be focused on making the best use of the time we’ve got. It even warns against life ‘devoid of intensity, mischief or love or sin.’ Why?

You read me very well. Lucky people here in the West are hugely empowered, limited mostly by time and our desires... We have the means to enrich the lives of our loves and especially our children. Or we can make them and ourselves miserable.

We can attempt to erect structures of words or thoughts or bricks or bites that may survive us literally for millennia and even alter the shape of the future – dare I say to our own image. We can devote our lives to eating sweets. Or we can choose to squander our invitation to the feast by denying our own passion and pretending to live our lives devoid of our own intensity or even a sense of mischief or love or sin. Which is the way to lose everything.

Given that the twentieth century was a century of murder, the twenty-first has to be an improvement. Yet this is poetry of a divided society. Is there a sense of waste here, or is a restless and fractured peace an attainment of sorts?

This is poetry of foreboding, I am afraid. The dominant symbols of the last century may well remain Auschwitz and Hiroshima. But we have developed the means of committing mass murder on a far greater scale. Many rulers of states and terrorist organizations are openly fantasizing about that.

We are having a rough time, but we have survived worse, the Cold War for example. But for survival, this time we really must put aside our tribal enmities. I think it is the task of poets, most of all, to direct humanity’s gaze towards collective survival.

I thought I spotted Andrew Marvell among your lines (‘our pleasantly prudent lives would stroll on forever/if the passion of mortals yielded to prudent control’) and Eliot (‘Faces, dead faces, O/the faces, the faces I know.’) Who are your influences?

Marvell I love, Eliot I loathe. Both are my teachers. I have had many teachers including the writers, critics and editors who have reviewed and improved and taught my work, such as you and Zsuzsanna Ozsváth, and Nicholas Bielby, Andy Croft, Alan Dent and George Simmers. I count among my teachers the poets whose work I have translated into English, and those who have

translated mine into their own languages (including Hungarian).

The greatest among these masters was György Faludy (1910-2006), a Hungarian poet equal to his beloved Auden, Lorca, Mandelstam and Yeats, who was my teacher all my life and my close friend towards the end of his. Among the contemporary English poets, my best teacher is also my best friend, Bernard Kops.

You write that what matters most in poetry is the passion expressed by the words. Is poetry no more and no less than a manifestation of the passion for being?

Poetry can and should express our passion for being, as well as a lot of other things. Our passionate intensity is our greatest source of power in any sphere, from the boardroom to the battlefield. It is also the force that can turn a good poem into a great one.

Many people are embarrassed by each other's passion, and even by their own. They fear the effect of destructive passion that can do great harm. But all passion is not destructive... while all suppressed passion can easily become that.

You were 18 when you were forced to leave your country. What would you say to your 18-year old self if you could meet him now?

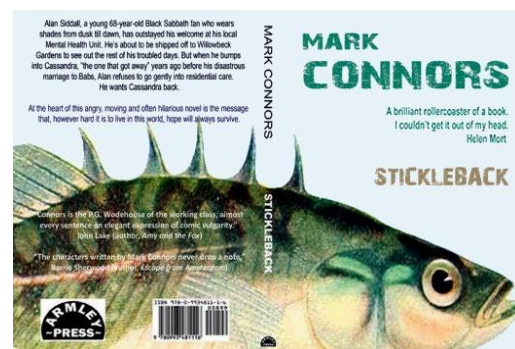
I would say to him that I am glad he had the chutzpah to try... but I would be more interested in what he might say to me.

He would be overjoyed that an accomplished, serious lady like you should ask me such marvelous questions. He would be delighted that I have managed to become a poet against all the odds, and an English poet at that. He would be astounded that I am still alive. Most importantly, he would approve of my plans for our next book.

Stickleback

Mark Connors, Armley Press, 2016

ISBN 978-0-9934811-2-3. £8.99; Kindle version for £3.99



This novel is the best take on the modern, post-Community Care Mental Health System that I've read since Poppy Shakespeare. It's told from the point of view of **Alan Siddall**, a 68 year old resident of Murton Croft, a (fictional) local Mental Health Unit in Leeds. Despite his many criticisms of the place and its staff, it's nevertheless Alan's home, and he's happy there. However, the powers that be have decided he should be moved to Willowbeck Gardens, (or 'Guantanamo Gardens', as Alan calls it) – a residential home for the elderly. I won't tell you how it turns out, but suffice it to say Alan doesn't go quietly.

