

Poetry *Express*

Autumn 2010

Issue 33

Success up North - SP Book Launches; Roy Birch

Simon Jenner's editorial on the State of the Arts

Tribute to Amita Patel 1957 - 2010

Dave Russell - Featured Artist including a piece by Veronique Walsh

Much more: bumper Broadsheet, editorials and reviews...



Editorial

Dave Russell

After a struggle, PEN 33 has come to fruition. This continues to attract a wide readership - downloads approaching 6,500. Progress continues on the development of the website, which should give Survivors national - even global - Outreach.

Currently, we are materially secure, but we cannot expect this to continue into the indefinite future. Under the new government, substantial arts funding cuts are envisaged. This is a call to Survivors to remember its past struggles, often unsupported, and to persevere with its endeavours. It is also a call for the funding bodies to be thoroughly lobbied, as arts organizations are fundamental to the basic quality of life, and can, if judiciously handled, be profitable - including contributing to exported culture. It is vital that all those who participate in and attend survivors, should be vocal as beneficiaries. (See Simon Jenner's editorial). Similarly, relevant governmental bodies should be constantly reminded of the significance of Mental Distress in society as a whole. This must link with publications, one outstanding example being John O'Donoghue's *Sectioned: A Life Interrupted*, MIND's Book of the Year, which received wide media recognition.

Blanche Donnery's graphic imagination has been hard at work enhancing the Newsletter's appearance - those great, embossed fonts - with shading: a positively three-dimensional effect. I am also most flattered that so much in my honour has been included in this issue - articles, artwork, recording links; special thanks to Blanche, and to Veronique Walsh for their invaluable assistance here.

Monthly events at the Poetry Cafe continue to draw capacity audiences. Among artists featured have been Heartsong, poet Jessica Lawrence, whose collection *Dreams of Flight* has recently been published, (see review in our next issue.) The Sibylline Sisters (Sybil Madrigal, Armored Weston and Kay Grant) - a totally rivetting and provocative performance - never a dull moment from beginning to end, exquisite blend of provocation and highly-evolved vocal art.

At Tottenham Chances: Recent featured artists include: Liquorice Fish (Dylan Bates - keyboard, Julie Kjaer sax & flute): great jazz feeling; Nigel Burch - George Formby has been effectively transplanted into the 21st century with unfailing guts and substance; Ian McLachlan, John Hegley; wild improvisations from Hugh Metcalf, organiser of Klinker's, one of London's foremost spoken word, acoustic music free form jazz and experimental film venues; a highly spirited and supremely eclectic performance by accordion supremo Matt Scott; Contemporary music trio Speaker Sleeper with the angular, Bartok-esque cello of Polly Banham; Glamorous madcap comic Fran Isherwood: "A wry, awry word-playful gallop through the vagaries of life encountering mail-stealing snails, lollipop ladies, Glam Rock, insomnia and macabre part-time jobs en route" (MySpace); Kath Tait:

her musical inventiveness goes on and on; the cutting edge of her mordant irony remains unblunted; Frank Charlton and Acoustic Clampdown

Such star-studded line-ups deserve capacity audiences. In terms of the quality of performance, this sustains the potential to become a major venue; It continues the heroic struggle with the difficulty of its location, which on my last visit had paid up with the arrival of many new local faces.

A stalwart of both venues is Jazzman John Clark: his feelings about his own work could be a manifesto for Survivors:

"My poetry amounts to the sum total of my inspiration. I do try to approach what I write, however, from a host of different angles, the way, perhaps, some artists employ certain colours, shapes, textures or spaces. Currently, I draw enormous inspiration from the intimate juxtaposition of the multi-arts approach. Traditional routes tend to bore me rigid - I want to plough my own furrow, take chances, try to be different without being overly contrived . . . for me inspiration can drop out of the sky and I find the source is infinite . . . I think the poetry market in London (and elsewhere throughout the British Isles) is definitely expanding, with a real plethora of venues hosting tremendous events almost every night of the week. Many music venues are also widening their scope to incorporate poetry and the spoken word; I like to feel that I've been in the vanguard as I certainly recognised the vast potential around a decade ago."

Pending projects include the posthumous release of P J Fahy's material. Masses of other material is in the archives. Survivors showed some more of its outreach potential by facilitating a reading by Ayelet Mackenzie at Waterstone's, Barrow-in-Furness, featured in Roy Birch's Outreach. May there be many more like this in the future!

Survivors' Poetry are dedicating this issue to Amita Patel, RIP.

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

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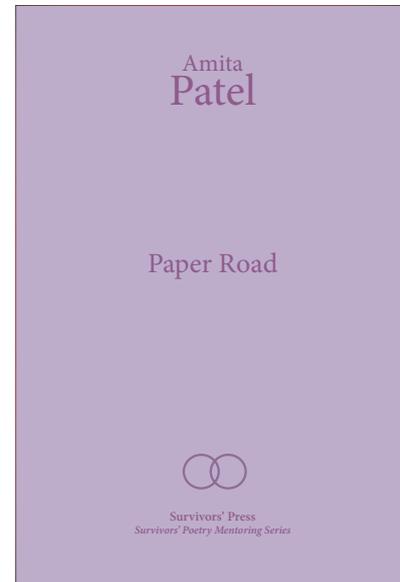
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Tribute to Amita Patel



A Tragic Loss

Amita Patel (died 15.7.10)

I first came to know Amita through her poetry. Survivors' Poetry run an innovative and much needed Survivors' Poetry National Mentoring Scheme, sponsored by the Esmée Fairbairn Foundation. This scheme facilitates first publications, in pamphlet form, for poets who have experienced Mental Distress, and are unfamiliar with the routines of publishing. Many of these attend the Poetry Workshop sessions held monthly at Swiss Cottage Library, where Amita was a key facilitator. Each poet chosen has a mentor, who assists with selection and editing.

Alan Morrison, who was co-ordinating the scheme at its inception in 2006 had the task of selecting the mentees and then matching them up with possible volunteer mentors. He suggested me as a mentor for Amita, saying: "She's a talented poet and, with your shared Indian background, she will respond well to your guidance. You will be an ideal mentor for her." I did not have to commit myself until I had read a sample of her poetry - but the honesty, immediacy and originality that I read there had me hooked straightaway. Amita Patel became the first survivor poet that I mentored - through regular correspondence in a long-distance relationship: she lived in London and I in Sheffield, and for much of the time I was working as a Writer in Residence in York. Over a period of more than two years there were occasional gaps in correspondence, some of them quite long, as Amita went in and out of hospital.

I was to help Amita to assemble a poetry collection that Survivors Press eventually published in 2007 as part of a series of debut pamphlets by Survivor Poets. She was happy to take suggestions and to work at her poems, drafting and redrafting them. She took pains to consider each word in her poems. But Amita would send me more than poems - there were photocopies of prose articles she had written, thank-you letters in which she revealed a little about herself, even the occasional Diwali card. Some of her articles and poems have been published in Lambeth Mind's magazine, to whose editorial team she actively contributed. She found great comfort in the act of writing - and she had important things to say. Her prose articles were often brave attempts to campaign to improve the lives of survivors. Amita valued her contact with Lambeth Mind and Survivors' Poetry, both survivor-run organisations.

Amita was a great activist, assisting on Lambeth Mind's helpline and later becoming a 'hands-on' trustee. In 2002/03 she was granted a student elective by The Wellcome Trust. She helped to set up and facilitate a Survivors' Poetry group and Hearing Voices support groups. Among her many leading roles, she supported the fight to stop the Amardeep Charitable Trust from closure. Her article about this unique culturally-specific community mental health service for Lambeth's South Asians can still be read at www.amardeep.org

When one of Amita's close friends, Yan Weaver from Lambeth Mind, and also Roy Birch from Survivors' Poetry, contacted me with the tragic news that Amita had taken her own life at Beachy Head, East Sussex, I felt that I must revisit her poems - very much needing to hear her warm and distinctive voice again. The poems in her pamphlet, Paper Road, glow for me and I am sure for many others. Her five-line poem, Groomed, now seems to anticipate a deadly fascination with sand and sea:

Update Simon Jenner

Last summer it seemed so different. The dusty trees outside weren't as dusty as this year's heat wave interspersed with showers. The weather was glorious; even now it's impressively late summer on the first day of autumn. In May 1997 one wag commented: 'Even the weather's better under New Labour.' I'd hesitate to say that now.

Ironically, we then anticipated funding might just come through in some of our bids. They did, spectacularly, in all of them: John Ellerman, Big Lottery, and ACE Sustain. Just as well. The last was to literally sustain some organisations who'd experienced a down-turn in funding from other sources through the recession. Now that the recession's 'over' it seems a holiday in comparison with the financial settlement on the arts. This affects the well-being of all survivors - or those sympathetic to them and the arts - who find there a solace, process, protest, creative affirmation and recognition other avenues don't offer. So hello, if you're reading this.

The politics affects all of us, at a crucial juncture where lobbying might just result in a better life. In July I spoke with ACE's Moira Sinclair (ACE CEO, London) and others, in meetings about what a 25-30% cut means. Their overall CEO Alan Davey argued for the arts not to be cut: they generate wealth. Government Culture minister Jeremy Hunt acknowledges that. Davey suggests we all in our Regularly Funded Organisations look to around a 10% cut in the next financial year. And after that? He's argued against government and DCMS visiting this blanket figure on the arts for obvious reasons. Little is saved and not only culture and lives would be devastated, but the very means of recovery. He asked that we all speak with a unified voice, and sent guidelines to articulate that end. I invite everyone interested to write to us, to make as strong a case as possible against cultural extinction. It might help us with ACE. They're on our side. But they might have to consider who matters most. It might not come this year, but it could come in the 2011-12 budget, since the standard three year funding plan was torn up for a four year one to 2015. Delivering a message to ACE itself would also be of inestimable value just now.

Culture Minister Ed Vaisey responded to Davey: 'We deeply support the arts and they have to take their burden of the cuts.' 'And...' That's like saying with Mrs T that you 'care deeply for the arts' and slash them. Vaisey isn't even going to fight our corner; nor Jeremy Hunt, Arts Minister. Vaisey, though, clearly hasn't even understood the funding criteria that Hunt acknowledged. It suggests the recession has allowed certain deep-seated prejudices and even gleeful vengeance a free rein, that better times would not.

Let's take a long view. We've heard much - not least from Davey - of the upswing in the arts since 1997 with funding the main reason. There are problems, pace Mrs Thatcher, that you can solve by throwing money at them (I take this from Michael Billington's book on theatre since 1945: *State of the Nation*, blisteringly good, applicable to all the arts trafficking with government and the times). Davey says '15 years of growth', suggesting inclusively that the Conservatives under Major 'got it' in the last years of their government too. It's more complicated and reminds us of the fragility and caprice of public spending. That day in May 1997 didn't bring instant benefit to the arts. The Blair-Brown Government not only stuck to the Conservatives fiscal model; they reduced ACE's budget, leading to angst and capital closure till 1999, when constraints were laid aside.

The magnificent Boyden Report of May 2000 then not only rubbished the ad hoc third way with its 'sticking plaster' approach, it pointed out these figures: Standstill funding leads to a 4% reduction in artistic activity; In contrast 10% increase in funding leads to a 26% rise, and a 25% one to a 57% rise in artistic activity. These figures have been augmented with even more optimistic ones since, quoted by the outgoing Arts Minister Ben Bradshaw. These May 2000 figures led though to the spectacular response two months later - and the success of the funding programme, when Chris Smith, then Labour Arts Minister, was finally able to party.

Time to clone the ACE envisionser and Economist John Maynard Keynes and replicate his brain-waves, like Joe 90, and pop them into the head of each cabinet minister. In fact all MPs. Keynes would suggest that spending our way out of a recession is the solution. In 1946, wholly bankrupted fighting for democracy, we could not 'afford' an NHS, and he knew it; he however persisted with Labour government colleagues, arguing here and abroad for loans. It takes courage, leadership, striking through the impossible. Keynes died of a heart-attack in 1946 through overwork and arguing the case with the obdurate U. S. Senate; others consummated his arguments. On current form we'd surrender if invaded, to balance the books. It seems we can more afford gestures abroad than generosity at home.

There's been petitions from artists and a copy of Turner's *The Fighting Temeraire* with the old ship cut out, 25% of the canvas slashed. It's a copy by Turner Prize-winning Mark Wallinger. *Temeraire* means reckless, and the vessel, a Trafalgar warship towed off to be scrapped as a wreck in 1838, is missing from the copy, 'wreckless' as Wallinger put it. It's a spectacular visual corollary, literally cutting the heart out of the arts, the most profitable recession-proof area of the economy, quite apart from its own efficacy.

Over August a Government committee invited me as an RFO representative to participate in a survey of 3,000 words on what cuts would mean for the arts in a set of directed questions. I took full opportunity to give a measured, constructive response as well as letting the mask of opinion slip a little. Wintry smiles are no doubt crossing this not-for-Quango quango as you read this. In truth this committee is doing its best to present a cast-iron case to a government with policies gear-shifting to a 1980s rust-graunch. The response will be available soon in some guise or mercilessly included in PE34 when the editor is looking for landfill.

As Davey reminds us: to cut the arts means cutting the wealth generators that will get us out of debt; hence slowing down that very process. Those public-spirited millionaires Mr Cameron, Mr Clegg, and Mr Osborne, could decide to waive their own salaries and charge the new revised expenses only? Other MPs can't and this could be a ring-fenced gesture. It takes leadership and courage.

II

More booklets and books are being launched and I'd like to take the opportunity to thank Blanche Donnery, Roy Birch and Dave Russell, and board-members like Phil Ruthen, for their persistent creative vision, producing so much in distracted times. We are in a briefly privileged position of being able to meet obligations and targets. Look at the books advertised. These are jacket-bound books, design award quality and recession-proofed at £8. The latest to be featured is Sean Burn's *People are their own dreams*. Helen Hudspith's *Sleeping with the Snow Queen*, is out. Lydia Hill's *Fishing for Potatoes*, Mala Mason's *The Coming of the Rains*. Girija Shettar's *This year, daffodils*, are at the printer's. Venetia Tompkins's volume is imminent. Other books, like David Kessel's *O the Windows of the Bookshop Must be Broken* (2007), has undergone a fifth reprint. In fact a bookshop, Housman's of Caledonian Road, King's Cross, has taken on a few despite the title's exhortation. Some others declined for understandably superstitious reasons.

Poetry Express has received more downloads than ever: well over 6,300. The artwork is dazzling. The reach of our designer and the rainbow palate she's achieved has produced stunning effects, like silver skin gradations and new reading tools. This speaks for itself but it's worth recalling how fine this magazine is, in comparison with many periodicals. We're more dazzling and inventive than just about any other comparable magazine I can think of.

III

We've had disquieting reports of Disability benefits targeting everyone in a scale of eight. The points calibrate in terms of physical, not other disabilities. Since depression kills more than heart disease, it might be that due to current stress, perhaps mental distress, members of this government have themselves forgotten mental health issues exist outside their sphere. The human, indeed financial cost of marching distressed people through punishing hoops is incalculable: Work Will Make You Free. Our rulers being in denial of mental distress is a curious, touching thought. Remember that quip reported in the Guardian? 'No-one' said a woman aide at No. 10, 'can get through the day unless they're at least half-pissed.' And that was in happier times. We need examples of this so a specialist advocate can best use the information and write a relevant article for SP and the wider community. As I've mentioned elsewhere, the cost of cutting mental health facilities in itself has already claimed our own mentored poet, the gifted Amita Patel.

IV

Alastair Campbell would have none of any denial when he was in government. He has spoken up eloquently for mental distress, himself a sufferer. He also judged MIND's Book of the Year, in company with Blake Morrison and the Chair, Michelle Roberts. Their chose our own ex-Chair, John O'Donoghue, whose *Sectioned* (Murray, 2009) was so favourably reviewed last year and serialised in - unexpectedly but positively - the Daily Mail. One reviewer in the more expected place, the *Guardian*, was Blake Morrison. Clearly the book in a year of life has proved itself a contemporary classic of charcoal black humour, shivering irony, plangent, graphic suffering, laced with a caustic but scouring documentary relevance, and renewal. After all, where else could you read of the best menus in each of the bins John was incarcerated in? Or what sexual joke to make as you're being put out with anaesthetic? That we should be able to trumpet our relevance at a time like this is cause for celebration. John attempted a great deal for SP in his years as Chair. He achieved much that is forgotten: was a fine talent-spotter, ambitious for our remit, and spent far too much of himself in our service. He deserves homage and he proves our case.

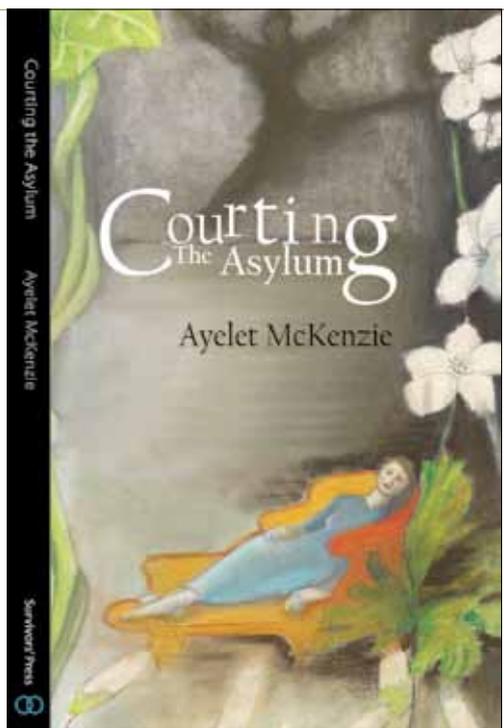
Simon Jenner, Bastille Day, July 14th-September 21st 2010

Simon Jenner appeared as Poet in the City in June (St Bride's Pessoa Portuguese Event) and July (Keats House) 2010. His latest volume, Pessoa, is out with Perdika reviewed by Andrew Taylor in The Journal and Alan Morrison in The Recusant. About Bloody Time (Waterloo) has just been reviewed in PN Review 193, by James Keery and Tears in the Fence 51 by David Pollard.

Outreach Roy Birch

Since disinvestment (I almost put dissolution) Outreach and Mentoring have been virtually as one. Recently, there have been two book launches, both outside London and one indeed a double, and it can genuinely be claimed that as far as these events are concerned, Outreach and Mentoring have dovetailed in a manner which has made the two indistinguishable from one another. This report will focus largely on those two events.

Beyond Morecombe Bay



The launch of Ayelet McKenzie's volume *Courting the Asylum* took place at Waterstones Books in Barrow-in-Furness on Wednesday, August 4th. I was there. This is my story.

I leave Stevenage by the 7.56 to Leeds. Crossing the flatlands on a day heavy with cloud and the threat of rain. Passing through towns I have never visited (except as Energy in the buff). Clouds hanging low, like downward-reaching smoke. From a tall ladder they could be touched. In places they actually brush the ground, writhing through corn-stubble at some speed. There is a new tone to the year. Autumn is here, in spirit if not actuality.

Passing lakes dappled with rain. A few ducks. Fishermen in little tents. On a nearby road hurrying vehicles kick up a considerable spray. Power lines, Cooling Towers, the rape of reason. Understanding is worth more than gold. We can keep each other warm, but who repairs the sky when it is broken?

Going North in the rain. Tasting the stereotype. I like it. It tastes of Life. It tastes of Truth.

Near Wakefield, coffee from the trolley. Strong, dark, bitter. Disorients me, but I need a hot drink, and I swore years ago that I would never again drink British Rail tea. Strange how complexes become traditions.

Wakefield is big. We slow past the Caesar's Ceramics Showroom (which I hope is more impressive internally) and come to a halt at Wakefield Westgate. The rain is heavy now, with a determined air about it. This is rain with a serious lineage.

Pulling out of Wakefield Westgate. Blocks of flats like badly-built storage containers. Beautiful allotments, retirement bungalows, lots of leaf. Beyond Outwood, the myth of countryside. Then a tunnel. Three versions of each of us. Then countryside. For a moment. Then the outskirts of Leeds. An old red telephone box. My Ranthia hugs itself nearly to death.

On the approach to Leeds station, a man-made wasteland. Ugly, yet not. Something mildly psychedelic about it. Could almost be the outskirts of 'The Zone.'

The 10.19 to Morecombe (stopping at Carnforth, my second and final change) is a small train. Not Thomas the Tank Engine small, but cute.

We pull out past a nearly-full, weed-strewn Car-Park next to a large, new-looking and completely empty office block. Social dichotomies can be found anywhere we care to look. The further north we go the thicker they gather.

Ticket Inspector with a ready smile. But then, we are up north. Dry stone walls, an abundance of ferns. Woodland. A canal. Cows, sheep. A rabbit and a horse, nearly together.

This train stops a lot. Shipley, Bingley, Keighley, Skipton, Gargrave, Hellifield, Long Preston, Giggleswick (why? - nothing here looks in any way flippant), Clapham (not a bit like the one in South London), Bentham, Wennington (ugly station, surrounded by opulence. Not, I fancy, a place where the poor are welcome), then Carnforth.

Between Carnforth and Barrow, the landscape, which has been little more than mouth-wateringly lovely, suddenly becomes heart-stoppingly glorious. At Arnside and Grange-over-Sands especially, the temptation to alight from the train and spend the day talking to sheep on the seemingly never-ending sands of Morecombe Bay, is hard to resist. But resist I do (we southerners are made of stern stuff - actually, I'm a misplaced Midlander, but who cares) and soon I am close to my journey's end.

Jaded outskirts. Tired-looking houses. Large and very derelict factory. Flame from a distant Oil Refinery. People waving from the wall of a small reservoir. Allotments with plastic greenhouses. Barrow-in-Furness.

Barrow-in-Furness has the feel of a town that has been hurt more times than it cares to remember, but simply cannot bring itself to forget. Feels like you could fall off the end of the world here and no-one would ever know.

Find myself a B&B. The first one I happen upon has vacancies. So I take it. Very basic, run by a Chinese lady whose English is of the same order. But it provides me with what I need - a shower, a comfortable bed, and a meal. The price too is basic. I wouldn't stay there again by choice, but for one night it's OK.

Having settled in, showered, and changed, I deliver books to Waterstones ahead of the Launch and give the rest of the afternoon to a tour of the local flesh-pots. I am sure there are places of excitement in Barrow, but if so they are well camouflaged. The town centre is definitely not exciting. I eat in a friendly chippie on the cusp of the run-down and the boarded-up, then wander back toward the town's commercial hub - and meet my second Chinese lady of the afternoon, Doctor Choi, proprietress of Herbstone, the local Chinese Medical Centre, who, having failed to shame me into accepting a consultation, diagnoses me on the spot (and on the street), as being in need of Acupuncture as I have a problem with my neck and lower back. Which I do.

