

# Poetry *Express*

Summer 2010

Issue 32

Stevenage Survivors' Creative Therapy Day by Roy Birch

*I want my Crown*-Frank Bangay reminisces on Kevin Coyne's new 4 disc CD

Featured Artist - Works by Survivor John Sheehy

Self Discovery by Andrew H. Smith

Art and Catharthis by Kona Macphee

John SHEEHY

 Survivors' Poetry  
promoting poetry by survivors  
of mental distress

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





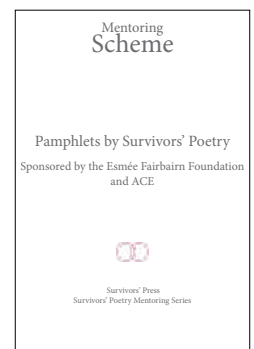
Girija Shettar	Lydia Hill	Mala Mason	Helen Hudspith
<p>Girija started out as a lead actress in South Indian films at the age of 18. From mixed parentage, she travelled to India, where she stayed for 10 years. Leaving films to study Vedic philosophy, she returned to the UK and wrote a PhD on the material nature of the soul and metaphysical psychology. She is now a journalist. Confronted by increasingly severe cultural and racial dichotomies, Girija finds Vedic philosophy, Buddhism, Sufi and now haiku poetry indispensable tools on her journey through life.</p>	<p>Lydia was born in Devon but has spent her adult life in the South East. She has a Masters Degree from the University of Kent. In 2007 she was invited to take part in <i>Voiceworks</i>, a project run jointly by Birkbeck College and Guildhall School of Music and Drama. Working with the composer Rupert Cross, she wrote the words for 'Mockingbird' which was performed as a song at the Wigmore Hall in April 2008. Her poetry has previously been published in <i>Poetry Express</i>; <i>Fishing for Potatoes</i> is her first collection.</p>	<p>Mala is 63 years of age. She retired from work some five years ago after a lengthy career in the Civil Service – a retirement which, she says, gives her 'much more time to focus on my poetry'. Mala's poetry is largely inspired by her personal history and by the Survivors Poetry Creative Writing Workshops programme, of which she was a facilitator; by SP's Write on the Edge Open Mike performance evenings; and by week-long Poetry Retreats at Emmerson College, an establishment run on the lines of the Rudolf Steiner schools, where the flowering of artistic intelligence is encouraged as much by the warm, tranquil atmosphere as by deliberate coaching. Mala's Indian poems are the fruit of regular Yoga Retreats she attended on the Sub-continent.</p>	<p>Helen was born in the now disputed territory of the East Riding of Yorkshire in 1965. She has always loved writing but her first poems surprised her as she had always thought that one day she would attempt 'the novel' that most people feel they have inside them. She has been writing poetry seriously now for about 10 years and has had work published in a variety of print and online journals, including <i>Aesthetica</i>, <i>Iota</i> and <i>Poetry Monthly</i>. Her work has also appeared in the anthologies 'Both Sides of Hadrian's Wall' and 'One in Four'. She enjoys reading a wide range of contemporary verse, especially the work of Billy Collins, Roger McGough, Selima Hill, and Seamus Heaney. Historical inspirations come from Wilfred Owen, Philip Larkin, Robert Frost and W.H. Auden.</p>
<p>Girija was mentored by haiku poet Diana Webb, as part of the 2008-2009 Mentoring Scheme series.</p>	<p>Lydia Hill was mentored by Peter Carpenter, teacher and publisher (Worple Press), as part of the 2008-2009 Mentoring Scheme series.</p>	<p>Mala Mason was mentored by poet Bernadette Cremin, as part of the 2008-2009 Mentoring Scheme series.</p>	<p>Helen Hudspith - was mentored by poet Maggie Sullivan, as part of the 2007-2008 Mentoring Scheme Series.</p>

## Mentoring Scheme 2010 Pamphlet Publications

### Pamphlets - £5.00 + £2.00 p+p:

- Girija Shettar - "*This year, daffodils*" edited by Diana Webb
- Helen Hudspith - "*Sleeping with the Snow Queen*" edited by Maggie Sullivan
- Mala Mason - "*The Coming of the Rains*" edited by Bernadette Cremin
- Lydia Hill - "*Fishing for Potatoes*" edited by Peter Carpenter
- Sean Burn - "*People are their own Dreams*" edited by Simon Jenner

Available at: [http://www.survivorspoetry.com/SP\\_Shop/](http://www.survivorspoetry.com/SP_Shop/)



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

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**Cover Image:** "It's all too much" by John Sheehy

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## Editorial by Dave Russell

At last, the long-awaited publications, both under Survivors Press and the Mentoring scheme; the production problems and teething troubles were finally surmounted. First and foremost is the reprint of *Orphans of Albion*, edited by Barry Tebb, a conjoint effort of Barry's Sixties Press and Survivors' Poetry (SP). It is essentially an anthology of the Underground in Britain, and as such essentially complementary to Michael Horovitz's *Children of Albion, Grandchildren of Albion* and the planned *Great Grandchildren of Albion*. Barry seems to have chosen the term 'orphan' to place emphasis on those outside the literary mainstream. The inclusion of David Kessel in this anthology illustrates his point admirably. Barry has had a long association with Survivors, and as being a prolific writer of poetry and fiction, he is a passionate campaigner for better mental health services, as witness *Life and Death in Camden* and *Censored in Camden*. (For the other titles, please see Simon Jenner's editorial. Further Mentoring Scheme pamphlets are imminent).

Poetry submissions continue in abundance, and all are gratefully received. We have a restricted number of pages, so the fact that any items may not be included in any one issue does not necessarily reflect on the quality of the material. We are building up a substantial reserve. One feature of this issue is to include, in the poetry, facsimiles of original manuscripts, with handwritten additions. This gives a feeling of vitality and authenticity. One of the poems is illustrated – something I would very much like to see developed – to create an 'illuminated' effect. We aim to cover the whole literary and literate spectrum - both to encourage reading and research, and to show the creative processes in action. Poignancy often emerges from struggles for self-expression.

There is a plan to organise launches for the other new volumes, and conjoint activities generally, nationwide. (See Roy Birch's Outreach article). Another major possibility is the revival of Bristol Survivors group, with an outline proposal by Hazel Hammond, a dynamic force in Alternative arts in Bristol, and whose publication, *Needlepoint*, is in my review section. One discovery I made in my reviewing is the poet Kona McPhee; one of her articles is featured in this issue. She is the most reader-friendly writer I have come across for some time, and I have proposed that she should be approached to do a special workshop session for Survivors.

The monthly event at the Poetry Cafe (2<sup>nd</sup> Thursday of each month) continues to attract capacity audiences, while Tottenham Chances, somewhat hampered by its location, struggles on with some excellent performances. There have been outstanding performances from Armored Weston – both as one half of 'The Children' duet with John Gibbens, and as part of 'The Sibylline Sisters' with Sybil Madrigal and Kay Grant. Both acts combine incredible emotional depth with fantastic imagination. There was also the zany humour and musicality of John Hegley and Hugh Metcalf, the incisive wit of Jazzman John Clarke, Dylan Bates and Nigel Burch. Sparks fly pretty consistently.

Work is proceeding, with professional guidance, on the development of the website which, when completed, will dramatically broaden Survivors' base: it will include posting boards for poetry, prose and artwork, for expressing opinions. There could be downloads of acoustic music and live readings recorded at Survivor events. The website could facilitate publication of novels. Once these are on, say, doc. or pdf file, they can easily be downloaded in their entirety. An enormous wealth of material may be released in this way. It was decided against serialising any of these in *Poetry Express (PE)*, as this does not come out frequently enough to sustain serial continuity. Links will be provided to facilitate correspondence between Survivors. In the interim, *Poetry Express* always welcomes feedback, comments and suggestions.

There are many readers who would like to see the return of the printed version of *PE*. Survivors' Poetry is very sensitive to the feelings and needs of those who lack funds for computers, who may be unable and/or unwilling to computerise. Such people could be making a vital contribution towards the preservation of literacy. The 'print revival' could possibly happen if a subscription scheme were set up, and copies produced on the 'print on demand' principle. This could possibly satisfy the funders, who strongly prefer the electronic version – understandably, as it continues to receive thousands of 'hits'.

Struggles for funding continue, with some success, but also with a need to sustain constant vigilance. Some of the relevant statistics are in the latter part of Simon's editorial. Throughout its existence (now nearly 20 years), Survivors has faced, and surmounted, much adversity. A great deal has been learned from past experience, and determined efforts are now being made to streamline accounting.

## Update *from* Simon Jenner

I

Are we losing touch? It's a question after dramatic shifts in government that people ask of themselves; and the government should in relation to them, but won't. More on Westminster's The Daily Quicksand in a moment.

It's a question I put provocatively to our electronic selves too, as it happens. There's no doubt our readership and survivor readership has increased greatly in our electronic incarnation. And the magazine's quality, colour art, design, overall flexibility – including corrections of a very few typos when pointed out – has put it a league ahead of its earlier, printed self. But we clearly can't reach those with no access to, or skills in, broadband-based emails and computers. And that's disproportionately high in the survivor community for many obvious reasons. But the notion of losing touch does own a tactile corollary: paper. There's several indices to this. Disappearing Day Centres can no longer boast copies of *Poetry Express (PE)*, save some elderly samples of c. 2004-06. Hardly current.

More disturbing, too, is the slow erosion of our reviewer base. Our extraordinarily erudite and copious Editor, Dave Russell, is keeping on a three-person-in-one band, which in itself does the job of ten. He can nuance his name to permutations (David T Russell; Dave R; David Russell); even he cannot do everything without a sense of solitary endeavour.

Some excellent reviewers might think that electronic isn't somehow real. True in the printed sense, though mainstream/avant-garde critical reviews are thriving. E-Zenes like *Jacket* and ex-mags like *Terrible Work* and other paper tigers and lions now boast a virtual presence. Reviewers attached or empathic to the survivor community, seem not to be natural constituents (or stakeholders!) of these on-line magazines. We're enticing reviewers back and certainly have enough review books. Bloodaxe and Faber & Faber have been particularly generous.

We've heard much of Kindle, the e-book, recently. It certainly has its uses. Still, there's nothing like the human scale of paper reading; printing off, though rendering a more colourful set of pages than we used to have, isn't quite the same. It's why incidentally Kindle will never replace the physical book, especially poetry. For one thing, the human frame of holding and riffling pages at will, in a comfortable posture, is a physical pleasure: you're not getting RSI (Repetitive Strain Injury). Another factor is of course eyes. You don't get health and safety warnings about taking your eyes away from a book every twenty minutes unless you have existing health challenges.

Nevertheless, we have to live within our funded and personnel limits. Sending out 4-5,000 copies of *PE* isn't yet viable. A bald, imperfect conclusion; still infinitely preferable to the fantastical, real world of political somersaults.

II

However, SP naturally produces all its books and one way of ensuring more physical titles from us is to keep buying them. We have another tranche of new titles and reprints – attesting to yet more sell-outs, due this summer. Those of you who admire our ground-breaking anthology of poetry from 1950-2008, *Orphans of Albion*, will be pleased to know your own copy is now superseded by a second edition. In truth, this edition really will penetrate where the first edition couldn't and we know that demand was wholly out-stripped by supply. We took the opportunity to enlarge, correct and expand the introduction and biographies slightly too. Steve Mann's pamphlet is undergoing I think its fourth print-run. Even more exciting for us are the three new full-volume titles: Ayelet McKenzie's *Courting the Asylum*, Bruce James' *Songs from Silence*, and Joanna Watson's *Inkblotting*. And other new pamphlets:



Girija Shettar's *This year, daffodils*, Helen Hudspith's *Sleeping with the Snow Queen*, Lydia Hill's *Fishing for Potatoes*, Mala Mason's *The Coming of the Rains* and Sean Burn's *People are their own dreams*. We hope to provide commentaries by their mentors, extracted poems from these titles, and samples of an extraordinary burgeoning of gifted poets. Each year seems to bring a rising standard. Our sales and PayPal facilities are up and I do urge everyone to buy copies, and where you felt inspired, to give us feedback.

### III

One element has emerged that will degrade in detail, but not in theme. IDS on the DWP. In other words Irritable Duncan Syndrome, as the ex-leader bar one of the Conservatives was called, is now implementing his inner-city make-over and of course those scroungers on Disability. He's grasped the nettle that Yvette Cooper, his Labour predecessor, claimed she grasped at the close of the month that shredded idealism and heralded the most extraordinary political pragmatism seen for decades. Cooper averred that the gap between benefits and paid employment where you paid an instant 90% tax as IDS neatly put it, was to be closed. In other words, get off benefits and find yourself a job and you'd actually be worse off. Cooper claimed plans to correct this were implemented, but admitted sluggish execution. IDS took this as a fine stick to Labour and a finer carrot to prove he cares about those on benefits. Well and good. But our recession, already seeing a miraculous diminution of the unemployed (partly morphing to other benefits), doesn't present jobs. People able to take up low-paid opportunities live outside the system with illegal fringe-benefits, the sort sweatshops prefer. The Government is grasping that arguments against the minimum wage, its crippling the economy, were made identically by anti-abolitionists in 1807.

I raise all this to counsel against premature alarm, something I know has been percolating in the survivor community as well as any sentient person. Commentators for instance have observed that this pushing of the disabilities envelope in the hope of finding all those scrounging traumatised ex-servicemen who should be selling bootlaces, is an unpleasant Middle England fantasy. The jobs aren't there, and the cost of pushing a section of people into all sorts of desperation – including crime and addiction-based crime – outweighs leaving them alone. When more is known, there'll be an article in SP by one of our alert commentators.

### IV

The government has acted unimaginatively with the Department of Media Culture and Sport (DCMS) and the Arts Council. Jeremy Hunt, Secretary of State for the Arts, and Ed Vaizey, Culture Minister, however, did eventually 'get' it, despite mild fantasies over tax-breaks for rich endowment (possible; but not now and not the American model they favoured). That is, arts ministers for all parties agreed that for every £1 you invested in the arts, you'd get £5. They were inevitably over-ruled. In the general rush to nibble at the debt mountain by slashing funding and paralysing us instead, the DCMS weren't going to lose out on losing out. These figures are *just* for 2010-11, that is *after* agreed budgets. The Olympics was brunted by £27M in addition to all DCMS departments being trimmed by a further 3%. But the Arts Council, who had just trimmed itself by £4m on drastic internal economies I touched on in my last essays, were blessed with a special £5M minus just for them, on top of the £19M (3% of their £460M total). As Liz Forgan, Chair of ACE points out, it's a £23-24M package on top of a heavy internal cut, that can't be absorbed by ACE's own running costs. There is a historic £19M saved from regional cuts that ACE haven't been allowed to touch. ACE is hoping to use this to prevent renegeing on current agreements. What 2011-14 holds is of course worse but perhaps better than we currently fear. What we must not do, on either side, is forget we're on the same one. We cannot blame ACE for cuts; and they might not use the arguments of failed governance with organisations they have to cut adrift. Are we losing touch? No. The virtual is our salvation. It can be activated anywhere. For the moment, with its marvellous plans for development, regional groupings all represented with an interactive site, our website might save us from the chop or, failing that, from silence. SP will visibly thrive as never before.



## Outreach *from* Roy Birch

For this report, Outreach and Mentoring are joining forces. Visit-style outreach is currently at a near standstill, though hopefully a circular to the regional groups will enable me to do some necessary visiting in the not too distant future. Where Outreach and the Mentoring Scheme are able to dovetail is in the organizing and facilitation of the Mentoring Scheme launches.

Traditionally, the launches have been held in London, and have all too often simply been tacked on to the end of the monthly Open Mike event at the Poetry Café in Covent Garden, an arrangement which has been deemed highly unsatisfactory by a considerable number of Mentoring Scheme graduates, who have felt that their launches were not being taken as seriously as they deserved. In addition, some of the graduates have been required to travel long distances, which has posed considerable problems. For this current batch of publications it has been decided to hold the launches, wherever possible (and if desired) in the graduate's home town. Unless the graduate has a particular venue preference, I am hoping to negotiate the holding of the launches at the local Waterstones branch. Not only does it seem an appropriate venue for the launches, I see a potential long-term value in collaboration between Survivors' Poetry (SP) and a major High Street bookseller.

Back to Outreach as it is. I hope to be able to announce in the next issue of *Poetry Express*, that the long-awaited SP International is an actual, if small, reality. The Bread is Rising Poetry Collective, of Brooklyn, New York, has at long last responded to us, and are, hopefully, sending poems, pictures, and a completed Affiliation Form, in the very near future. It has only taken three and a half years since I first broached the subject to them at one of their poetry evenings. This time I shall stay on their case until they surrender. They are a wonderful group and their membership of the SP Network could be invaluable in helping us establish ourselves across the great water, which, if it happens, can only be of benefit to all concerned. I am also going to contact Syracuse University to see if there is any way we can work with them. My wife Lucia and I already have a working relationship with members of the University staff, and it would be wonderful to collaborate seriously with an American University.

Outreach is also teaming up with London Events. Razz and I are mounting a campaign to gain SP representation at some of the London festivals in 2011. We are also researching the possibility of creating SP's own festival. A successful SP festival would be a wonderful achievement. There is little better therapy than having a good time.

Mentoring again. The current crop of mentoring submissions is waiting to be read by potential mentors. The work on offer deserves to be brought to publication. Where are the mentors? What are we doing wrong? Or, conversely, what are we not doing right? Personally, I feel that SP needs to take the acquisition and employment of mentors far more seriously than it presently does. As we do not pay them for their services, it is at best naïve, and at worst arrogant, of us to expect worthwhile mentors to come flocking for the privilege of assisting unknown poets to the publication of collections which will leave them as unknown poets. We need to canvas extensively for mentors, something we simply do not do, and we need to seek further exposure and extended publishing opportunity for the work produced by the scheme, and for the authors themselves. I am not at all sure how this can be accomplished, but I feel that collaboration between SP and Waterstones could help, if only in a small way.

Now a small item which is not strictly Outreach but if I don't mention it probably no-one else will. From time to time people send me lengthy prose pieces. I have not been able to make use of them because we are simply not equipped to publish lengthy prose works. One item which I was forced to relinquish, and which was subsequently published by Chipmunka, was a very fine novel about a schizophrenic living in Hampstead. With the requisite amount of editing it could have rivalled 'A Conspiracy of Dunces.' It has now been agreed that readable novels which are able to be used, can (and hopefully will) be serialized on the SP website.

I think that is about it. I could whinge on about the new government and the state of the economy, and where the cuts are likeliest to fall, but Simon has already done that at length. Troubled times are undoubtedly upon us, but they have been so before. Survivors' Poetry is not so named for nothing. See you next time. Keep on Trucking.