The observation throughout is on the ball, and the descriptions are fresh and interesting. For instance, this is Alan talking about ward rounds, or 'The Circle Game' as he describes it: "the abject humiliation of the Circle Game. It's something I can never get used to, and I can handle meself . . . it's all very cordial and pleasant but that makes it worse. You are being quietly judged. The questions come at you in much the same way as an inquisition, only the tones are gentle and there are no thumb screws to look forward to. Just drugs. Lots and lots of drugs, and not the kind you can enjoy while listening to *Black Sabbath's Volume 4* or *The Dark Side of the Moon*."

This sets the tone. He describes Murton Croft: "it's not a bad old place compared to the alternatives. Hell is only a Care Programme Approach meeting away".

If you don't like swearing this is probably not the book for you. We spend the whole 230+ pages in Alan's mind, and he is one of those service users, ('the new posh word for nutters', according to Alan), who can't help saying whatever's on his mind, regardless of how rude, tactless or even downright abusive it is.

But he is also very funny with it. Some people (and I had a brother who was like this), are able to swear very well, and to be really funny. The more outrageously imaginative the swearing, the funnier it can be – but you've been warned.

Alan is also an old fashioned unreconstructed sexist, but never just that, and you never feel that the author is condoning his views, just

describing a genuine modern phenomenon. In many ways Alan is difficult to like, but he speaks his truth, even when it's clearly against his interests to do so. Sometimes you just will him to keep his mouth shut, like when his long-suffering sister goes out of her way to visit him and bring him stuff, and he's rude to her. But that's precisely the power of Alan Siddall. He's free from the constraints of polite society, and as such his voice is really refreshing and important. He reminded me a bit of the mad character in the film *Revolutionary Road*, who is the only one to come out with the truth of what's going on – everyone else is too polite and well brought up to acknowledge it. Alan is a modern holy fool who will tell you the brutal truth whether you like it or not.

This book is really worth reading for anybody involved in the mental health system, either as a worker or someone accessing it for help. It's very perceptive about a system where some progress has been made for people's rights, yet restraint and involuntary treatment are a fact of everyday life for many; where 'service users' have achieved some limited powers and are prepared to use them, but ultimately are no more in control of their destiny than they ever were.

It's very sharply written, and stands up well alongside the great writers about madness like Janet Frame and Ken Kesey, with the added attraction of being a truly Yorkshire take on the subject.

Terry Simpson, July 2016

In memory of Ravi Nalladorai

21 September 1972 – 11 February 2016



Ravi's parent felt that these would be Ravi's parting words to us. The author is **Jane Pallister**:

The Choice

*Dedicated to those who have left
and those who are left*

I chose my time, I chose my way

I chose to stay, not another day

**Don't hurt yourself, don't wonder why
I made my choice, my sweet goodbye**

**Cry for me not, I have my peace
Please respect, my short-lived lease**

**It wasn't to punish, or cause great pain
No upper hand, nor spiteful gain**

**It was a thought, a mood, a chance
Our worlds have changed, a circumstance**

For the tearful eyes, I leave behind

To make you suffer, was not in mind

**I am ever near, so remember me
And the stupid stuff, that caused such glee**

**Take all these thoughts, and give them
space
Banish bleaker ones: they have no place**

**And because I trust, you love me so
You'll understand, I had to go**

**I'll suffer not, I won't grow older
There's nothing more, for me to shoulder**

**I didn't explain, I made my choice
And so this poem, becomes my voice**

**So pray for me, I pray for you
I pray for strength, to carry you**

**Because
I chose my time, I chose my way
I chose to stay, not another day.**

.....

**A fund has been opened at Rethink – Ravi's
Fund; . . . We want the money raised to help
others whose lives could be changed and
improved.**

**We want the stigma of mental illness to be
lifted and for those affected to feel that they
can come forward and seek help . . .':**

<https://www.rethink.org/get-involved/rethink-remembers/ravis-fund>

Please send any donations to Rethink.

Thanks and kind regards,

Nick & Thanga Nalladorai (Parents)

From: Nicholas Novak <novak@poetizer.cz>

Your Message: Hello! A while back, the European Leadership and Academic Institute contacted you about Poetizer, a social networking app dedicated to posting and sharing poetry. I'm writing now to give you a little update: we are now on iOS, and are launching internationally! You can download the app here:<https://itunes.apple.com/us/app/poetizer/id1092194110?mt=8>

From: alastair.kemp@yahoo.co.uk

Subject: Call for articles on the Practice of Unrecovery in everyday life under policies of Austerity – for Eleusinian Press

Hi all

Please could you read and/ or distribute this call for articles (paid). If you are wondering why you are on this list, it might be that you could pass this on to people who would be interested, please could you pass it on.