I escape without committing myself, but, at the end of the street, inspired by her massively intuitive understanding, by the fact that the Acupuncture Foot Map in the Herbstone window is built on the basic Reflexology Foot Map (I am a lapsed Reflexologist), and finally by the feeling that such encounters happen for a reason, I retrace my steps and book a treatment for 9.30 the following morning. And what a treatment it turned out to be! I advise anyone in Barrow-in-Furness who has a health problem, to visit Doctor Choi.

A few minutes later I head for Waterstones and the Book Launch.

The launch is magnificent. I arrive at Waterstones at 6.15, some two minutes after Ayelet. It is our first meeting. She is nervous. We talk. She calms. I would like to take full credit for that, but I think the larger contribution comes from Louise, the events organizer, and her assistant, Kerry, who are young, bubbly, and super-efficient, all of which impresses Ayelet with a sense that all is well and will remain so. Which it is and it does.

Shortly after 6.30 the audience begins to filter in. First among them is Ayelet's brother, Adam, who has come up from London. He lives in Wood Green.

By 7pm the place is full. Health and Safety regulations decree that as there are only two staff members on duty, only 30 people are allowed to participate. Well, approximately. Thirty-two seats have been put out. All thirty-two are occupied, with people standing at the back of the room. Waterstones had ordered 30 copies of the book, and I have brought 5 more with me, just in case. Two of the audience already have copies (Ayelet's brother and her ex-husband) and 33 copies are sold. I also brought 40 copies of the Survivors Poetry Brochure with me and part with all of them. Also 30 celebratory bookmarks. I think 35 people are in attendance. Louise tells me 20 were unable to obtain tickets.

Louise opens proceedings with a short introduction then passes the baton to me. I say a few words about SP and the mentoring scheme, then introduce Ayelet, who says a little about herself for the benefit of a group of people who know her considerably better than I do. Then she reads 5 poems from the book. During our telephone conversations she had threatened to be too nervous to function adequately, but, in the event, she is superb. Her poems are well chosen, and she reads them with an easy assurance and at a perfect pace. Then we have a 'Comfort Break' to allow people to use the toilet and/or top up their wine glasses. Using the toilet at Waterstones is something of an art form, as there is a security lock and an alarm which trips easily. Ayelet had tripped it prior to the event, and someone trips it during the break, which, of course, provides a talking point and a source of merriment.

The second half opens with readings from the volume by two of Ayelet's friends, Kim Moore and Jennifer Copley, and her ex-husband, Gordon. Ayelet herself then reads again to complete that part of the event. The remainder of the evening consists of Ayelet signing copies of the book while the rest of us mingle. Louise and Kerry work quietly, efficiently, and with effervescent energy (in spite of having already been in situ for nearly 12 hours). Louise tells me that *Courting the Asylum* will replace Dan Brown as next week's best-seller at the store. Later she sends me an e-mail confirming it is so. Not bad. A local poet ousting the author of the *Da Vinci Code*. No matter how briefly.

A wonderful evening. Fine poetry, well read, in a warm and affectionate atmosphere, at a superbly organized event - so well organised in fact that it almost appeared to run itself. For which enormous thanks are due to Louise and Kerry. Their efficiency, exuberance, and sheer friendliness alone, would have made the journey from Stevenage worthwhile. Add to that a book launch as good as any I have been part of and it becomes obvious that here was an event worthy of itself in ways that all too many are not. A truly heart-warming experience. Add to that my encounter with the Chinese doctor and it becomes fair to say that if I ever have to fall off the end of the world, well, Barrow-in-Furness is as good a location as any.

I have invited Louise to contribute an article about her work to *Poetry Express*, SP's on-line magazine, and have also invited Kerry, who is a quite superb illustrator, to be the featured artist for the same issue. As for Ayelet, I hope the publication of *Courting the Asylum* will spur her on to even greater literary achievements. My thanks to all who made the launch so memorable. I would love to return.

Notes: In Light Body meditation, the Ranthia is an energy centre located very near to the Heart Chakra. It awakens us to a heightened awareness of our capacity for both personal and compassionate love.

In the film 'Stalker', The Zone is the mysterious area, created by long-departed aliens, whose landscape is blessed (or cursed) with its own sense of logic and manipulative intelligence.

Double Launch at David's Bookshop

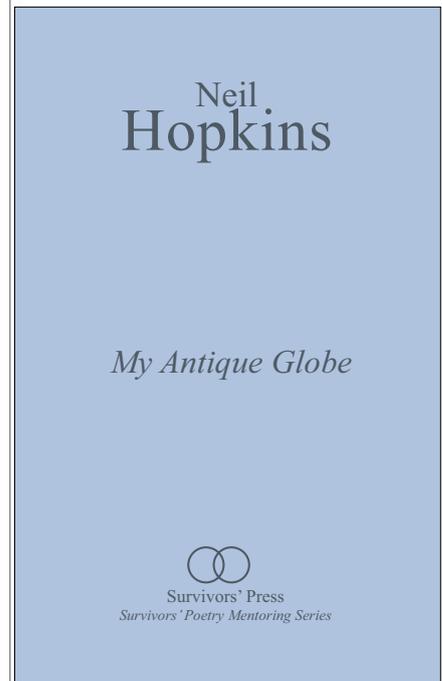
Rainy night in Letchworth. Temporarily trapped in the One-Way system. Luckily Andy is wise in the ways of *The Maze* and extricates us. Andy is Andy Smith, a member of Stevenage Survivors and the means of my early arrival at the venue to help set up. Andy knows the way. Even parks us across from David's. The Bookshop is welcoming, bright lights and open doors. We cross the street quickly, enter the shop, and locate Paul, the new owner (who was once the manager). A table has been set with drink and nibbles near where the launch will take place. Chairs are stacked ready to be decanted. Tonight is Book Launch night. Bruce James and Neil Hopkins, both members of Stevenage Survivors and my own personal mentees, are having their poetry launched as part of the Survivors Poetry Mentoring Scheme.

We move greetings cards from a heavy table. Then move the table itself. Then decant the chairs. The room begins to look more like a venue. Books are laid out in readiness and a measure of hope. The audience begins to trickle in. No sign of the principals.

19.31. Neil has arrived. Still no sign of Bruce.

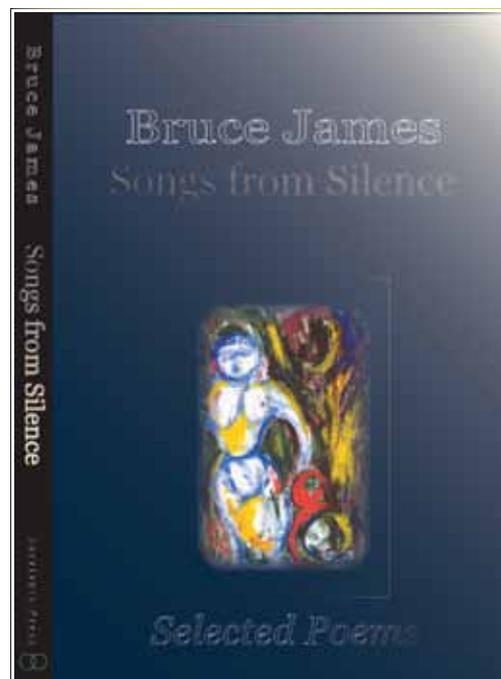
19.35. Bruce arrives. More audience arrives. We decant more chairs. Much animated chatter. Time to begin. By now we are thirty, which enables us to unfurl our collective sense of superiority. The average for a reading at David's is twelve.

I say a few words about the mentoring scheme then hand over to Bruce, who says a lot of words about himself then reads from his volume *Songs from Silence*. Bruce is seventy-one years of age and suffering from terminal lung cancer, which he is attempting to pre-empt by smoking himself to death first. I have been nervous about his contribution but I need not have concerned myself. He reads well, in spite of his vocal difficulties, and his work is appreciated. As it should be. He is a superb poet who has been widely published in British and Irish poetry magazines. All his work has ever lacked is a publisher to take it as seriously as it deserves. Thank you Survivors Press.



We then have a break, during which people network, use the toilet, and imbibe legal drugs. Then we resume.

Andy starts the second half of the programme by reading four of Bruce's poems, and then it is Neil's turn. Bruce James is a modern metaphysical poet, his metaphysics rich, colourful, and warmly atmospheric, with God never more than a half-rhyme below the surface of whatever is being said. Neil Hopkins writes short, spare poems which speak of the small, the close-up, and the everyday; the divinity of the mundane, the secret magic of the commonplace. His long-awaited pamphlet *My Antique Globe*, is a small and highly polished gem, as clipped and unsentimental in tone as *Songs from Silence* is romantic and effusive. Continued on page 46



● featured *Artist*

D a v e R u s s e l l

Power Kernels

Break down the elements, split them
To non-existence;
Then shatter all solidity's illusions,
Free impulses
Beyond the viscous mind, still feeling hard
By vanity's gas upholstered.

And then, for happiness's definition,
Shut the door;
Relax, and don't be squeamish;
For every grit of teeth, a pull of trigger,
A sear, a cloud . . .

Then, if the bacillus, the charge
Breaks through even your filter-screen,
Then paper barrier that defines
Your victims and yourselves . . .

And you, amoebae, become specimens
Now that your brainchild ogres
Have outstepped the frames of will;

Oh super-brains! Limp, flapping squids;
Now that you've burst your cranial canisters,
Now that you've blundered on the combination
To open up the vault
Wherein you case your muffled
Conscience-bleats
to soothing, doped oblivion;

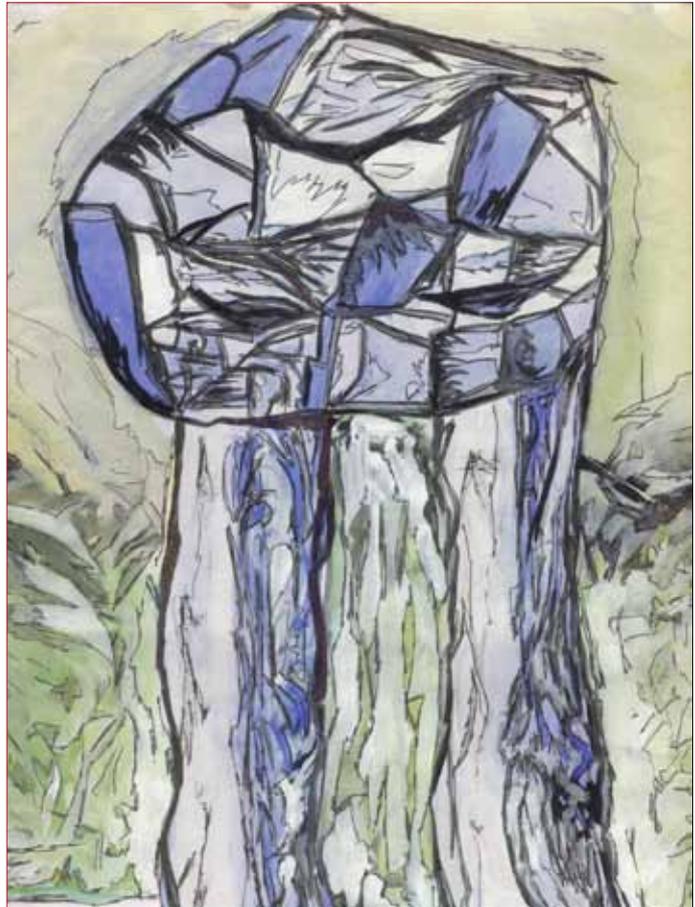
Did you first conquer all remorse, all fear,
Destroy all that might have the power to save?

And will you now be laid low, by yourselves,
Even denied all retribution's flames,
All instantaneous dignity?

Oh ones still solid, cynicism's crust
Thickens and stifles, yet absorbs,
Driving life's final spark to desperation;
No scope to flash
Without full-voiding all outside itself.

Oh loosen now your halters,
Clean growth, no fission-cancers,
Live now; be novae

Dave Russell



Dave Russell (b. 1940) Singer-Songwriter, Poet, Writer:

'We live in a Triplicate World'

As I finish writing the title to this essay, the phone rings. It's Dave he wants to come round later.

I explain that I have just started to write about him. It would be unkind to put him off after all that he has contributed plus he has some tenacious fans who envy my relationship with him. I am in a privileged position and my fieldwork has taken me beyond the values of modern urban rudeness fending off answering machine messages and speaking in text sentences. Biographical fieldwork can result in close communication and a deep friendship. The theory of fieldwork can in part prepare one for the experience and yet each experience will be different according to the type of relationship one engages in. Furthermore fieldwork operates on several simultaneous levels of awareness and discovery this is why I quoted one of Dave's songs in my title 'We live in a Triplicate World'.

continued on page 23

BROADSHEET

Almost poetic

City lights shinning
bright and dazzling
the hustle and bustle
of traffic and people
as they go about their business. Dusk descends and umbrellas disappear.
The glare is unrepentant. The reflections from the lights on the wet road
surface are almost poetic

Mandy Ducksbury

Who do you think you are?

I am me but not me. I would like to know who I am and am desperate to know... I have not had a pleasant life, many ups and downs. My father and mother did their best. I was a very lonely child, didn't make friends too easy. I have not wanted to be me. I always seemed to be looking after others, perhaps not wanting to. I lost myself a long time ago. Having children was not an easy thing. Have prayed for help and guidance but on-one seemed to hear me. Who am I? a person with no self worth. I want to be strong. I want to be loved for myself, even if I am nasty or unkind. I always think I have to put on a brave face, to do what others want. I am slowly getting there: to say what I want without feeling guilty. Who do you think you are? Me, me me, me

Maureen Bayliss

I love You

Do you miss me
when I go away?
I love you with
a deep passion
that only you and
I know. I miss you
when you are not here. I call your name
but you do not answer. Where are you?
Please come home.
I love you.

Mandy Ducksbury

Chopin

My father was very fond of
Chopin's Piano Sonata number 2.
I personally never understood the
technicalities of musical compositions
One thing I did know, it was no accident
that when I entered the house.
'The Funeral Sonata' would begin to play.
I think he was trying to inform me
in his subtle Yorkshireman way that
I should look for in alternative accommodation.
Or maybe he was trying to educate me
with the fine sensibilities of Chopin's
music.
I found out later in life that my brother
suffered from the same malady ---- except he
received
the special treatment:

Gustav Mahler's 6th Symphony

Henry Blake

An Elegy for My Father

It was a boring Saturday afternoon when my father died,
I'd been listening to Buddy Holly on the radio and wasting my time,
Mucking about with a stanza or two and looking for a rhyme,
It was a boring Saturday afternoon the day my father died.

My mother had dementia and couldn't understand
That my father was dying and leaving her behind,
She thought he'd gone on a journey and she didn't really mind,
But she wanted him to come back to her and she didn't understand.

What really appals me is that no-one makes a noise,
Things happen that shake your heart but nobody beats a drum,
We do not even notice when the Angels of Darkness come,
And what really appals me is that no-one makes a noise.

Camus says 'each of us is born condemned to die' –
And I guess it certainly seems that way,
You fritter away your time on another boring day,
Measuring your life out with Buddy Holly tunes
Or pints of beer or even coffee spoons,
But I'm sick of all the philosophy and I want to cry.

John Thorkid Ellison

Insane
Knocking at my door
within the walls of my mind

Kane Eyles

Old Age and Freedom

Old Age and Freedom.
All of you people deserve my censure
If you don't respect people with dementia –
You'll be old yourself one day,
Your limbs will be weak and your hair will be grey,
Do you think it'll be fun to be locked away?
Deprived of any dignity,
Hidden away behind lock and key?
"I'm not gonna let them do that to ME!"
Says your angry voice,
But you'll have no choice,
You may be rich but there's no guarantee
That anyone will honour your liberty,
It's time you realised nobody's free
In this godforsaken society!!

John Thorkid Ellison

Handwritten text in purple ink on a white background. The text is arranged in several lines, some underlined. It reads: "YOU'RE WELCOME." (underlined), welcome home to your MIND. Seldom, Combed. or Seldom Kind. IS Life Good? or IS Life Bad? "you're welcome IN For your Jab!"

What's your nickname?

Trying hard to smudge the public's naive suspicion
working hard to lure them through your spite
I guess you could bluff your way through the gates of heaven
what's your nickname, I may be able to use it tonight.
No blunt tongue would dare hasten to argue
with a voice that knocks through human rights
even you corrode the patriot's selective memory.
What's your nickname, I may?

Anthony Moore

Slave – Cunto XLII (*Who's up for dairy queen?*)

There was no subordination servicing was active
the mast was rigged as I leapt from ridge to
ridge his pierced pistol holster held over the
king's well exactly where I was three years ago
with a member of the family in frieda-style and
don't tense the head the throat is the energy
the crimson cachets I take vacations from
think providing amusements for bachelor attache
there's a circuit board where his heart should be

Sex Slave – Cunto XLIII (*Miniluv*)

Rubicund bedlam because of the ram
coming in was sinking into the aircraft
as I landed on the ceiling her the spirit
becometh a lion opening manual change
will to pour over the direst mistress
giving one's hand to spank the phantom
swinging his crown jewels longing for
his over-fun-ness I'm assuming this is
a family piede in half boot formation
the middle is everywhere something warm
and living quickeneth me is the
preacher-on-the-mount there are no
skid marks as he shits in rose petals.

Sex Slave – Cunto XLI (*For John R.I.P*)

Boxed in and then out for sixty-seven
quits Castle philosophers in blank night
warmth hovers by bar rumba bearded memory of
ghost salutation loss of his oft tone
sing song ales me attentive brother lets go
as equinox chill sets in for your
cold throne and coronet the kindness
still radiates permeates and sets seal
on kinship of the sole survivors.

Manjit Dhillon

Eternal Bondage

We are, One.
Though trapped,
One in
Gilded chains
One in
Shackles of rust
You and I are
One –
Bound – we fear and
Fight the
Hate of, love of,
Either one.
Chains of silk,
Of blood, of genes,
Of grey matter,
Of infectious laughter-
Sane – insanity,
And of history.
Bound till
Death. My
Most intimate
And most foul
And most
Selfish
Kin.

Shah Wharton

R a i n

*The rain began ...
Oh, water of the first ancient thirst.
the grasslands are spacious and colourful
come, let us go there
to breathe free
I remain calm
the sun strengthens, lightens the faces
in our mountain dogs, pigeons, sparrows, kids
the way my friend was gazing at them
with so much affection and deepness.
He stnads in the light, cool and comfortable
with an instinctive kindness that cures!!
an now, here in the nature
after so much passions
I'm reborn brand - new
with all the old obsessions
improved, perfected!*

*There was a time that life existed in the songs
the city seems friendly
oblivion didn't come yet
actually we stopped expecting it!*

Yannis S. Anastasopoulos

Memory Plantations

I open the box and emptied myself of all that I
didn't need then planted the seed that sprouted the
leaves on my see through memory
I open the door to allow the grapes of wrath to
distance themselves from thee, sit down and tap at
the window of my jaded memory
To reach out and touch all the things that you seek
to believe
until your mind starts to ski on the slope of some
distant memory
I catch your eyes as you stand blinking in the snow
bushed by the blizzard in the trees
I hear you laughing through music awash and astray,
I betray the night drinking you from my memory
Some people never eat, some people never sleep, some
people never dream
Some people tarnish like silver stained with the varnish
of forget me not memory
It's as though other people bring about the end when you're out of
time, but that's not really true.
The echo's from another room linger on until the memory
declares a truce
The shapes and leaves and dying breeds, will alternate
their case on my memory

Anthony Moore

Jackson Dog

I am the jaxon dog, I fear no snails
I only hitch rides with hump back whales
I am the stick dog, I come from another age, when men were mere
stickmen and women all the rage.
I am the jaxon dog, I have no bow and arrow, I drink with Champagne
Charlie, eat charcoal in the snow.
I am the stickdog-I listen to the BBC I am no beast of burden, I
only take tea at three.
I am the jaxon dog, a pencil thin log, a sheet of glass, shining
thru the grass.
I am the stickdog, I wear a millenium tie, they'll be no hubble
bubble on the ghost train tonight.
I am the jaxon dog, I trot uppercrust past ivory cats through donkey
years,
I am the stickdog I trot on triggered toast and scroll, searching for
the hole in one.
I am the jaxon dog-I trill on a clarinet- while staying ten steps
ahead of the vet

Anthony Moore

Blood Letting

Aloof and lingering on a lost spot
Disaster cries.
The crime awaits for its no man,
For trouble tried and guilty got its way.
Saved, for a moment
By the soothing of a soft smile;
The blessed brought in trust to tease the tale.
But many miles of yawns, averted eyes
Then took their toll.
Time terrified a tension there within.
A grave suspense and hasty heaving;
Cut the blood and left it flowing
While the heart of stone sobbed silently its morbid cry.
Darkness took a heed when
Mountains moved revealing thunder.
More tasteful than the pain
It pierced the head
And all it said;
A blunt edge sucked the scribbled sacrifice.
The end of pressure pushing sustenance
To feed an awesome anger.
This guilty crime against the word
This guilty crime against the world,
Please Talk.

Terri McDonald

Undone

They come at me with a magnifying glass;
I am an ant scuttling between denial and anger.
Mea culpa, mea culpa

They lobotomise my brain
take out my heart
but they cannot unlove me.

I am stitched up in a white suit
in a white room
where the only release from the pulsing clock
is the howling of the hyenas outside
where the wind sweeps through the torn trees
and clouds shadow the moon.

There is blood in my mouth,
guilt rims my lips,
mea culp, mea culpa
ther words flood through my conscience
spill onto the soft white floor like a entrail.

Sometimes I think I amy crawl through the eye of a needle

Lousie Shirley

My Real Dad (Part One)

My real dad has got irritable bowel syndrome,
a digestive complaint, farting a lot...

He needs potty training,
trimming around the edges,
his sideburns larger than the hedges outside my
windows
he was offered some construction-type work
in Madagascar, but he didn't go –
there were natural harbours there
full of pink pigeons everywhere.

He decided to stay at home,
beneath an army of marching pylons in Barking,
where he lives now
driving the disabled in the community about,
negotiating roundabouts, the one-way-system,
from Safeway's to the A&E, and back
he's partial to banana milkshakes
and celery and onion soup,
buying a Rowenta kitchen blender,
carrying it around with him everywhere,
his exhaust spluttering, farting a tot...

Simon Robson

Bipolar Distress

Today I am so wonderful, so powerful am I?
If I step off this building, I know that I could fly
God blessed only me like this, with such astounding grace
Such mental agility, and such a pretty face!