## Art and Catharsis *by* Kona Macphee

These days, you can find any number of creativity-based therapeutic programs - art therapy, music therapy, creative writing therapy, journaling therapy and so on. Occasionally, "serious" practitioners get a bit sniffy about these activities, as though engaging in creative activity with an explicit therapeutic aspiration is somehow an insulting parody of the arcane, rarefied processes of "real" art. Apart from its inherent arrogance, this point of view overlooks the significant role that "therapeutic" emotional processes can play in the production of art - particularly, I would argue, in the production of poetry.

It goes without saying that opinions differ wildly on what poetry is "for". For me, at least some of the time, writing a poem is about communicating an emotion by recreating that emotion in the mind of the reader - the poetic equivalent, perhaps, of the "Show, don't tell" dictum beloved of prose writers. In my own experience, the poems most likely to evoke a visible emotional response in readers are those wondrously satisfying ones that had a similar effect on me as *I wrote them*. I'm certainly not the first poet to notice this; Robert Frost once said:

"No tears in the writer, no tears in the reader. No surprise in the writer, no surprise in the reader."

At its most absorbing and enjoyable, writing poetry can feel more like archaeology than construction; rather than creating something new, the poet is delicately dusting and probing to reveal some wondrous artefact that *already exists*. When a poem is emerging like this, I'll sometimes uncover something - occasionally an image or metaphor, but most often a line, particularly a closing line - that instantly releases a wave of emotion (in my case, usually grief). Inevitably, it's these poems that seem to have the most impact on other readers, inducing a similar emotional response. Where does that power come from, and why does it so often apply its potent emotional force to reader and writer alike?

I doubt there's any definitive, single way to explain it - or not given our current level of understanding of the mind and the brain, anyway. We might turn to the work of 20th century psychotherapist C.G. Jung, who wrote extensively about what he called the "collective unconscious", and the shared symbolism he suggested was at play there. Alternatively, we might revisit the notion of the "Objective Correlative", as popularised by T.S. Eliot:

"The only way of expressing emotion in the form of art is by finding an 'objective correlative'; in other words, a set of objects, a situation, a chain of events which shall be the formula of that particular emotion; such that when the external facts, which must terminate in sensory experience, are given, the emotion is immediately evoked."

When it comes down to it, though, I don't think it really matters *why* these fleeting, transcendent snippets of poetry are so powerful. The process by which they emerge - on those "sweet rare days when the words / come deeper than voice", as I once described it in a poem - feels both deeply inscrutable and ineffably profound. If we could derive a mechanistic explanation, would it then be possible to draw that magic up from the depths (or down from the heights in Plath's 'rare, random descent') by combined force of will and application of theory? Somehow I just can't imagine this ever being true.

It seems to me that emotionally powerful poems work because they help us feel things almost *despite ourselves*, sneaking in under our defences and releasing emotions that we might not actually *want* to be feeling at that moment. (In other words, they work like those infrequent but compelling moments in therapy when a psychological or emotional block finally gives way, and the material behind it comes flooding out - the classic experience of catharsis.) It's a process rarely amenable to conscious volition - and thereby all the more revelatory, when it does occur.

Obviously, 'Art Therapy' doesn't always produce technically polished, professional-standard works of art. To argue, however, that "serious art" should eschew its therapeutic capability, its capacity to "get under the skin" and induce a cathartic response in both artist and audience, is to reduce it to no more than a pretty shell of intellectual show-offery. I, for one, won't be queuing up to write that - or to read it.

Kona Macphee grew up in Australia and now lives in Scotland. Her latest collection, "*Perfect Blue*" (Bloodax 2010), includes a free e-Book of commentaries intended to support new readers of poetry; see [pb.konamacphee.com](http://pb.konamacphee.com) for more. Dave Russell will be reviewing "*Perfect Blue*" in the next issue of *Poetry Express*. Her first collection, "*Tails*" (Bloodaxe 2004), is being sold to raise money for UNICEF at [www.konamacphee.com](http://www.konamacphee.com).



## Self-Discovery *by* Andrew H. Smith

Self-Discovery is for me the most important part of my on-going recovery. Building a relationship with myself is the key to all other relationships in life.

My addictions and mental illness backed me into a corner. The roof fell in and my world became narrowed and enclosed by my illness. Feeding my addictions and the negative thoughts and emotions surrounding them gradually became my total preoccupation and I lost myself. The psychosis, depression, obsessions, paranoia, frustrations, loneliness and anger didn't leave me when I stopped drinking. It is vital to try to minimize the harmful anger and mood swings as to indulge them depletes energy and undermines self-confidence.

In early recovery the negative emotions and traumas that had fuelled my addictions and had consumed and overwhelmed my personality making me somebody I wasn't, could have triggered a relapse. The support of psychiatric day services, social services, and Alcoholics Anonymous (AA), was vital at this crucial stage.

Through pursuing self-expression and exploring my psyche by the process of creativity I started to re-discover myself and eventually a fulfilling role to perform, working in Mental Health (MH) trying to help others and support myself.

I discovered the positive self within that had been crushed and overwhelmed by my 'dual diagnosis.' I first used art and 'journaling.' Art is great at all levels but has a special quality to put you together when you have broken into pieces and have even lost 'the words.' From working with elemental forms I then moved into studying particular subjects that interested me, whilst all the time writing about myself and what I had learnt about the world around me.

I focused my attentions principally on philosophy, sociology, psychology, history, and therapy. AA recommends writing down about resentments, anger, fears and sexual issues through the fourth and tenth steps of the recovery programme. Once I had started gaining a 'vocabulary' through engagement with my demons and my structured educational studies I then moved into poetry and creative writing. The subjects could have been of any kind and the end product is not important. The whole point is the engagement with the creative processes. It could be through dance, music, trampolining or astronomy, almost anything in fact that pushes you to express yourself and experience positive emotions and connects you with your creative life-force.

I believe that journaling, keeping a diary, writing down on a regular basis is the most neglected tool in maintaining mental wellbeing and as an aid to self-understanding it is also the least expensive of any form of treatment. It has stood the test of time and the ancients were able to keep their heads by recording their thoughts when all about them were losing theirs. The whole concept of recording thoughts, events and emotions is reawakening. Many stress counsellors recommend writing, and CBT (Cognitive Behavioural Therapy) also involves recording 'hot thoughts.' The draft NHS\* wellbeing toolkit includes journaling as well. I certainly know that my own self-discovery would be lost without paper and pencil.

Self-Discovery also has a spiritual side. I don't know in what form spirit exists outside of myself but in exploring my own spirituality I may make more discoveries about what the ancients meant by the inscription on the Oracle to "Know thyself."

# ● featured *Artist*



Cover image by J.Sheehy "It's all too much"

## Introduction

### Swollen Hats

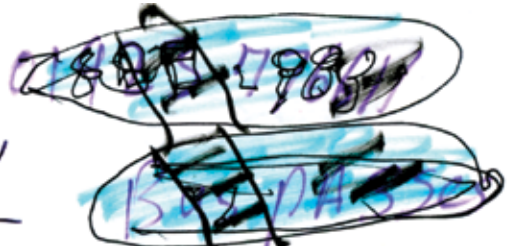
Glamourising  
Fame brings influence  
Floods in power  
Swelling head in glory  
Awful worry  
Times get tougher  
Send them out to work  
    Unable  
Prunings  
    Cuttings  
    No other options  
Will i have to turn,  
To a life of crime.

John Sheehy

# BROADSHEET



Square Egg - head



That's the way up the Ladder



Some lie on their Back  
Old Long gone power  
Rises from the Ashes

SPRAYING BOLTS AND NUTS  
When oiled And Re heated  
once again ~~Gold~~ Reddens  
Black ARROWS Tune The Rust  
Masked Bugs come ALIVE

Statues polished Shine  
Anesture <sup>secure</sup> secure STAGE

Beehive Honey

combs The Streets  
Broadcasting SILVER TABS  
STAINED GLASS  
has spoken again of John Sheehy





## Entangled in the family web

The cactus was born into the harsh desert and put down deep roots,  
Moulded by its environment, its skin was made tough by the heat and sand,  
It grew spines to protect its juicy skin from predation,  
It kept everything inside,  
It was about survival, not living.

One day, a dark shadow was thrown over the cactus,  
It was made by someone she couldn't quite see.  
Blinded by the contrast between the blistering sun and sudden dark,  
The cactus decided that it was a positive step,  
There was a chance for a different future, with offspring that will not shrivel in the sun,  
The Dark fostered this.

The cactus produced offspring, they were scared of the Dark,  
The shadow laughed and toyed with the offspring till they were small and submissive,  
The cactus was still blind and trapped by a fear of return to the blistering desert,  
The dark brought water and nourishment, but brought no truth, the cactus remained in the dark.  
The offspring ran to the cactus for protection, but wounded themselves on the spines,  
The cactus saw blood dripping from its spines and thought, oh my god, I'm bleeding'

The offspring survived and grew, keeping themselves small,  
Venturing further from the cactus and eventually out of the shadow and through the desert.  
They found a different future, but struggled to adapt,  
One of the offspring crawled behind the figure casting the shadow,  
They saw it was a facade, a puppet controlled by strings,  
They watched and learned and thought, 'so that's how it works'  
They took out a pair of scissors and cut the strings.

The puppet collapsed, but the dessert sun still threw its shadow over the cactus,  
The offspring ran to the cactus and said, 'look I've escaped, you can too,  
Beyond the dessert is a lush vibrant world, it's hard to get to, but you can do it if you believe in it'  
But the cactus had put down deep roots in the heat of its formation, remembering the cruel sun,  
It saw the shadow as its saviour, so it formed the question, 'escape from what?'  
The offspring bowed its head in pity and looked at its choices,  
The offspring set off towards the world, away from the shadow,  
Grieving for the cactus, now going rotten in the dark.

The cactus sat patiently in the shadow, feeling helpless to do anything,  
Its roots dug deep into the earth, keeping it immobile.  
It thought, 'why does everyone treat me so cruelly, except my saviour?'  
The cactus could not see, the puppet's strings were cut.

**Samantha Long**

## I. The View From My Wooden Tower

As the messenger arrives we continue,  
The steps are marked with tears,  
Its finger is crying and its toes are cold,  
The sea has risen and all is fine,  
It's Tuesday morning and the beast is here.  
Dripping from its journey the land is no longer dry,  
How long has it been we now ask, our brother?  
Maybe, I think I can remember,  
Something is ringing but it is smoky,  
Far off in the distance,  
Time has cloaked the memory of it all,  
But if I strain I can see.  
There are shrouds everywhere I look,  
But to the others they are invisible,  
Vision and sense, the sense, the sense, common?  
Shake, touch, nod, agree,  
Not now, the door is locked,  
The key is lost, the people are gone the lie is true,  
At least for now it is clear,  
Like the water is clear,  
Can you follow a straight line?  
Marked on the  
beast is the time  
it came,  
But watch as it leaves.  
Silence is here again and I feel peace,  
Ignorance is silence yet silence is peace,  
A gaze, a glance, a smile or a smirk,

Acceptance is nigh when you can hide.  
In the dark north four friends march into a moonlit space,  
Cloaked by the crowd they can slip through unnoticed,  
But watch now, be careful,  
There are eyes on all sides on all things,  
Constant surveillance, we must be monitored or we may  
fall ill,  
For our own good you see they see you.  
Now I can see their eyes but it has not always been so,  
Memory tells me something,  
But I have issues with trust,  
Evidence tells me nothing as it was lost in the flood,  
The sea had to rise and the mountains had to fall,  
Yet the people missed it,  
They were at work, press the button.

It's Friday morning.  
It's five AM,  
I'm waking up,  
I'm up.  
Im out,  
It's seven thirty,  
I'm on the road,  
It's eight thirty,  
I'm on the phone,  
Squares,  
Blocks,

Time,  
Space,  
Command,  
  
Demand,  
Answer,  
Ask,  
Lie,  
When,  
Now,  
Stop,  
It's seven PM,  
I'm home,  
It's over.  
But now the stare strays from here,  
Can we find comfort in that?  
In another world young ears hear of flames and wonder,  
To what magic can our world stretch,  
Our wondrous leaders know no boundaries,  
Oh thanks be to the beast,  
The flames of freedom bum all over the world,  
The red flame scorches the earth white,  
The blue sea from where the beast came is powerful,  
Aren't we the lucky few who can claim to be here,  
To be here means we can go anywhere.  
But I warn thee beware,  
The markings are clear but vision is blurred,  
The wall of our past has not yet crumbled.  
The rebel talks about revolt,  
To stand against our great world and the beast we follow,  
How can this be?  
Where can he speak?  
Perhaps it is a whisper?  
Silently plotting and then silently plotted,  
So easily erased from the book,  
A full chapter lost forever,  
Not even a myth left for his friends,  
There were none.  
As our world hangs on a thread,  
We conquer all our fears,  
Freedom we celebrate,  
Slavery we despise,  
I'm losing my breath,  
Forgive me,  
I will continue but not for you,  
Only for myself  
The freedom I speak of can not exist,  
It is only there because we are told it is so,  
You can never let the beast know you are truly free.  
Will he return?  
Is he simply hiding?  
Look carefully or you will miss it.  
The birds drip tears of blood,  
From a cheek the drop lands on the red earth,  
The flames are hurrying the moment upon us,  
Push away and the closer we come,

Do nothing and nothing happens,  
So simple,  
Simplicity can be so,  
If only we would let it,  
To fight human nature is to fight our self,  
The self is not something,  
It is not us,

Only an idea,  
To create is to overcome,  
How long must we wait for a new idea, a new creation?

### VIII. The End Alain

As I stand here in my wooden tower,  
I can see the people run,  
The beast has returned.  
Questions must now be asked,  
The answers must now be found,  
Do not stand silently with a bent over back,  
Do not stare blindly at the architects prints,  
Be prepared for your time has arrived and you must now leave.  
I can see you as you step upon the ship,  
As you set sail to meet the beast,  
The land hastening for a long time now,  
The sea is ready to cleanse our land,  
And we must be ready to act.  
Relentless efforts of politician's minds,  
Plots for freedom and fake images of hope,  
These are the things that we now regret.  
The time has passed for the epiphany,  
Our sight may have returned,  
Our senses may seem clear but you still can not trust,  
Now the weather is beginning to change,  
I can see clouds on the horizon,  
They are pushing away the smoke,  
But the view is still hazy,  
We still can not see the beast, but he is there,  
Standing on the sun,  
Pushing away the moon and soon he will bring the darkness,  
No light shall be seen as we stand by his side,  
Our bombs are set are guns are loaded and our finger is ready,  
Push the button.  
Explosions of ignorance are killing this world,  
Narrow minds and acceptance have brought us here,  
My wooden tower is shaking and soon it will fall,  
I still can watch for a little time more,  
But what I can see is not pleasing me,  
Like everyone else I try to look away,  
But like the people of ignorance I have to stare and stare.  
The sun now is black,  
The moon has vanished,  
Our universe is empty and our world will soon be dead,  
This is not a warning,  
The time is late the moment is upon us,  
Raise your weapons and raise your children to battle,  
To battle we must go.

### Bubbles

From my lungs a terrible surge:  
the value of life  
its intense expression...

In my belly a tide of slow water...

Striving for anticipation, the meal  
of eyes, with kitchen  
smock, deliberate and deranged.

To famished experience a revelation:

I visit the site of its luxury. I pour out  
like soup the hunger of its appetite.  
I clean the inside of its anxious  
heart with the dust of salt and burns.

### Benedictus

Leave it with a prayer to silence the  
flood in a mind of dead pillars.  
Excite the blood with beaded fingers  
in a hall of flames.

Shake with foul breath the scented  
flowers in a garden of bruised thighs.  
Tear from its sleep  
the immense gratitude of storms.

Your face shines in its pocket like  
a hand of soft and brutal  
waves. The sea of concrete  
is blue with cold and silent water.

In a corner of black hearted stone  
your speech is religious. On flecks  
of dust your greatest  
sacrifice in a burst of light delivered.

### Astrological

I walk on a snow beach with a dog  
of pride.  
Hail light!  
The salt on your tongue will return.

On shores of stone I kiss frozen water.  
Happiness I do not crave;  
silence is a shelf I fill with tools of sand.  
Peace I often wonder is a little sound.



Sharp faced the outline of cliffs and snow.  
My heart is in flames;  
raw the memory of your sudden death.  
Give me sight to challenge its mysteries.  
Remove from my face a white cloth to see.  
The moon is like a grey lamp.  
It draws in circles. It revolts at night.  
Tied to its feet anchors of human space.

**Austin McCarron**

## **T h e   W a y**

Thoughtful, hands behind my back,  
I walk between the rails  
the straightest way  
there is.

From behind me  
at great speed  
comes a train  
that knows nothing of me.

The train  
(old Zenó is my witness)  
will never reach me  
for I am always a little ahead  
of things that don't think.

And even if brutally  
it runs me over  
there will always be someone  
to walk ahead of it,  
his head full of things,  
hands behind his back.

Someone like me,  
now,  
while the black monster  
approaches horribly fast  
and will never  
catch up with me.

### **Marin Sorescu (1936-96)**

Translated from the *Romanian* by  
Michael Hamburger.

Taken from *We Have Come Through*,  
edited by Peter Forbes.  
Published by Bloodaxe & Survivors'  
Poetry in 2003.

## **A n   O l d   A d d i c t i o n**

You'll find me in the dark spaces between the stars  
Where the cold wind blows through my rib-cage  
And the moon slowly wanders.

You won't find me hanging round bars  
Nursing a pint to shelter me  
And ward off the lonely tears.

I'm 'cured' now, but I still carry the scars  
Life gave me and the pain that I got rid of  
By drinking too many beers.

It was a way to drown out the sorrow,  
Just at the price of a hangover tomorrow,  
And I've missed it for so many years.

## **L o s t   S o u l s**

hanging around  
waiting for something to do  
but there is nothing,  
if he smoked he'd smoke a cigarette  
fag-end of time waiting  
dynamic apathy, nothing  
to do,  
lives wasted in schizophrenia  
wandering about, straying into cafes  
hopeless pints never a girlfriend anxious hours waiting-  
rooms, injections  
occasional sweet moments of joy  
a hundred years of boredom in a minute  
Jesus spare us

## **B e n t ?**

Something happened to me earlier today  
That made me wonder if my friend, Y's gay.  
He says he loves me which I think is nice  
And love between friends is never a vice,  
But I must admit it's a little bit queer  
When he whispers sweet nothings in my ear!  
I love him too, but we don't share the same bed,  
Whatever our friends or the neighbours have said.  
I don't give a toss about their dirty dreams,  
Love's always straight however bent it seems!