Call for Papers

Eleusinian Press is a small publishing company working in an Interzone, a space that is part of and separate from, on the edgelands of; academia, music writing, mental health activism and left-wing politics. We are looking to curate a new collected volume on unrecovery.

What is unrecovery? It is the practice of

living with one's mental distress in everyday life, living with one's mental health history in a time of austerity, where the 'choice that is no choice' is rammed down our throats on a daily basis. When you ask for support and are only given CBT. When we are told that we 'can recover' and then rather than a 'personal journey', it has to be a pre-navigated outcome measure. When the possibility of recovery that has been fought for against the bio-medical model has turned around and bitten us on the arse and become a means to explain why we failed the WCA whilst our housing situation turned shit because of the bedroom tax and the subsequent homelessness is a lifestyle choice. It is being sanctioned because you missed your appointment because your voices made you agoraphobic five minutes before you were due to leave the house. When the constant nudge unit in charge of nudging units makes our inner worlds a shit shower of dystonic buzzing. Unrecovery is a reaction to this.

It is practices, like making noise, walking an erratic path to escape the microfascist nomos police, cooking up a Storm, researching the hex-files, scotting back at the top down semio-therapies, unflagging the behaviourist order word semaphore, rewriting the signing in-book.

It is about solidarity, building mad unions, it is about training up the activist community to help with ever more punitive benefit forms, it is looking at housing, it is looking at protesting policy. It is looking beyond individualist psychology that is designed to turn us into

efficient working subjects for capital. It is about biopolitics, it is about Das Swamp Dog Ding, it is about eluding control. It is about making a stand. It is about fighting back. It is about respecting our concrete situations. It is about the lay of the land. The map not just not the territory, the territory is not the terrain. Territory is about capture. It is no longer the fish getting off the hook from the Mental Patients' Union, it is escaping the trawler's net. As Daedalus said, as Nemo said, keep swimming down, down, down. And wrestle the Minotaur to the ground. The Minotaur is the language of profit, and its stench has saturated the ideological labyrinth. It has saturated the language of mental health recovery. And in the crisis of capitalism that is intentional, permanent austerity, the Minotaur is fascist.

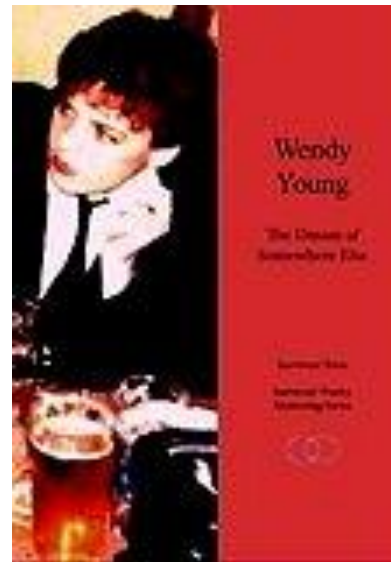
The Eleusinian Press is looking for stories and articles from 4,000 words up. The pay is 4p a word based on work published in the volume. We will be having a kickstarter next year, but we are looking for articles from now.

Please email alastair@eleusinianpress.co.uk

NEW from SURVIVORS' PRESS!

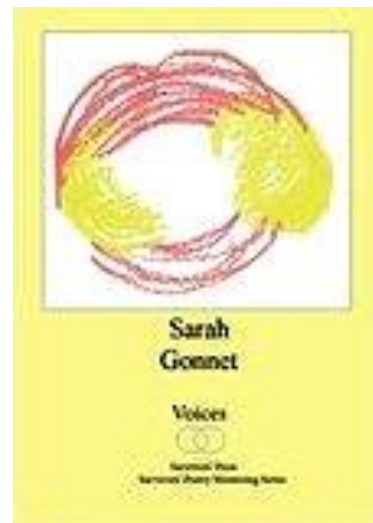
Your summer reading sorted! . . . to borrow a well-worn strap-line from the commercial world – Survivors' Poetry is delighted to announce three Survivors' Press poetry collections were published earlier in August 2016, available NOW on Amazon Kindle as e-Editions ahead of the print options. Plus an extra, for info.