Don't tell me that I'm suffering, I know you don't know me
I'm all you hope to understand, and all you hope to be!
Anything I want to have, I know they can be mine
All your fears of illness, are simply out of time!

Today I am so terrified, so weakened by my mind?
If I stepped off this building, my ending would be kind.
God forsaken specimen, so suicide's my goal
Feel my mental torture; the darkness in my soul!

Don't tell me that I'll 'be okay', I know you don't know me
I'm all you hope to understand, but never hope to be!
Everything I need to have, I know I cannot find.
All your talk of wellness, is simply not of mine.

Shah Wharton

Portents, Padua and The Chaos Theory

The ancients read portents in Nature
As scientists do today, to explain
 How Unseen Forces
 Hold man and beast
In sway; the 'fall of the sparrow',
The dance of the butterfly's wings,
 Predict Death or Deliverance
For all mankind; this is as true
 For yesterday as it is
 For Modern times:

In the University city of Padua,
Young men in doublets and hose,
 Drink Tuscan wine in tavernas,
Or discuss the local-born historian,
Livy, in clusters under the lamps.

The night is dusky, palpable and tremulous
As the dance of a moth's wings and maids peer
From behind Wooden shatters, a hiring for
 Romance and lute-strumming poets
To liberate them from their chaperones,
 Parents and arranged matches to
A stern-browed Guelph or Ghibbeline,
 From Florence.

A girl imagines being Beatrice as she
Pours over her Dante by candlewick.
The clock in the Piazza strikes 8.00 p.m.
A stone is heard crashing against the
 Window-pane. She drops her book
 And gathers her skirts, to hasten
To see a students on horseback below.

He blows her a kiss and
She tucks' her skirts in
Her bodice and climbs

In her study. On one side of the fan,
A jester weeps blood and a maid is
Shorn for a convent -- on the other
 Side of the fan, two lovers kiss.
In the nunnery she will pour
 Through her Dante once more
And tell her beads but love no more.

For Fate has painted this picture
 On her silk fan to record the
Shooting dead of a love-sick man,
Who dated to dream of higher things
 Than golden ducats and the
Scorching muzzle of a musket.

We must ask ourselves in these
Times of War and honour killings
Have we really progressed from today.
Medievalism to the life of today.

The girl weeps for her lover,
Her hair shorn, her eyes wild
Shaking the bars of the convent
Where the mad go who don't fit
In with this life, for life is pain,
And a young woman's heart
 Has beaten in vain.

The night is as hot as the lover's spilt blood
As a scorpion crawls around the corner
Of the doomed mansion and lizards scale
The marble steps, where a mother sits
 Lamenting the death of her son to
The sound of the bats squeaking as
 They circle above and the stoats'
Eyes glimmer like candles in a dark vault.

Was this all in the dance of a dusky moth's wings,
The chaos effect in the Nature of things?

Down the rope she has flung
From her casement to escape,

But a shot is fired through the
Thick night – the lover collapses
An angry father arrives on the
Scene to wrest the arms of the girl
From the rope. She screams,
One lamplit evening in Padua.

A crowd surrounds the lover,
Fallen from his steed, of
Merchants and their wives
In wimples, carrying lit
Bulrushes and screaming:
 "Murder!!".

But there is no redress
In the students' book of Law,
For the penniless who risk
Their lives for high-born daughters,
Destined for Duty, Rank and Display.

Crickets chirp in the surrounding fields
And carousing students stroll round
The piazza, shouting oaths and laughing
A few alleys away, ignorant of the
Tragedy that befell man and maid
 In Livy's town of Padua.

Blood and Beauty, Love and Duty
High tension, mounts in the home
Of the girl who dared to flout
The wishes of those whose Word is Law.

Her cheek is stinging from her Father's
Thick hand and her Mother shakes her
Finger, outraged and a life has been

Homes of Care

Lost in blood for beauty and love for duty,
The two faces of the fan she has dropped

Or is Chaos Theory dreamt up by a mad scientist
Of today and related in poetry by an April fool?

Fools are often wise
And wise are often fools
I leave you this dish of words
Over which to chew
And judge who wears
The Jester's cap,
You or me
Or a silly Prof.
In his lab,
With his frothing test tubes
And moonshine views
Who conned us all
With half-baked Truths!

Angela Morkos

Sharp claws
Pointed teeth
Purr

Kane Eyles

'Cell of a thousand men'

was in prison, a grim sentence,
blatantly exposed,
walls of hardened stone,
echoes of a thousand screams,
all time and time again, calling me.

I pleaded for some love, warmth and affection,
some love
but I was in a cell of a thousand men, condemned,
eyes peeping in at me, my nakedness.

As Wordsworth once said:
minds that have nothing to confer
find little to perceive
I was in a cell of a thousand men, done in.

Simon Robson

Those who dwell in homes of Care
In a distant realm,
Of some, quite unseen, despair,
For whom sadly, some,
Can find no end,
To their troubles and painful cares,
Who ones
Once said,
They flower and bloom!
But no,
No they do not. They sit.
Locked in a room,
Who, through a bottle of coke,
Or some precious tunes,
Ease their worries, And gently soothe;
That which bites And causes pain,
For whom, quite sadly,
Most days,
Stay quite the same;
And who must, surely attend,
Daily groups of different kinds,
Or the paid staff,
It will greatly offend;
To bitter anger and great distress,
For this is how to find order ,
in your mess;
But you see bitter ones,
The answer lies in reverse
For short tempers
and cold hearts,
Only make worse;
That distance which brings,
And through our society rings,
A wall of hate,
That through bricks of
Ignorance and closed doors, creates;
That which in schools, prisons,
Hospitals and churches hides
An answer of love
Which only can mend
Broken souls and broken minds
Which dark hearts did rent;
Those who are forgotten
By even their loved ones inside,
For which only the love of God can they lovingly call mine.

Michael Meader

The Chatham Bus Driver

From the Pentagon
to the Davis Estate ...

Walderslade, Weeds Wood ...

His routes are endlessly dismal
he failed at school to reach any of his true potential -
be left at fifteen, before Easter
the Chatham bus driver.

The bus controller keeps pestering him,
wanting him to do extra shift patterns, weekends -
he's got a bad back, all the holes in the roads, slack council contractors -
pity him, the Chatham bus driver.
He has a multitude of problems, swarming
his wife has a chronic throat infection, using an inhaler -
his son, Elvis, smells of linseed oil, illegal male hormones,
a body-builder
his next door neighbour who he used to go fishing with
for carp, fresh carp,
has brain damage, a cabbage, vegetable.

Borstal, Snodland Lakes ...

The Chatham bus driver
he spends ages outside off-licences,
arcades of shops, mostly shuttered,
school boys in leather box jackets, suede shoes
Asian women with bags full of wet laundry, saris,
baskets, umbrellas and gold ankle bracelets,
swopping places by the window, getting up and sitting down.

None with passes or the correct change
his wife makes him feel uncomfortable
when he undresses in front of her after a tiring day -
'Some secateurs for the roses' -
'Why's that the says -
'They need pruning,' she says.

He's been reported for a short-changing scam
that he wasn't aware of, being almost innumerate
accused of pocketing fares to finance his gambling affliction -
he has sensitive teeth, a white tongue
he smells of semen, horse-chestnuts,
drinking kegs of stale beer, rotting his guts,
eating pickled eggs and gherkins for breakfast.

Buckmoor Park, go-karts.

Simon Robson

Friends

"Had a rumour."
- rude to you
faces
Someone
"toll you."
- then distastes
Don't be
Paranoid!
Things work
out!
And you'll
wonder
why -
you had
Such
doubt!

Philip Allen

Be the same?

Be cool
Be calm
Don't drool
or cause alarm
Follow the
trend
of all misery
Guts
They're
Shallow as
friends
with faces
like mutts
Be the
Same. Just
to survive
the game
nor humour revive

Philip Allen

James
Blanch
out
fart

televiper
lord

it is (st. clair)
how has he managed it.
how ever he did. as if his head led him
to whatever it is that is.
come on. time to let go.
if i were a woman. i didnt have much
of a choice.
becoming a type.
when my heart was ripped out
a night seven trillion years ago.
before drugs sex and rock and roll.
life was simple as an azobda
talking then. seeking out truth.
much as i appreciate
what the rood lord has done.

i cant help thinking of what verb
should i choose to include in this thing
call poetic art
or to state
poetic farts.

sometimes things appear distasteful
like pigeon shit
and the morning after a drunk
with your head down the toilet
puking out your guts.

beauty and being nice
appreciating a well tuned verse
climbing up to the top
going down on a cock.

a 20 yr old. I am david. the beginning
of a ~~new~~ NEW age -

and in the morning
if i am lucky to have slept a wink.
pull the duvet off the bed
look at me.

not exactly a promising start.
i always sleep with my socks on.

i dont know why.
probably a tribal ritual
i acquired from the mormon church
in between frequently visiting
a few prostitutes

a bottle of michelob
a toke on a joint.
and piscine in the backyard

watched like hawks
and i still quite blow out the brains
of the property of ee. what would they do about
all this? i cant speak for him. possibly because
he is german and i am english.

June 4th, 2009 dsc

Garden

sun smoke
The American
ART T

open
Real Attraction
Imagintion
Dukin
Doch Iron

you know i
will
Always love
you.

The Crown
Yellow
Pain. Shyn
Cranberries
Wdm Bm

Chinyu
march

Bm
Place

When I hear the word change

i want to crawl into an early grave
politicians appear from nowhere
suit and tie
and a haircut
how do they sleep at night
we all have jobs
of various types
i write poem
do you see what i do
am i making any sense
i get quite upset
i don't like TV sets
even the radio
and god only knows what
computers are about.
for speculators regarding
the future
i am not quite there yet
what kind of world will it be
kids are being born every day
and the dead are forgotten about
so quickly as they are buried
people don't value life
they just want to make a profit
it is not quite cold enough
to ask the neighbours
for some fire wood.
say whatever you want
the only thing left
is to stop, here and now, to give up writing.

Dave St. Clair

Are women for
nothing but being your opposites
the muck of dialectics turning the lights out
into the dismal history of thoughts
all that schooling
for women too have thoughts
though I might find it the only journey left
at least the only thing left is worthwhile
I know they are beautiful
and wear their clothes
to attract the opposite sex
but what if they are lesbian and I a homosexual
would it truly matter if
their soulmates
are the same sex.

Well, I'm looking back

I have to agree with them
once we get past the parts and the desires
of the flesh we might get down to the heart beat
and that is obviously the first place to start
in any relationship
let the women decide but don't expect them to wait for you
while you make up your mind

I am melting into the valley

between her breasts I caress her nipples with my tongue
I guide her hand down to my penis. I gasp as she place it
into her mouth. It truly is the best feeling in the world
and then when I enter her. O fuck fuck fuck. Ahh.
I am coming I scream out into the night then put my tongue
everywhere. No hole is left unserved. Then falling asleep
in each others arms, and the fucking morning can wait for eternity
and even I get tired out.

Dave St. Clair

"Shock of mighty skins"

Oh mighty skinheads searching for an underpass at midnight
Please relieve the guilt of the system as you sing "Doo wah diddy"
Oh mighty skinheads concerned over dave atkins diet
Relive the stress of demolition as matching scarecrows fool the public
Oh shock of mighty skins pole-vaulting over ambition
Where do you feel, lightly poached barbecued or grilled
Oh mighty skinheads gain entry to the soup theatre
Timewarp inside a wasteland, a queue for the shit opera
Oh sight of ageing skins, prescription daylight inside a plastic bag
A twenty four hour pastry chef always on tap
Wake up goosefair skins, standing at the end of the pier
Many life forms appear at this time of the year.

Anthony Moore

Transfusion of Satan

There in the darkness
Salome is dead
Tired of the interruption
Calling mega-vortes
Into president-babylon
And drowning serpentine
Transfusion of Satan.

Tamlin Hodgkinson

Exanthia spins her web
The goddess of love
Three magical incantations
enticing her prey
I'm spellbound

Kane Eyles

One and Only

You know that I have forgotten about you while I was there,
as if you were a stranger,
a pearl in the sea, which everybody will step on.
And I also knew
that sin grows much faster there,
on these plantations infested with feverish sin.

Macabre
The blood drips
from the sword
A deranged frenzy
Psycho killer

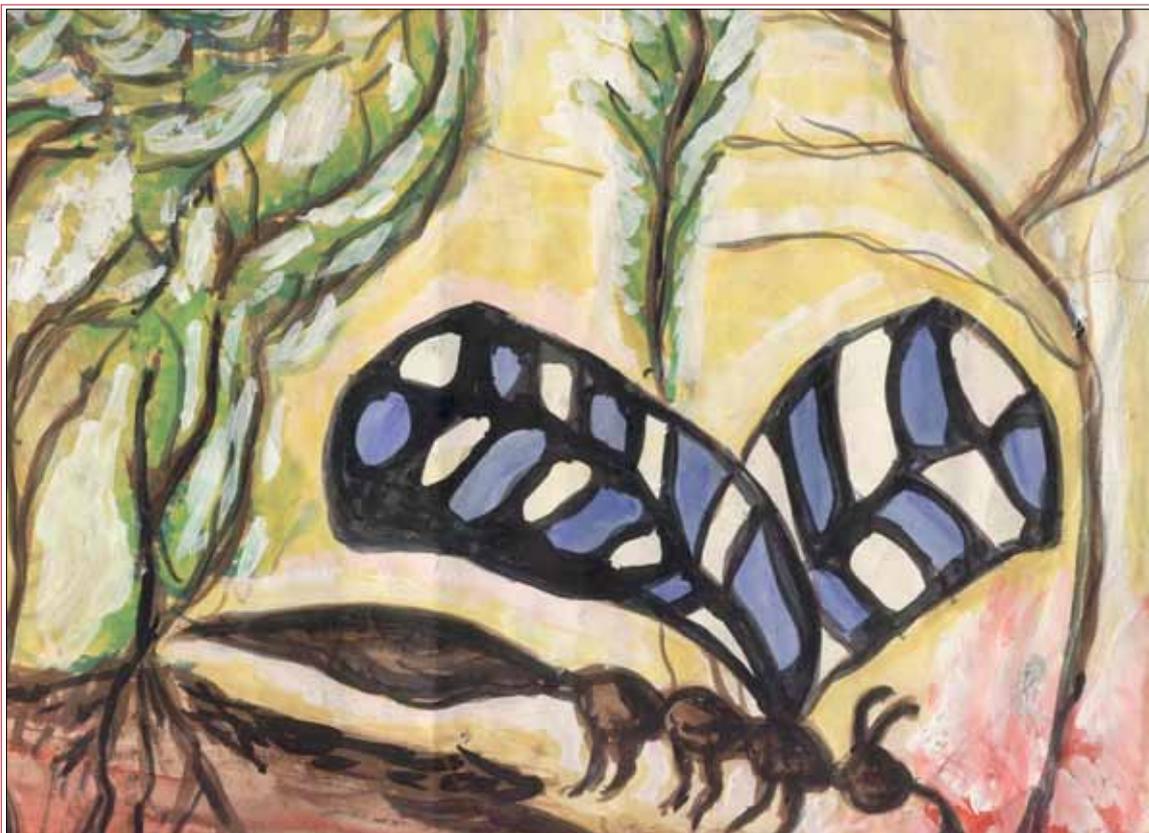
Kane Eyles

I fell from grace in my pagan lair,
I've been sitting motionless for days,
while the love from your heart, which I have brought along, still remains.
Suddenly, sin bit me like a reptile,
she looked haughtily at me, teasing everything inside me.
My feelings aren't burdened with shame,
as if arduously climbing up from the unfathomable depths of confusion.

I forgot everything... I have sinned,
I watched that white, swaying flame in her eyes.
While your voice is acridly waking me up from the spell, in my pagan lair filled with carnal drive
I uselessly walk the halls of sin.

Let me confess:
I have kept this disease close to my heart,
my heart has abruptly died,
because our love is covered with the scarlet fabric of oblivion.
My one and only!... Let our love shine anew
under your strings of passion,
let the broken waltz sound from your heart again,
and fill this painful emptiness in my soul.

Walter William Safar



'Butterfly' by Dave Russell

When Hope Dies

And now you ask yourself, my beloved —
trightenedly, or perhaps just in surprise —
you ask, my beloved,
why have I denied my love for you for all these long years?...
How can I explain
that without your touch... without your breath...
my life is no life at all.

How can I explain the infernal torment
of expectation and despair?...
When I mindlessly stare into the abyss
where I have thrown our love.
The only thing that's left is hope that a new love
will grow out of the bones of old love.

I am prowling like a beggar 'round the walls of hope,
and the blue chill has gently leaked through to my soul.
But!... how do I tell you, my beloved,
that our love is dead in the darkness,
and if you would open your eyes in the dark and feel
that you are beside me,
you would be born again.

Walter William Safar

Timid like a blue shadow

All shriveled up in the corner
she looks like she is illuminated with the aura of divine mercy.
In that sweltering heat,
all my pain melted,
and my memories wandered off
in a hot, pointless daydream.

I felt the sudden hammering of her blood,
feverishly beating,
like the pores of my own skin.

I wanted to merge with her face
twitching the infernal fire of passion.
I wanted to lay down there,
where the flickering heat
and the hum of boiling world
vanishes in the call of love.

I float in this angry green circle of compliance.
Like a sleepwalker, with eyes closed
and hands stretched out
I tried to find her face.
On the wings of the wind,
I felt her whispering and leaning towards me,
leading me to the same direction,
where love is heading.

Walter William Safar

Freedom Calls

The trapdoor closed for many years
No air to breathe
No chance for her to be
No natural light to see
No room to air her fears
No space to feel
Clinging cloying unclean dust
Clammy clouding lack of trust
She pressed her face full blown with tears
Against the door
And pushed with all her might
Beckoning now a gleam of light
Shone down through all the years
And Freedom Calls

Into the dark and lonely night
The wandering gypsy stepped
From nobody she came
And to no one she crept

The sunlight brightly now streams out
Hallowing the morn
Another day
Another way
For the gypsy girl to roam

Following the strange uneven trail
To green grass pastures new
Through happy heathered moor lands
Clambering and stumbling on her way
To the easy rambling hill
With rushing rocky cool sweet streams
Full weathered in her mind
The stray and solitary light gleams still
Leading on her way
To the momentous mountain tops
Where the alien view hangs high
Presenting a catch and sandy bay
Shrouded yet in mystery and mist
But I have come now all this way
And Freedom Calls

Terri McDonald

Dawn

Down the path she walked
through the shadows of the trees
to an unknown silence.
Looking for day
trying to break the eeriness of the night
the wind whispers gently as the leaves begin to fall.
She beckons the birds to twitter
as she makes her way across the fields
and through the woods.
The silence is broken by her chorus
now the dawn breaks and a new day begins.

Mandy Ducksbury

Miscreant Teenager

I know I'm a drunk forty-five-year old man
with nothing to show, full of weaknesses...

I've got this miscreant teenager
who's moved into my bed-sit,
flashing her bouncy tits at me when she gets out the shower,
steamy, too hot, she says,
asking me to stroke the poodle she's looking after,
don't you like it? she says, drawing me in closer.

A miscreant teenager
who's been kicked out by her parents
she hasn't got any merits I can find,
lacking in pleasantries, general respect for others.

Once I peeped through her open window
at empty beer bottles, pot noodles spewed there,
a mattress dumped on the floor,
living like a leper, unfit for social contact,
gentleness, kindness, whatever,
itchy scabs covering her face and arms,
a bracelet which I helped her fix around her wrist,
a Rolex watch for a £1,
no booze, cigarettes or food
her destitute mouth full of safety pins,
drowning herself in three litre bottles of cider,
three men chasing her down the road with kebab knives,
Tesco's at five in the morning.
lip and tongue piercings
inviting her friends over, a supposed younger sister,
leaping boyfriends who flee through the bathroom window
when they see me coming.

I've advised her to get a job in a department store,
behind the glass counter
on the third floor of Debenhams,
selling vases, ashtrays, full-length mirrors –
maybe she should take a better look at herself.

What can I say or do?...

I've tried to tell the landlord about her,
but he's a useless swindler, addled by greed for rents on rooms –
I've tried to tell the guy upstairs,
but he's bi-polar, hearing a multitude of voices,
too out of it, prescribed medication for his nerves,
a window cleaner
while she shouts and rows with strangers
outside in the street, picking fights,
drawing attention from the neighbours
and soon the police, waking up to blue lights,
flashing blue lights.

Simon Robson

The Flower

How fresh, O Lord, how sweet and clean
Are they returns! ev'n as the flowers in spring;
To which, besides their won demean,
The late-past frosts tributes of pleasure bring.
Grief melts away
Like snow in May,
As if there were no such cold thing.

Who would have thought my shrivel'd heart
Could have recover'd greenness? It was gone
Quite under ground; as flowers depart
To see their mother-root, when they have blown;
Where they together
All the hard weather,
Dead to the world, keep house unknown.

These are thy wonders, Lord of power,
Killing and quickning, bringing down to hell
And up to heaven in an hour;
making a chiming of a passing-bell,
We say amisse,
This or that is:
Thy word is all, if we could spell.

O that I once past changing were,
Fast in thy Paradise, where no flower can wither!
Many a spring I shoot up fair,
Offering at heav'n, growing and groning thither;
Nor doth my flower
Want a spring-showre,
My sinnes and I joining together.

But while I grow in a straight line,
Still upwards bent, as if heav'n were mine own,
Thy anger comes, and I decline:
Where all things burn,
When thou dost turn,
And the least frown of thine is shown?

And now in age I bud again,
After so many deaths I live and write;
I once more smell the dew and rain,
an relish versing: O my onely light,
It cannot be
That I am he
On whom thy tempests fell all night.

These are thy wonders, Lord of love,
To make us see we are but flowers that glide:
Which when we once can finde and prove,
Thow hast a garden for us, where to bide.
Who would be more,
Swelling through store,
Forfeit their Paradise by their pride.

George Herbert [1593-1633]
from "*We Have Come Through*"
ed; Brian Forbes, published by
Bloodaxe & Survivors' Poetry

Something Else

There is something else inside of me
Struggling in me, wishing to be free.
Unsteady spirits straying in my mind
Live here within, all wanting to be me.

I am a something else inside of me;
Different facets fighting to be free.
Then if I knew, yet now I cannot find
Myself. This sad – and searching all for me.

I feel that something else inside of me
Is screaming pain and trying to be free.
The way that was, the way I hope to be;
This battle in my soul, it is all of me.

I am that something else inside of me.
I am this soul and shouting to be free.
A wistful wanderer on land and over sea
Who stays at home and dreams of one of me.