**John Thorkild Ellison**





Make this...  
MNCI  
BAPT'S childhood part proce

Setting, being understood, still, the trail of the years  
Decades, historical settings, the bombardment of  
Physical pain, located within the brain, the sense that  
I don't know, and because that is in itself a truth  
These attempts of mind, to know, truth, to actually  
Accept, by way of limitations, a world in which  
The very fabric of nature, is also, just one more  
Development, by whatever, time, to notice  
The material surroundings in which society operates  
There is no method no correct path, there are  
No ideologies, nothing is absolute, even philosophies  
Everything, even the radical theories, the institutions  
The elaborate belief systems, the whole picture  
Stands here, as I sit, as I, or to reverse that and  
Teach myself a new view point, in which numbers  
In their pure state, in comparison, a unity  
A religion, a psychiatric, the need to move onwards,  
To pass away, to die in fact to the fear of death  
Even fame, even poverty, everything  
To turn this page over and start once more  
For this too, is a place, of a kind,  
It is rather like being blind, to know the difference  
And circumstances, to actually make the ideas clear  
As picture, to paint your thoughts, to give up  
Believing in categories and labels, even  
Schizophrenia, is just another attempt to understand  
How could it be other wise,  
Let us say, that to change, the concepts, to stop believing  
That you are getting somewhere, when the process  
Is in the now and no where else.  
Time to pause, and time to fall, through, the state  
Where in fact the mind exists, too, as a notion  
No more true than anything else.  
If you thought I only wrote poetry and philosophy  
You are probably right. So write as you will

attempted  
Dunk  
94

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Johnson



## The Madness in Me

The madness in me,  
is a flaw, a fault, a trauma,  
a disruption to my mind's  
time-space continuum.  
I feel like damaged goods.

The trauma occurred in Bristol  
18 years ago, between Broadbury Road  
Police Station and Barrow Hospital.  
Immediate ECT could not straighten it out.

A spiral, a worm-hole, or plug hole  
opened up, which is always there,  
to fall through, to another plane of paranoid  
networks, of thoughts that follow me.  
A cascade of thoughts, hard wired into my brain.

Sometimes when I cycle, I imagine  
that if I cycle fast enough and hard enough,  
I will leave the thoughts behind.

But the network has leapt counties,  
across England from West Country to East Anglia.  
Connecting one police force's records with another.  
Passing messages from one  
undercover police officer to another.  
Passing messages between the police force  
and the mental health services who are in league.

Leaving me in fear of the paranoid certainty of the need to destroy the  
evidence, to end the chase, to end being on the run.  
The only certainty being the end will be suicide.  
The knowledge that exhausted, I could slip beneath the waves

**Kevin Simpson**

## What I don't know is

What I don't know is  
Now to write without thinking,  
About knowing anything.  
To use any other term  
It all amounts to nothing  
Along the road and down the drain  
High above the clouds Rain  
Now for whatever reason was it possible  
To stop anytime at any place  
This isn't written down  
Whatever I imagined I might say  
Has disappeared into the abyss  
Towards an oblivion  
Does nothing exist or am I unable to

Move past being and all its state,  
Where personal pronouns  
And the object blur across this line  
My eyes are crossing  
Jumping in between, I arrive  
Into an unknown world  
Where the earth and its inhabitants  
Are slowly dying.  
Such as goes might as well hang around  
For as long as possible  
Of course I can leave all this behind  
I don't know quite how to label this activity  
It truly is for me without any reason  
For anything at all even giving an title  
And using my own name as an author  
A sad fact seems to be you are doing this  
In a state of being absolutely alone  
With your feelings in whatever state of mind  
Have now it doesn't seem possible to  
Stop what I did so long ago when I decided  
In become a writer. That about sums it up  
This is not the answer to any of your questions.

**Dave St. Clair**

still sky-  
the chatter of gulls  
passes

summer heat  
lines and lines  
of multicoloured washing

**Girija Shettar**

from "*This year, daffodils*". Published by  
Survivors' Press, as part of the Mentoring Scheme

## The Fairy Ring

Out in the countryside  
in the middle of the birchwood  
I came across a Fairy Ring.

Wandering about for a while  
I wondered if I would see a fairy.

Some people believe in them. I  
came home empty-handed,  
But I know I'll be back.

**Keith Murdoch**

## Consumed by Darkness, Cover me in Light

The darkness surrounds me in a cloak of despair

Consuming my soul  
I can feel it clawing at my mind  
My body wracked with pain  
I feel myself slipping from the light.

In the darkness wait the demons  
Hungry for my soul  
Gaining sustenance from each piece  
Of hope that I once had  
Cruelly snatched from my hands.

I long for the sweet kiss of oblivion  
To end my torture  
So I can no longer feel the pain  
But the demons take even my longing  
And I am left in agony and in the dark again.

An angel hears my anguished screams  
And comes down from the light  
To try and end my suffering  
In this eternal night.

The angel carries with her  
A cloth of brilliant light  
That weakens the demons enough  
For me to gain the strength  
That I will need to fight.

The angel is always waiting  
To help me on those days  
That the darkness is upon me  
And I lack the strength to fight.  
She opens her heart and gives me love  
And the hope that I have lost  
And when I am consumed by darkness  
She covers me in light.

**Myles Cook**

## Cellos

The cellos are crying  
that fresh girl  
got lost in the city's streets  
as a cat that hides rapidly  
I walk alone slowly  
struggling against my misfortune  
lost, hazy day  
I draw out my childish prayer  
taught by fools  
but innocent to me!

Industry of pain the Public Funds.  
In our home's snugness  
the night I felt a threatening presence  
as I was sleeping in my room  
I woke up – no one was there.

I contend with my old passion mystified  
searching the open skies  
the broken horizon  
the big cargo-boats  
loaded with heavy merchandise  
legal and illegal.

Torn sails, subdued light  
I found you in a junk shop  
you sold our photos  
I saw us in the centre of a frame  
I was marching like a ruin dressed in rags  
under your house's stairs  
what night took you away, spoil of the war?  
My cough strengthened!

**Yannis Anastasopoulos**

## A Pair of Red Shoes

Soft patent leather,  
four inches high,  
matching stitches  
round the edges,  
bright shiny red  
in the shop mirror.

They'd look fantastic  
over black fishnets –  
heels to feel alive in.

Eighty five pounds a pair;  
stashed away in the back  
of the cupboard  
while I wear  
flat black lace-ups.

**Lydia Hill**

from "*Fishing for Potatoes*". Published by  
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**'Hurricane come and hurricane go, but sea timeless, sea timeless'**  
*Grace Nichols*

my bookcase is causing me a nervous breakdown and  
driving me to the bottle. Even the photo of  
Nelson Mandela i can see on one of the book spines  
echoes this grief and confusion.

like he did, i live in this prison of a room  
bugged by the bookcase; he survived 25 years —  
i've served 21 years time here. Before the bookcase  
it was the green jumper which i binned and felt better.  
i'll ring the Charity Shop tomorrow about the  
offending furniture but today is Sunday  
and the shop's shut.

i'm curled up feeling a cripple and i daren't take  
any more Chinese herbal medicine — don't know  
how that would affect me — i'm used to being  
generous to myself with British pills but i've got  
so used to them they no longer work.  
wish i had an axe.  
i struggle to find the eye of the storm.

the elderly widow upstairs kept having  
to change her lounge carpet. She thought  
the Devil was in her room —  
the clock ticks on...

i found out last week that a married man  
from 'round the corner shot himself  
5 years ago —  
"stress" his son told me. i know his son quite well  
but not well enough it seems.  
what grief goes on behind closed doors!  
he was just pissing about with a gun. It was an accident."  
said his son. i remember meeting the deceased once  
when my stomach was full of paracetamol and I'd gone  
to 'kill' time in the local Chinese. The man had signalled  
me to come to their family's table —  
he just shook my hand and said  
"god bless!"

In the West Indies they have natural disasters:  
in Britain we die differently—  
my heart tugged as I crouched near the nettles  
last week by the railway tracks —  
i daren't

**Angela Morkos**



## Russian Roulette

The room is moving all around me,  
Fighting figurines surround me.  
Search the streets for now they've found me.  
Careless ears, harsh words astound me.  
Crushed, my soul; their hands have bound me.  
Congested echoes come to hound me;  
No way out, my daylight dreams will ground me.  
Marching monsters all around me.

Turn around and see the trailing shadow,  
Heavy as wood, in a  
Symbolic chase for casual targets who  
Slip in seedy canyons where vice grips;  
Shooting desperate trips in the dirt.  
Slip the knot for a scouting chance to  
Catch an early day; for aching twisted  
Tangle weeds crush souls; and aspirations  
Sing futile songs of protest with strangled breath.  
Whispered reasons are measured on a  
Smooth white parcel of protracted death.  
Now there is no hope.

Moving eyes in fickle empty heads  
Scramble vacantly through a plastic forest of pleasure;  
Visuals, clouded by fibrous double glazing  
Roll in the abandoned ecstasy of dereliction.  
Vibrations shudder, elongated by sloth  
And taut tissue explodes in vomit.  
Unnatural experiments enliven days of dullness,  
Searching for the morbid truth by derealisation  
In a wasted world of toilets and stinging sores.  
This is a disguise - a game of Russian Roulette.

**Terri McDonald**

Then ebbs away.  
The canopy is moving,  
Reckless at heart.  
Wistful, wild and  
Untamed of spirit.  
All your new hopes and dreams.  
Are no sedative  
On its life-force  
Now or ever.

**P.C. Vealey**

## Unthinking

We are the main killers  
Of the natural resources  
Of Earth.  
The internet and media briskly announced.  
As if it's some great surprise.  
We ravage unthinking,  
We speak unthinking.  
We learn unchallenging too often.  
We are the main killers  
Of the natural resources  
Of Mother Earth.  
Nothing will change,  
Nothing can change  
Till profit is God  
All knowing  
No more!  
In the boardroom and bedroom of mind.  
Unthinking deserts us all  
Remorselessly.

**P.C. Vealey**

## Nature force

The canopy is moving.  
Free will or not.  
The puffy, complacent  
Grey and white clouds,  
Signal an ominous dawn.  
The canopy is moving.  
All the fresh change of yesterday.  
Changes anew again.  
To unseen, unknown worlds  
Of light and tragedy.  
The canopy is moving,  
Restless and fickle,  
Into night and day.  
Where fortune is stemmed,

## Midnight

On board the Artemis,  
we slide through the sea  
like butter under a sky  
made rosy by the midnight sun.

When I saw it, my heart was so moved  
that waves of tears streamed silently  
down my face.

**Mala Mason**

from "*The Coming of the Rains*". Published by  
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## Repeat prescription

In they trot, breathless, exempt from answering machines  
Edward Burra should be here, this cup of tea would leave him weak at the knees  
A brazen barmaid coughing up lust from her dancing belly  
Well fed, jaunty exchange, a quip refuel a plenty  
Iguana pop should be here, coughing up hollow sky into bowls of crystal clear light  
Dust settles cutting corners by hand and by sight  
Face values sidestep the Moscow banana skin lauded,  
helpless hope to bring  
Hopeless draws are over on broken wings  
Working out the hollow horse, and your empty gesture,  
hang him in the wardrobe, the cry from the umbraceous ensemble  
Aviators signal the square dance in sight, Sinead O'Connor should be here bathed in dressing gown moonlight  
fearless driplets with iron lungs, clipped and congested  
the illusion of credentials a showpiece still in transit  
A piece of fluff that broke the camels back, industrious yet holy  
finger the fabric, never mind the boulders, here's the flex blisters  
johnny rotten should be here, seeping into the nations consciousness one at a time  
that's how it works, the stopwatch has stopped ticking.  
Gone dead train in earmuffs with safety elevated stomach  
making waves in the sunlight, utilise the oven to understand a dream, the incident in the clinic-extensions blocking my view.  
In every packet an answer announcing a run for your money.  
plastic letters engulf Industrial estates, exposing surname origins to folk police.  
Age old wine we'll drink, clutching at straws that are skint  
Amerikas tortured din, New York sublime scattering flint  
trying to suppress the sin that lurks within  
Flint and sculpture canned at birth, what is all the landscape worth  
holding dreadful bargains drawn, nervous chattering holds the brawn  
Cape horn lesser shown, what will Horatio bring to throw  
Good intentions don't put an onion in the soup, Elvis Presley should be here, rock a hula baby, loop the spinning loop  
Chinese gourmet visits fountain gate tabernacle holding nan's flowers, from passion launderette  
plasticine burger fights cormorant on bread mix Monday  
Tuesdays ceramic mosaic, a throwaway tourniquet

Anthony Moore

## Light Without Shadow

There was a light casting no shadow,

a holy light, bearing me  
toward the threshold of heaven.

But then, straight and clear  
as if emerged from mist,

was a thread — incongruous as a barrier — across my path.

Desire to pass on being fervent,  
I moved to put aside

this last remnant of earth,  
but by such act in an instant

was made a Goliath of presumption felled by David's stone,

bereft of the light,  
returned to earth,

here to consider the folly  
of seeking to enter that sacred place

by application of logic from a world left on the voyage out,

of assuming it inconsequential  
to attempt a trespass into grace,

of failing to consider the thread  
as myself, in due time to hope

of dissolving into the Light, when temptation and regret are no more.

**Anthony Savory**

## **T r a n s f i g u r a t i o n**

I

Once, in winter, we walked across  
a silence grieving in witness  
to our quarrel.

Your hand was bare.  
I offered my glove.  
You were mute.

I was deaf  
to your longing  
for my hand to be your glove.

II

Later, we flew,  
    your hand with mine,  
across a sky  
    lit by stars.  
I said: 'Look, my darling',

And woke.

III

Sometimes you guide me  
to a different path,

and in thus responding to your love  
I walk with silent tread

through fields and woods  
quiet in sun or rain,

even to be your agent of release  
for birds trapped in churches.

**Anthony Savory**

## ***Gadus morhua***

Pouched lips.

It shoals the tide,  
a hoax of ships

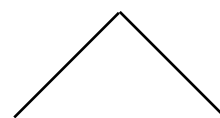
with barbels, inky-eyed;  
wears squamous plates for speed,  
pneumatic, dignified.

It swims to eat to live to breed—  
spontaneous relationships  
without constraints of partnerships.  
We live to eat: it dies to feed

the world. Its flesh is pied  
or caked or kedgereed,  
the liver liquefied...

Thick battered strips  
delight us fried

with chips.



**Joanna Watson**  
from "*Inkblotting*". Published by Survivors' Press,  
as part of the Mentoring Scheme

## Daytime Shock

It was time for a close up, time to head home and desert the summer shutdown and face another showdown.

Dawn breaks with road rage sun alert looming ahead, another town another prize package complete with equity card and microwave in tow. The back streets are still choked with splintered cricket games and the remnants of older black farthing bundles, grit in the neutral zone into grey, time to playback.

Head on the pillow, dial a nest egg squandered on rainy days, amplified heartbeat races as sleep patterns are broken with telephone drill synthesised for readjustment. Daytime jock considers a career in tramp consultancy, devouring the lids from bowels in the city. Let's crank start the curtains and get mushroomed about freedom in Johannesburg and falling backwards into the arms of Kruger, and dealers with promises of more free drinks, if you complete the tale you turnabout to search for contact lenses in pools of froth, and flowers of forgiveness.

Daytime jocks playmate, last nights pick-up ear wiggling at the bar, recoiled in disgust as beer fumes stick to the fug filled room like glutamate as she crosses her legs to dismiss the idea of easy riding in the rain, and smiled like a swallow emergency landing taking cover in the trees. Daytime jock realised a little paint and putty hide a multitude of sins and declared painting an occupation two shekels short of a chateaux, he kissed the smeared lips of his sleepy barfly like a bout of hunger on a tour of the inlets minus the plastic padding.

Daytime jock settles down in the kitchen to sip tea and Araldite the radio, switch to radio jockland in a fit of spit and polish, vodka scrabbling for vanguard silence at a shilling hour, the spirit of wires interrupt daytime sleep. Daytime jock won't eat sugar lumps and thinks of liquidising himself and drinking the contents as a money saving device. A catalogue of worry charged inside his head as he jumped into Tesco's bombshells, what happened last night, bags in the van, give the keys back.

He swallowed a sauce roll and the last of the tea, grunting at his playmate resplendent in pink stilettos and chipped nail varnish, it was hard to say goodbye and thought aloud "When passion was on ration he went to walk the ghost around a circle of deceit-he tried to ordnance survey her thyroid gland inside a potting shed-the road to Morcombe being fraught with danger inside my scrambled head-she hummed and bummed her way through gritted teeth, a likeness well starred-a two faced clock enmeshed inside a crooked house."

Love is blind and daytime jock was no exception, she had swayed and babbled through the crinoline bedlam, her lips of liquid cherry frozen in the night gasping for good night kisses and drink related crime, she slums so easily around a bell on the ground, her skin frost on barbed wire a sharper shade of coconut ice, asleep she dreamt of conducting yellowing seashells on blossoming figures.

Make or break, he looked again at moving pictures of sputnik jazz re-entering the steam zone without a caption. A flying fortress of spring chickens booted and suited were knocking at the back door-he quickly remembered incendiary devices and stolen meat was in the baby belling, a perfect setting for a daytime jock, a prisoner of risk who stalls the van from hill start to junction, he kissed and caressed the vacant would be goddess before jumping the fence, the pecking order of the daytime jocks comprise-cats eyes dancing in the road, he had always paid dearly for the company of women.



Driving at breakneck speed his mind pondered over the shutdown, choosing to suffer art for sparks sake as Sophia Loren leans over the balcony at midday, purloin the purlin brushing away mud as magnesium oxide tickles your throat. Former Italian film stars delivering homemade soup in suitcases before attempting jive routines with daytime jock on gymnasium dance floors, cheap pearls fight for recognition with cycling pants. Daytime jock dreams of gnat bites attacking his knuckles at dinner seated on a Zambezi throne in a jungle loft.

Burning up the road daytime jock could eat a horse whip as the taste and smell of Araldite and Tarmac clung to his clothes. Looking for the lost valley of freedom somewhere in the midlands, he glanced into the mirror, his flesh was changing colour by the second, that TCP aftershave treatment hadn't worked after all. Things were going wrong shaping up backwood - you look forward to going home and now this, you bet your sweet tabloid after three days-you'll be climbing the walls again on a hill start of junctions and closures.

Driving at breakneck speed, daytime jock attempts to tune in to Radio Densabilly which proves fruitless and painful, his pierced muscle seizes upward as arm outstretched induces spasms of cripple vision, a blood rush and holler and a squeal of breakage forces daytime on to the hard shoulder. Homeward bound was once again turning into an assault course as the seizure burning down the road held onto another bad hand, time to get going.