Wendy Young: The Dream of Somewhere Else



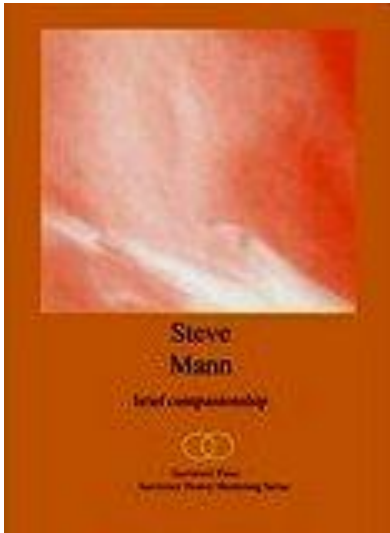
https://www.amazon.co.uk/Dream-Somewhere-Else-Wendy-Young-ebook/dp/B01JIJN1K2/ref=sr_1_1?s=books&ie=UTF8&qid=1470467680&sr=1-1&keyword=s=wendy+young+the+dream+of+somewhere+else

Sarah Gonnet: Voices



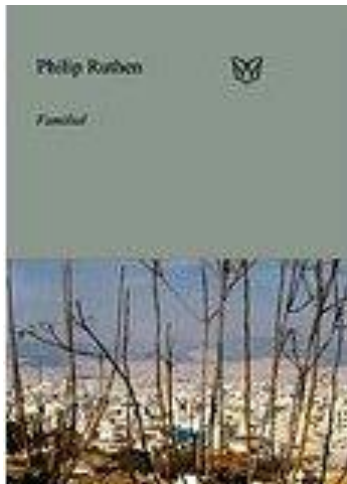
https://www.amazon.co.uk/Voices-Sarah-Gonnet-ebook/dp/B01JGHOL34/ref=sr_1_1?s=digital-text&ie=UTF8&qid=1470070231&sr=1-1&keywords=sarah+gonnet

Steve Mann: Brief Companionship



https://www.amazon.co.uk/Brief-Companionship-Steve-Mann-ebook/dp/B01JIKRT3I/ref=sr_1_1?ie=UTF8&qid=1470468275&sr=8-1&keywords=steve+mnn+brief+companionship

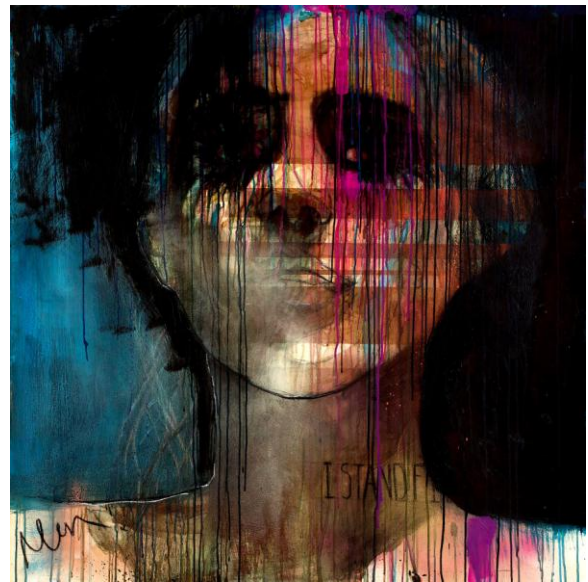
(And an extra! Philip Ruthen's third collection, 'Familial', from Waterloo Press):



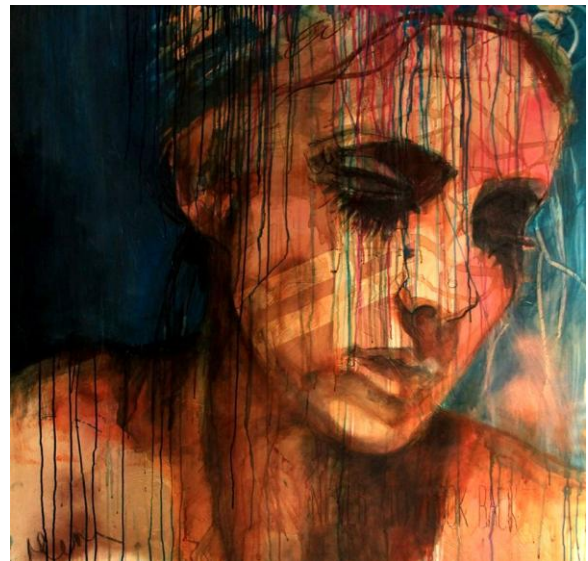
https://www.amazon.co.uk/Familial-Philip-Ruthen-ebook/dp/B01JJB1GEE/ref=sr_1_3?s=books&ie=UTF8&qid=1470222460&sr=1-3&keywords=philip+ruthen



Michelle Eva May



Michelle Eva May



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