This is this something else inside of me;
That part of me remains and yet is free.
But this I know and all I want of me –
Unsettled spirits always try to flee.

Terri McDonald

I walked into another universe

I walked into a bar in town one Friday night, the Funky,
it was another experience, universe – there was a rabble
of middle-aged men presented, happening before my
eyes, middle-aged, suspicious, alien types, just like me ...

I walked into another universe beyond my understanding
– they were dressed in silver, spangling, tinfoil Suits,
multi-coloured shirts, flat, pointed boots, green eyes – I
was scratching my groin area for leaping lice, creepy
insects.

I had chains rattling in my ears, dragging me down,
from the Stone Age, primitive types – they were reading
newspapers, crosswords, Sudoku, waiting for the results
from Leicester, the 3.15 there, a delayed photo finish,
winners, losers ...

A pint of Stella, a cinnamon Sambuca, that's all, I said
– my profile presented in the mirror before me, nothing
happening, I said – 'Minds that have nothing to confer/
Find little to perceive,' I said, quoting Wordsworth,
Chinese poetry...

I walked into a bar one filthy Friday night, searching for
beautiful petals, lusty, intoxicating flowers - it was the
end of the week ...

I was seeking compensation for my miserable existence,
peace and general relief – all I found were middle-aged
men with swollen, sweaty feet, creased clothes that
needed ironing out, scruffy shirts, scruffy men, just like
me, trousers from Burtons, drunk, scruffy types ...

It was a nightmare - one in a suit from a charity shop,
second-hand, second-hand heart attack victims,
pulmonary spasms, things happening ...

The two girls serving, April and Lisa, both depressed by
events, one with enhanced, plastic breasts, whispering to
each other, no knickers and bras, bending over – hordes
of Mongol eyes undressing them into matchsticks, picking
away between their teeth, molars, incisors – we're all
screaming inside, I said to myself ...

All old enough to be your fathers, suffering from irregular
bowel movements, heart beats, too much gravity,
pressure – all of our diets ill considered, doing us in,
rhubarb and syrup, our teeth rotten, stinking, brains, no
brains to speak of, empty vessels soaked in brine, rotting
– I walked into another universe, nothing happening.

Simon Robson

In A Hallowed Orchard

In a hallowed orchard waits,
The eyes of a hidden princess,
Safe, Locked in silent, peaceful, slumber,
By a key of long stolen plunder;

The years roll by,
And many stroll and wander near, hoping to find,
But never knowing,
That she lies right,
Under their very eyes,

For the orchard has many doors,
Made of rosewood, in different colours,
Facing north, east and west,
That wait, testing the eyes of those who seek;

They come tall, strong and bold,
Others fair, young, and some old,
Who knock, and ring,
Shout, and sing,
But all, fall short,
For the key lies within the fruit of the southern tree;

The tree that lies south,
Catches light that once found,
The heart of he who truly loves her,

So to find the sleeping princess,
You must eat of the hidden zest,
That feeds the heart that gently slumbers;

But only one, can find the fruit,
Who still loves his one and true,
For he still lives, deep down inside her;

He still walks among the crowd,
Not tall, or strong, or proud,
But weak and lost without her;

But one day he finds a door,
Still locked, and trying more,
He walks around the orchard;

He sits, facing south,
Lost in tears, still locked out,
But then drops, a single apple;

On his head there comes a thud,
As he falls and hits the mud,
And comes round some hours later;

He wakes, to find a key,
From right inside the broken apple,
So very small, bright and shiny;

It fits inside the door,
Which swings, and reveals more,
And then he hears the sound of distant crying;

The noise in him awakes,
A love that he did not forsake,
And now returns a prince from distant hiding;

And then, in a sudden, quick flash,
The princess, suddenly, springs back,
From a realm that has no rhyming;

Their eyes now meet,
And they fall, so deep,
In the deepest, truest, love,
That all is quickly forgotten;
And so returns,

This love that burns, With the eyes,
Of his only, special one;
That dream, And love,
That gleam, And touch,
The heart of he who truly loves her.

Michael Meader

Depression

My very eyes are Tocks
of black and grey marbled granite.
My ears are deaf to your music,
Washing over me without purifying me.
I cry and sigh for a life once blazing,
I yearn for that shimmer to return.
My world, crumbling and wan,
Disintegrates in a heavy haze, a smokescreen.
I feel trapped in a maze of unhappy times
And your bleaker, darker rhymes.
I cower under the weight
Of emotions I hate.
I pray this storm would abate
And a rose of rebirth
Restore me to a healthy life.

Joyce McCracken

Geese flying south
Summer sunshine
Rose petals falling

Kane Eyles

Madness
Losing my mind
Voices

Kane Eyles



featured *Artist*

Dave Russell

Continued from page 7...

In this essay I will be starting with a list of my practical methods for collecting information and my difficulties in finding a focus for my fieldwork. Secondly the issue of biography versus locale in selecting approaches and how I arrived at my focus point. Thirdly the relationship between myself as a fieldworker and Dave “the researched” and the issues this raised. Fourthly an analysis of Dave’s musical style and how this was formed both consciously and unconsciously from other music genres, borrowed musical concepts, values and the myths surrounding the personalities he emulated. An overview of the Web 2.0 applications and new technologies I used and whether or not they were helpful and finally some difficulties I encountered and possible precautions to take for my next project.

My methods for collecting information for my fieldwork started by making a collection of all of Dave’s recorded albums, obtaining his books and videos. I also did some research into music and counter-culture in Notting Hill in the 1960s and 1970s, as well as the folk scene in London by watching some well researched BBC music documentaries such as “Folk Britannia” and “Hawkwind” which analyses the Notting Hill counter-culture in detail as well as Carol Clerk’s epic book “The Saga of Hawkwind” (2006: Omnibus Press), Dave Harker’s “Fakesong” (1985: Open University Press) and later read Sara Cohen’s analysis of rock culture in Liverpool (1991: Oxford University Press). My principal method of collecting “data” was through conversations with Dave. Some interviews were recorded and others filmed but many were spontaneous interchanges where recording had not been anticipated, so I always took notes. In between our lengthy interviews I would reflect on what he told me and read up on any new names or ponder on which direction my research was going. These reflexive periods where I was to research and formulate new lines of enquiry were as important as the interviews themselves.

I had a good rapport with Dave, and interviews went well but my main dilemma was should I base my study on “Biography” or “Locale” in terms of local identity, history and how this relates to the music? Initially I was going to focus on Dave’s biography. However in the first weeks of my interviewing him he was telling me increasingly fascinating stories of his involvement with the music and arts counter-culture in Notting Hill mostly undocumented. Both biography and locale were complex and vast areas so which approach was best?

Sara Cohen’s account of rock culture in Liverpool (1991) interested me by verbalising the underlying issues. I was particularly interested in how a place was associated with “authentic” somehow better musicians in the British music press and identity (pp.9-20). The Notting Hill area, also known as “The Grove” (Ladbroke Grove) or the hard-core “Frestonia”, part of Notting Hill that had its own National Anthem, passports, currency, stamps and trying to become a free independent state, certainly had a strong community of creative rebels. Musicians, artists, film-makers, actors, political activists, journalists with radical challenging ideas all wanted to be associated with the area in the late sixties and up until the mid 80s. The underground counter-culture was more concentrated there than in any other part of Europe.

However Giddens wrote that locales are “shaped in terms of social influences quite distant from them” (1990:18 quoted in Stokes 1997:3). Dave had told me that the people in the forefront of this alternative community were American or Canadian intellectuals, many who were on the run from the army as well as rebels from outside London who gravitated towards Notting Hill to be part of the scene, people from New Zealand, Ireland, Australia, the West Indies, Africa, Chile etc ... and established musicians such as Jimmy Hendrix, Bob Marley and Eric Clapton moved there. However the type of “place” Giddens was referring to was not necessarily geographical. Stokes writes “People can equally use music to locate themselves in quite idiosyncratic and plural ways” (1997:3). In relation to this period in Notting Hill someone playing CDs of Pink Floyd, Hawkwind, Gong or The Clash in any corner of the world would knowingly or unknowingly be tapping into the music and values of this 60s/70s Notting Hill counter-culture. Conversely the musicians of “The Grove” at the time sought out alternative types of music and were often well-versed in Indian music, Middle Eastern Maqams, Free-form Jazz, Blues, British folk, Calypso, Reggae as well as the prevalent popular music on the radio and hyped into the hit-parade. The music they grew up listening to and learning to play be it Western Classical or from another musical background would also be influential. In spite of its very strong identity this location had musical influences that were as geographically diverse as possible. There is no one “Notting Hill Music” although the music that typified the anarchic counter-culture and created their own style of music were bands such as “Hawkwind” and “The Pink Fairies”, and later fusions of punk, psychedelic rock and reggae from bands such as “Here and Now”. But there was still far more live music-making in the area beyond this. Although musicians adhered to the same value system and locale, the actual music as an “object” shared similar values but could sound totally different.



Click above icon links to view Dave performing:

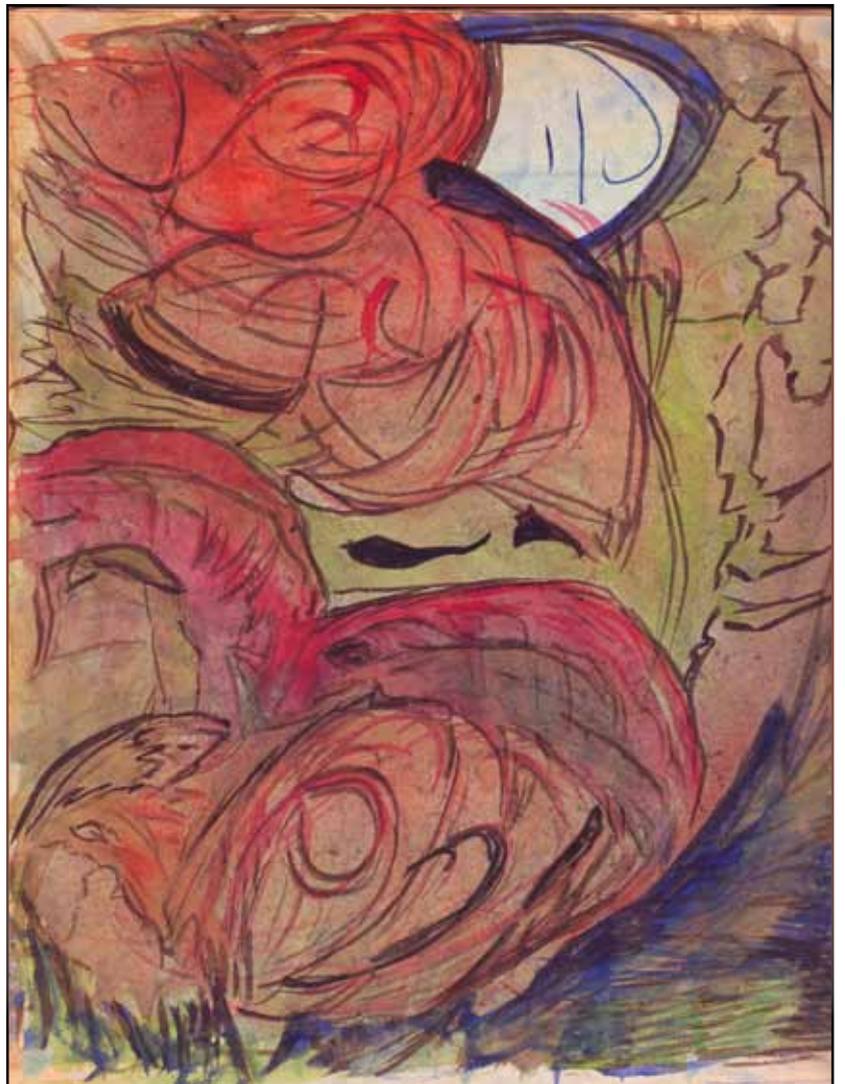
Crackdown Tribunal [top] and Northern Lights, on Vimeo

Artwork: Left: Debris, top left Tangle, above Undergrowth. Below: Top left Blue, bottom left Grid 2, Flushes. Cover image; Apple. Next page: Vortex.

music were bands such as "Hawkwind" and "The Pink Fairies", and later fusions of punk, psychedelic rock and reggae from bands such as "Here and Now". But there was still far more live music-making in the area beyond this. Although musicians

adhered to the same value system and locale, the actual music as an "object" shared similar values but could sound totally different.

Continued overleaf



Laurent Aubert writes “ The question of identity is placed simultaneously on the collective level ...such as adherence to a civilisation...community...political party..and on the “subjective” components, how individuals situate themselves in relation to these components” (2007:2).

The same could be said about this music that individuals at this place and time chose which musical and ideological influences to develop. Some within that community chose to take drugs, others like Dave did not. Although some musicians attribute their creativity and synthesis of musical ideas to using certain drugs Dave is equally innovative without these. However these lifestyle choices would be important in fieldwork.

Should I categorise people according to their individual preferences and if so how do I avoid making false generalisations? As time went on and different people contacted me I realised that although Dave had a fantastic memory and was very informative, that his experiences and his recalled interpretation of events would not be enough to represent an entire community. However the way in which Dave could be “the undeniable expert” was in relating his own history within the context of the counterculture and insights into what formed his own unique musical style. This eventually became the focus and subject of my fieldwork.

Hellier-Tinoco in her article entitled “Experiencing people:relationships, responsibility and reciprocity” (2003 12:1:19-37) says the new fieldwork is “an experience rather than a place”(p.26).

She stipulates that friendship is the basis for fieldwork. Much has been written on this special relationship. Jeff Titon writes “Fieldwork is messy ... but it grounds our explanations in the dialogue between self and others . It counteracts the intellectual tendency to theorise ... It posts a paradigm for knowing based in knowing persons.”(Titon 1997:257).

During my interviews my friendship with Dave deepened and with each interview any superficiality is waned, each time a new layer to our subject was exposed. When I first interviewed him for this ethnomusicological project he started by talking about Alan Lomax’s work and about what Indian instruments were around in Notting Hill at the time. Cooley writes in “Shadows in the Field”: “As individual fieldworkers, our shadows join others, past and present, in a web of histories: personal histories, the histories of our own academic field and the histories of those we study.” (Cooley:1997:5). He may have been alluding to a different context, such as the attitudes of missionaries or tourists encountered prior to a fieldworker’s appearance. In Dave’s case it was his expectations of what I might be studying. He was trying to be helpful and the Alan Lomax radio programmes had indeed been a big influence on Dave’s musicality but I gently steered him towards his own experiences.

At first he spoke freely about his involvement with the local music culture but as interviews progressed I felt I got to the really important information. The kind of information that no one else would have access to and this was when he started to talk more candidly about his life and experiences and demonstrated which myths and attractions drove him to various influences and choices for his music. It was at

this point that the biographical approach seemed the most appropriate.

Jonathan Stock (2001 43:1:10-15) identifies three factors underlying the rise of biographical writing. Firstly the idea that there are “prominent individuals” or specialist musicians.

Dave does not chase fame but is an exceptionally innovative and intellectual songwriter who blends diverse musical genres and literary ideas. This idea of blending different genres together into an experimental music and also to cross the music with another art-form (poetry and prose), is key to the ethos and practices in the Notting Hill counter-culture where and when he first felt free to develop his songwriting style. He developed his songwriting at a regular Poetry Workshop run in Notting Hill where he collaborated putting the experimental poetry of others and his own to music. However his musical influences dated back to the 1950s radio broadcasts and his studies in English Literature at Durham University and he continues to experiment and change beyond the Notting Hill era integrating more recent pop ideas and influences. He is unique on the current acoustic scene in London and is still a “prominent individual”.

Stock’s second justification for biography concerns that buzz word “representation”. In the old days a fieldworker might attempt to make generalisations about a large group of people (Stock 2001 p.12). Biography enables Dave to have his own voice about his own music. In my conversations with Dave I listened, recorded, filmed but I tried not to interrupt. Instead I occasionally noted a question that I would ask later. These free-flowing conversations where he was in charge of much of the journey through place and time, allowing one memory to spontaneously lead to another were the most productive. If I had a set of questions he would sometimes struggle to remember. The way he could recall best was to give him a context.

For example I got hold of some rare photos of people and events in Frestonia via networking on the internet, he recognised some of the people and had done music with one of them. We also spent hours watching music clips on youtube and going through my mp3 collection. This was an extremely productive and a vital part of my research.

Footnote:

I also used other Web 2.0 applications speculatively following Anthony Seeger’s model of using diverse and flexible approaches in fieldwork (1987 :493-494), I posted some excerpts of our interviews online and was contacted by various people originally living in Frestonia, received unpublished artwork, or anecdotes even today I was contacted by someone volunteering to be interviewed now living in Spain.

Cooley writes how music’s temporal ephemeral nature can make it difficult to quantify. “Musical meaning is often ambiguous or liminal, inviting ethnomusicologists into a dialogue with multiple realities” (1997:3). Although some ethnomusicologists use “participant observation” and “bimusicality” to learn to perform the same music and/or live the same life, I am a “native observer”. I have played



the same venues as Dave for 18 years and live a short walk away from him. But I am interested in Dave's unique music which he learns and writes by ear or intuitively. Therefore talking in terms of music theory will not be helpful and learning to play his songs is not only beyond my capabilities but I also judge as not helpful.

Instead the key to understanding his music was by listening to music together or watching clips which he chose, by experiencing them together and talking about them. Insights into all of his favourite kinds of music from the past were available without having to ask him about his influences. Whether it was that he had been attracted to the myth of the character of lesser known solo eccentric musicians such as "Sleepy John Estes" (early blues), or influenced by the methods of emulating Wes Montgomery (Progressive Jazz).

When we watched Wes Montgomery playing a cover version of "Tequila" together another factor in Dave's music would fall into place. Many are impressed by Dave's heavily disguised and mostly unrecognisable cover versions of Madonna songs. I could hear Wes Montgomery doing the same thing and therefore asked Dave if there was a correlation (recording track). He explained to me the virtues of jazz musicians who kept an eye on current pop melodies and used these as a basis for their own jazz versions that stretched the music as far as possible away from the original. Similarly with the Malagasi music which we had listened to together I could hear where Dave's eccentric sense of timing and flow was inspired from and could ask him about this.

If I had asked him directly, without listening to music together what his influences were, he probably would have said: blues, folk, jazz. But this could mean anything, it was from on the one hand knowing his music extremely well and on the other listening to music with him and asking some questions and seeing what excited and delighted him that I really got into his sense of musicality. Sometimes music speaks louder than words and it seems only natural to use music as a method of researching music.

The personalities of those he emulated were also important. Dave liked solo acoustic performers or only related principally to the soloists or singers within bands. The unique and eccentric, the virtuoso, the poetic, the anarchic, the passionate and the solo artists both male and female, all ages, from 1930s to the present, some black, and all

mostly from the U.S.A. or Canada. When Virginia Danielson writes about the famous Egyptian singer Umm Kulthum, she focuses on the myth generated by the songwriter and how this myth or personality is shared between singers and their audiences (1997:15 quoted in Stock 2001). Dave clearly has mythical personalities that he relates to and characters he wishes to get closer to such as the angry rebel Johnny Rotten or the sensuous Madonna. These characters inspire feelings and techniques that free his creativity and stage persona. In turn he is viewed by his audience as a veteran of the music scene, an anarchic yet intellectual force, a virtuoso performer who does not conform to any genre of music.

This brings us to Stock's third argument for biography: 'a reconceptualization of "culture" as a mosaic of individual decisions ... a desire to draw attention to individual cultural agency.' This brings my essay full-circle. Although Dave's musicality to a certain extent represents the Notting Hill counter-culture he made certain decisions throughout his life and had certain cultural influences that make him unique. His music is atypical of the "jamming bands" characteristic of the area or the earlier free-form jazz ensembles. Also his daily routines and aspirations are different to others.

I also have to question who I am as a fieldworker and how the experience changed me. I started off from the standpoint as a "native insider". I assumed that I understood Dave and where he was coming from and that I was somehow "cheating" by choosing such an easy topic. However O' Laoire writes an analysis of his role as he states that on the one hand his background helped him to gain insight into the music and people he was studying and on the other to be aware of possible misinterpretation (O'Laoire 2003:12:1:118). Rice writes about his work with Bulgarian musicians and how the fieldworker can sway from having an "insider's" understanding to "distantiation" mainly due to scholarly theory imposing meaning further limited by language(Rice:1997:109).

An example of this lies in a conversation we had about a rather wild psychedelic club called "The Crypt" where I had performed several times. Dave told me he not only knew "The Crypt" but used to help to run it and performed there along with bands like Pink Floyd. I soon realised we were talking about two totally different venues, mine in Deptford in the 1980s and his in Notting Hill in the late 60s and early 70s. I was fascinated and started to document and research this particular club out of my own interest. It was through this coincidental misunderstanding that I chose him as my subject for this piece. Although I am a native insider the mere fact of our twenty year age gap is enough to create misunderstandings. I came to the study with many assumptions about how the experimental and psychedelic music of Notting Hill originated, these proved to be incorrect and yet during most of our conversations we appeared to be entirely on the same "wavelength".

The fieldwork also changed me from being a researcher to both a friend and a mentor. Dave was an inspiration to me. He has routines that keep his music practice and performance alive.

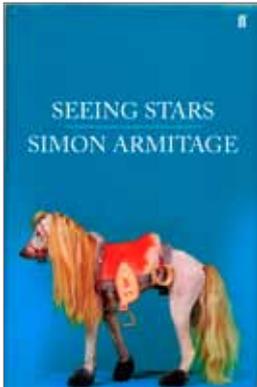
Veronique Walsh

Reviews

Seeing Stars

Simon Armitage

Faber & Faber 2010; ISBN 978-0-571-24990-9; £12.99



“Simon Armitage’s new collection is by turns a verse and a chorus: a hyper-vivid array of dramatic monologues, allegories, parables and tall tales.” (Preface) . . . “takes wicked pleasure in the bizarre detail of ordinary lives . . .” (Kate Kellaway, *Observer*, 9.5.2010)

Simon Armitage, poet, playwright, novelist, singer . . . 1993 Sunday Times Writer of the Year, received a Forward Prize, a Lannan Award, and an Ivor Novello Award for song lyrics in the Channel 4 film *Feltham Sings*. Simon was vocalist/lyricist in the Huddersfield-based Scaremongers group. In 2000, he was the UK’s official Millennium Poet. His adaptations of the classics made a considerable impact. *Mister Heracles* (2000), an adaptation of Euripides’ *Heracles*, was commissioned by the West Yorkshire Playhouse. His *Selected Poems* was published in 2001, followed by *The Universal Home Doctor* (2002) and an adaptation of Homer’s epic, *Odyssey*, in 2006. His translation of *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* (2007) gained wide acclaim.