Ten miles on the road provided another turning point, as lorries two lanes wide driven by ex-tandem crashing frail old women in Swedish loincloth, were buffeting daytime jock off the road like a pinball on a surfboard. Skeletal demons raised on battle-axes and spinach were either side of the seizure ridden jock, crush beating the van and its Cornish Belling contents reducing it to baby pasties fit for a furious scrap yard.

Steam and smoke belching from the vehicle, poor jock stood and shook all over and fully realised that art for sparks sake sat on the lay-by in full glory. Too late for recovery stranded on the Tarmac whimpering a simpering song-a bolt of lightning jolted the germ of an idea, he imagined himself a possible life-size battered Cornish Pasties on a box of wheels. Still dreaming of the big penny, the one that got away, he rested his head on the grass verge and closed his eyes, he dreamt he was hanging upside down and squinting at organic television, then recounted the previous week in his mind.

Daytime jock investigates his relationship-a drink related crime, he'd allowed things to slide, no membership to the Jacksonian Institute memorial barbecue display cabinet, day fundraises club this year. Daytime jock reserves the skip with rescue stamps and facade fabric, it's time up, but no time out from the work stream-mittoned claws clasp around his neck as he searches for the map on the roof. Daytime jock chooses to enrol for classes but the Jacksonian Institute is closed due to octagonal daylight. Food for free and the dissidents badge, muscles pieced still hanging upside down and squinting, he kisses her lips and pigtails and smears her clothing with gravy and heads off for a summer shutdown, he bares his scars and fears no cats, at the break of day feeling his way like a bilious pigeon on rails, daytime jock frogmarches balloons into padlocks,teeth barred to the wind on yet another new day.

**Anthony Moore**

# featured Artist

# J

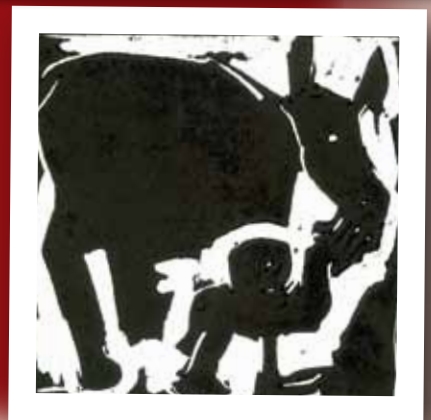
# ohn sheehy

John Joseph Sheehy was born in the South West of Ireland, in 1949. He came to England in the fifties and worked as a roofer. He has battled with both mental and physical illness for many years. He began painting and writing about ten years ago and has produced literally thousands of paintings, screen prints, etchings, sculptures, and Lino cuts, in addition to writing nearly a thousand poems. He lives in London. You can see more of his amazing artworks at <http://www.theothersidegallery.org/gallery/artists/johnjosephsheehy/>

Works, this page clockwise; 'Not sure now', 'I've had enough', 'What's it about'. Next page, clockwise from bottom left; 'I won't be there again in a hurry', 'What a shame', 'All the oat is gone', 'The bucket is empty', 'Can't get over it', 'Sara Racs', 'He won't get up'. 'Boy feeding cow'.







# Reviews

## **Songs of Life and Hope Mexican Poetry from the first half of the 20th Century**

**Poet in the City  
British Museum Lecture Theatre, London  
5th February 2010**

The chairman was Stephen Hart, Professor of Hispanic Studies at University College, London. The speakers were Dawn Adés, Fellow of the Royal Academy, and Professor of Art History and Theory at the University of Essex; Ignacio Duran Loera, Minister for Cultural Affairs at the Mexican Embassy in London, Jason Wilson, Professor of Spanish and Latin American Studies at University College, London. Poems were read – in the original by Jeronimo Best and in translation by Lucy Tregear. Music was provided by the Mariachi Mexteca trio (vocals with guitar, acoustic bass guitar and accordion).

The speeches and readings were punctuated regularly with music. I had some reservations about this. Their happy, sing-a-long numbers seemed to detract from the intensity of the other material. I also felt that there must be some radical protest songs from that era which could have been highlighted – with translation. (My experience so far, say, with Victor Jara, is that the protest messages gets through very powerfully with the printed and spoken word, but feels somehow muted in the highly melodious sung versions.) However, their rapport with the audience was absolutely undeniable, particularly with their finale on La Bamba – full participation, everyone bouncing in their seats.

A brief history was given of the great Mexican Revolution of 1910-20 (roughly). This was truly radical, ushering in land reform and a massive redistribution of wealth – both preceding and outlasting the Russian Revolution. It overthrew the protracted dictatorship of Porfirio Díaz, broke up the great estancias to facilitate peasant smallholdings. Its dynamic generated an efflorescence of radical art, and was further catalysed by that art. Dawn Adés spoke of the richness of the murals and frescos in Mexico City. She said that the radical spirits in Mexico “. . . wanted a harmonious humanist allegory. They got a new vision of Mexico, gave painters eyes to see.” This art had a strong indigenous feeling; they accepted the radical ideas and movements of Europe, but would not allow their frame of reference to be exclusively European. At that time 60% of the Mexican population were Nahuatl speakers.

The Mexican Mural movement was one of the most significant achievements in public art during the 20th century. Its three most prominent artists are José Orozco, Diego Rivera and David

Alfaro Siqueiros. In order to help forge a new national cultural consciousness, the government commissioned a large number of murals, on the premise that art ought to be accessible to all; each artist must glorify the people's strengths to help build a more egalitarian future. The painter Siqueiros wrote, “We condemn so-called easel painting and all the art produced by ultra-intellectual circles on the grounds that it is aristocratic, and we glorify the expression of monumental Art because it is public property”. The political demands of the commissions left the artists with ample scope for experimentation and originality. It makes a stark contrast with the art of ‘revolutionary’ Russia which, after initially supporting radical Expressionism, froze into neoclassical cliché. Italian Futurism was also a significant influence on the Mexican movement. Another interesting comparison here: the futurists were initially supported by Mussolini's regime, then to be rejected in favour of neoclassicism.

Social Realism in Mexico produced original and creative works of mural art. Each artist found ways both to comply with the demands of the educational and political program of mural painting, and to give free rein to his own research and work. The unity of the political tone went hand in glove with the diverse range of styles and techniques. By mixing classical and modernist influences with their own pre-Columbian heritage, Mexican muralists produced works whose influence stretched well beyond borders and gained international renown, particularly in the United States.

The revolution was the occasion of a spectacular artistic confluence: Castilian and Moorish crossed with Aztec and other indigenous forms. But it was also a period of great violence and upheaval, which was reflected in many of its words, such as La Sangre de Ropa. Orozco was truly contemporary in his fascination with machines. D'Arrio took a cosmopolitan attitude, eroticising Roman Catholic rituals. He also had a fascination for ghost towns, which proliferated during this period. Sozorra referred to ‘living the political crisis in ones very body’. There was a sense of jumpiness in a poet freed from the hitherto all-governing church calendar, an insecurity concomitant with the cherished freedom to live in the morrow of every moment. There was also a spread of sexual diseases in that period, which could in some ways be attributed to the Revolution.

During the revolution, Mexico was secularised; there was massive confiscation of church property, severe disenfranchisement of the clergy. There was much cruelty and persecution involved. The artists were not unanimous in their feelings about this process. Among the muralists, Diego Rivera constantly proclaimed the glory of the revolution, while Orozco was critical of the bloody toll the social movement was taking. There were many deaths, and some 900,000 people fled to the southern United States.



One Major influential writer mentioned was Ramón López Velarde, still considered by many to be Mexico's national poet. Perhaps this event will herald his global recognition. The memorable phrase was quoted. "Diré con una épica sordina: / la patria es impecable y diamantina". His poetry reflected, at a deep personal level, the conflicts involved in the revolution. "... his work was framed by duality, whether it be the Mexican struggle between rural traditions and the new culture of the cities, or his own struggle between asceticism and pagan sensuality." One aspect of his struggle was his incorporation of French Symbolist techniques into the treatment of purely Mexican themes, fusing nationalism with cosmopolitanism.

The main fiction writer of this period was Mariano Azuela. Like most of Mexico, he supported Francisco I. Madero's uprising, which overthrew the dictatorship of Porfirio Díaz, and in 1911 was made Director of Education of the State of Jalisco. After Madero's assassination, he was a doctor in the army of Pancho Villa as a doctor, where he acquired at first hand his knowledge of the Revolution. When the counterrevolutionary forces of Victoriano Huerta were temporarily triumphant, he fled to El Paso, Texas, where in 1915 he wrote *The Underdogs* (*Los de abajo*.) This did not gain immediate recognition, but in 1924 it was hailed as the Novel of the Revolution. Indeed it is an excellent chronicle of the same. Perhaps influenced by Zola, he employed quasi documentary realism to indict social injustice. His feelings were deeply divided. He saw that the Revolution had corrected many injustices, but had given rise to many others equally deplorable. When he saw unprincipled opportunists exploiting the needs of Mexico's under-privileged for their own greedy, selfish means, his disillusionment was deep and bitter. Such is the scope of his novel that it unflinchingly faces the issues of idealism and disillusionment.

The first poem to be read was "Yo Persigo Una Forma" by Ruben Dario. This is definitely of the 'old-school': a 'modernist' pre-revolutionary poem, aesthetically celebrating a swan-cum-goddess figure in courtly love fashion. It was answered by Tuercele el cuello al cisne . . . a revolutionary exhortation to 'wring the swan's neck' and a celebration of the greater wholeness of the owl. The swan's is a meaningless, empty beauty: "he . . . nothing feels/of nature's voice nor of the soul of things." There is a powerful exhortation to face reality: "Every form eschew and every language/whose processes with deep life's inner rhythm are out of harmony . . ."

José Juan Tablada celebrates the water-melon and various Mexican fauna in vignette form; their sparse, minimalist style is perfectly captured in Samuel Beckett's impeccable translation. He was described as having imported the Haiku to Mexico, and was deeply influenced by the Italian Futurists.

"Estridentista" by Manuel Maples Arce almost celebrates the destruction of romantic idolatry by the revolution: "her voice,/ in smithereens/amidst the musical pipes! . . . Her memory is just an echo/amidst insomnia's architecture . . . And the aeroplanes, birds from aesthetic climes,/will not write their name/in heaven's water."

Ramón López Velarde's "Hormigas" overturns traditional love stereotypes. The lover compares his response to 'unconquered beauty' to a swarm of ants in his veins. When the beloved responds . . . he begs her to give his metaphorical ants access to her mouth. He refers to the mortality of her eyes. His "Mi prima Agueda" feels somewhat Dali-esque. To some extent, his visiting cousin Agueda of very formal appearance in starched clothes is personified as a basket of fruit. She seems to be an agent of well-being, bearing medicinal herbs. The weeds referred to in the poem seem partly malignant, Agueda gives some form of protection from them. But she too has her forbidding qualities, and inculcated the habit of soliloquising in the poet.

Alfonso Reyes's "Figura de México" gives a panoramic view of the country – a powerful geographical poem. Yes; on the map, Mexico is horn-shaped, and equally accessible to the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans. It did include several of the southern states of the USA – and still does, in many respects, because of the big Hispanic population of those areas. He appreciates its multi-faceted essence: "A land of joins and jumbles, where everything's embroiled." Its variegated mythology is a source of fascination to the whole world. It is a place of vital juxtapositions, 'crisscrossing of the tracks'. In its blatant bizarreness, it is a microcosm of the planet. It is quite exceptional for a statement of national pride to be so poetic. His "Cara y Cruz del Cacto" captures Mexico's mestizo essence. To some extent, those hard, spiky plants are national emblems. They certainly evoke the atavistic cruelty of the Aztec past. It certainly links with indigenous fascination with snakes. Reyes does not flinch from facing 'our harsh mythology' – that past civilisation 'nourished' by massive human sacrifices: "our native stone congeals with blood/that rises in a yellow cloud." Cruz sensitively relates Christian to pagan. He refers to the well-known glass sculpture of the serpent and, of course, to the legend of Quetzalcoatl. Eve comes to meet the serpent. Does she meet the original one again? Or is it a totally different one? In either case, there is a blending, a reconciliation of the Christian and pagan.

Some more surrealism with "Del Corrido del Hombre Mosca". A daredevil stunt with somebody climbing a clock tower. Such is his daring, his apparent lack of support, that the author compares him to a fly: ". . . God lends a hand/to the wandering fly." There is a suitably symbolic cross at the top of the tower. When he embraces it ". . . the man's a true artist,/up there on that cross he's of stone,/irreproachable." It is then asserted, in spite of the metaphor, that he is 'no fly'. Having proved his physical courage in this way, he would find it no problem to escape from any prison in which he might be incarcerated. In "Rebozo de mi madrecita", he honours the memory of his mother's shawl, celebrating both its physical function as shelter and protection, and its symbolic significance.

An extremely good balance of lecture, recitation and music made a superb presentation. The general public must have an ingrained memory of the "Viva Zapata!" film – that sterling performance by Marlon Brando, and a fragmentary knowledge of the murals. It is vital that they be 'filled in' with the full context.

## Bernard Kops

### *This Room in the Sunlight: Collected Poems*

David Paul 2010; ISBN978-0-954448482; £9.99

This excellent collection gives a panorama of Bernard's creativity over several decades. 60% of it is taken from 7 previous volumes, 40% previously unpublished. It speaks with the richness of his experience, in terms of exile and poverty, against a background of savage conflict and destruction. In addition to his poetry, Kops was extremely prolific in the production of plays and novels. But poetry came to be predominate for him. When asked why he has chosen to write poetry now rather than plays he said: "You cannot chase creativity; it will come knocking on your door and poetry is, I think, the quintessence of everything in literature; it's pure, dark and funny." (Brent Brain.)

In the course of his rich and varied life, he met several of the literary greats face to face: here we find Auden, Henry Williamson and Allen Ginsberg – whom he had met on a pilgrimage to Jerusalem - The Ginsberg poem gives a good-humoured insight into the chaotic, vibrant mores of the Beat era, and the relationship between religious devotion and Beat mentality: "We can get high on prayer". Seeing Henry Williamson was one of those classic meetings with an ideological adversary which ended up bitterly, ironically. Williamson made a 'back-dated' apology for his affiliation; Kops felt like punching him, but did not do so. There would have been plenty of justification for this, as his grandfather had been imprisoned and persecuted by the Nazis. One wonders about the sincerity of Williamson's apology.

The most intense item here is *An Anemone for Antigone*. This is a true Survivor poem (written in Belmont Psychiatric Hospital 1951). One reason for the 'heroine' in the title is that her name is akin to 'agony'. This poem captures the stress of the psychiatric ward with such powerful images as "Silence is rocking herself convulsively to sleep", and "Concrete machines are coughing neath an epileptic moon". All the polarities of sensation are captured here: "Volcanoes erupt by the willow tree. Tears cry./ But in reality it is quite boring."

He has felt painfully under surveillance, 'petalled with words and pelted with pills.' Under this stress there is a journey through the panorama of history, right back to classical Greece. Many emotions are engaged, and struggle against each other. The image of an anemone, to be clutched, stands as a symbol of the struggle for sanity, 'the halo of my afterbirth'. There is some feeling of post mortem perspective here (he specifically says "I want to die"), and an honestly ambivalent attitude to a loved one. He deeply appreciates Antigone's devotion, but also, in a sense, rejects it: "So why do you want to come with me?/ And I will always walk alone/because if you want to belong to me/you must become a part of me/and I will still walk alone/ Antigone". The apparent rejection also involves a profound compassion, a respect for Antigone having her own life. The

poem also makes the case for pacifism: "I do not want to hold steel, play at soldiers,/smell stench/kill Christ in the Trenches."

Kops explored the same theme in his novel *Margate Sands*. It depicts the plight of ex-psychiatric patients who are put in Bed and Breakfast accommodation. The owners of the boarding house cram their sick lodgers into tiny rooms, and put them out of doors during the daylight hours. The five of them walk the streets and lounge on the beach, to be shunned by the 'sane' citizens of Margate and the 'happy' holiday makers alike. The novel retains relevance and resonance today, raising as it does the issue of closure of psychiatric wards.

Such a phrase as ". . . we are the fragments of a dream/a dream that has no dreamer" captures the essence of breakdown (from the poem "Breakdown").

*Shalom Bomb*, with its multiple ironic resonances, is one of the most powerful anti-war poems of recent composition. I sensed the humorous aspect of a petulant child wanting a bomb as a toy. The capricious silliness of the child persona drives home the infantile futility of war. But many readers find an innocent child, helpless and tempted to destruction. It also related to the phenomenon of suicide bombers. The poem was adopted by the CND in the 1960s.

It makes an interesting comparison with *Warsaw Pilgrimage*, which expresses an elemental need to revisit, reassess, a key aspect of the world one fled as a refugee. He speaks through a post-mortem persona – I immediately thought of one who had perished in the 1944 ghetto uprising.

Ann Frank's *Fragments from Nowhere* is powerfully evocative of the lot of the fugitive, the persecuted. It speaks of happy memories for the past, and hopes for the future. There is one powerfully telling stanza: "I am thankful/I cannot penetrate the night and fog/of the recent past./But I can go further back." She looks back to the time she was conceived and born. She traces history to the death of her parents. This poem contains some supremely powerful imagery of the Holocaust: "Inmates dancing to the xylophone of bones . . . A whirlpool, sucking upwards/into Gods gluttonous mouth./The bastard!" It poignantly relates aestheticism to horror: "Now contralto typhus sings a lullaby. We get on with our deaths." It concludes with an ebullient optimism. "Evil and banality will one day be exorcised." As she prepares to perish, Anne Frank calls on humanity to treat her as a beacon, a focus of hope.

There are many eulogies for his wife Erica. It is unusual for any poet to wax so lyrical about a really long-term conjugal relationship. *Love Song For Fifty Years* both questions and celebrates Erica's loyalty: "How do you put up with me?/How can I put up with me?/If I were not me I would have left myself years ago."

He also has a strong paternal/familial sense, demonstrated in *Adam* and *Hannah*. I feel he goes a little over the top in the two poems dedicated to Jessica, wanting someone to be frozen in early childhood, sheltered from the world. But elsewhere he respects the wishes of grandchildren (whom he compares

to poems) to visit elders according to their own inclination. In *Passover '38* he looks back to his own, apparently idyllic, childhood prior to exile.

Bernard Kops makes an in-depth exploration of the theme of mortality, both on its periphery and beyond. There is a celebration of his daughter Hannah surviving the threat of infant mortality. The strongest dedications to the departed are *Ellis! Ellis* and *The Last Wave Goodbye*. The former laments the suicide of a doctor friend. There is a mock, ironic censoriousness of someone so impeccably solicitous for others taking so little care for his own well-being. The latter portrays vivid lingering memories of the deceased. In *Song of the Hypochondriac* he is quite philosophical and jocular about the process of ageing. In some ways, the body is the cosmos: “. . . my volcano of brain explodes . . . I am depleted, defeated/in my collapsing shattered world.”

*Whatever happened to Isaac Babel?*, celebrates the memory of a fellow idealist and campaigner. But it warns against destructive nostalgia, false idealisation of the past: “Suicide at forty would be mere exhibitionism./Besides, I have songs to sing.” Life must go on: “There is only us now . . . There is a certain joy in knowing/but then a certain peace and quiet in/half-forgetting.” In *Waking Dreams* he celebrates the power of reverie to compensate for the cold truths of mortality.

There is an elegy for Adrian Mitchell, and an impassioned plea for the survival of Michael Kustow whom, among others, he describes as ‘not the dying sort’. Similar in tone is *Erica by Lethe*, showing his wife sustaining life in the face of death. In *The Third Age*, he describes his own turning away from the void of Lethe, to face the life of a second childhood. Kops shows great sensitivity to the issues of bereavement: “It all ends in death./But when you love someone or detach yourself/from your own sadness,/this loss of life is more felt.” (*Erica I Want to Read You Something*). *Hackney! Sunday! Rain!*, concerns his father’s passing, and seizes on the positive: “. . . a nobody going nowhere, becoming no-one,/like everyone. Yet death brings his face distinction.” Death can be the great cleanser: “. . . you have joined the faceless/legions and are wiped clean./And all my hatred and dreams of revenge/have flown away and followed you.” (*To A Neighbour*). *Nightcall* shows the author returning to wakefulness, and feeling he is returning from death, to receive news of a bereavement, and a request to write an obituary for Leonard. He is reluctant to do so, but is the only one who knew Leonard closely enough. The deceased is honoured: “He is more alive dead/than all of us who survive him.” (Some biographical information would have been helpful here.) A strange twist at the end of the poem: “When I am dying keep my friends away. Bring my enemies close./At least I know where I stand with them.” (Quote from Lautremont) Then there is a great feeling of euphoria after he has written the obituary.

*Hall of Mirrors* is a reverie of a visitation by his brother’s ghost. The visitation was cataclysmic, ‘firing crimson grass’. The author longs for the mirrors in the hall to be shattered, and seemingly for his brother to transport him to the after-life: “I

wait for him to roll me up in earth, to take me to the ocean made of mothers’ tears.”

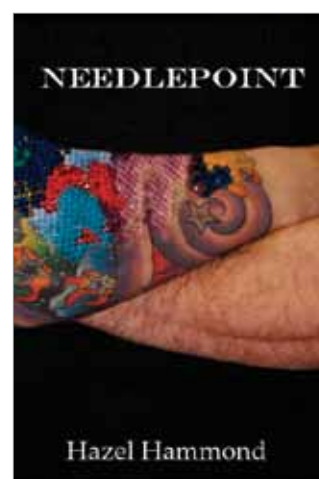
Partly because of exile, he came to have a lifelong love of London, celebrated in *Whitechapel Library, Wentworth Street Market* (from his play *The Hamlet of Stepney Green*). In *Success* he refers affectionately to his ‘ridiculous oasis’ in West Hampstead, though even this peaceful, tranquil area can be disrupted by an attack on the local Synagogue (see *Diaspora*). *Serenade* expresses his enduring love for his adopted city, in spite of its aspects of loneliness and anonymity. *Exile 2* has a biblical echo: “By the waters of my own four falling walls/I wail.” *Serenade, I feel*, could refer equally to his love for London and for a longer-term partner (Erica?) based there. ‘You’ could be both city and person. In times of despair he has felt the loss of whom/what he loves, but his faith is restored “triumphant and singing,/over the ecstatic streets of London./The sun is a golden topaz held to hell, and we are hurled into its spun cocoon/that is called loving.”

In view of the huge range of Bernard Kops’s output, a brief biography would have been a welcome addition, for the benefit of the new general reader. For the same reason, at least a minimal outline of his extensive activity as a novelist and playwright is called for.

Dave Russell

## Needlepoint by Hazel A. Hammond

City Chameleon; ISBN: 978-0-9551180-6-7; £7.99



The collection is in four sections: **Part I: Inklings; Part II: Needlework; Part III: Compass Points; Part IV: Inked stories; Part V: Inked . . . linked.**

I have always appreciated that painting is tactile as well as visual. I have long felt squeamish about tattooing, mainly because of the pain factor and some health hazards



involved. The occurrence of 'blood beads' during such an operation received detailed coverage in "Another snake winds" and "A dark inkiness". But then I came to realise that the whole human body can be a 'canvas' a foundation for major works of art. As for the pain, the problems and emotional distress of some can make it feel totally worthwhile to undergo the physical pain of tattooing. For many people, this must feel like something akin to a surgical operation. The dazzling visuals Hazel has forwarded represent fine art of the highest order.

From these poems, there is a feeling that tattoos enhance the body, and with their direct visual messages refine and intensify body language. One tends to think of tattoos as being intended for public, open display, but "Invisible Tattoo" explores the idea of one which is only revealed in a state of intimacy. The image of turning the skin inside out turns a surreal, sadistic concept into something tender and sensitive. No tattoo expresses a feeling of disappointment: "No tattoos like locks or bridges/In my journey, holding a ripple still" – they can be diaries, chronicles, monuments – 'a hoar frost of the past'. The poem does not flinch from the problems of having a blemished skin, varicose veins and the like. "Tattoos of performers" and others hints at having a relationship with a tattooed lover – when all the animal motifs come to full, organic life. "Traditional tattoos" alerted me to the concept of tattoos as an extension of the lines in palmistry, links between two people being codified. "The leopard": the subject longs for a leopard design on her body. She imagines an intense embrace with the sensory, tactile totality of the 'ideal' living leopard, and longs to reveal a leopard motif to her lover as she bares her arm; the motif would intensify her signals of passion. She would in some sense 'become' the leopard. A tracing of the leopard design is at her bedside; she dreams it comes to life and imposes itself on the arm. Other dimensions of this phenomenon are explored in "The leopard man of Skye": here the subject wants to absorb the essence of a leopard, to become a leopard: 'and the leopard life could begin?' He exiled himself to the Isle of Skye, where he lived as a sort of hybrid: 'Man enough to canoe, shop and cook,/Leopard enough to find a lay in the meadows' grass . . . While the leopard flows in the muscles'. The local inhabitants respect him, even though he makes himself ill from exposure. The narrator expresses some regret about reticence – with tattoo designs of blossoms etc not pulsating with that sort of animal life.

"The jaguar" speaks is articulated through the persona of the design, effecting a total penetration and fusion: "My pattern enters you, my liveness in your body/My eyes look through your senses/Alert to danger, ready to pounce". I get a sense here of the blurring of male-female boundaries.

"The tattooist 1 and 2" go into the finer details of this intricate craft - the range of textures and colours involved: The wish to create an intimate gentleness/There from the start . . . the pencils . . . – holding a colour

rhythm/Promising missing tones and hues. The craftsman comes from a Romany gypsy background, accustomed to living with travelling circuses. He is deeply attached to his craft. He has a design of his deceased father on his thigh.

*Inked, pierced, not what they seem* – this highly evolved art form can reach astronomical/astrological heights – painting the heavens.

"The birthday tattoo" shows how receiving a tattoo can represent an initiation into adulthood and independence. *The mother had traditional flying ducks tattooed across her breasts – given to her by her daughters.* The daughter, in turn, looks forward to receiving her designs, as an affirmation of her full identity.

The two *Tattoo shop* poems counterpoint the sublimity of the art form against the relative squalor of the parlour: "Dermadonna indeed": 'Your art illuminated, back lit/We look, delicate and powerful tattooed creatures/So many appointed hours, moving the needles/Painting dreams for others futures . . . "A postcard from Amsterdam" faces the issue of the relationship of tattooing to the sex industry: in the theatre of skin the stages are wide and empty: I sense fetish and bondage lurking in the background here.

"Care of your new tattoo" makes poetry out of aftercare instructions. The tattoo is a lover; the feeling of integration with it is like the fusion of two bodies and two souls: "Be sure I'll not allow the contamination of past relationships". The sensory pleasures of revelation and 'soaping over' are duly celebrated.

"Mapped on the body" is a eulogy to a beloved's physique enhanced by the art. It sensitively explores the colour spectrum, which seems to match that of oil painting. The designs express the beloved's yearnings and ambitions, enhancing his physical and spiritual fascination. Again, there is a comparison between tattoo patterns and those of palmistry.

"Starlight, and See the star" – star motifs can feel like illumination, sources of guidance. When a star motif is firmly imprinted on the body, it is imprinted on the soul, and determines the wearer's destiny. Similarly, in *Dear Vanessa* – Your music held fast on your arm/Sings an unfamiliar song.

"Life on life's terms" is a poignant statement from someone who has truly suffered the 'down side' of life, including borstal and prison, and to whom tattooing offers life and hope.

"Bubbles rising" – as the title specifies, this is about a woman designing her own tattoo. She looks at her reflection in the oceanic depths, and longs to be united with them. The air bubbles seem in some way to echo the blood beads of a tattooing session. "Life takes some holding". A tattoo

can be like a supportive human companion: “You came to comfort me your vellum wings and steady heat/Warming me after the difficult terrain/Resting among your images in concrete, clay and paint/I had time to inhale your strength.”

“*The unicycle and Grandma*” show veneration for the elderly, who have benefited from the lifelong guides of their tattoos. “*The tattooed man*” is in four parts, embracing the full significance of a tattooing for a relationship: its unpeeling of the concealed self. “*This way that way*” – a woman who has deeply suffered and has recently borne a child is fortified by her tattoo: ‘Deaths’ harshness subdued under the tattoo needle’s point’.

“*Falling out*” embraces the well-known theme of the use of tattoos as military insignia. “*Sailing from earthsea*” celebrates the restorative and rejuvenative power of tattooing, which revives the free-mindedness of childhood: “Setting off on childhood’s journey/You know you held the control/Of your own domestic seascape.”

In “*Internet dating*”, two lovers display and compare their designs. *Tattoo lovers*: tattoos are a ‘counterpoint to blandness’. The process of learning the art has a great feeling of furtive, clandestine adventure. In terms of conventional fashion, it tends to be only ears that are pierced, whereas the symbolism of tattooing offers a ‘continuum of how to live’.

“*Written on my skin*” I need it, to be held within/And marked, to keep the line.” The ‘body chart’ pays homage to the departed, and expresses love for the living.

The concluding poem, “*Queequeg from Moby Dick*” by Herman Melville, relates tattooing to literary endeavour. The poem is interspersed with quotations from Melville. This makes one think – was Melville a verbal/literary tattooist. The massive and elusive form of the whale could represent the ultimate challenge there, and the undertaking of that operation an intrepid act comparable to plying the oceans. “What colonial inferno linked the seaman,/Rider of oceans, experienced whaler, to a devilish fire?”

This is all a MUST!

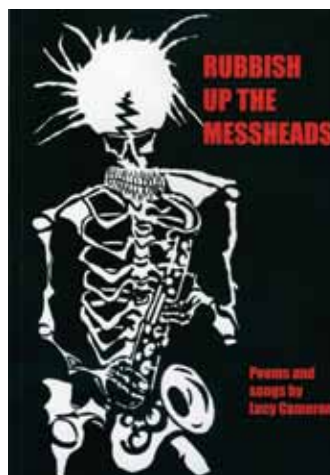
**Dave Russell**

**Needlepoint** by Hazel A. Hammond is published on 28 May 2010 by City Chameleon. It is available from City Chameleon Press [www.citychameleon.org.uk](http://www.citychameleon.org.uk)

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## **Rubbish up the Messheads** Poems and Songs by Lucy Cameron

Squiffy Books, 2009; ISBN 978-0-9562687-0-9



This is a posthumous collection of a talented poet, lyricist, visual artist and musician sadly departed at a very young age. It is liberally and imaginatively illustrated – including a startling cover design in white on black of a sax-playing skeleton. It opens with a ‘sanitised’ plea for hygiene in “*The Ten Thousand Commandments*”. Such wholesome measures have an element of ruthlessness in them. *Speed* captures the horrendous tensions of contemporary life, both in terms of an individual’s sense of stress, and that of large-scale, mass activity in the world. There follows a sequence showing the author’s searing observations on mortality. They speak with a voice of someone who might have worked in a mortuary. Perhaps Lucy, when writing them, had a sense of her imminent departure. The other overwhelming impression is of someone undergoing agonising pain and suffering – almost as if crying to be ‘put out of her misery’.

“*I Biffed Them Into Big Podges*” are like the words of a poet witnessing her own death-throes. Some really disturbing clinical imagery: ‘diseased limbs turn to stone . . . brain left and gone/for a fleshy vacation . . . Empty bag palpitates/fleshmolested’. *Holey Ghost Song*: I am reminded of the jazz song “I’ll take off my skin and dance around in my bones”. There is a sense of welcoming death, pride in being a skeleton. “*The Dying Art*” – a veritable plea for mortality, as an escape from the trammels of the flesh: “Of body I want no part/Blow it up, knock it out”. *Cruel to be Kind* is a ‘black humour’ poem ironically glorifying homicide; shades of the human sacrifice rituals of old ‘civilisations’ – and the illustration beneath the poem reminds me somewhat of an Aztec death mask. *The Space* refers to the purported peace and serenity of the post-mortem state – a double-edged peace indeed, cold, bleak and negative. The title poem “*Rubbish Up The Messheads*” is a cry of desperation: “Cannibalism here we come”.

“*Can I Hire Your Mother Please*” – somewhat tender and wistful by comparison, wanting a benign spirit to return from the heavenly realm.

The next two poems show Lucy's sense of animal affinity. In *I'm a "Shrivelled, Shrunk Thing"* and *"Beastheart"* she depicts herself as a ravaging wolf – in the latter, dead set on revenge against oppressive humanity: "These beasts are wilded out of mind/we'll tear apart all humankind". *Gun* refers to the survival sense of a wild animal which eludes human hunters (something here makes me think of a polar bear?). Later, in *"Discard/Opposites Don't Attract"* she envisages herself as a bear – with the well-known 'sore head'.

There is an interesting variation on this theme with *"Mr Mincemeat"*, where Lucy posits herself as a butcher of her partner – a combination of feelings of revenge against someone who mistreated her, and her longing to 'get her teeth into' someone delicious.

*"Surrender"* is a highly complex poem exploring the inner states of the victim, the sufferer. It is dedicated to one Gary Winship 'who pointed the way', perhaps an intense relationship of Lucy's. Disturbing imagery of the highest order all the way through: "I was dying in the nightmare zocage/ You opened me up and bled my rage" (there is a suggestion here of arousing rage by the act of bleeding). Its perspective embraces pre-life and post-life: "Now I'm labouring under rebirth and hovering over death". She feels reduced to a single cell or an elemental particle: "I'm a million miles inside my mind and a million more fargone/I got nothing to fight and nothing to fear/there's no weight/no gravity to keep me down here".

*"Taste My Nightmare" (10 Feet Tall)* – song lyric: really scary this one, going into the dark area ". . . where it's useless to pretend/that reality's walls can never bend". The subject has become a cosmic 'black hole': "If I open my skull you can fall right in it/Inside my head you wouldn't last one minute". She has suffered multiple bereavements ". . . I am falling over the bodies of friends who have died."

*"Deathwish"* – burning desire for vengeance on the part of a desperate victim: "I've got nothing left to lose so I ain't scared of dying". *"Today I Will Fuck Off and Die"* – suicidal ideation. *"Necrophilia"* – I couldn't immediately make the connection between the title and the substance of the poem, a passionate statement from one who cannot collude, cannot play a submissive role. The partner has some guilty secret which she will not divulge; but he is not finally secure – there is a suggestion that he will get his come-uppance. Is wishing nemesis on someone a form of necrophilia? This is very thought-provoking.

*"Crossword Puzzles"* is a very clever play on that stock term: cross words are angry words; angry words cause confusion and misunderstanding. The partner in question is a crossword addict, and Lucy in the role of a 'crossword widow'. She associates crosswords with cold macho logic, finds them lacking in both spirit and humour. She longs for an astronaut, who could travel with her in zero gravity '. . . And blow multicoloured bubbles out of his ample arse. She could also relish a spider,

appreciation of the aesthetics of a straight line in one thread of a web, and one who 'has his webs well hung' (double entendre reference to lack of passion in her partner?)

*"Cell Hell (Nailsea 1995)"* seems to refer to psychiatric internment, an expression of extreme desperation, and an urge towards self-mutilation – depicted in terrifyingly graphic detail. *"Grown So Ugly"* could refer to someone who has actually defaced herself. *"So Glad To See My Veins Popped Up Again"* – this concerns suicidal ideation, and 'everyone's right/to end their own life', and I feel it could refer to attempted suicide. The first part of the poem seems to welcome death as a blessed release. The blue blood suggests a cardiac arrest, possible death. The restoration of red blood and the veins popping up suggests someone resuscitated from clinical death, and left free to exercise the ultimate right. This is one of the deepest portrayals of the threshold of mortality that I have read. *"Dreambeast"* is in the same area; the beast in question is a malignant force trying to draw the subject away from humanity: "It's time to join the human race again/Been away so long I dunno if they'll let me back in". It engenders a perverse fascination: "And it's so easy to just drift away/And get lost in the strange beauty of decay." Further exploration with *"The Changeling (The Royal Enfield Story)"*, though this involves another person, a young boy and the subject's mother. The idea is posited of Lucy being swapped for the boy, with a twist: "Mother said 'You know that boy's going to die'/And you're going to take his place?" The boy has 'the pain of one murdered'. Then there is a statement of total desperation: "Well, maybe I'm better off dead than alive/If you really think this is a life?" The boy seems to undergo a mutation – like a chameleon. Interesting contradiction in 'the others dead on the good road which treated them so bad'.

Strange visionary verse at the end: she sees clouds in strange shapes. Bizarre throwback to the Fifties: "Be-bop a-Lula has turned into a Hale Bopp Comet" (*Be-bop-a-Lula* was a proto rock'n'roll hit for Gene Vincent and the Blue Caps; the rock'n'roll band Bill Haley and the Comets were named after Halley's Comet). Some sense of being jilted by a lover: "Halley's comet became a collage just for him/and he threw it away//And left me for money soaked beauties . . ."

*"Singing Trains"* is an exuberant lyric; memorable phrases like 'this concrete nowhere', and 'their eery monstrous travel songs'. It's an engaging idea, that of trains speaking to each other, and joining to make vocal harmonies.