This is a collection of extremely dense, tightly packed prose poems – or should one say encapsulated short stories? I would describe them as being on the periphery of fantasy and speculation, approaching, and going beyond, the boundaries of what could happen in real life, but in terms of capturing sensations – especially painful ones, always remaining groundedly real. The cosmic references are accurate in terms of astrophysics. The author speaks through multiple personae; this collection has been described as ‘impersonation-filled’.

The opener, ‘The Christening fuses’ self-betittlement and self-aggrandisement in the image of a sperm whale.

One key area Armitage covers is that of tensions within couples. An ‘Accommodation’ describes a couple making a territorial division within their cramped apartment, the subsequent neglect and decay of that apartment. This theme is reiterated in ‘I’ll be there to Love and Comfort You’, where the couple next’s rowing threatens their abode, and a fist breaks their wall. There is a sound like a baby

crying for help; partner Mimi thinks it his her offspring; this cannot be in reality, for the real offspring would have been 24. The man lashes out with his fist, and reaches the hand of a child the other side of a wall. This is painfully close to reality; it could happen in any situation of extreme poverty and stress in any dilapidated environment. ‘The Cuckoo’ is surreal to the extreme: 18-year old James Cameron, on his birthday, learns the true identity of his (non) parents, and that they are setting up a safe house for political prisoners. He then meets friend with girlfriend. The latter seems to have an of ‘old flame’ who rejects the memory – provoking an extreme reaction: “James could have punched a hole in her chest and ripped out the poisonous blowfish of her heart.” Then, portentously, a purported cuckoo falls to its ‘death’ at James’s feet; it is an artificial one, propelled by an electric motor. In ‘Seeing Stars’, a pharmacist is an unwitting voyeur to a couple’s domestic tensions, which involve the purchase of a pregnancy tester. The pharmacist infuriated the couple by tactlessly joking about the possible pregnancy. He offers free goods for compensation; the couple demand speed and heroin in return. The pharmacist gets a ‘cosmic shock’ about the disproportionate repercussions of one careless remark: “. . . as a man of science I have always been careful to avoid the casual use of metaphor and hyperbole. But I saw stars that day.” Mentally inside a rocket ship, he passes many planets capable of sustaining life, and has a vision of myriad fetuses. ‘In Upon Unloading the Dishwasher’, Katy wants to end an affair, but agrees to meet her partner in an art gallery. They see a Tracy Emin-esque canvas with congealed rabbit blood. When her partner queries her response, she goes into visionary mode: she has seen an image of the world’s most wanted man on one of her dinner plates. After an all-too-real confused dialogue with ‘Customer Services in India’, a policeman and a priest come round, and ‘verify’ this apparition as one of a many. They have to take the dishwasher to the laboratory; when she protests, they suggest prayer. It is then stated that the story is complete nonsense; but Katy realises that when she stops talking, the couple’s lips will touch again, against her better judgement. ‘The fresh and bloody wound of Raymond’s mouth’ links thematically with the rabbit’s blood on the canvas. ‘The Personal Touch’ related to cohabitants’ territorial struggles. The woman wants space; the poet, only half-figuratively, describes space as a commodity, available at retailers’: after all, all property and utility articles take up measurable space. The subject settled for a ‘standard spec’ space, left it, duly wrapped, on his partner’s doorstep, and fled. ‘Sold to the Lady in Sunglasses and Green Shoes’ tells of a ‘reified’ man whom a woman has won as a prize. Could he be a male prostitute? He tries in vain to find out the price of her prize entry, equating it with his own self-evaluation. He loves her and leaves her.

‘Back in the Earliest Days of the Twenty-First Century’: selling balloons in Bombay. The narrator feels he has sold his soul when he blows up the balloon for sale. Michael is an interesting parable – ones future destiny is symbolised by items on steals in ones formative years. In ‘The Delegates’ are some guilty truths: Dr Amsterdam, a high-ranking criminologist is a kleptomaniac. He and Stephen go on an expedition, and then Dr Amsterdam righteously decides to

break his addiction. They both throw their 'takings' into the river. One of the items catches the fleeting attention of a passing swan.

'The English Astronaut' seems to be a dual personality. He has fallen into the sea (presumably from a helicopter or spacecraft), is rescued and returned to comfort. The poet/narrator follows him, and observes him: after his rescue he does not look at the sky. His hands differ from those of the man of the immediate past. There is bizarre imagery: "And his face was not the moon." This suggests that the old face was the moon, the focus of observation, and that his stargazing could be compared to a watchmaker handling a jewel.

'Hop in Dennis' is an excellent piece from the great fictional and literary treasure-trove of hitch-hiking incidents. Hitchhiker Dennis happens to be a distinguished footballer on his way to an important match, who has been ditched by his chauffeur because of an argument about Vermeer and Rembrandt (whom the footballer had defended). In the course of the journey, Dennis behaved impeccably. The driver persuaded him to change in the car and took him straight to the stadium. He then reels off a list of distinguished Dennises to whom he has purportedly given lifts. Most likely a leg-pull, but just possibly true; he was a trained driver, and could have been a chauffeur. 'In Upon Opening the Chest Freezer', a childhood prank assumes surreal proportions. Damien makes and refrigerates a giant snowball, then 'presents it to the public' as a hoax; they think it might be a meteorite, and Damien photographs them. In the second part, the snowball speaks with its own voice, asserts its independent identity: "I'm through playing housewife to your 'art' . . ." It wants to return to the freezer among the depressing frozen foods, and urges Damien to face reality rather than playing superficial games: ". . . and feel for yourself/ the true scald of Antarctica's breath". 'Last Words' is a dialogue between two victims of injury: one has been bitten by a spider, the other may have lost his leg to a shark. There are two twists to the 'narrative': the two people are 'comparing notes' on a Premium Rate chat line and, in the process, sizing each other up as potential (real or fantasy) partners. After the call ended "There was a horrible pause as we sat there wondering whether or not to applaud, then the curtains closed." It seems as if they had turned themselves into voyeurs of their own experiences; after all, people do sometimes get entertainment value out of their reminiscences. 'The Accident' combines the couple theme with that of injury. Leo has scalded his hand; the visiting nurse suggests he sustained the injury while being violent towards his wife. She refuses to acknowledge that Leo is not married. Leo then meets a possible partner, whom he very movingly assures of her future safety. There is even a comic vignette of a wedding against the background of a zoo - '15:30 by the Elephant House'. Twists again: the zoo keeper turns out to be something of an animal rights protestor, and objects to their human chauvinism; the wedding ceremony is aborted; there is a rainstorm which ruins the wedding dress. The couple consummate illegitimately; the narrator finally reveals that he is their bastard son. Love and magic are related in 'Knowing What We Know Now': an elf offers Kevin a rejuvenation pact. This is enormously tempting, but Kevin declines it because he feels it would be wrong to confront his ageing true love with his rejuvenated self. The elf compliments him on his sense of honour, but then adds that Annie, the true love, ". . . looks younger every day". Has she made a rejuvenating pact? 'The Crunch': that ubiquitous problem of putting on weight: the subject makes several dietary experiments, all of which fail. His girlfriend 'breaks silence'

on St Valentine's night, and guides him to a wardrobe. If he won't slim for his partner, why not slim to fit into those fabulous clothes?

'My Difference' – a cry from the heart from a creative writing course student. A mini-philosophical tract here, exploring the modulations of real difference, apparent and assumed difference (to be fashionably exploited). Here, as so frequently with Armitage, rhetorical hyperbole gains surreal concreteness – the idea of locking up one's difference in a coal cellar until it matures. 'Aviators' is an absurdist drama cameo. An airliner has been overbooked; there is an offer of money or free return ticket to whoever is willing to stand down. The pilot, in severe financial straits, offers to do so. That would leave the plane pilotless; then the subject offers to stand in, although his qualifications are not authenticated; a risk is taken, and the show goes on.

'An Obituary'; Edward comes back from the dead to read his mother's testimony. 'The Experience': grave robbing with Richard Dawkins. All they find in the coffin is a sacrificed goose. In their shame and embarrassment, they feel they are being surveyed by a vicar, only to discover that it's really a fox. Collaborators: a vain, bald man goes into a barber's for a head shave. He pays with 'pretend' (forged?) money. Then the barber finds in the dustbin ". . . a long, golden ponytail tied neatly with twine . . . nails and thorns . . . what looked like teeth, and the suggestion of a small black moustache." The reader is left with vast scope for speculation. Could these be related to any personal acquaintance/s of the bald man, or could they stem from someone physically unrelated with whom there is an abstract, spiritual affinity?

'Ricky Wilson Couldn't Sleep' depicts a crisis of conscience. Ricky is taking a walk in the small hours; an orange comes rolling towards him, maybe giving him the impression that it has fallen off a lorry or a van. Feeling hungry, he consumes it, and then meets a little girl who tells him that her father – an illegal immigrant, due for deportation – threw the orange to her from his cell. She thinks Ricky may be able to look after her. Ricky, guilt-ridden; feels impelled to show the little girl the remnants of the orange. The little girl asks him if it was hers. Ricky answers with a lie: "In England we call these apples." It is left to the reader's imagination as to whether they will find an all-night supermarket where he can replace the orange, and whether his conscience will prick him to help the little girl further.

'The Knack': more on the tribulations of the aspiring writer. Boris revisits one of the scenes of his childhood, with his sketchbook-cum-notepad. He experiences muscular spasms – to some extent pleasurable – then a flashback to his childhood: his father, a fireman, was showing him how to use a razor when he had to rush off to a conflagration, in which he may have perished: "There he entered the inferno". Presumably continuing with the flashback, waiting for the funereal flowers to arrive. He is then (maybe in reverie) flown over by James Tate, a distinguished American poet whose first volume was called *The Lost Pilot*. Tate gives Boris the V-sign, presumably ridiculing his aspirations; Boris wonders if he might be celebrated in remote parts of Latin America.

'The Practical Way to Heaven': most complex piece in this collection. It concerns an absurd and ostentatious exhibition at the Sculpture Farm (some satire here on the Millennium Dome?), with a 'crocodile of staff', iron pigs, a granite bull, a pit pony made of coal, and

stainless steel geese. There appears a gigantic pie, brought in on a forklift truck. This expands as people try to devour it; Jack and Maggie and others try to immerse themselves in it. They then retire to a temple in the woods. Jack makes a strange incantation: "In the horse I see the plough, in the bull I see the wheel, in the goat I see the scythe, in the pig I see the stove." Jack then says "bring out the custard" – to complete a gourmet experience.

'Beyond Huddersfield' is another fairy tale gone mad. The narrator catches sight of a bear in a junkyard. As he reflects on that memory, the image of the bear, in his imagination, becomes ever more degraded; "I couldn't suppress the escalation of inglorious imagery." He takes another trip to observe the bear. With the second observation, it is not clear whether we are in dream/reflection or reality. The bear was asleep; it is aroused by the sound of the car, on its hind legs, eating voraciously, and then taking an intravenous injection. In relation to the refuse tip, does it embody of contemporary humanity?

'Cheeses of Nazareth': the travails of an independent retail entrepreneur. Nathan has been awarded money by the Criminal Injuries Compensation Board; with this he has set up a cheese delicatessen in a run-down council flat. He has some sense of mission about this action – 'until ye church be builded'. There is a weird sense of a priestlike figure presiding over his flock of cheeses.

'Show and Tell': Marlon has been called to give a talk in a rough inner city school. He has to negotiate security guards; his daughter flees at his approach, and he follows a trail of blood to the classroom. He tries to take the class by surprise, showing them a pebble and describing it as a meteorite. The class walk out on him en masse; only one small girl remains. She happens to know his daughter, but then says the real father has no legs. She advises him to flee, but to legitimise his departure "It's got to look like there's been a struggle": she offers to deal him a blow. He dodges the blow, and sees the girl's reflection in the safety glass. Then "suddenly the meteor started to glow." The magic of trauma has turned imagination and mendacity into truth.

'The Last Panda': 'economic growth' as seen through the eyes of one of an endangered species, its environment wrecked. The piece fades into a retrospective of the sixties. In that perspective, the unfortunate creature is degraded by the society that 'protects' him, reduced to a caricature.

'The War of the Roses': another hitchhiking lift story; the hitchhiker tells the driver, Norman, a pitiful tale of a young boy who perished in a sewer, possibly killed by rats. One of the hitchhiker's jobs was to keep up-to-date population numbers on road signs. But when it came to subtracting 1 from the total, because of the boy's decease, he did not have the correct number. He was riven by guilt, for he had been careless about lending numbers to people who could not be trusted. Norman saves the situation by offering to come and live in the town, so that the population figure remains exactly what it was before the boy's death. His offer culminates in a brutal initiation into citizenship with a branding iron.

'The Nativity': a strange domestic scene. The couple has a collection of toy animals, which normally are put on display, then back into their boxes. Mary suggests that they should permanently be kept out, perhaps to keep a permanent vigil Christ's nativity. When

they have made this decision, they feel they are 'creators of a new tomorrow, peacemakers in a holy war'.

'The Overtone's opens with an interesting poetic conceit relating times of day and emotions to colours. The piece phases into the activities and reveries of a painter, who enacts his subjects in his fantasies. Another kind of artist, a tattooist, in 'The Sighting of the Century': a celebrity is spectacularly body-painted. In celebration, a plaque is carved in anthracite, honouring the memory of the celebrity's husband.

'Bringing It All Back Home': a gentle satire on nostalgic conducted tours, revisitations of the scenes of the past. Simon enhances the 'effect' by going on the expedition in disguise. This tour is in competition with a big array of traditional local rituals. The guide proves to be standing in for his wife, who is tending a sick brother. There are flashbacks of Simon's grandfather dying, his dog drowning, and himself getting gored by a bull. Incongruously, a bronze statue of Simon has been erected, although he had reputedly vanished to Los Angeles. Nevertheless, the seagulls appreciate it. An enigmatic reference to the 'Simon Armitage Homestead Experience' where tourists visit his old residence.

The concluding poem, 'Last Day on Planet Earth' I found the least satisfactory in the collection. On investigating the names, I found that Wittmann was a physicist, while Kirszenstein and Bambuck were athletes. This is one solitary instance in the book where explanatory footnotes would have been appropriate.

These pieces are admirably 'far-fetched' to the extreme, and stretch the imagination to the full. Yet there is also a vital contingent reality about them, as if they are round the corner, next door but one, the day after tomorrow.

Dave Russell

You are Here

Poet in the City, Kings Place, 26th April

"Colette Bryce, Daljit Nagra and Jo Shapcott write emotional, complex, funny and engaging poems. Publishers, readers and prize judges alike love them. The poets and Jaybird have worked with a director and designers to build a brand new live literature show. It's based on poems they've written in the 'I' voice, the one which poets use to play with ideas about autobiography and selfhood. How the poets move, sit, stand on stage helps the eye support what the ear attends; the words and moods are enhanced with the soft sparkle of delicate lighting design. Together on stage, the poems form a silver-tongued performance of work musing on the identities of performers and audience alike." (Jaybird)

The event could have been much more clearly presented, with brief introductions of themes. From their response, I sensed that the audience were extremely familiar with the work of the three poets. For those less so, like myself, it would have been a good idea to have given the audience a list (perhaps with summaries) of the poems. I had to look up said list in the Net to identify them or ideally, to have produced a pamphlet with all the poem texts – Poet in the City has done this before. It was a bit difficult for me to follow. I have found many previous events enhanced by the use

of illuminating and explanatory slides and film footage on Kings Place's ample screen. Backing footage of scenes of war damage and rioting, for example, would have been totally appropriate.

There has been an excellent choice of poets here, taking many factors into account. An important factor is the interweaving of their various backgrounds – Middle English, Irish and Indian – an interactive melting pot! This is enhanced by the modulation between romanticism and contemporary feminism. The performance was further enhanced by some tasteful recorded sound.

The event opened with Colette Bryce's 'Nature Walk', where she muses on the massive specimens she would have liked to bring home from her ramble. She had to settle for a limited reality: "I bought some bark and a couple of conkers". A re-reading of that poem concluded the evening. An interesting switch from rural to urban with 'Our Town in England' – concentrated cultural mix in an inner urban environment. Switch again to Colette's where a kindred urban environment is subject (literally and metaphorically) to air raid and conflagration. A timely reminder that patterns of immigration such as Daljit described have those horrors in the background, at points of origin.

Then a ricochet back to strife-torn Ireland in Colette Bryce's 'Derry', describing the world she loves as utterly ravaged: "The adult world has tumbled into hell." The opening gave a flashback to her repressive, priest-ridden childhood. Interesting background of modern graffiti on ancient walls, jokes about Jesus and Gerry Adams's mouth out of sync. The poem as a whole paints a tableau of Derry ancient and modern. Its atmosphere of garrison surveillance forced Colette and her family to flee – be refugees – another link with Daljit Nagra's themes. His 'Singh Songh' is a witty portrayal of an Indian shopkeeper with a wife who (perhaps dubiously) surfs the internet: interesting cross-cultural interaction between the traditions of arranged marriages and the dating agency phenomenon. In Jo Shapcott's 'Phrase Book', the plea "I am an Englishwoman" is reiterated by another refugee – a helpless air-raid victim in what may be a British Commonwealth country. It intermingles a romantic fascination for the aircrews with a sober assessment of their callous brutality. It also contrasts their glamorous television image with their underlying reality portrayed through her misery.

This was followed by Daljit Nagra's A Prelude to Suka's adventures from the Board Room describing the lot of the emigrant/immigrant: "He was the first from our farms on a cheap boat ride to Britain" . . . someone who "sent home his money for an Enfield bike" The subject of the poem migrated in search of a better standard of living. Was this achieved? There is a moving reference to 'cardboard chapatis' and laughing through yellow teeth. A very appropriate switch to Colette Bryce's Indian Rope Trick – emigrant from India to (possible) visitor to India, or at any rate, to a Westerner avid to identify with Indian culture. The subject is desperate to do the Rope Trick, ascend to the heavens into an ascent of fancy. (Incidentally, that sequence of two poems is an outstanding example of how baking film footage could have enriched the event). After this, I found Daljit Nagra's 'Confessions of a Coolly Woman' something of an anticlimax. I get the point of it, a gentle dig at the foibles of the fashion-conscious. But I sometimes find Daljit's use of dialect a bit patronising towards his own people. "I used each day to cushy sit and bag" or is this the appropriate counterpart of Coronation Street for the Indian community? In terms of sequence, it was well-placed

to precede Jo Shapcott's 'The Shopper' – set right in the middle of the consumer ethos, fashion consciousness and health-consciousness jostling against each other in the bustle of the supermarket.

Shift of mood with Colette's 'A Spider' –

I trapped a spider in a glass
I meant to let him go
but still he taps against the glass
all Marcel Marceau
in the wall that is there but not there,
a circumstance I know.

This is the opener of her collection, 'Self-Portrait in the Dark'. Its leitmotif of imprisonment pervades her collection. Thematically, it well suited a presentation which, both verbally and visually, gave a sense of claustrophobia. Neat progression to Jo Shapcott's 'The Mad Cow Talks Back' – from a creature confined by an external power to one purportedly entrapped in the prison of her own metabolism. But the constrictions of her purported madness prove to be a supreme liberator:

There are wonderful holes in my brain
through which ideas from outside can travel
at top speed and through which voices,
sometimes whole people, speak to me
about the universe. Most brains are too
compressed. You need this spongy
generosity to let the others in.

She enjoys global, even cosmic mobility. This is a true survivor poem: one categorised as mad asserts her highly evolved sanity. There followed 'Abishag', Jo Shapcott's translation of Rainer Maria Rilke's poem. According to the Bible, Abishag was a beautiful woman who looked after David and may have married Solomon – someone skilled in diplomacy. It celebrates a woman of enormous power, who could both control and rejuvenate an old man. Then there was almost a feeling of physical mutation, 'Colette's Gallery' was followed by Jo Shapcott's 'Matter' – a projection from 'red earth' to physical particles:

He touched my skin
all afternoon
as though he could feel
the smallest particles
which make me up.

By the time he knew each
of the billions of electrons
which fly through my body
every second.

Personal intimacy is related to the physicist's electron microscope. This point could have been strongly emphasised by a slide of film footage. From personal intimacy, in a way, to its denial – with Daljit 'Nagra's Arranged Marriage' a bitter indictment of that institution: "against the will of my God . . . empty she bowed to her God . . . whole hushed trap . . . zombying behind me and the bride . . . a costumed prat from another world . . ." Colette's 'Car Wash' continues the theme of obligation to a patriarchal society: "This business of driving/reminds us of our fathers" – analogies are made between family obligations and the routines of a menial job.

The mobility of the cars they tend points the way to their freedom, their independent self-expression. Jo's 'Somewhat Unravelled' paints a nightmarish vignette of the disruption of a domestic environment, where all the furniture becomes animate (a sofa does the rumba!) and one sells nail-clippings online.

In Daljit's 'In a White Town' a woman suffers double stigmatisation – as someone intrinsically eccentric, and marked out by her ethnic identity. The poem shows the fear and furtiveness resorted to in the face of racist menace – a sense of entrapment, a cry from the heart: "I'd only be freed by a bride from India."

Jo's 'Wine' ("The corkscrew lifts its elegant arms") was read by the poet sitting on the floor in front of a chair. With 'Mad Cow Dance', Jo returned to her earlier theme, but in this instance the cow seems to uncritically relish its liberty: ". . . fibres of my muscles give me such a charge . . ." dramatic effect was added by interpolations from the other two readers, taking part of the text. Daljit's 'Darling & Me!' is one of his linguistic experiments. 'Di barman's bell done dinging,' reads 'Darling & Me!', 'so I phone di dimply-mississ/ Putting some gas on cookah/Bonus pay I bringing!' Daljit Nagra tackles a difficult area with great courage. He struggles valiantly for dialect authenticity without descending into caricature; striking reference to 'pirouetting' amidst the colloquialisms.

Jo Shapcott's 'Piss Flower' has considerable reputation as a feminist poem. That Shapcott's transformative treatment of the body can sometimes have a feminist context is evident in the playful defiance of a poem like 'Piss Flower'. (Poetry Archive). Jo is very conscious of having broken the male monopoly on describing this theme; she also, very validly, made analogies between urination and the creative process:

"But I can print a stream of bubbles
into water with a velocity
you'd have to call aesthetic."

Flow of urine cf flow of ink, cf flow of ideas – one must think of all the implications.

Colette's 'Poetry Bug' was recited by all three poets taking alternate lines. The 'bug' is "a moon-pale lumpish creature/ parcelled in translucent skin/papery as filo pastry". A beautifully ironic reflection on poets' feelings of being parasitical on their own and other people's emotions.

. . . feeds, thrives I should say
on human scurf and dander
indeed, is never happier
than feasting on the dust
of love's shucked husk
the micro-detritus of us.

Colette and Jo Shapcott have similar attitudes to the 'scientific approach': the bug is 'invisible to the naked eye/monstrous in microscopy.'

Darkness was then focused in Jo's 'The Deaths' and Colette's 'Where are You?' – the key question to which this presentation is the answer. The latter poem goes into the cosmic dimension: "2. . . the black hole into which the earth itself might fall . . . satellite menage . . ." Some

more great humour with Daljit's 'Bolly – Bollywood' is one area in which Indian culture excelled its Western role-model. Colette's 'Self Portrait in the Dark (with Cigarette)' is a vignette about insomnia:

To sleep, perchance
to dream? No chance,
it's 4 a. m. and I'm wakeful
as an animal,
caught between your presence and the lack.
This is the realm insomniac.

This poem leads on to areas of darker anxiety in Daljit's 'The Informant' – one persecuted, but also imposing surveillance on himself: "myself telling on myself . . . I may have to go back into hiding".

There followed Jo Shapcott's 'Procedure'; "This tea, this cup of tea, made of leaves", Colette's 'Next Year's Luck' ("now we're seeking it"). Back to Jo with 'Of Mutability' (also the name of her collection) emphasising her well-known desire to 'depersonalise' by being thoroughly scientific and analytical about her own metabolism "My body's a drop of water. Maybe the imperfections and proliferating cells help it to refract the full spectrum." And an exhortation to learn astrophysics. Then Daljit's 'The Constant Art', which indicts the shallowness and hypocrisy of fashion: 'It's true, my love's a paid up fashion victim . . . I've left my heart on my sleeve'. And Jo's 'La Serenissima' 'I was on land, but the land didn't belong'

Then back to the concluding piece – the second reading of 'Nature Ramble'. At the end of the performance, the two other poets symbolically handed their books to Colette Bryce. The event faded out with the eerie refrains of "if only my bag had been large enough . . ." and 'like paper boats'.

An excellent concept, and its execution certainly made me want to track down all the material. It felt exploratory, arousing in the audience ideas of how a fully worked-out production could be.

Dave Russell

Sectioned - A Life Interrupted by John O'Donoghue

John Murray 2009

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This rightly won the Mind Book of the Year Award, 2010. John O'Donoghue's book tells how his father died when he was sixteen, his mother 'could not cope and ended up being sectioned ...' and began a long period in and out of mental hospital, living on the street and in hostels for the homeless, charity and council funded accommodation and prison cells. At last he prevails against the system, to make his life as writer, poet and lecturer in creative writing.

For all the depth of the tragedies it described, this is a story told with humour and optimism. The narrative is told in the present tense, with occasional italicised passages highlighting his 'interior monologues' – a very reader-friendly approach.

is real life after all; he does not flinch from describing those who are positively repellent. O'Donoghue comes across as a victim who understands the system which oppresses him, the system and makes a sustained, honest and clean fight for his future and his life. There are some graphic accounts of the effect of medications upon him, and the tightrope between precarious casual labour and being pressurised into stealing. No stones are left unturned.

"The humdrum reality of mental illness has rarely been so well conveyed. It's less a story of locked wards than of hostels, soup kitchens, sheltered housing, drug addicts, well-meaning charity workers and relentless poverty. O'Donoghue is honest about his own failings ... What saves him, in part, is poetry: he begins to write as a teenager and through most of his ordeals he keeps it up. *Sectioned* is too hard-edged for verse but it's a triumph that it exists at all and a vindication of O'Donoghue's faith: psychosis could easily have killed him, or the liquid cosh stunned him into silence, but here he is, against the odds, speaking loud and plain." (Blake Morrison, *The Guardian*)

"*Sectioned* is written simply, elegantly and with wit and irony. Dispassionately, and with his tongue in his cheek, John O'Donoghue holds a mirror up to charities, to corporate greed, to writers of leaders in *The Times*, and to us, the lower orders who should know better – in fact, to all . . . who failed him, and are failing others like him every day, because we let it happen. There really is enough to go round (although I know it is old hat to say so). It's just that it all ends up in too few pockets, and the worst pockets at that. And so it is a miracle that one of the most disadvantaged of us all can sit down and write a very interesting and well written book, with originality, wisdom and wonderful understanding. As if proof were needed. But if injustice is meted out to the undeserving, and not, as some would say, to those who deserve all they get because they are feckless, brainless and unwashed, O'Donoghue's humour, which enlivens the pages of this tragic book, is living proof to the contrary, and I, for one, felt privileged to read it, and greatly enjoy it.

"But let us not forget, at our own peril, the other fourteen-year-old boys who endure grief, loss, humiliation and despair, but who cannot write a book, or even write at all. They may yet wield a weapon far mightier than a pen."

Paula McMaster of the Downs Book Group, Brighton

My Happy Days in Hell by György Faludy

Translated from the Hungarian by Kathleen Szasz
Penguin Modern Classics, London, 522pp; ISBN
9780141193205; £12.99p

Through an excellent translation of his autobiography, this soft-spoken poet, who spent a long life writing in a difficult minority language unrelated to most others, is at last taking his rightful place among the giants of world literature – to be recognized even in his homeland. The Hungarian literary establishment has

still managed to keep his name out of the schoolbooks, despite the two decades since the establishment of democratic rule. But their efforts to suppress him in toto were entirely in vain.

György Faludy was born in Budapest a century ago this September – 1910. He was a Jew who wanted desperately to be a Hungarian, but had to spend some of his best writing years in exile or prison. His poetry, circulated at home illegally during the grim years of Nazi and subsequent Soviet occupation, kept alive the flame of freedom and decency for generations of his adoring public.

My Happy Days in Hell first published in English in 1962, anticipating Alexander Solzhenitsin's *Gulag Archipelago* by more than a decade. Its re-released by Penguin Modern Classics is timely, if not long overdue.

It is an elegant tale celebrating the triumph of the human spirit. It covers a morally confusing period. Not so long ago, many otherwise decent souls betrayed their own deeply felt values when, outraged by the initial triumph of murderous Nazi tyranny, they allowed themselves to become the instruments of Communist murder as apologists, spies and even torturers.

A natural teacher and spellbinding raconteur, Faludy leads his reader across a blood-drenched landscape, sharing his enjoyment and surprise at morality, friendship, loyalty and sheer physical as well as aesthetic pleasure that somehow overcame the carnage. His autobiography is an essential literary document of the 20th century, the testimony of a writer whose stature is comparable to those of his beloved Auden, Lorca, Rilke and Yeats.

Faludy, who died in 2006, was my teacher for most of my life and my close friend towards the end of his. I have been privileged to discuss the events portrayed in the book with two of its principal characters, also close friends of the author. Both were impressed with the veracity of Faludy's recollection and his power of detailed recall.

Throughout his life, the poet was relentlessly beleaguered by the hostility of the agents of repression as well as being sustained by the love of a devoted public. He attended several West European universities, taking courses in the arts and history, without ever sitting an exam. He burst on the literary stage of Budapest as a young man just before the rise of Nazi oppression with a collection of ballads exuding the love of freedom, translated and adapted from the mediaeval French of Francois Villon. The 45th edition of that book has just been sold out.

His books were seized, burnt and banned by both the Nazis and the Communists. He left Hungary in time to fight the Second World War with the American Air Force while members of his family and more than half a million other Hungarian Jews were murdered by the Nazis during the Holocaust. He returned home immediately after the war to be imprisoned by the Communists in 1949 on trumped-up charges. This is the main theme of the Penguin autobiography covering a lively and horrendous 15-year period from his first exile to his release from prison in 1953.

Many of the events of *My Happy Days in Hell* are also described in Faludy's poetry, written during or shortly after their occurrence. These contemporaneous records confirm the accuracy of the later work.

The book opens with a description of the country of his youth: a semi-feudal backwater locked in bitter resentment then as now over Hungary's territorial losses suffered after the First World War. The author chose to leave for Paris, eventually reaching French North Africa after an anti-Semitic Hungarian parliamentary deputy had suffered a heart attack on reading a Faludy poem mercilessly lampooning his voting record. The poet thought this was one of his greatest literary achievements.

In Paris, Faludy courted, wrote and starved a lot and met people -- such as Picasso and Roger Martin du Gard -- who later influenced European history. Here is the author's mocking and prophetic response to the shamefully cynical treatment meted out by the French to the desperate flood of mostly East European Jewish refugees fleeing the racist wrath of Nazi Germany during the early years of the war. (Both Faludy poems included in this review are rendered in my translation).

REFUGEE, 1940

Like our hosts, we thought the French army
was the mightiest under the sun.
And what did it show to the German Nazis?
Beaten backsides on the run.

The French distrust and despise us aliens
for fleeing to their land for salvation.
It was their own deceit, not ours,
that callously brought down this nation.

They boast: defeat will bring them peace
(too bad for the Jews). Oh, hunky-dory...
Few of them know that it's only the start
and very far from the end of the story.

The Nazis will settle into their homes.
They'll drink their cellars dry, abuse
their women and, should they object,
treat their hosts as they treat the Jews.

Faludy found asylum in the United States at the invitation of President Roosevelt, obtained through the efforts of leaders of the Hungarian anti-Nazi resistance. In America, he served the Free Hungary Movement as its honorary secretary, published and lectured widely and enlisted early to fight the war in the Far East theatre against Japan. He astonished his hosts afterwards by declining their offer of American citizenship and returning to his war-torn homeland at the first opportunity. Soon he found himself in prison.

He endured torture in the dungeons of the Communist state security organization AVO, which had been used earlier for the same purpose by the Hungarian Nazi movement, the Arrow-Cross. Eventually he 'confessed' to being a CIA spy, but laid a trap for the planners of a prospective show trial by identifying his alleged American minders as Captain Edgar Allan Poe and Major Walt Whitman. He spent his final night in that building -- now a museum called The House of Terror, open to the public -- awaiting his promised execution at dawn before being dispatched, instead, to serve a 25-year forced labour sentence handed down without a trial.

Faludy's fellow captives at Recsk, a notoriously sadistic prison camp known as 'The Hungarian Gulag', included the elite of intellectual society. Its members supported each other by lengthy group conversations at night, each treating the rest to lectures on his specialized field of knowledge. Many of them perished from exhaustion on starvation rations -- usually those (Faludy noted) who chose 'to sleep more and think less'. The survivors came to believe that their discussions on Plato's philosophy and Keats' poetry had the power to sustain them.

He saved many of his poems composed in captivity by entrusting them to his memory. He was assisted in this by his fellow prisoners -- including my two informants whom I eventually interviewed in Toronto -- who memorized and recited them during work. On their release from prison in the confusion following Stalin's death in 1953, the same comrades helped Faludy to reassemble the poems for publication.

Faludy fled the country again after the collapse of the 1956 Hungarian revolution against Soviet rule, edited a literary journal in London, taught at Columbia University in New York and received a Pulitzer Prize as well as an honorary doctorate from the University of Toronto. He was nominated for a literary Nobel. Then he returned to Hungary yet again at the age of 78, together with his lover Eric Johnson, an American classicist poet, to witness the implosion of Communism and the birth of democracy.

He was greeted by a tumultuous welcome and lots of more literary prizes. More than a decade later, he married Fanny Kovács, a poet then aged 28. This was his fourth marriage, in which he spent his final, extraordinarily creative years. But those years were clouded by the pique of the Hungarian literary establishment who could not stomach Faludy's enduring popularity: he was hailed as the only Hungarian poet to make a decent living by poetry alone. English translations of Faludy's poetry have been collected in *East and West* (1978) and 'Learn This Poem of Mine by Heart' (1983), both ed. John Robert Colombo, and *Selected Poems* (1985), trans. Robin Skelton. Faludy's irreverent Hungarian adaptation of the Villon ballads has been adapted further in my own English *Free Women* (1991). His prose available in English translation includes 'City of Splintered Gods' (1966), a novel; 'Erasmus of Rotterdam' (1970), a biography; and 'Notes from the Rainforest' (1988), a collection of essays and correspondence.

Four years after his death, Faludy is still a presence in public life, his name and odd lines of verse persistently quoted even at political rallies. Many of his expressions have been adopted in common parlance. He also still attracts vindictive personal criticism from the Hungarian literary establishment because, some explain, he made too many allowances for popular culture. This is highly disputable as adverse criticism.

His poetry is rich in unforgettable, romantic or flippant turns of phrase that unfailingly draw their power from keen perception. The poems are often composed in delicate, chanson-like tones that can unexpectedly give way to heart-chilling horror. The many voices and attitudes quoted or adapted in his enormous oeuvre sometimes give expression to colloquial language and repellent manners and attitudes observed in a very wide range of social

and educational strata, without ever compromising the highest standards of literature.

Yet Faludy has remained an irritant to many Hungarian teachers, critics and editors. I think this is because of his irrepressible voice in praise of freedom, an anathema to the very nature of the literary establishment here that has evolved through decades of rigid regulation under a succession of tyrannies. And perhaps he was too successful at flouting social conventions and egging on his detractors to embarrass themselves.

That was easy game in this deeply conservative society. Consider his last wedding, at the age of 92: a lot of Hungarians, who had learned with great difficulty to tolerate their favourite poet sharing his life with his same-sex “secretary”, simply could not accept the old man changing the rules of conventional morality yet again by marrying a young woman.

To make matters worse, the bride had been unwise enough before she met Faludy to place on the Internet a website displaying her literary efforts accompanied by some amateurish nude photographs of herself. Friends reminded her after the wedding, and she removed the website at once. But Faludy, who had no personal Internet access, was informed of its content by a gloating article published in the gutter press.

He responded by allowing the Hungarian edition of Penthouse magazine to photograph both of them wearing little more than their wedding rings for a feature spread including several epigrams about love. The coy Hungarian public was so shocked that it rushed to purchase 70,000 copies of the magazine within days -- this in a country of less than ten million souls!

He also published his following, final great love poem. It is almost certainly the only description by Age of physical love with Beauty in all of Western literature.

LOVE POEM (To F. K.)

She was far from the first. We lay there naked
and, with one arm, I lightly caressed her body.
I hoped it should be quite agreeable
with just a touch of customary boredom.

It turned out to be more. I leaned above
her small left nipple musing what to compare
it with: a speck of coral? Or a wild strawberry?
a tiny tulip still in bud perhaps?

Only an instant had passed and I entered a different
reality. Had I fainted or just awoken?
Around us stillness prevailed and blue, insane
wildflowers began to whirl behind my forehead.

It was the taste and fragrance of your skin,
not your perfume, that utterly triumphed. They thrust
away my troubles, cares and fears and sorrows,
my past and memories, leaving only this love.
Packed into one another, we two alone

inhabit the earth, our shoulders spliced in stages.
We lose our way in one another's hair.
We meditate on one another's navel.

You can go away but will remain with me holding
between my teeth a single strand of your hair.
I use your body's shadow for my cover.
Say not a word, for all our secrets are shared.

Many people are never touched by such passion
and many would never dare to risk it, even
though this is all that I recognize as love:
soaring all the way from our bedsheets to heaven.

The literary establishment tore into Faludy's reputation after his death by questioning the veracity of *My Happy Days in Hell*. While the world mourned the passing of a brilliant mind, a minor Hungarian writer opined in an obituary published by *The Guardian* newspaper of London that the book contained “picaresque adventures and saucy anecdotes . . . even if it is uncertain how much of it is based on fact”. He also asserted that Faludy's verse was ‘rarely faultless’.

Another writer stated on an establishment literary website, without citing evidence, that the book was full of ‘fibs’. And even before his funeral, which turned into a spontaneous demonstration of national grief, the mass circulation *Népszabadság* newspaper of Budapest categorically ruled that “the Hungarian literary canon does not recognize Faludy”.

Perhaps the silliest and most revealing criticism was sounded during the recent election campaign by a leader of the far-Right Jobbik party expressing outrage over the recital of a Faludy poem at a public event. Faludy was a “well known Zionist enemy of the Hungarian nation”, the speaker declared, again in the absence of evidence, and proposed that in future all poems chosen for public performance should be routinely vetted by the authorities.

But all this will pass into irrelevance. The city of Toronto has already adopted Faludy as its own poet and named after him a small park beneath the apartment where he had spent 14 years of his exile. As Hungary at present is passing through an awkward transition from authoritarian rule, Faludy may yet teach its administrators of culture how to trust their own public, and even – it is to be hoped, their own hearts.

THOMAS ORSZÁG-LAND

THOMAS ORSZÁG-LAND is a poet and award-winning foreign correspondent who writes on Eastern Europe. His last book was *CHRISTMAS IN AUSCHWITZ: Holocaust Poetry Translated from the Hungarian of András Mezei* (Smokestack, England) published in June.

An Omission by Poet in the City

The works of Frida Kahlo

Poet in the City's survey of the art and literature of the Mexican Revolution, *Songs of Life and Hope*, (5th February 2010) was excellent, except for one glaring omission – of Frida Kahlo. Intentionally or no, the lecture gave the impression that the experimental spirit revolution was a 'men only' affair. The record should be set straight. Frida's work was far too long 'played down' in the shadow of her husband, the celebrated mural painter Diego Rivera.

There is some disagreement about her under-recognition in her own lifetime. According to Edward Lucie-Smith, "Kahlo, however, pretended not to consider her work important. As her biographer Hayden Herrera notes, 'she preferred to be seen as a beguiling personality rather than as a painter.'" I am deeply suspicious of these evaluations; they seem to come from prejudice rather than supporting evidence. Others might have considered her so, but did she so herself?

"Who was Frida Kahlo? 56 years after her death, there are as many answers to the question as there are audiences to ask it. Kahlo is variously enshrined in the popular imagination as a bohemian artist, a victim turned survivor, proto-feminist, sexual adventurer who challenged gender boundaries, and, with her mixed-race parentage, an embodiment of a hybrid, postcolonial world.

Indeed, Kahlo's position as a globally recognised cult figure has become so powerful that at times it threatens to overshadow her art." (Tate Modern)

Frida (1907-1954) born in Coyoacán, near Mexico City was stricken with polio at the age of 6. Later in life, she suffered from major bone fractures. In the face of these, she managed, with difficulty, to retain her ability to walk. She developed her art of painting as an elemental necessity, with her injuries and drastically limited mobility.

She went to Detroit with Diego Rivera, who was commissioned to do some murals there. During this period, she suffered a miscarriage, and was subsequently unable to bear children. The tragedy catalysed the painting. During her recovery, she painted 'Miscarriage in Detroit', her first incisive self-portrait, and the foundation for her personal painting style. Immobility and deprivation forced her to impelled her to develop her art to the full.

Frida was a mestiza (of mixed race). Her work was deeply rooted in traditional, Mexican indigenous styles, especially church figures called retablos; these blended with the influence of surrealism – a true blending of indigenous and cosmopolitan/progressive influences. Andre Breton did in fact visit Mexico, and was hugely impressed by the vitality and originality of the art there. Partly through his influence, she

had her first major exhibition in the Julian Levy Gallery in New York in 1938. Her devotees included Soviet filmmaker Sergei Eisenstein, painter Pablo Picasso, and novelist Andre Breton. In addition to these literary and artistic luminaries, her circle included political figures such as Leon Trotsky and the Rockefeller family. But this 'limelight' was not altogether congenial to her: "I dislike the "high society" here [in New] and feel a little rage against all these fat cats, since I've seen thousands of people in terrible misery."

A year later, she had an exhibition in Paris, partly organised by Marcel Duchamp. It was well-reviewed, but at that time Frida had some feelings against the Surrealists, calling them 'this bunch of cocoo lunatic sons of bitches of surrealists.'

In the 1940s, she was much more celebrated in the United States than in Mexico, being exhibited at the Museum of Modern Art, the Boston Institute of Contemporary Arts and the Philadelphia Museum of Art. In 1946 she was awarded a Mexican government fellowship, and an official prize related to the Annual National Exhibition. She also took up teaching at the new experimental art school 'La Esmeralda', where she proved a source of inspiration to her students. In 1953 she was exhibited in Mexico itself - the only solo show held there in her own lifetime – at the Galeria de Arte Contemporaneo in the Zona Rosa of Mexico City. At first it seemed that Kahlo would be too ill to attend, but she sent her richly decorated fourposter bed ahead of her, arrived by ambulance, and was carried into the gallery on a stretcher. The private view was a resounding success.

Her work tended to be overlooked by the academics and critics of the 60s, probably because of her Communist affiliations. It was in the 1980s, with the arrival of Neomexicanismo that she returned posthumously to major recognition by the general public. She was the foremost woman artist of the revolution. Furthermore, she is of major significance as a disabled artist. Interest in her life and work was generated by the 2002 movie Frida starring Selma Hayek.

The rise of feminism and in recent critical theory led to the re-evaluation of her work. The following excerpt from John Tagg's *Ground of Dispute* (p. 20) suggest why Kahlo's work would gain recent critical acceptance:

"But if my body is a locus, it is not the centre of a discourse; and if it is located, it is at once 'a place in history' and a site of 'more than one identity'. In this sense, my body is never one place: it is always elsewhere, dispersed in meaning and differentiation, given over to the unequal exchanges of discipline and desire . . ."

The first major exhibition of her works in this country was mounted at the Tate Modern in 2005 – the first for 20 years! She was a communist, and a great supporter of the Mexican Revolution. It was in these circumstances that she met Diego Rivera. Ideologically, at the start, they were highly compatible. At a personal level, her relationship with Diego Rivera was creatively catalytic (though their styles differed dramatically), but often stormy. There were extra-marital affairs on both sides, on Frida's side both hetero and lesbian, including an affair between Frida and Leon Trotsky. Kahlo was later to say: "I suffered two grave accidents in my life. One in which

a streetcar knocked me down ... The other accident is Diego.” There is some speculation as to whether some of the medical operations on Frida for her spine and her crippled foot, were not really necessary, but imposed by Diego to curtail her attractiveness to potential partners.

Ideologically, they finally headed in different directions: Rivera was expelled from the Communist Party because of his links with the Mexican government of the day, and because of his association with Trotsky. Kahlo boasted: ‘I was a member of the Party before I met Diego and I think I am a better Communist than he is or ever will be.’