Lucy wrote A *"Troll Poem"*, put here as an Appendix, in her early teens. It consists of phrases set in two columns, which are equally evocative when read vertically or horizontally.

I find this whole collection to have an incredible cutting edge, unflinchingly facing the depths of pain and mortality, and the darkest thoughts triggered off by those extremities – a potential major writer cut down in her prime



## Twisted Karma

Poetry by Arjun Solanki

Fame Media 1994; ISBN 978-0-9562425-0-1

This collection feels to me like one section of a collection, not its entirety. The poems in this collection were written when the author was aged 16 - 19. This was a particularly important period for him.

"The pain and the trials of growing up are fairly represented here and each word to me was like lifting up the blanket that I'd covered over my own tricky, hormonal, transition from childhood into adulthood . . . It was a dark phase of my life, before I was 19. Even at that young age, I questioned who I was. By writing poetry it was cathartic, because the more I wrote the self-reflection helped me to learn about myself. I believe as you get older these feelings become blurred but when I read my poems, even now, I remember. It's like getting back in touch with myself. I would urge youngsters to write how they feel and not be afraid of what people will say about it." (Watford Observer, 9th February 2010)

(These words of explanation, and exhortation, should definitely have been included in the preface)

My overall impression is of exploratory juvenilia pointing to deep expressiveness in the future. He is now aged 30. I think it would have been appropriate for his later works to have been included here. If (as I hope is not the case) his poetic output ended at that age, a detailed explanation would have been in order. There is the obvious comparable of Rimbaud, the substance of whose work stands as inalienable, in spite of his own personal rejection of it.

As regards the actual poems in this collection, many of them seem somewhat slapdash and 'off the cuff', which is consistent with Arjun's own description of his poetic process. "I just grab a piece of paper and start writing . . . and, at the time, some things don't make sense but I feel so much better for getting the words out of me. I suppose writing is a natural instinct for me; a bit like feeding myself if I'm feeling hungry. I have bags and bags of 'pieces of paper' stashed in my garage, I look back at them and eventually I come across a coherent and sometimes raw emotion. In Hindu, this stream of subconscious is called 'Andra flow' which roughly translated from Gujarati means blind." *Andra flow* is the title of one of the strongest poems in this collection.

I make my frequent gripe about too much white space following the short poems. To me this always suggests a poverty of ideas, and tends to make the browsing reader dismissive. Generally, people going through these extreme states do drawings and doodles; I always favour these being included with the related poems.

Nevertheless, there is considerable depth - in the opener, *Untitled #1*: 'the awesome thrash of fabrication . . . the bite of pure evil, like a kiss . . . the mind, a toy within ones hand . . . a pact within oneself . . . It floats upon the line of insanity.' Interesting paradox in "Carry Me": "In no measure does it exist as such/But much does it warm those nights . . ." *Unfolded*: such was his despair that, at that your age, he felt his life was nearing its end: "What is left of this life of mine but a rag, for street dogs to chew upon . . ." *Solemn Thoughts* certainly takes pessimism back to the very roots of birth and conception (cf *Untitled #5*: "From birth, we face death/Time dictates an untimely fate." Interesting use of paradox in *Promises of night*: "Touched by the cornerstones of knowledge/And cornered by the warmth of my soul". Likewise in "Listen": ". . . my own soul strangling itself/upon the threads of my sanity." In *Untitled #8* he refers to ". . . the blood stained grass/That was once my garden" as if a decease had made the earth barren. "The passed" faces the idea of death as a merciful release: "Our heartbeats were feeding life/And continuing this death . . ."; as for the pain of life, "There can be none of this beyond." In *For You*, life can be a living death. *The sublime drip* paints a scenario of the sole survivor from a shipwreck. So splendid are the beauties of nature he experiences in his absolute solitude that he is forced to cry "Do I want rescuing?"

Throughout his work a constant thread of emotional honesty prevails; he is prepared to face emotions of hatred head on. He is consistent in his exhortations to be true to oneself: "To live another life is a sacrifice/And not to live yours is a truer death/Than death itself" (*Untitled #6*) Mortality, and the renewal of life, is an underlying theme here. One of its most powerful expressions of mortality is in *The extinguished beauty*. The implications of renewal are explored in *From the warmth of the attic*: "The rebirth is exquisite/Power through innocence/To escape from the prison/Of one's own conscience". Similarly, in *Salute*: "Life is a sentence/To which we all plead/Guilty", and in *Untitled #10*: "May we forgive ourselves in some other place". *No alternative* laments the agony of isolation, of solipsism: "And we can never be educated/For population is the land of one/and where we are at war with ourselves/fatalities are high". *Arena* gets into the area of positive spirituality: ". . . the human form is lost/It is then that Arena is born/From the depths of our souls . . . She is love and reason." As a corollary, he refers to '. . . the pain that keeps me/Together/Forever' (*Half*).

*Andra Flow #2* relates the anguish of a desperate individual to the common lot of humanity: "Stop pretending, you alone will do as you will. Until, all that you feel is to kneel by the waters of emotion, and pour out an ocean, caught in your devotion to life, the notion of strife, the creations, the mass devastation, the clash of generations." Mind and soul might have seemed to be separated, but they are manifestly united.

*Idyllic* bizarrely relates happiness to the extremes of pain. He needs '. . . to walk, to suffer, to learn how to rejoice.' Identity

crisis in *Untitled #7*: “What is my crime?/That I appear only as a shadow” and in *Our time*: “Our being has fled/Into our own depths/Will it ever return/I fear not.” Interesting observation in *Helix September*: “Ambition is consuming/So too is the detriment/Of balance.” Is ‘balance’ detrimental to the soul?

*Up against* I found quite enigmatic: the boy has to make his pilgrimage/exile journey up a mountain. *Draft* is a strong plea for the written word as against the spoken: “Words without a mouth always seem sharper.” *Andra Flow #1* reflects on the nature of ‘recovery’: “There may be no magic in that book but its spells have tormented me for too long/As I weaken again only to become stronger.”

As often happens, I was initially deterred by the preponderance of extremely short poems. This always suggests a poverty of ideas. And in this instance, I found the poems which I have not specified in this review to be trite and ephemeral. If there are more substantial poems extant from this writer, I would love to see them. If not, then a briefer, more concentrated volume would have done better justice to his depth substance.

**Dave Russell**

## **The English Sweats** by James Brookes

**Pighog Press 2009, ISBN 978-1-906309-10-7; £8.00**

“The poems of James Brookes share some of the characteristics of that creepy Victoriana that is all the rage with designers and artists nowadays. Stuffed rodents. Phrenology. Wax jackets. That sort of thing. Steampunk without the punk.” (Tom Chivers)

This collection has an historical perspective on war and brutality. The opener, *Portents* concerns hunting. Henry Peacham’s *Emblem 75* is a 16th century engraving of a hunter with two dogs chasing an ermine. *Isti mirant* alludes to the Bayeux Tapestry, looking at a battle through the victorious Normans’ eyes. Joseph of Arimathea purportedly made Christ’s tomb, and the spear of Longinus pierced Christ’s side. The poem implicitly gives the ermine a human (or divine) soul.

In *Shrike* he speaks through a bird persona, one of the gentler species, referring to its ‘passerine tact’. *Kyrie Eleison* is Greek for ‘Lord Have Mercy’.

*Requiem for an Invasion* concerns Henry VIII’s warship *Mary Rose*, which was brought back to the surface 400 years after it sank. *Whitby jet* is the most precious English gemstone.

*The Crescent of Hearing* concerns three examples – from the

16th, 17th and 18th centuries, of people’s ears being cut off. Its last stanza jumps 200 years – from the War of Jenkins’ Ear, to the legendary Tintin’s quest for the ‘broken eared fetish’. I find this bitterly ironic. Those who research such phenomena with comfortable historical hindsight can be blinded to the sheer horror of the situation researched. ‘Quarantine for aggressor nations’ strikes a chilly note. The last line, “Ivor Gurney dies, speaking to Schubert” merits serious thought. Gurney was a musical composer and a First World War poet. He saw active service, and was both shot and gassed. He later suffered a breakdown, having been diagnosed with Bipolar Disorder. His main affinity with Schubert may have been his suffering, his not being recognised in his own lifetime.

*Badger*: surreal comparison of artillery with a rabid dog. The analogy reinforces the sense of panic and futility in war. The figurative dog is in a state of terror: “Alive, gone tumour-mad, fleeing the cull/of its own acute senses”. There is a parallel sense of furtiveness in a camouflaged gun emplacement. The poet refers to its last feral part (feral = formerly domesticated, run wild). Having defaecated en route, it seemingly returns to its kennel, wrecked and exhausted – in harmony with masses of human refugees. The main historical focus seems to be one of the World Wars, but there is a flashback to ‘Angevin scrubbed velvet’. *Barn Conversion* and *The English Sweats* captures the drab routines of service life. *Recently Sighted* – a strange marine biology lesson. *Murex* is a genus of predatory tropical sea snails. *Poins* is a slang word for a lazy person. *A cuspidor* is a spittoon. This is an extremely complex, subtle poem. The predatory nature of the snail is counterpointed against its vulnerability to ‘... Myrmidons’ widows; cosh-/or garrote-savvy thugs.’ It is to some extent belittled and ridiculed: ‘children’s entertainer on a cross/channel ferry’ perhaps meeting the final degradation of being an edible delicacy: ‘Habitat, the bar’s side of the dance floor.’ *Mons Horse Burial* surely relates to the First World War – a horse and its rider catching gunfire head on. The horse is ‘steak-stripped’. Pulverisation of installations parallels laceration of flesh: ‘weak soil flensed to an equine shrapnel’. *Clitheroe Keep* is in 2 sections. The keep is a Norman castle, believed to be the smallest in the country. It stands as a symbol of oppressive power ‘like the taxman’s strongbox on arrival . . .’ Once again, there is a historical panorama, echoes of the Norman period, contemporary resonance in a postcode. I am still puzzling out the meaning of ‘scitter-tourney’: one definition of skitter is to move elusively and skittishly; there is also an interesting definition of ‘tourney’: “This is a mode that determines which player stands victorious on the summit after winning many battles against many foes!” (I) Could this allude to the garrison? In (II) there is an historical focus on the period of the Wars of the Roses. There is an implicit accusation of the reader: “You think always in foreign/English, the uncomfortable/syllables lost to the tongue.” One should face the horrors of conflict; the keep stands as a grim reminder. There are allusions to four rivers related to major conflicts. There is a final historical jump to Prince Rupert. *The Guinea Pig Club*: this was assembled from patients at Queen Victoria Hospital, East Grinstead who underwent intensive plastic surgery in World War II, generally after suffering burns in aircraft. This is a searing portrayal

of injury: 'A top lip thinned up over the denture seam' . . . a moustache described as 'patches of pale scrub. Their eyes are traumatised: "One eye is bleary watercolour cobalt . . . one eye painted lapis lazuli." They seem to be undergoing therapy, in preparation to face the outside world. The reader is left wondering whether they shall fully do so: '. . . the gaze, that follows you night after night into dreams' suggests that it might be longing for the unattainable.

*Caractacus in the Rape of Bramber*: Bramber castle, in Sussex, is another Norman edifice dear to Brookes. The spirit of the Ancient British chief returns from the dead, and does a super-panoramic survey – embracing the Middle Ages, coming to near-modernity with references to *Moonlight Serenade* and 'Morse's Jaguar'. He refers to being 'cut cold from Cymbeline'. Cymbeline was his father, as celebrated in Shakespeare's play – in which Caractacus has no part. As a figure of rebellion and insurrection, he might have been airbrushed out for political reasons. The play was written when Shakespeare had royal patronage, and the Gunpowder Plot was still in recent memory. The castle was built by William De Braose, whose family owned it until their line died out in the early 14th Century. It was briefly confiscated by King John. Some atrocities were perpetrated during that occupation. It was largely destroyed by Parliamentary gunfire in the Civil War. Brookes makes reference to the Act of Union: one reference I have found to this states that "The boundaries between Bramber and Steyning were indistinct." Through the Caractacus persona, the poet warns against comfortable historicism: ". . . exposing myself as a party to this fraud, the nostalgia for an age of uniform fear . . .". There is a bitter irony to taking young children on conducted tours of historical sites: ". . . finger the pillories with them . . . mumble along in the flint-knapped grapeshot of Brythonic . . .". So what will become of them? Will they be safe, comfortable, passive weekend excavators, or could they re-enact some of the horrors of Bramber's 'prime time'?

*Mink* reiterates the ermine theme of the first poem. This fast predatory animal crosses a river. On entering the water, it hardly made a splash; its immersion was compared to ". . . blood that pelts out through the first jaw-grip/of pleasure-kills." It almost feels as if the animal has perpetrated a violent act on the river. Its 'nothing-to-answer for coat' suggests total egotism. Once again an indictment of the complacent human observer 'snug in the trim of privilege'. An interesting hypothesis is suggested by hearing 'screaming underwater'. Could this be compared to recorded whale songs?

*Concerning Plunder* almost treats a pirate's prize like a lover: ". . . the treasure-ship of your listing body . . . I plant my kisses/above your arse/to the crack of your *tella nullius* (common land – now privately owned)". There is some nostalgia for 'the old piracy.' A reference to Britain's imperial past. The White Rajah were a dynasty who attempted to impose a benign rule on Sarawak, and remained in power from 1841 to 1993. They came from a Brookes family, but James Brookes claims to be unrelated to them. Their régime 'never came to an honest Gibraltar'. Some of their benign rule restricted economic growth. The 'family name'

is reiterated in that of an 18th century slave ship, notorious for overloading on its passages. Brookes has seen a blueprint of this ship, and feels empathy for the slaves on board. His residence could never imprison him as the ship did the slaves. There is a surreal comparison between piracy and the actions of a hunting dog. It holds the foreleg of a deer in its teeth, which is compared to a spar or a mast. The once whole deer is compared to a ship; its body is its treasure cargo '. . . its slight ingots of bone'.

*Surfeit*: the leitmotif here is eel fishing. The eel is renowned for its energy and intractability. In a way it defies mankind. Disturbing figure of speech with 'history's peristalsis' (The rippling motion of muscles in the digestive tract) – the eel is indigestible by the precepts of history. The attempt at 'digestion' is compared to dubious research '. . . for long-lost relatives'. Such research is lampooned as 'sock puppetry (glove puppetry), thread necromancy.' I do not feel that Brookes fully developed the potential involved in the reference to 'greek flame' (the fires issuing from the Chimera). Complex last stanza: 'ultima ratio regum' = last argument of kings; "Meme = a postulated unit of cultural ideas, symbols or practices, which can be transmitted from one mind to another through writing, speech, gestures, rituals or other imitable phenomena. Supporters of the concept regard memes as cultural analogues to genes, in that they self-replicate and respond to selective pressures." (Wikipedia). The 'Good clerk' could possibly refer to God. But some independent spirits will always struggle to preserve their identities, a life force against 'death's perpetual slander', and a closing couplet referring to digestive difficulty: '. . . the mute eater/thrashing against the curd of his own rennet.'

*Hydra* is intensely cryptic. There is a suggestion that Brookes's father worked for the ambulance service, and that there has been some chemical terrorism at work: Sarin is an organophosphorus compound, a colourless, odourless liquid, used as a chemical weapon. Ricin is a poison found naturally in castor beans. If castor beans are chewed and swallowed, the released ricin can cause injury. The two 'weapons' seem to have a fair amount in common; their chief difference seems to be that one is of mineral origin, the other of vegetable. In terms of experience, an incident of real horror coincided with the self-indulgence and comfort of reading escapist horror fiction.

*Ordeal by Fire, By Water*: this is dedicated to a military ambulance driver. It seems to be set in one of the World Wars. There is some hint of censure against the driver for having taken a 'soft option': "You've missed out on France: were ice-skating/on the billet's pond." The 'unreal house of darkness' – is this referring to the hospital, where things are (comparatively) at peace, removed from the grisly action? The third stanza could be alluding to air raids, when many took shelter in London Underground stations. Again, some implicit moral censure at the end: "Into the night/you went dancing, like this patient/who quick-stepped with a squadron's/petrol ration." This is an appropriate reminder that war does not make saints or heroes of everyone; dubious activities can, and often do, go on in those conditions.

*Diastole*: “The period of time when the heart relaxes after contraction in preparation for refilling with circulating blood.” (Wikipedia.) It is dedicated to a submarine officer on shore leave in the Pacific theatre during World War II. He is obviously unwinding after having been fairly traumatised in action. Half of him is in detached comfort; the other half definitely in mid-action. There is a reminder of the disastrous British defeat at Singapore. The final stanza suggests that his own vessel has been sunk or badly damaged. “Water rushes in to candle the dying/room with short-out voltages, glugged gasps/of brine steam . . .” the fusion of fire and water imagery convey the horror most effectively. “Again, you press your thumbnail to the button’s socket.’ Is this to submerge, to surface, or to fire a torpedo? *Silent Enim Leges Inter Arma* (the laws are silent in war). Also set in the Pacific theatre. A namesake of the poet is put before a court-martial for jettisoning ‘cargo’ from his aircraft; there was ‘a deficit of Japanese prisoners’. Were these the cargo? The flying officer was acquitted; some war crimes go unpunished.

The concluding poem, *Two Seasons for the Tees-Exe Line* I find the least successful of this selection. It paints a rural northern landscape, using Anglo-Saxons-cum-Gerard Manley Hopkins. Some linguistic originality here, though: ‘Grey moats the sky, greets/migrants . . . the sleet mints groats . . . torrifed wheat’.

James Brookes is undeniably a major writer. He demands hard thought, and pricks the reader’s conscience. Depending on the volume of his output, he would certainly merit a full-sized publication. His work is difficult, opaque and demanding. It is overtly erudite, necessitating research on the part of the reader. I feel that fully detailed footnotes would not have been out of place here, though I am not sure that every reader finds these reader-friendly. But I definitely look forward to seeing more.

**Dave Russell**

## **A s e n t i m e n t a l   b l u e s ?**

### **CoolTan Arts’ response to ‘Depression?’**

**It’s just the new trendy illness!’**

**by Janet Street Porter, Daily Mail, 19th May, 2010**

<http://www.dailymail.co.uk/detate/article-127850/Depression-Its-just-new-trendy-illness.html>

If you have a problem, talking - or writing - helps. Bottling up concerns and anxieties is damaging. Having a better grasp on the facts and a heightened social awareness of mental distress is a key step in moving forward and finding positive ways to ease the suffering experienced by a growing amount of people.

Janet Street Porter recently branded a number of middle class women as exploiting experiences of depression, when arguably they should be understood. Who are we to judge what another

person’s depression might be like? Her article raises a distinct social and financial ‘class’ question. And supposedly enough wealth can buy proper treatment, yet why is mental distress still on the rise across all communities?