In her later years, she felt obliged to leave Mexico, because of her friendship with Trotsky’s assassin. Her health continued to deteriorate, as, sadly, did the quality of her painting. In 1953 threatened by gangrene, Frida had her right leg amputated below the knee – a terrible tragedy for someone who had invested so much in the elaboration of her own self image. She learned to walk again with an artificial limb, and even (briefly and with the help of pain-killing drugs) danced at celebrations with friends. But the end was close. In July 1954, she made her last public appearance, at a Communist demonstration against the overthrow of left-wing Guatemalan president Jacobo Arbenz. Soon afterwards, she died in her sleep, apparently as the result of an embolism, though there was a some suspicion of suicide. Her last diary entry read: ‘I hope the end is joyful - and I hope never to come back – Frida.’”

Dave Russel

‘Baby’ BONKERSFEST Blog

Creative Routes. Lewisham People’s Day. Moutfield Park 10th July

‘It was ragged and naive, it was heaven’ there was something about the overall ‘vibe’ of the ‘Baby’ Bonkersfest on the beautiful little Bandstand stage that made me think of the words of David Bowie’s ‘Memory of a Free Festival’. Tucked away in a corner of Mountsfield Park, in Catford, as part of this years Lewisham People’s Day , like a cool little festival within a festival, with an intimate cosy and strictly laid back feel, suitable for the blazing heat on what was a completely glorious day, once more the sunshine smiles on the Bonkersfest.

Following a slow crowd build up there was a healthy audience during the course of the day with some staying to check out several acts and others looking in for one or two, some going off for a wander to check some of the other goodies on offer at this brilliant long standing community festival, now celebrating it’s 26th year, and returning later to check other acts The stages proximity to one of the main thoroughfares in and out of the festival meant we attracted

a fair bit of passing trade, with some just stopping by briefly and others settling in for the long haul. And it was a really mixed audience in all terms with people from all ages and backgrounds enjoying the goods on offer. Just what you would expect from a ‘people’s day’.

On stage activity kicked off with regular people’s day festival regulars UPROAR an enthusiastic vocal band comprised of people with learning difficulties from a local Sydenham based project organised by facilitator Gwyn Jones. Their original evocative and positive songs of love hope and joy brought an uplifting quality to the start of the day and proved that another marginalised group in society can be cool, the UPROAR crew and their full posse also stuck around to enjoy a lot of the other acts that followed with much enthusiasm, we were glad they enjoyed. We were happy to invite UPROAR to be part of our BONKERSFEST stage as we have wanted to involve them with BFEST. We would love to work with them again.

Despite meticulous forward planning there are always glitches that throw spanners in the works, the vagaries of public transport meant that Razz and at least one of his accompanist ‘BAFFLED ANGELS’ was pushing the wire as far as arriving just in time to get on and perform. Joined by his regular bassman and Creative Routes own Pete McD adding some stonking guitar and Olympic Clamp Down percussionist Arnold Lane. A bit rock’n’roll, with a bit of a ‘punk’ political edge, showed off the strength of RAZZ’s melodic and incisive song writing. A real treat.

The eccentric wordsmith PAUL THE POET one half of the lunatic PROVACATEERS was on hand to fill in with some of his utterly insane poetry and ‘madcap’ stage antics, nuttier than a box of frogs.

JAZZMAN JOHN brought back the true spirit of jazz with a totally improvised set accompanied by virtuoso Italian jazz saxophonist Roberto Manzin, now apparently a local Bellingham resident, who has previously played with luminaries such as funk guru James Brown and East European percussionist Enos Kugler in the UK for a brief flying visit from Slovenia, John also brought the international connection and some exotic flavour – nice! This spontaneous jam resulting after the original trio John had planned to bring dropped out at short notice. Some cool laid back jazz was just the thing for a hot summer’s afternoon.

In the gap between the Jazzman and the next billed act MC JASON WHY invited award winning ‘slam’ poet and professional actor ALLAIN ENGLISH to do a couple of his quickfire but complex verbal rants, top stuff. Allain will be the featured poet at the August POET’S COMMUNION as usual on the last Monday of the month at the ART’s bar (above the FUNKY MUNKY near Camberwell Green).

Dogged by sound problems, exacerbated by the odd acoustics of the bandstand award winning eccentric poet / singer and Edinburgh Fringe Festival favourite LIZ BENTLEY won the audience over with her off kilter humour and totally madcap songs and poems about therapy and breastfeeding, creating

a nice intimate feel with the 'enclosed' arena space created by the trees and stalls to the rear of the audience area.

Old friend and inspiration to Creative Routes ,Survivors Poetry founder Frank Bangay maintained this intimate vibe with his evocative and heartfelt poems were accompanied by his TOPSY TURVEY BAND with their deliberately naive and innocent shuffling off centre sound that fits Frank's Poetry so perfectly.

Veteran 'survivor' singer songwriter DAVE RUSSEL is always good value for money with his quirky eccentric songs and virtuoso guitar playing, he impressed and won over many in the audience and he has gained new fans, noticed quite a few grins raised by Dave's paean to 'the Burglars of Britain'. SLP journalist Dan Frost was on the button to give him a big up in the festival preview in the 'Pulse' pages; thanks Dan, nice to meet you by the way.

Tyrone Thomas' OLYMPIC CLAMP DOWN were sounding mellowed and cooled out with the addition of a keyboard player adding a funky edge and their sound augmented by Arnold's experimentation with an electronic drum kit. Cool, cool, cool this band just get better every time I see them.

Utter mayhem invaded the stage in the shape of pirate maniacs THE PROVOCATEERS here augmented with guest drummer Enos Kugler who had also played earlier with the Jazzman. Vocalist and guitarist Pete Bowditch, a founding figure in the original Deptford 'Combination' Theatre leads the attack with mad cap sea shanties that get us chanting along whilst madcap 'percussionist' Paul the Poet (yes it's him again) runs around the stage and the audience going completely mental. You just have to see to believe their immensely psychedelic version of the old Beatles classic 'I am the Walrus', completely loony.

ONE TRUE DOG brought their shamanic psychedelic noise to the party with poems and tunes about urban alienation and bodily realities, as punters commented they were 'unusual' and 'random' (that's good random apparently).

More late arrivals, victims of the London Traffic were Mathew and Polly - of the astounding 'street real' poetry and cello duo we 'discovered' some months ago at one of our POET'S COMMUNION open mic poetry nights, SLEEPER SPEAKER, arriving separately and both late, Mathew is up onstage first bravely trying to carry the crowd without his able accompanist, he is a strong enough poet and performer to pull this off, then at the last minute Polly arrives. No time for a soundcheck she does it sans mic, entirely 'unplugged' sat astride the monitor speakers at the front of the stage she again takes full advantage of the intimate audience arena totally drawing the audience in and making them feel involved. It takes a strong act to carry things off in the circumstances in the way they did and they showed themselves to be real troopers by soldiering on in the face of adversity to overcome triumphant.

Seasoned MC the unique Mr Jason why had prepared for this emergency and had got a couple more poets up to fill in the time including encouraging one spontaneous performer,

a local Lewisham resident, to get up out of the crowd and have a go, something we always like to encourage, I was even encouraged to get up and do a couple of bits myself and in the spirit of the day did a couple of my 'comic' pieces rather than the usual 'King Miserable' sh*t. In a spirit of anarchy I spontaneously invited RAZZ back up onstage to treat us to a couple of his incisive poetic gems. It was at that point that Matthew arrived to save the day and get us just about back on track time wise (and timing was crucial with such a packed and diverse bill).

Next up was BLACK STAR long time regulars at the Peoples Day with their upbeat positive melodic reggae tunes, again we were happy to invite them to be part of our stage having worked with them previously on last years Billy Blake Birthday Bash they carried on the afternoons niced up mellow vibe.

Sadly Creative Routes and Sound Minds own Rasta chanter DJ HONEY rang to say that he had been suffering from tribulations that prevented him from getting there, he was really apologetic and sad to miss the day and he was sadly missed by many who had been looking forward to seeing him perform and those who missed the chance to see him were denied an audial treat. Oh well next time.

This meant a bit of spare time which was ably filled in by Tyrone and Colin with a stripped down ACCOUSTIC CLAMPDOWN.

The whole day closed with an almighty bang with CR's Samba Drum maniacs BLOCO MALOCO drumming up a storm and getting people up and moving sending the punters home happy. For me it was a quick trip over to the festivals mainstage to catch closing headline act THE BEAT play an amazing uplifting set that had the audience on their feet and skanking, a perfect end to a really hot but way cool day.

All in all it was an utterly brilliant day, feedback from everyone has been totally positive and things bode well for us to get the chance to run another BONKERSFEST stage at next years festival, who knows we may be able to make it a regular feature, something to look forward to.

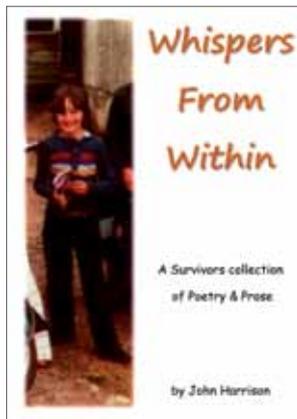
EXCELSIOR.

Dave Skull, BONKERSFEST stage organiser for CREATIVE ROUTES.

B Safe 1st Always

John Harrison

– <http://www.bsafelstalways.com>



This is one of the best-articulated statements about abuse I have encountered. It is a fully comprehensive site, containing autobiographical details, an extremely well documented history of Harrison's campaign, some powerful poems and pictorial material, also contact links.

Harrison has been extremely thorough in his description of dealings with governmental bodies. He took the utmost care in presenting his credentials to all those in positions of power and influence, particularly in verifying his lack of a criminal record. The site contains the complete text of a circular letter he sent to heads of Healthcare departments, Gordon Brown, David Cameron, Nick Clegg and others. This is a fully stated, admirably rationalised indictment of the utter inadequacy of current provision for this problem area, outspoken in its criticism.

He nails down evasiveness: "The fact that you choose to get people to write on your behalf which is and will be used to exonerate you from that correspondence does not exonerate you. You choose what they do on your behalf. You are responsible for their deeds and actions that you have them do on your behalf. I wrote to you about the affects of child abuse. You failed to respond yourself . . . You, your government, previous governments are guilty. You all cannot obviously be blamed for the start of abuse. But all of your and their systems failings to act on the facts known in cases directly leads to more abuse being suffered and deaths . . . Not only have you failed to secure our basic fundamental human rights. But you and your government have undermined and eroded them . . . In many of our cases including mine after these failings and more within the system (and yes outside its jurisdiction) we have little or in most cases no recourse of action . . . They have insinuated things . . . put miss leading things on . . . lied on my medical records. They have broken the Data Protection Act . . . People who abused me or where abusive where compassionately dealt with. I had the opposite for years they said I did not need their help, that I was not even mentally ill. Which they now on record lie about, and say they knew I was ill and that they helped me. I tried ICAS, and the Health Care Commission; on two occasions they failed me and only seemed interested in preserving the status quo. I tried locally with GP's. With NHS chief executives. Only for more lies, assertions and more neglect to be dished out. I tried and am trying the legal route. Being failed by it as I have said earlier in this letter."

And the on-going call to act: "Why must your system be allowed to lie, abuse, neglect and discriminate against us? Doctors and other health care professionals must not continue to have near if not total impunity. This is a fact. My case and others prove it beyond all doubt. I hold you personally responsible . . . The system abusing and neglecting our rights, our lives, is something you all should be ensuring either doesn't happen or is safe guarded against. You have all failed. You have all actually made it worse. Do not insult our intelligence by saying "how does this happen" when it is so blatantly obvious and well known. And I will continue until I die. I assure you prime minister this is not the last you and others have heard from me. I will never stop until they (within the system health care professionals etc) are in a court of law and become for the first time answerable for their actions and in actions and or if all else fails I intend to totally expose them and all those who have and do fail me and others including you, your government and other members of the opposition. And the organisations that have failed me all these years to help support me to stop it all continuously continuing . . ."

His communications were largely ignored, with the exception of Nick Clegg, who "did talk of the issues involved in a general way". Facsimiles of the relevant correspondence – from ward notes to ministries – speak volumes about their evasiveness and apathy, their perpetual 'passing the buck'.

The detailed reply from the Department for Children, Schools, and Families is a masterpiece of diplomatic evasiveness: ". . . the DCSF is unable to comment on or intervene in individual cases. I would urge you . . . to discuss the local availability of counselling services with your GP and support services . . . Survivors of abuse may obtain help, according to their needs, from a range of statutory and non-statutory agencies in the health and social care fields . . . The Health Secretary and the Secretary of State for DCSFG have also established a Social Work Taskforce, to inform a long-term programme with the objectives of reforming initial social work training . . . the Taskforce will roots its work in the views and expertise of front line practitioners . . ."

The letter refers to Lord Laming's The Protection of Children in England, A Progress Report: "The report makes detailed recommendations to ensure that best practice is universally applied in every area of the country; to improve local accountability; and to provide more support for local leaders and better training and support for the front-line workforce."

The Documents file contains some medical notes and letters; these too merit careful scrutiny, particularly the claim that Harrison was discharged after refusing DCSF treatment: "It is difficult to see really how we can help him because he is not really mentally ill & we don't have the resources at the moment to deal with anger management in people who are not mentally ill."

"With regard to his childhood, he has very poor recall."

"He did not appear mentally unwell, just plain miserable. He is difficult to work with, and finds fault with all his keyworkers thus far.2

"In the absence of psychiatric disorder no arrangements have been made for follow-up."

Harrison's sense of justice (and injustice) is poignantly articulated

in 'The Price': "The crime is noticing and knowing the truth. That which they wish to deny. That which they wish not to except. It would interfere with their lives. Their answers their conclusions their reasoning their lies. So even though it destroys somebody else or worse. It's a price they think is worth paying. But it is you who pay the price not them. A price that is not and never will be worth paying. It's easy to think it is a price worth paying . . . when it's not you that will pay the price."

"The way to judge society is not to look at all the well off or the top. But to look at what happens to the ones at the bottom how they are helped and treated." (CMHT)

His two files of Writings are enormously honest and powerful. 'The Bridge (Temptation or Realisation)' relates the aftermath of abuse, rejection by society, and suicidal tendencies: ". . . at the end of 2002 I had myself built up my hope. An appointment with a Psychiatrist took away my hope. You can not live without hope. If I didn't know this before I knew on that day or the days that followed. It started so good. I would stand my ground with him and question him and his care. As he discharged me from their care? I left deeply upset, hurt. I walked across a bridge in a slight daze. I stood looking over and down. So knocked back I find myself saying to my self "why don't I do myself and everyone a favour and just jump?" It scared me I moved away and went home. For a few days I was scared to go out. Scared of what I was feeling. I believe this was the most prominent thing that began over the next four months to unlock some truth not just of my childhood but of the recent past and the present too."

In 'The Gam'e, he expresses his defiant, independent spirit:

The problem is I'm not a participant

I am the game/Play well for you can never loose/ The game is not with me/It is me

In 'Is it a 'Game like Chess', he makes a shrewd appraisal of the essence of struggle with a powerful but uncaring system, and surmounts defeatism: "You know the game it can be like chess. Sometimes you realise you can't win. So all you can then do is try and get it to stalemate. When that happens no one wins. But it's the best you can do. So you don't beet them but you make sure they can't win. How it affects them depends on how much winning means to them. But if stalemate happens you are on top because you couldn't have won anyway. But they could have. You got the best you could have but they lost."

He achieves optimism through expressing pessimism:

"I'm a failure because I try/I'm sad because I care/I'm a fool because I want to believe/It's my fault because I keep . . ./Trying, Caring Believing/Even as it destroys me inside . . .

'(The Dream of Life)'

He sees a way ahead by expressing self-doubt: "So alone. So much victimised. So much wrong. 'What's the point?' An answer is in me. I know it's not good. It's like a silent answer. One that wells up more tears. But the denial of the answer right now keeps me safe. Can so many for so long be all wrong? Hey another question. Reasoning the unreasonable. Can I be so wrong to believe they Abuse me and it is wrong? Why do so many not act when they know? They

are so absent. They believe those that hurt us." '(What's the Point?)'

This is of particular import to me, as mentor for Kate Evans's *Journey Into Healing*. Kate was outspoken in her conviction that much mental distress is firmly rooted in sexual abuse. All readers/browsers must remember that this site asks for replies, comments, participation. It could be built up into something really powerful. Do read and respond; browse thoroughly!

Comments and comparable stories are welcomed; do reply. This could be the beginning of a vital database and lifeline for a major area of suffering which has hitherto been severely marginalised.

How many have suffered in silence? Give yourselves and others light and hope! In 'Links/Books' there is an extremely helpful list of effective support organisations.

An admirable endeavour, which deserves to grow into something large-scale.

Dave Russell

Perfect Blue

Kona McPhee:

Bloodaxe 2010; ISBN 978-1-85244-866-6; £7.95

The title phrase concludes the opening poem, lubilate –pure blue skies – visible in the vaulted space above a shopping mall, where someone jumps to his death. Kona compares the 'tunnel vision' of weekend shoppers to the 'emotional emptiness of the suicide': "I hate the fact that our culture steers kids . . . into thinking of 'going shopping' as a primary recreational activity."

The invention of the electric chair explores the use of wood to make instruments of cruelty and relates human use to a tree's organic cycle. When a tree is used to conduct energy, its essence is corrupted ". . . As neutral wood suborns to dark intents". Trees are sacrificed to service human sacrifice.

Addiction: ". . . Out of the central college-and-tourist zone, there are some wondrously ugly sights in Cambridge . . . I wish now that I'd followed up on my half-formed idea to produce a Cambridge Anti-Calendar, featuring all the ugliest Cambridge locations I could photograph . . . one particularly grim location was the fetid toilet block at the Drummer Street Bus Station – a favoured place to shoot up . . . I've never been addicted to any drug stronger than tobacco, but there have certainly been times in the past when I could have been . . ."

Wild night's morning: eulogy for an intrepid crow – weather-beaten, possibly injured by a cat or a fox. Struggling with the elements, it can 'annul each gust/with accordant force.' with resilience and dignity: 'in his ruined grace/not a sundered abbey/ but a boxer's face.'

Pheasant and astronomers: sound physics here: "seethe down the invert shrinkage of a telescope." In describing the pheasant, Kona relates aesthetics to mathematics: "Our measures and projections fall aside/as coarsest calculus to his most perfect curve;"

“. . . I did get to spend a few years writing astronomy-related software in the amenable surrounds of the Institute of Astronomy in Cambridge. The IoA occupies a garden-like site on the outskirts of town, and is frequented by a variety of wildlife . . . to see a cock pheasant up close is to be reminded of how arrestingly colourful this ‘ordinary’ bird’s plumage is. We take pheasants for granted because they’re everywhere – and we forget how . . . lovely they are.”

‘The Short Answer’: In our ‘safe and comfortable’ environment, we live routinely from day to day, oblivious of ever-present hazards to our eco-system. But when one everyday object – a car key, gets out of context, a moment of concomitant panic reveals a chaotic cosmos.

“Space agencies really do have to attempt to track the junk that’s now floating around in orbit. . . . from big chunks like spent rocket stages and dead satellites to tiny fragments like paint flakes. The biggest objects are tracked by radar, but NASA says that “the greatest challenge is medium size particles . . . not easily tracked and . . . large enough to cause catastrophic damage to spacecraft and satellites.”

‘A year in the back country’ conveys the real bleakness of rural retreats, measures reverie against the discomfiture of corresponding reality.

“For me, the daydream is one of dropping out – heading off to some remote and beautiful place, and leading a minimalist existence in some small-but-perfectly-formed retreat . . . however . . . my minimalist lifestyle would definitely include a laptop and an internet connection – so while I might be isolated in the physical world, I’d still be just as connected in the virtual one.

‘Self-portrait aged 8 with electric fence’: The witticism of this ‘nursery rhyme’ captures electricity’s primal impact on an unknowing child.

“. . . We lived in a house that bumped up against the outermost membrane of suburbia. Just beyond the communal parkland of our housing development, there were farms, dams and orchards . . . Quite near the house . . . there was a field that intermittently contained cows. The cows were kept in this field by . . . a fragile-looking fence and an electrified wire. We proved the liveness of the wire by holding grass-blades against it, and counting the tiny clicks of attenuated shock that transmitted themselves like a pulse down the wavering green ribbon.

“. . . the writing process has genuine cathartic power; the sudden discharge of electricity to ground, through the channel of a human body, seems like an apt metaphor for the abrupt release of stored-up emotion that the act of writing can bring.”

Pears translucent soap: “When I was very small, my hair was often washed with Pears soap. The honey-coloured, semi-see-through block had a distinctive and lovely smell that now has a thoroughly Proustian effect on me. I’ve continued to buy it as an adult for sentimental reasons.” Pears soap, looking like amber, is a symbol for geological time.

‘To a Young Daughter’: “I hate the way children attempt to force conformity on each other . . . Girls enforce conformity in

a particularly noxious way, by pointedly excluding those who refuse, or simply fail, to assume the camouflage of being just like everybody else. My own experiences have left me over-sensitive, so it’s particularly difficult for me to give calm and judicious advice when any of the girls in our household are experiencing ‘peer-group issues’. My honest prescription – ‘just be yourself and you’ll be happier in the long run’ – must sound pretty hollow to a six-year-old with nobody to play with at break-time.”

This expresses childhood’s early ‘ugly duckling/promises of future perfect/sisterhood . . .’ and its later ‘brutal elegance’. Conformist humans are contrasted with the mountain hare – “whose pelt/pulsates with light and dark”: beauty and ugliness are fused.

‘Autumn evening blues’: “The length of days doesn’t change uniformly throughout the year; rather, it follows a sinusoidal curve (like an S on its side) with steep periods where the day lengthens or shortens by a larger amount each day, and shallower periods where its duration changes only a little. October is one of those months of steep change . . . A shot tower is typically a tall, straight, chimney-like structure, traditionally used in the making of lead shot. Droplets of molten lead would be released at the top of the shot tower, and, due to the funkiness of physics, would take on a near-spherical shape as they fell freely to the bottom, where a cooling bath of water typically awaited them to ensure their solidification. The ‘shot-tower fall of October’ captures for me the steepness of October’s change in day-length . . .

“‘Common darkness’ means for me both ‘ordinary’ darkness – the normal visual spectrum in which we see . . . and the shared darkness of bedtime. The tigers are a reference to William Blake’s poem *The Tyger*. The tiger hidden in the night, the eyes vivid in invisible wavelengths in the dark, are, for me, the emotion we cover up with habit or convention . . .” – The whites of the eyes are illuminated in infra-red light.

‘Justice’: “We institutionalise this abstract, even-handed, ‘fair’ notion of justice, and then we demand that it satisfy our desires for retribution or revenge. Can it ever? As Mandela said of his own anger towards those who had imprisoned him, ‘I wanted to be free so I let it go.’”