We are given no facts to support any of Janet Street Porter’s article. Is telling the women cited to, in effect, simply ‘pull their socks up and get over it’ a proviso for a positive resolution? Articles such as this carelessly promote unnecessary and negative stigma.

Our western lifestyle is manic. It’s terrifically fast and ferocious and changes have happened quickly. Our working week is one of the longest in Europe and pressure is greater than it has been. As the medical world has improved its methods of diagnosing and treating clinical depression, bi-polar, and other forms of mental distress, the word ‘depression’ has become a word that’s being casually thrown about in everyday life. Serious conditions can be belittled and undermined through misunderstanding. Or I misunderstood Ms. Street-Porter’s point that melancholy is increasingly used to boost popularity, to gain attention and of course, sell celebrity-endorsed books?

Whatever, there is something seriously off kilter when people who voice concerns about their own well being, are ignored, mistreated, or not taken seriously. This is a tragedy. It’s common to hear of people misinformed and encouraged into prescribed drug dependency when other courses of action could be much more effective. Alternate solutions should be offered and sought, and social therapy could be encouraged; often the charities and organisations who offer these avenues are not adequately recognised, supported or promoted. Some forms of mental distress are increasing rapidly and we need a better plan of action to combat destructive attitudes and find ways to bring stability and equal care into our communities. Is there a lack of creativity in the ‘system’ that reinforces isolation and pressure?

One example is CoolTan Arts, a charity challenging stigma and campaigning for the rights of people experiencing mental distress. CoolTan Arts works from a vibrant arts centre near Elephant and Castle in South London. Run by and for people with mental distress, it believes mental well being is enhanced by the power of creativity.

We would very much welcome Janet Street Porter to come and visit us, at her convenience, and hopefully revise her opinions.

“Mixed anxiety and depression, according to the ONS 2000 survey, is experienced by 9.2 per cent of adults in Britain... the figures show an increase in the prevalence of mixed anxiety with depression compared with the 1993 survey by 1.4 per cent (from 7.8 per cent to 9.2 per cent). Source: ONS, 2000, Psychiatric morbidity among adults living in private households in Great Britain.” Source: <http://www.counselling-directory.org.uk/commonstats.html>. Written by Martin Walsh ©, volunteer at CoolTan Arts, with members of CoolTan Arts’ Self-Advocacy Training Course. More information about CoolTan Arts is available at [www.cooltanarts.org.uk](http://www.cooltanarts.org.uk)



# Kevin Coyne's *I want my Crown* by Frank Bangay

## The Virgin Anthology

This 4 disc CD was lovingly put together by Kevin's sons Robert and Eugene. This is a collection of work their dad did between 1973 and 1980, when he was on Virgin records. It is hard to pick a 'best of' with an artist so prolific as Kevin Coyne. Perhaps an attempt at a 'best of' is a pointless exercise. What is important is to show the scope and diversity in Kevin Coyne's work; in this, I feel Robert and Eugene have done a very good job.

Kevin was influenced by the blues and rock'n'roll, also by music hall comedy – Frank Randle, George Robey, Rob Wilton and Billy Bennett being some of the music hall comedians he has mentioned as liking. But he went on to influence some of the punk musicians: John Lydon is the famous example, another is Leeds punk band The Mekons. In 2002 former Mekons John Langford and Sally Timms performed and recorded with Kevin.

My first introduction to the music of Kevin Coyne came in the late 1960s when I heard his early band Siren on the radio. John Peel was a big fan of Siren as he was of Kevin's solo work. In fact, Siren was signed to John Peel's Dandelion label. I remember hearing a Siren song called *Lonesome Ride* that I was particularly fond of. In 1973 Kevin signed to the then small independent label Virgin and recorded *Marjory Razor Blade*. It was reading about the record, then hearing it, that really brought Kevin's music into my life, as did seeing him live for the first time a couple of years later. In fact I can say that discovering Kevin Coyne was a turning point in my life.

Like *Marjory Razorblade* in 1973 this anthology starts off with that record's title track. I read somewhere that Kevin made the song up while he was shaving. He sings unaccompanied, sounding like a music hall/pub comedian. But underneath the black humour it is a song about self harm. A taboo subject back then, as I guess it still is. Like on *Marjory* we now rock through *Marlene* – a great track with a gorgeous organ playing throughout. The other tracks from *Marjory* featured here, are the bleak acoustic *Talking To No One*; there is *Eastbourne Ladies*, another great rocker, and *House On The Hill*. This is a song that Kevin wrote from his experience working as a Social Therapist at the Whittington Hospital in Preston. When I interviewed Kevin in 2004, he told me that the song was also about his own experiences of being an out-of-work drunk wandering around Brixton. Kevin sings the whole song in the first person. When he sang about the *Brixton Square*, I wonder if he was referring to Brixton Oval – a place just outside the centre of Brixton where drunks used to congregate. Throughout the song Kevin is accompanied by Gordon Smith's sensitive slide guitar. Here they created a genuine British Blues. The Anthology's title track *I Want My Crown* is also featured on *Marjory*. Kevin got the song from Big Joe Williams but put his own lyrics to the verses; I feel he is still true to Joe's song. Big Joe Williams is best known as a blues artist, especially perhaps for *Baby Please Don't Go*. They had a big hit with the song in 1964. But sometimes Big Joe got together with his wife Mary and together they would sing spirituals like *I Want My Crown*. The crown in question is the starry crown that we are given when we get to heaven. This is a theme that runs through a number of old gospel songs. There is a lot more to be said about *Marjory*, as the whole record has been reissued. But for now we must travel on.

In late 1973 Kevin released a single; the A side, *Lovesick Fool*, is included here. It has a great opening and rocks along nicely. Also recorded around the same time was an impressive version of Blind Willie Johnson's *Keep Your Lamp Trimmed and Burning*. Kevin's soulful singing is accompanied by Gordon Smith's slide guitar. Here Gordon's playing reminds me of Mississippi Fred McDowell, who had also recorded the song. During 1974, Kevin released his second Virgin album *Blame It on the Night*. Again Gordon Smith is a constant companion. His slide playing was very much a part of Kevin's work at the time. The opening track *River Of Sin* is said to be one of Kevin's songs that inspired Johnny Rotten. The stark acoustic *Sign of the Times* is very disturbing. The acoustic title track creates

a similar disturbing atmosphere, the added strings work most effectively. There is a rough version of another song *I Believe In Love*. But these works in progress were all a valid part of Kevin's creative output. Following all this is *Dance of the Bourgeoisie* from a 1974 John Peel Session. Here Kevin is accompanied by a saxophone. This bit of comedy shows the avant-garde side to Kevin's music.

By 1975 Kevin's band had grown. Andy Summers joining Gordon Smith on guitars. His 1975 album *Matching Head and Feet* lacks the acoustic spontaneity of the previous two albums. But it contains some good songs, and is very much a testimony to the power in Kevin's voice. *Saviour* starts off with bass player Archie Leggett before building into one of the most powerful things Kevin ever recorded. There is a bit of unaccompanied singing in the middle, perhaps a bit reminiscent of Captain Beefheart, then the band come back in and the song builds to a climax. Bang. Over the years *Saviour* was often a regular part of Kevin's stage performances. In later years the song became a vehicle for Kevin's spiritual searching's. Here however it is very much an exorcism from an ex-Catholic. *Lonely Lovers* is a song from the troubled side of suburbia. A subject Kevin often sang about over the years. *Sunday Morning Sunrise* is a beautiful love song. However *Turpentine* is a blast of proto punk, with its nightmare visions. Kevin gives an extremely powerful vocal performance, while Gordon Smith's harmonica wails away in the background. It is extremely explosive. I first saw Kevin on stage in 1975 and he was a wild performer. There definitely was a sense of danger about what he was doing.

Around this time, Kevin made a couple of commercial singles. *Let's Have A Party* is a live recording complete with audience noise. Lorna rocks along nicely, sometimes putting me in mind of Slade or Mud. I don't mean that in a derogatory way. However while Kevin was making these commercial singles, he was also working in more adventurous areas. Side two opens with two songs from a play he co-wrote with playwright Snoo Wilson called *England, England*. The play was about the Kray Twins. I never saw the play so I cannot comment on it. The two songs featured here are called *Which Way Can I Go*, and *A Life Divine*. I am particularly fond of *Which Way Can I Go*. Over Andy Summers' sensitive slide playing Kevin sings of friends deserting him. The repetition of 'Well, Well, Well', in the chorus puts me in mind of Blind Willie Johnson. However it is very much a Kevin Coyne song with references to institutions like Marks and Spencer's, Wilfred Pickles, and Winston Churchill. A very moving song.

Around this time Gordon Smith left the band. Andy Summers took over all the guitar duties. Kevin was now working with a four-piece band that included legendary keyboard player Zoot Money. In 1976 they released *Heartburn*. This was perhaps the most commercial record that he made in the 1970s. It was not as explosive as *Matching Head And Feet*; however it contained some good songs. *I Love My Mother* has an eerie feel to it, *America* is a song that I think also appeared in *England, England*. Here it has a music-hall feel to it with references to the little boats on *Millwall Docks*, and *The Pearly Queens from Tooting Bec*. Then there is the *Gangster King* holding out his hand to say "hello son". *Shangri-La* looks back to a bygone era with its references to Frankie Lane and Johnnie Ray. A couple of years later Kevin would record Jonnie Ray's hit *Cry*. After *Heartburn* Kevin and the band toured England. Some of the gigs were recorded for the live album *In Living Black And White*. For me this is one of the great live albums from the 70s. Here it is represented by the two opening tracks to the show. Both feature Kevin on his own. *Case History No 2*, with its poetry and piano playing; memories of childhood, memories from his social work experiences in Camden – befriending someone whose body he would later have to go and visit in the morgue. *Fat Girl* features Kevin's frantic acoustic guitar playing. Both songs walk a tightrope between the absurd and the tragic.

After *In Living Black And White* Kevin went back to solo performing. However, his partnership with Zoot Money was to continue both on record and on stage, where they often worked as a duo. Late 1977 saw the release of *Beautiful Extremes*. This was a collection of songs recorded between 1974 and 1977 that never appeared on any of his records. I feel the record contains some little gems. The tracks feature either Kevin accompanying himself on guitar or piano, or Kevin singing to Bob Ward's guitar accompaniment. Kevin and Bob Ward were to work together a lot over the next few years. The three songs selected here are *Roses In Your Room*, A nice love song sung to Bob Ward's guitar accompaniment. I feel the song is also a search for spirituality, with its reference to harps in the chorus. In the background there is a second Coyne voice talking. It fades in and out, as such it is not always easy to make out what the voice is saying, this becomes very effective.

*Mona Where's My Trousers?* Is the story of a boy pleading with his father not to give him a beating after he loses his new duffel coat. Kevin accompanies himself on piano and uses both a speaking voice and a singing voice going simultaneously, to tell the story, which he does by playing the part of the boy. Through all the black humour, this is a frightening song. There is also the surreal *Rainbow Curve*. Following this is *Rivers Of Blood* from a Peel session Kevin recorded in early 1978. *Rivers Of Blood* portrays England as it was at the time with the National Front making their intimidating presence felt. Kevin uses the Wandsworth Road where he then lived as a location for part of the song. The Wandsworth Road runs from Vauxhall to Battersea; it borders on Clapham.

In 1978 came the album *Dynamite Daze*. Recorded at the Alvic studio in Wimbledon, this had a different sound from the two previous albums. The title track is homage to the punk and new wave music of the time. Something Kevin had himself helped to inspire. *Brothers of Mine* echoes a sense of persecution one could feel through being an outsider. The scary *I Really Live Round Here* speaks of urban fear and paranoia. This is followed by a powerful performance of John Clare's poem *I Am*: a poem that John Clare wrote in a Northamptonshire asylum. Kevin accompanies himself on piano, and half speaks, half sings the words with a lot of soul. This was my first introduction to the work of John Clare. It made me want to hear more of the poet's work. *Dynamite Daze* is very varied in its styles. After the rockers like the title track and *Brothers Of Mine*, there is *I Am* and *I Only Want To See You Smile*, the latter a beautiful love song, with Kevin singing to a piano accompaniment. The simplicity of this song is most effective, and deeply felt. *Juliet and Mark* shows two ex-lovers fighting their way out of the darkness, struggling to find their spirits again. In the chorus, Kevin sings "Funny how the gramophone never seems to play when you're down." Side two ends with a song called *Older Woman* from a record called *The Virgin songbook*, which I have never heard. Around this time Kevin had started experimenting with early drum-machines. Some of the results can be heard on a song called *Having a Party* from his 1979 album *Millionaires, and Teddy Bears*, which starts off side three. The album title comes from *Having a Party*. A song inspired by a music business party that Kevin went to. It is a pointed attack on the exploitation there. The song would often feature in his set over the years. It is also a theme that Kevin would expand on with the publication of his book of short stories *Show Business* in 1993. *I'm Just A Man* is a sensitive love song, *Pretty Park* is a rocker with a lovely quiet middle where he sing about *Doreen and Michael* being friends until the end. Always sitting on the same old bench. *Marigold* is about the militant type of feminists who want women to take over the world. One of the musical delights on this record is the keyboard playing of Paul Wickens. One track where they are most effective is on *The World Is Full Of Fools*, a beautiful song: Kevin sings about a big bookcase hiding the window, being covered in pamphlets that he throws into the sea, and the struggle to go out and enjoy himself on a sunny day. But us fools aren't bad people. *Millionaires* came out in January 1979. Around the same time Kevin did a concert at a venue called Rockpalast in Cologne. From this concert comes the *Burning Head Suite*. Over a distorted transistor radio broadcast Kevin sings through a transparent mask; the effect is most creepy. Having seen this on You Tube, *Zoot Money* also wears a transparent mask as he plays his keyboards.

Later in 1979, Kevin released the album *Babble*. It was also a stage show and both in the show and on the record, Kevin collaborates with German singer Dagmar Krause. Featured here is the stark opening track: *Are You Deceiving Me*, Kevin singing to a piano accompaniment. In, *I Confess*, Kevin confesses to the Priest, only to have the Priest laugh at him. *Happy Homes In The Moonlight* looks at the disturbance beyond the neatly cut suburban lawns: Mother In Law is having fun, while the Son In Law is toying with a gun. There is also a version of *Lonely Man* from 1975: Kevin singing a song that Dagmar sings on the record.

We now move to March 1980 and *Bursting Bubbles*. This was collaboration with guitarist Brian Godding. The record has no bass on it, as such it has a raw feel. *Children's Crusade* starts off with Kevin's guitar, on the second verse drums come in, with the third verse a saxophone starts wailing. Over all this, Kevin gives a powerful passionate vocal. *Learn to Swim, Learn to Drown* has Kevin singing over Brian Godding's guitar and a drum machine. The song links together the turbulence in the mind with the turbulence in the outside world. Rain storms, barricades burning etc. *Dark Dance Hall* is about seedy dance halls. For me it is also a song about loneliness. The *Old Fashioned Love Song* is like a 50s love song. However, when we get to the choruses Kevin's singing is accompanied by screaming. It is a powerful record. The autumn of 1980 saw the release of *Sanity Stomp*. This was

a double album, recorded at a time when Kevin's mental health was in poor shape. Disc 1 was recorded with punk band the Ruts, disc 2 with Brian Godding, Robert Wyatt, and Bob Ward. All the tracks here are from disc two. The sentiments of *A Loving Hand* are as relevant in these days of political uncertainty as they were in the early days of Thatcherism. *Wonderful Wilderness* finds Kevin in a spiritual frame of mind as he recites poetry over a very atmospheric backing. The closing track *You Can't Kill Us* is a statement of intent. Kevin singing over his frantic acoustic guitar. In 1981, Kevin left Virgin and signed with the then new independent label Cherry Red. He then recorded *Pointing the Finger*, an album that saw him trying to climb out the other side of a nervous breakdown. But this is another part of Kevin's long story.

On disc, four we travel back to 1974 for two live performances. Both gigs feature a band lead by Gordon Smith. The first was recorded at Golders Green Hippodrome for a BBC in concert. This features various tracks from the then new album *Blame It on the Night* including the title track and *Poor Swine*. There is also an early version of the *Marjory Razorblade Suite*, an expansion of the original song. Also an early version of *Fat Girl*. Who is the DJ? The other concert comes from Hyde Park. A free concert. Why I never went to this gig, I don't know. I wish I had gone. Kevin starts off with an acoustic *Mad Boy* from *Case History*, after this the band comes in and they go into *Mummy* from *Marjory Razorblade*. There is another song from *Case History*, *Need Somebody*, also the *Marjory Razorblade Suite*, and *Poor Swine*. The concert ends with a rocking version of John Lee Hooker's *Boogie Chillun*. Both the gigs show what a great live performer Kevin was.

At £34 this record might seem a bit expensive, but it is worth saving up your money for. There are four discs here, this is no more than you would pay for a four CD set by the Beatles or Bob Dylan, and Kevin is just as worthy. This is an excellent introduction to Kevin Coyne. For me it brings back memories of buying Kevin's records and seeing Kevin on stage. The 1970s weren't always happy times for me. But listening to Kevin's onstage humour helped me find a little humour inside myself. I also found that I could identify with a lot of what Kevin was singing about. This anthology shows that Kevin very much earned his crown.

Available at: <http://www.kevincoyne.de/Music.htm>



*Waxing Lyrical* Post in the City is delighted to invite you to a series of free New Audiences events bringing together some of the most exciting and talented contemporary poets from the UK and from across the Lusophone world.

## FERNANDO PESSOA

7.00pm on Tues 22 June 2010 at Bridewell Hall, 14 Bride Lane, London EC4

Fernando Pessoa, who died in 1936, was the most famous poet to emerge in the Portuguese speaking world during the 20th Century. A marvellous and brilliant poet, his work speaks to people all over the world and in all languages. With a name which means in English 'Person' and in French 'Nobody', Fernando Pessoa is renowned for writing in the names of several different alter egos, or heteronyms, including the lyrical doctor Ricardo Reis, the adventurous engineer Álvaro de Campos, the shepherd and bucolic poet Alberto Caeiro, and Fernando Pessoa himself. Do not miss what promises to be a unique and splendid London-based celebration of one of the world's greatest poets.

<p><b>Inês Pedrosa</b> - Director of Fernando Pessoa House in Lisbon, an important centre for Pessoa scholarship, and one of the world's leading 'Poetry houses'</p>	<p><b>Richard Zenith</b> - one of the leading English-speaking experts on Pessoa and translator of his work, and editor of the Penguin edition of his poetry</p>	<p><b>Professor Seabra Pereira</b> - a distinguished scholar in Portuguese Literature from Coimbra University in Portugal.</p>	<p><b>Simon Jenner</b> - British poet who recently produced a poetic re-interpretation of Pessoa's work in the form of a pamphlet published by Perdika Press.</p>
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## Creative Writing Therapy *by* Roy Birch

On Saturday, March 27th, at the Mid-Herts MIND Well-Being Centre in Stevenage, local Creative Writing Group, Stevenage Survivors, held its inaugural Creative Therapy Day.

Stevenage Survivors was set up in April 2000 for the benefit of survivors of mental distress. In the words of its Mission Statement, 'to use poetry in all its forms to help survivors of mental distress survive more adequately.' The group's record in that respect is exemplary, and the Therapy Day was, in addition to expanding the group's general remit in the field of interactive care, an attempt to show that a small local mental-health-oriented writing group can be considerably more, and also an attempt to bring Creative Therapy to the community in a manner which empowers service users by allowing them to be who and what they are in a safe and undemanding atmosphere, while offering them gentle and compassionate therapy combined with an opportunity to express their own personal creativity. In fact, offering them several levels of therapy simultaneously. Including the best therapy of all – enjoying themselves. And it worked.

When I broached the possibility of the Therapy Day to the group I was not certain how they would react. Stevenage Survivors is, after all, a very fine writing group with some quite superb poets in its ranks, and I was not at all sure that the group would want to move so far away from its spiritual heartland. But move we did. And the Force moved with us.

I had set my sights on thirty-five as our probable upper participation limit, with thirty as the likelier figure, and a very real possibility of as few as twenty-five actually turning up. In the event we were blessed with an official attendance figure of fifty-four (the number signed-in via the attendance register) though at least four who participated omitted to sign in, which means we had an actual attendance of at least fifty-eight. Virtually twice the number I had anticipated.

All the day's activities were facilitated by group members, which meant that the day was truly "User-led." And how.

By the time the first workshop began – Creative Writing with Rosie Berry - there were some twenty-five of us in the building. Most attended the workshop, and some fine work was produced. Meanwhile Andy Smith had got his All-Day, Drop-in, Drop-out, Drop-back-in Creative Art workshop under way and, accompanied by the seductive smell of paint and thinners, during the hours of daylight eighteen participants (of whom a number had never painted previously) created fifteen worthy canvasses, one of which was later used as a prop for one of the pieces at the evening Celebratory Reading.

Following the Creative Writing workshop, two activities ran in parallel – Paul Evans' Confidence-building and Assertiveness workshop, and an hour of Taoist meditation led by Dave Pack. Both were well attended and equally well-appreciated. Sadly, Dave, who had led the session magnificently although ill, was by now so depleted that he was forced to return home to his bed. Rosie Berry had also drained herself and was forced to leave early. That they had been willing to take part while unwell is a stirring testament to their courage and resilience. That they were able to have the positive effect on the event that they did is testament to that which makes Stevenage Survivors the group it is.

Lunch followed, and a chance to converse and network, an opportunity avidly accepted by all present. By this time the atmosphere was firmly established, and the entire venue was awash with a powerful aura of warm, safe, and vibrant peacefulness, a feeling which was to remain and intensify for the duration of the event.

While all this had been happening, Rhonda Challis had been probably the busiest of us all. She was giving Tarot Readings and people were queuing for the privilege.

It is always nice to be able to satisfy our vanity by admitting to being wrong about something we actually wanted to be wrong about. When the idea of Tarot readings was suggested, I, in my infinite wisdom, had a vision of Rhonda sitting in some corner twiddling her thumbs because not enough people had attended the event to make her activity viable; a fear I continued to harbour in spite of being assured by those who know about such things that Tarot Reading would, in all probability, be the most popular of the day's activities. Which it pretty much turned out to be. To be happily wrong is such a good feeling, permitting, as it does, expressions of false humility.

While it is great to be happily wrong, being unhappily wrong is a different matter altogether. During Lunch I ventured forth to the Railway Station to collect our guest poet – but missed her. Intelligent pair that we are, we were not in possession of each other's telephone numbers and so could not make contact. I returned to the Well-Being Centre fully confident that Sarah would soon find her way there. Soon, however, eventually became less soon, and, overcome with feelings of anguish and inadequacy, I returned to the scene of my initial failure – and failed again.

There were, quite obviously, many possible permutations with regard to the reason for Sarah's no-show. I ran through them all, arrived at no satisfactory explanation, and decided to be sanguine about the whole affair. Clever me. At about 2.30 she appeared, large as life, after a tour of the fleshpots of Stevenage New Town, a tour which included a visit to an Internet café to try to contact me by e-mail. Crisis over. On with the show.

The afternoon began with simultaneous workshops – Cynthia Price (another group member who battled illness in order to take part in the event) gave a Healthy Eating workshop, or, as she herself described it, 'Diet for Stress Reduction.' Considering it took place immediately after lunch, the workshop was well attended and gave everyone (if you will forgive the unintended pun) much positive food for thought.

While this workshop was in progress on the first floor, immediately above, in the gym, Lucia and Matt were holding an interactive music workshop, aimed at the creation of a piece of music of sufficient quality to be worthy of performance at the Celebratory Reading. And that is precisely what the workshop achieved. And in a way summed up the event, as did the Creative Art workshop. People who don't paint painted; people who don't play music played music. And did so remarkably and enjoyably well.

The workshop programme concluded with a healing session by the Vale House Project, which combines Meditation, Reiki, and Creative Writing in a single-unit therapeutic and self-development activity. Seventeen people attended the workshop, which was facilitated by Lucia, myself, and Geoff Dilley, and began with a simple meditation, focused on the union between the mind and the abdominal breath. Most of the group meditated. Creative Writing followed the meditation. The participants were invited to choose the topic for the writing exercise and Jackie Primett suggested 'Daisy.' The suggestion was accepted and we wrote about daisies and then read our work to each other. Some inspired and beautiful pieces were shared. As always at these workshops, people were surprised by what they wrote, and the way in which they wrote it. And then it was time for Reiki.

Reiki (Japanese for Universal Energy of Life) is a hands-on healing technique derived from the High Tibetan healing art of Qi Gong. Reiki is normally practised in seclusion, for approximately an hour, with the recipient on a therapy couch in a prone position. For the purposes of the workshop Reiki was practised with the recipients seated on chairs and receiving Reiki for about ten minutes each in front of an audience. Twelve participants received Reiki and all were extremely therapeutically impressed. This session, like the Art and Music workshops, helped define the Therapy Day. A number of people to whom Meditation and Reiki had previously been anathema, engaged in both and benefitted greatly.

Meanwhile, Rhonda was still packing them in for Tarot Readings and, had she continued to accept bookings, would probably have been busy until two in the morning.

The Vale House Project workshop finished at about 4.45. An interval and refreshments followed, with the Celebratory Reading scheduled to begin at 6pm. Considered opinion in certain quarters had

been that attendance at the Therapy Day would be poor until the Celebratory Reading. The opposite was in fact the case. By the time the reading began, about half the participants had retired. Which was a great shame as the fare on offer was hugely entertaining and in places quite superb. Lucia sang as only she can, and assisted Matt and the Music Workshop team with their performance of the piece they had created. Bruce James treated the audience to some of his brilliantly acerbic poetry and demonstrated why he is published in magazines of the quality of *The Shop*. Alyson Torns read John Sheehy's poem from the Vale House workshop, while John himself accompanied her on the mouth organ. STL (herself a member of the Music Workshop team) regaled us with her speciality – small verses which inhabit the borderlands between this reality and some barely knowable 'other place' where Darkness can see itself, and the light is a kind of mysterious aphrodisiac. Jackie Primett was pressed into service, as was Cynthia Price, and, in both cases, rightly so. Without their contributions the event would have been diminished. Dave Chambers (like Alyson Torns and John Sheehy, a visitor from London) showed why TheFED is a literary force to be reckoned with. Bruce Chinnery celebrated his return to public performance by providing a magical backing guitar for the poetry of Paul Evans. Last but by no means least, our guest reader, prize-winning poet Sarah Wardle (published by Bloodaxe and formerly Poet-in-Residence at Tottenham Hotspur Football Club) brought the day to a close with poems of such gentle magnificence it is virtually impossible to do them justice in any words but their own.

And so a truly wonderful day came to a close. We cleared up, did a lot of hugging, said our farewells, and went home.

During the course of the day a number of people asked me if the Therapy Day is going to be an annual event. I was able only to say that I hope it will. Stevenage Survivors as a group also hopes it will. Dave Hobbs, of Mid-Herts MIND, who dropped in at lunch-time to "have a look" and was so impressed he stayed until the end and in fact manned the door so the rest of us could attend the Celebratory Reading, declared that it must become an annual event "because it is needed and brilliant." A truly wonderful endorsement.

Thanks are due to a whole range of people. To Tony Carswell, Director of Mid-Herts MIND for agreeing to our use of the Well-Being Centre. To Mark Mills, manager of the Centre, for preparing

the gym for our use. To all the facilitators – Rosie Berry, Dave Pack, Andy Smith, Rhonda Challis, Paul Evans, Cynthia Price, Matt Blaschke-Templeman, Lucia Birch, and Geoff Dilley. To Jackie Primett, Lucia, STL, and Susan Kennedy for the wonderful dishes they prepared. To Jackie and Lucia for organizing the catering. To Paul Evans for all the hard work he did during, and prior to, the event. To Cynthia Price, Sarah Smith, and Bruce James, for manning the door. To Dave Hobbs of MIND, for his very practical support, including the report he wrote for me, and the feedback sheet he encouraged participants to put their comments on as they were leaving. To our guest reader, Sarah Wardle, who came all the way from London to take part. To all the participants, without whom none of it would have had any relevance. And, of course, to the Hertfordshire Community Foundation, whose funding made it all possible. Thank you.

Footnote:  
TheFED is a national network of creative writers and community publishers, dedicated, as is Stevenage Survivors, to the use of writing to help the disadvantaged.

if you want to help poets suffering from mental distress get published and perform their work, the best way you can help is to make a donation

Reviews from *Dave Russell*  
Update from *Simon Jenner*  
Outreach from *Roy Birch*

BROADSHEET

get  
INVOLVED?

If you wish to find out more about Survivors' Poetry you can get in touch either by email, post or telephone

## Leeds Survivors

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

## Bristol Survivors

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

## Manchester Survivors

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

Contact Jackie Hagan  
email: jaclynhagan@hotmail.com

## GROW - east sussex

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

Contact: Ashley Jordon  
email: jordan72uk@gmail.com

## High Peak Writers

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

Contact: Louise Glasscoe  
email: glasscoe@tiscali.co.uk

## Stevenage Survivors

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

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

## The Poetry Cafe

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

Dates	Features
8th July	TBC
No event in August	
9th September	TBC
14th October	TBC

Dave Russell & Raz feature on a regular basis

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

## North London Survivors every fourth Thursday night of each month



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

Dates	Features
24th June	TBC
22nd July	TBC
No event in August	
23rd Sept	TBC

Contact: XOCHITL TUCK  
email: xmtuck@hotmail.com

Tel: 07796 831 935

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



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

If you've found insight and understanding of survivors within these pages, please tell us about it, as we want to hear your views.

IF you are online there are two reports that you may find of interest (in pdf).

- 1. New government report on *Attitudes to Mental Illness*: Click here to download.
- 2. Poems in the Waiting Room - Summary of Research into *Poetry in Health*. Click here to download.

**DONATIONS:**

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if you wish to

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

Survivors' Poetry  
Studio 11 Bickerton House  
25-27 Bickerton Road  
London N19 5JT  
Tel: 020 7281 4654  
[www.survivorspoetry.com](http://www.survivorspoetry.com)

Call for volunteers to help with promoting Survivors' Poetry.

Please contact:  
[blanche@survivorspoetry.org.uk](mailto:blanche@survivorspoetry.org.uk)

CALL FOR VOLUNTEERS

*SP is still interested to hear from survivors wishing to take part in developing our a new website. Deadline for response is 10th July, 2010.*

**Expenses only**  
**email [blanche@survivorspoetry.org.uk](mailto:blanche@survivorspoetry.org.uk)**

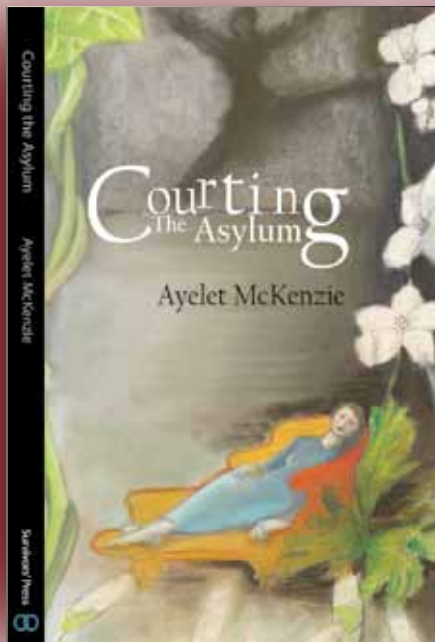
SP is looking for help from an academic with experience of translating from Spanish to English. If you have the time to help us please email Dave Russell for further information:

[dave@survivorspoetry.org.uk](mailto:dave@survivorspoetry.org.uk)

Survivors' Poetry is looking for new trustees to get involved. If you have 4 hours a week and have an understanding of the NHS Mental Health sector we would be very interested to hear from you.



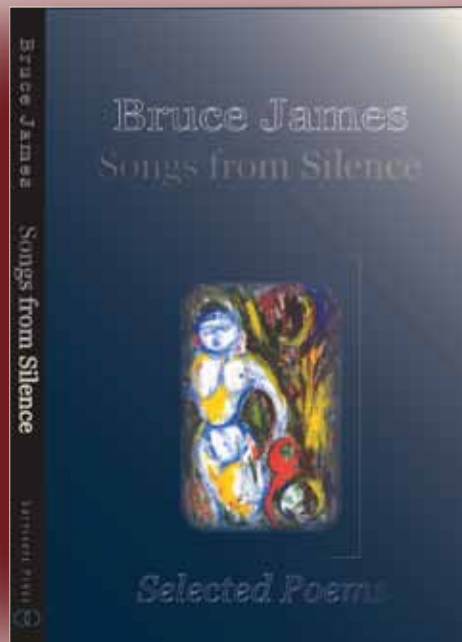
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Ayelet McKenzie (Nee Taylor)

Ayelet as born in Israel on a Kibbutz in January 1957. She came to England as a baby and was brought up in Leeds. When she was 29 she moved to Barrow-in-Furness her present home, where she had her first collection of poetry published (*The Patient is Disappointing*) by Tide Fall Press, in 1999. In 2007, she had a chapbook published (*Waiting for an Angel*) by Selkirk Lapwing Press. Over the years she has had six major breakdowns and hospital admissions and has been diagnosed as suffering from depression and schizophrenia. Ayelet is a 'born again Christian' and belongs to two local writing groups. She is currently having therapy with a psychologist and has a lot of hope for the future.

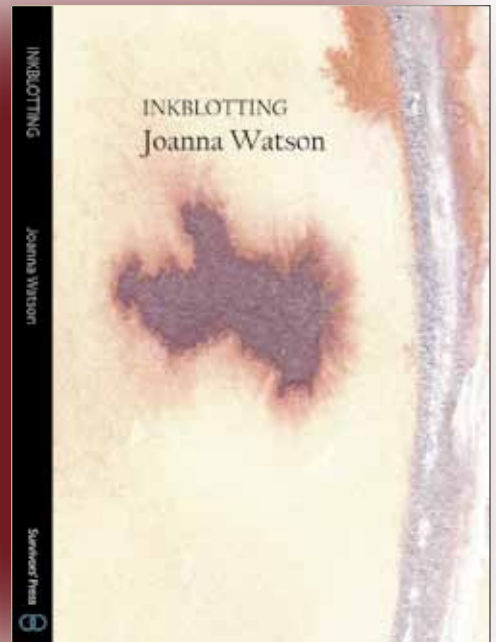
Ayelet McKenzie - was mentored by poet Akin Oladimeji as part of the 2008-2009 Mentoring Scheme Series.



Bruce James

Bruce John James was born in Pembroke Dock in 1939, and grew up there. Following a period of service in the R.A.F. as a senior instructor, he worked in technical authorship and technical journalism. An addiction to Diazepam, which critically injured his faculties, forced him to give up technical writing. It was at this point in his life that he began writing poetry and songs. He also began to draw cartoons and paint canvasses. Following detoxification in the 1990s, Bruce set up a number of community resource centres for the mentally ill, and campaigned for a greater realization of global warming, and greater funding for the third world, the psychiatrically disabled, and other marginal-status groups. Bruce James has written over 3500 poems and painted 250 pastels and acrylics, and created a substantial number of cartoon line drawings. He has been published in *Iota*, *Orbis*, *Ore*, *Seam*, *Scintilla*, *Staple*, *The Shop*, *T.O.P.S.*, *The Haiku Quarterly*, various spiritual and countryside magazines, and in a variety of anthologies.

Bruce James was mentored by poet Roy Birch as part of the 2007-2008 Mentoring Scheme Series.



Joanna Watson

In this ambitious book Joanna Watson draws on an extraordinary range of subject matter: an impression of a hospital doctor's weekend on call, caring for a severely disabled son, experiences in Romania before and after the revolution, an attack on women in a village which ends in rape, bulimia, the illness of the world. She approaches painful situations head on and there is a high emotional charge in her poetry. However, it is tempered with light touches and the writing is controlled. Considerable attention is paid to form. Always central, and very moving, is an empathy with people, their suffering— the human condition.

#### Myra Schneider

Dr. Joanna Watson was mentored by poet Naomi Foyle, as part of the 2008-2009 Mentoring Scheme Series.

### Mentoring Scheme

Pamphlets by Survivors' Poetry

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### Mentoring Scheme 2010 Publications

#### Volumes - £10.00 + £2.00 p&p:

Ayelet McKenzie - "*Courting the Asylum*" edited by Akin Oladimeji

Bruce James - "*Songs from Silence*" edited by Roy Birch

Joanna Watson - "*Inkblotting*" edited by Naomi Foyle

#### Pamphlets - £5.00 + £2.00 p&p:

Girija Shettar - "*This year, daffodils*" edited by Diana Webb

Helen Hudspith - "*Sleeping with the Snow Queen*" edited by Maggie Sullivan

Mala Mason - "*The Coming of the Rains*" edited by Bernadette Cremin

Lydia Hill - "*Fishing for Potatoes*" edited by Peter Carpenter

Sean Burn - "*People are their own Dreams*" edited by Simon Jenner

Available at [http://www.survivorspoetry.com/SP\\_Shop/](http://www.survivorspoetry.com/SP_Shop/)