There is always a mismatch – between gut feelings of having been wronged, and ‘answers’ to them – political actions, like presidential vetoes and filibustering votes, and the purported principles invoked to justify – a gulf between justice and retribution.

‘Newsbites’: A villanelle, with predefined rhyme scheme and repeated lines, like Dylan Thomas’s ‘Do Not Go Gentle into That Good Night’ The verse structure skilfully parodies journalistic slogans.

“I haven’t owned a TV in a long time, but occasionally when I’m staying in a hotel room I’ll switch on the TV news. It’s inevitably a deeply depressing experience . . . The thing I find most disheartening, though, is the empty and exploitative mock-concern with which human suffering in far-off places is presented . . . the repetitions of a villanelle seem appropriate both to the endlessly-repeated inflictions of human violence and brutality, and to the repetitive platitudes with which these are presented and ‘explained’ to us by the mainstream media.”

'Wildwar': "My daughter was born at the end of January in 2003, and a few weeks later, Iraq was invaded . . . I imagined the new mothers in Baghdad cowering with their own tiny infants, as bombs and missiles took apart the world around them. I felt outraged and helpless, filled with overwhelming empathy and empty of power to do anything . . . wishing that a few more of the world's 'leaders' . . . might be made to feel this way too – because how could they continue to wreak such destruction if they . . . felt the implications at an emotional level?"

"The emotions I felt then were highly charged, which makes them quite difficult to write about without becoming mawkish or hectoring . . . I've held onto the feelings about war and vulnerability, but approached the subject obliquely, by simply observing the 'collateral damage' suffered by the natural world – animals, insects, plants – at the hands of our . . . industrially-scaled tools of destruction."

Her staccato phrases have the effect of snapshots or film footage taken in mid-action – ample room, and prompts, for the imagination.

'Exit hymn': ". . . apocalyptic anxiety . . . has shifted from popular, much-discussed fears of nuclear holocaust to popular, much-discussed fears of environmental meltdown.

"We may well be headed for a catastrophic global environmental crisis. We may yet fall victim to a global thermonuclear war. It's nonetheless difficult for us to gauge the severity of these threats, because there's such a large irrational component in our fear of coming end-times.

"As a species, we do love to forecast the apocalypse . . . Is this tantalizing worry really just our fear of our own individual deaths, in a conveniently externalised disguise?"

"It's self-obsessed and short-termist to think that what happens to us over the next 200 years is very important on a cosmic scale. However, it's even more self-obsessed and short-termist to crash our planet's interlinked global ecosystems into the ground, just because we're too lazy, greedy or in-denial to clean up our act."

This poem has a 'call and response' structure – prophecies based on known, reported environmental disasters – counterbalanced by eulogies to the elements.

'Exit hymn' is about our real environmental anxieties; The problem of the bees concerns those we don't have but should.

"In very recent years, there have been widespread unexplained disappearances of bee colonies – so-called Colony Collapse Disorder. Since bees are primary pollinators for a great many plant species – including . . . a large number of human food crops – the implications of large-scale bee-loss are pretty sobering."

'The Book of Diseases' applies a microscope to many ailments, showing their cosmic dimensions by magnifying the bacteria.

"In 2006, my husband Patrick started an 'Invention Of The Day' blog, and he proceeded to post a new invention every single day for an entire year . . . I felt somewhat shamed: "If he can come

up with an invention every single day, surely I ought to be able to write one measly poem each week! . . . Poem Of The Week was born.

". . . I was quite intimidated about what I was taking on; it felt like signing up to run a marathon despite being barely able to make it around the block . . . I thought about Simon Armitage's wonderful poetry collection *Cloudcuckooland*. This book includes the long poem sequence *The Whole Of The Sky* . . . written at a truly awesome rate of one poem per day, and includes a poem for every named constellation in the night sky. I figured that the rich set of constellation names must have been inherently inspiring, and decided that perhaps it would be helpful to have a similar overarching theme to provide a stream of poem starting-points . . . my own (slightly morbid!) first choice of theme was historical diseases – hence the sequence 'The Book Of Diseases'.

Leprosy: leprosy has the ability to numb the senses; that there are no 'warning signals' if parts of the body are injured.

"In the popular imagination, leprosy is some kind of flesh-eating disease that causes parts of the body to 'fall off'. Untreated leprosy sufferers frequently lose fingers and toes, and even hands and feet . . . because of the . . . peripheral nerve damage it causes. This nerve damage can eventually make the extremities completely numb; sufferers then repeatedly injure them, because they have lost all the usual pain cues that tell us when we have hurt ourselves, or are about to.

"The story of the blind men and the elephant is an Indian folktale, with many variants. 'Ludwig' is of course Beethoven, who died deaf – though 'dying fall' comes from Orsino in *Twelfth Night*.

Scarlet fever: In our culture, the connotations of 'red' include both anger and being immobilised (stop signs, traffic lights) . . . You know those people who shamle through their days in a rictus-smiled haze of unacknowledged-yet-barely-suppressed rage, feeling themselves stuck in the wrong job, the wrong marriage or even the wrong life, but unwilling or unable to contemplate any change . . ."

"Someone suffering from the disease, and at a high temperature, has a vision of being badly injured in a bomb attack – and 'experiences' scarlet in a different form. Close in colour is the crimson of the clock-radio, which might be a guide or a warning: 'it all depends on whether you know how lost you are.' The illness, and its associated colour, seems to epitomise his general frustration with life."

'Pleurisy': Kona suffered the trauma of a disease she had considered a thing of the past.

'Gonorrhoea': cry of compassion for those suffering agony for what might have been innocent pleasure, and being criminalized for disease.

'Depression': excellent relating of depression to creativity: "I've experienced intermittent bouts of depression for most of my life; fortunately, they seem to be growing ever more widely-spaced. I think my depression has always been 'reactive' – a response to life circumstances rather than a random biochemical imbalance.

“My depressive phases are induced . . . by my unconscious mind’s realisation that that there is something I need to relinquish . . .

“. . . I’ve come to trust my particular form of depression as a process, and to let it run its course, trying to keep faith that in the end I will feel clear and enlivened again . . . I see this depression as a bitter but powerful remedy that brings me one step closer to psychological integration . . .

“The worst depressions I’ve ever endured occurred during my last few years at school – well before I had any understanding of what the process meant, or, to be fair, any real power to change the more unbearable aspects of my life. During those times, I absolutely wanted to be dead, and yet I didn’t want to kill myself; I was still rational enough to see how devastating that action would be for other people. Instead, I went to bed each night fantasizing that some magic hand might reach out through the dark and simply erase my existence from history . . .

“The longed-for hand never came, and the desolation I felt every morning – when I woke again to find myself ‘still there’ – is one of the worst things I’ve ever experienced.”

There is the energy ‘underside’ of depression: “the mind pursues/a witless grind . . . its constant mate/a fleet of thoughts/that race unchecked/but never free.” (I’m not sure about the final image of replacing the brain with a stone or tree – D.).

‘Influenza – Sci Fi’: an interplanetary panorama. An ‘alien’ invasion has been ‘hushed up’. The visitants unleash an epidemic, and are interned, quarantined ‘for their own protection’. Research into the incident has proved ineffectual, as it happened in a dictatorial state which rewrote history; it refers to “the Great Redemption/when records, as you know, were purified.’ Alternate verses are spoken by the visitants.

‘Plague’: Here, ‘plague’ and ‘vector’ (as in ‘disease vector’) are used for the social ailment of a spreading cult, rather than anything biological, but there are obvious parallels. (The scientist in me would love to see some diagrams of the way that cults spread within and between communities, and see if there are similarities with the spread of individual viruses).

“I’ve always been aware of a certain ingenuousness in myself, springing from a thwarted need ‘to belong’ . . . to suborn myself within some external framework of higher meaning . . . This poem’s aristocratic young man, persuaded or brainwashed into shedding his cushy existence for some irrational but passionate crusade, is probably a cipher for my younger self.”

“I had a lot of fun with the sound-play in this poem, particularly in the first stanza. As something of a minimalist/simple-lifer, I’m parading my Schadenfreude with ‘dysphoric millionaires’, and I relish the sharp ‘malfeasance of angles’ and ‘inhuman mien’ of the plague-spreading protagonist.

“The phrase ‘the fervour of the novice damned’ captures for me the driven earnestness of recent converts of all kinds . . . The mildly paradoxical phrase ‘to fall redeemed’ reflects the inadvertent glamour of the seedy, the romance of poverty when viewed from outside. As a . . . 16 year old, I was captivated by the 1986 Australian film *Dogs in Space* and the shambolic bohemian lifestyle

it portrayed . . . That vision of the world seemed to provide a genuinely redemptive alternative to my stressed-and-depressed, middle-class, academically-driven existence.”

‘Dysentery’: . . . “many ‘brand name’ diseases are largely scourges of the past . . . the word ‘dysentery’ always makes me think of the glory days of the British Empire . . . this poem . . . is at once a celebration of their adventurousness and appetite for knowledge, and a swipe at their anglocentric condescension and pomposity. It’s probably also a bit of a dig at dry academicism . . . Jung said it well: ‘Analysis kills and synthesis brings to life. We must find out how to get everything back into connection with everything else. We must resist the vice of intellectualism and get it understood that we cannot only understand.”

“This . . . is an unacknowledged salute to the brilliant old BBC radio show *My Word*, with Frank Muir and Denis Norden . . . coming up with convoluted anecdotes that finished up with a terrible pun on a pre-designated, well-known phrase. I still remember one of these stories explaining how you could tell that a brie was ripe when pressing it in the middle felt like pressing your eyeball.”

The ‘central character’ is an explorer – hint of Britain’s ‘golden age’ here.

‘Typhoid’ inspired by a BBC news story about women lifers in a mental institution, not because they were disturbed, but because they were asymptomatic carriers of Typhoid. Isolated, long confined in challenging surroundings, they experienced mental deterioration. The voice of this poem is one of these aged, incarcerated women.

**Highly relevant to survivors – expressing a desperate struggle for articulation by one severely debilitated.

‘Smallpox’: “Growing up in Melbourne, I rapidly developed a strong phobia of the large and fast-moving huntsman spiders that got into the house . . .

“My huntsman phobia is very particular (unlike huntsmans, I can rescue large Scottish spiders from the bath, and I’ve even held a tarantula in my hands) . . . a curious mixture of panicky terror and perverse fascination. If you put a huntsman in a safely-sealed jar on my desk, I’d spend all day staring at it, and even provoking it to rear up on its hind legs and menace me.

“The poem has a very tight rhyme and rhythm scheme . . . There’s a terrific pleasure in writing poems like this, because the ultra-restrictive constraints seem to act as a spur to one’s unconscious creativity; somehow, almost miraculously, piece after piece of the rhyme’s ‘puzzle’ appear and slot into place, as though the poem already exists and is simply being remembered, bit by bit “

‘Cholera’: many creative spirits died of this, including Tchaikovsky, whose baton is “laid to its satined bed like the long shank of a pale and lovely boy . . .”

‘Syphilis’: My favourite poem in ‘Book of Diseases’. A three-stage disease like syphilis is already a micro-story in its own right – beginning, middle and end: syphilis brings a tragic overtone to Capone’s life, highlighting the drama of a man destroyed by his own brutality – a poem counterpointing the panache of exhibitionism

with the ravages of this ugly malady.

'The Detour': "I saw just a couple of episodes of the TV series *The Twilight Zone* as a kid, but I found them pretty memorable. That ambience of creepy mystery was almost certainly the inspiration for this poem."

It uses the motif of a car journey at breakneck speed, where a time limit is involved, and panic takes over – as often happens when travelling without road-maps. New tech doesn't always compensate: "The hire-car's sat-nav screen shows near-precisely/the nowhere that they're in the middle of,/but one key detail's lost – the track's not there." She sees the all-important landmark; he misses his bearings: there is a 'pile-up'. With gadgets 'out of sync' they are stranded – hopes dashed to the ground.

'Three Vagaries' – vignettes on the theme of insomnia. It makes one feel like a wilting, unwatered plant. A fly on ones hand evokes 'blood pools in silted deltas'; untrammled by sleep, mind and imagination range freely.

'Borrowdale' – a favourite resort for Youth-hostellers

'Fen train': "The train journey from Cambridge to Peterborough is an indirect one . . . In many places, the railway line is elevated on tall embankments, offering a panoramic view over the relentlessly flat landscape and its rich and delicious-looking brown soil.

"The town of Ely . . . used to lie on an island amid the swamps and waterways of the Fens, until the land was 'reclaimed' for agriculture . . . While it was submerged . . . biological matter such as dead trees didn't fully decompose; an ironic side-effect of draining the land is that in subsequent centuries, 'ground level' sank lower and lower as biomatter in the soil broke down on exposure to the air. The original drainage channel . . . are now effectively aqueducts elevated in high banks.

"Some people love the Fenlands landscape and its 'big sky', but I've always been more of a mountain person. East Anglia is apparently under a lot of housing pressure, and somehow those . . . modern housing developments look even more depressing in a perfectly flat landscape."

'The malfunction': "The most retrospectively guilt-inducing moment of recent years is the afternoon when I stupidly let my baby daughter play with my watch – and she promptly bit right through the watch-glass. Fortunately, and somewhat miraculously, she suffered no harm . . . the watch, however, was a write-off.

"My husband had a couple of old Swatch watches lying around, and I adopted one of these as my new watch. On occasion, I found myself being atypically late; while it mostly kept good time, every now and then the watch would be inexplicably slow, sometimes by up to half an hour. I assumed that I must have somehow jolted the adjuster knob and caused the hands to move. One day I looked down . . . The watch's second hand was moving the wrong way, anticlockwise; just for a little while, the watch was running backwards."

'Paranoia': "Years ago, I stayed in a youth hostel in the city of Seattle, which lies on a major geological fault-line. Just as I was

unpacking my bag, the room jolted and then rocked back and forth, as if a large truck had bumped into it . . . It wasn't until a good few seconds afterwards that I realised I'd just experienced my first proper earthquake . . . Similarly, I'm so accustomed to a reliable electricity supply that when it shuts off suddenly, I always experience a moment or two of utterly blank confusion."

"Kona remains objective, refusing to include personal subjectivity in her poems, even in an apparently personal situation, jottings in a margin or a fortune cookie, in *The Assessment*: "Your sentiments are balanced on the cusp of artlessness and visibility he noted in the margin, in red ink. At lunch, the fortune cookie said: The one who says it can't be done should not disturb the one who's doing it – which didn't seem to capture it exactly. On the street a tram let off its bell, then bombed away to overscore the ruled lines of its rails."

"This poem is a petulant swipe at certain kinds of academicism. One of the aspects of academic life that most depressed me was its . . . tendency towards knee-jerk dismissiveness of ideas or works outside of the approved academic/intellectual canon – or, in my perception of it, the pervasive belief that one loses less face by sneering at something that one's peers subsequently praise, than one does by 'naively' liking something that everybody else then decides is crap.

"Melbourne . . . has an extensive tram network. When I was a kid, the trams were lumbering, rattly single carriages with loud one-eding bells used to chivvy recalcitrant pedestrians and cars to get out of their way – not unlike crusty and irascible, long-sinecured professors. I have a bit of a grudge against trams because their metal rails, embedded in the road, are a major hazard for motorbikes; cross them at too shallow an angle and you're almost guaranteed a skid, particularly in the wet.

"One side effect of being a computer geek is that I do all of my writing in a simple . . . 'command-line terminal', using a somewhat esoteric techie text editor known as 'vi'. When I open a terminal window on my main server, it gives me a tasty opening quotation (known in geek parlance as a 'fortune', short for 'fortune cookie'). One morning it spat out the aphorism used in this poem, "The person who says it cannot be done should not interrupt the person doing it," . . . I thought it was a wonderful admonition, a great antidote to negativity and dismissiveness (academic or otherwise) – just the sort of thing I'd like to find in a real fortune cookie . . . When cracked open, it reveals a little slip of paper containing an instruction or prediction for the edification of the eater."

'View from a window': This is what I call a 'patterned poem' – patterned with assonance and half-rhyme, but also patterned and stylized in its use of language, tending towards the ritual or incantatory . . . The simple, slightly ritualised language, its musicality, the constraints imposed by the poem's formalised variations/repetitions, combine in a way that feels particularly effective for conveying an essence . . .

"D.M. Winnicott distinguished the 'true self' from a socially-compliant . . . 'false self'. . . that even the wearer can't always recognise as an assumed and misleading disguise. I associate the true self with that rare but wonderful sensation, when creativity is really flowing, of 'taking dictation from the muse'; the words . . . are coming from somewhere very deep and very real-feeling,

somewhere that's at once 'other' and yet also profoundly part of yourself. It's in the simple patterned poems that I most often experience this; the 'false', compliant self is more likely to spew out clever-clever ideas-y stuff that's intended to impress some hypothetical audience of academics, critics or other poets. One of the great challenges of writing lies in getting that bit to shut up and get out of the bleedin' way."

'A small reprieve': "I got my first proper grey hair when I was pregnant with my daughter. . . . I was full of perverse enthusiasm for it; perhaps it made me feel like a Proper Grown Up.

"In subsequent years, a handful more grey hairs appeared. To my great surprise, one day I discovered that a prominent silvery strand had turned brown again towards the root. What excitement! If I could only work out how I managed it, just think of the franchise opportunities!

"As it turns out, it's quite common for the colour-producing cells in a hair follicle to sputter on and off before finally dying out completely; some people even end up with zebra-striped hairs for a little while."

'The earthworm': "I like worms. They can eat dirt and make progress at the same time. They're great instructors in the fine art of just-getting-on-with-it. This poem is about as close to haiku as I seem to get. Instead of fixed numbers of syllables, it uses fixed numbers of words in each line . . .

'Conception': "I don't know where consciousness comes from – and in particular, why 'I' am conscious in this mind/body of mine, and not somebody else. I suppose I attribute my own subjective consciousness to some property of my particular physical body, and therefore to my precise combination of genes. Looked at this way, my conception was a spectacular fluke at the end of an astonishing chain of coincidences linking right back to the 'ancestral Eve' of human DNA.

"There's something curiously liberating about this viewpoint. For all of us, there were vast stretches of time before we existed, and there will be equally vast stretches of time after we have gone. Our consciousness is a brief and stunningly improbable interruption to this status quo – so just being here at all is the most tremendous bit of luck. What's the only sensible thing to do . . . ? Be grateful, then go and find out just where it might take you, while it lasts.

'Summer morning why': "Moving to Scotland has had various impacts on my life, but one of the biggest has been on the amount of exercise I do.

"For a former couch potato like me, the best thing about exercise – apart from the delicious novelty of actually getting fit! – is the effect it has on one's morale. . . . It's wonderful to come home after an early run and start my morning's work feeling endorphined and inspired – and the beauty of the countryside I'm running through makes me feel glad and grateful every single day."

*

'The gift': "I wrote this poem after reading Lewis Hyde's book *The Gift*, about gift culture and its relation to artistic work . . . in a gift culture, value or goodness keeps circulating because of the cultural

requirement to hand gifts on, or to repay them with other gifts; true gift-giving is never a single, one way transaction, and gift cultures require this reciprocity to survive.

"In a universe where anyone's individual existence is so gigantically unlikely, the very fact of being here can be construed as the most . . . extraordinary gift; it seems right, therefore, that we should try to live out these lives with generosity, to pass on some tiny part of that unearned, unrepayable, near-incomprehensible benefaction."

'Marchmont Road': "I've always felt ambivalent about taking a camera on holiday. It's easy to get snared by the neurotic desire to 'capture everything', becoming so desperate not to miss a shot, not to lose a 'memory', that the whole holiday experience is mediated via that small viewfinder window or that four-inch-square preview screen. You're so busy documenting the experience that you miss out on half . . . of it.

"It's a bit like this when you start trying too hard to 'be a writer'; you end up violently strip-searching even the most innocuous experiences, in case they might be harbouring a poem or a story somewhere. This introduces a kind of self-consciousness into your life that distances you from it, and prevents you really being present in the moment.

"It's taken a while, but I've learned to back off from both the compulsive snapshottery and the forced writerliness. I've learned that the things you need to write will come to you. You don't need a full-body scanner or a steel bear-trap or a CCTV network to catch them; you just need patience and a fishing line.

Kona's eclecticism, embracing motor mechanics, music, computer science and robotics – permeates her poetry.

Kona on writing:

"For me, writing is about communication: conveying the emotional state of the writer by recreating it in the mind of the reader. I value the way that good writing can sneak in under the most entrenched defences and unlock an emotional response.

"I write poems because I love words – playing with them, building complex interconnected structures out of them, and most especially making music with them. The aural qualities of a poem are always important to me, and I'm only properly happy using a word if both its meaning and its sound are right. I often use rhyme and strict forms; the artificial constraints they impose can actually free up the creative process and let the truth out. They're also good for provoking that delicious sense that you're not making something new so much as uncovering something that has always existed, word by tantalizing word."

A free complementary volume, *The Perfect Blue Companion*, available online, provides author commentaries on all the poems in *Perfect Blue*. You can read it online or download it as a free PDF e-Book. This is an outstanding example of an author being reader friendly with her honest and lucid explanation of her poems – especially valued in relation to poems of this depth.

I find Kona McPhee an ultimate in reader-friendliness

Dave Russell

Tribute conti...

Rising, the tide takes me,
again and again.
I am a broken part of a sand castle,
being smoothed and groomed
into a grain of sand.

In 'At the End' she writes of a dear one's funeral: "Someone read The Bhagavad Gita" and all lit lamps so that Yama, the God of Death, could come to collect the departed 'for the journey/to our ancestors'. In my Preface to her collection, I wrote that journeys are a recurring theme in Amita's poems - "journeys to health, growth and understanding; journeys that entail risk-taking and adventure. Her poems strike a chord for she speaks as a fellow-traveller to every reader on life's journey."

The final poem of *Paper Road*, 'We are Candles', seems to echo the Buddha's message: to be lamps unto oneself.

We are Candles

Ordinary acts of courage,
like sunrises and sunsets,
often go unnoticed.

In the midst
of teeming cities
there are monsters.

And also millions of flames,
tiny and enduring.

Hers was a fine debut collection and I was honoured to be able to mentor her and to edit *Paper Road* for her. Amita was a talented poet, a courageous champion for social causes, and a woman for whom family, friends and community mattered.

But I have grave doubts about whether mental health professionals did enough to help and support her. Her poems tell me of an isolation in which she was not always understood or helped, and given medication that may have drugged but did not heal her. In 'Voices' she wrote: "the psychiatrists give me/a tablet of mountains to swallow -/ unlike Hanuman's healing herb-mountain". Hanuman, the monkey-hero of Indian epics, is a Lord of Strength and in one of *The Ramayana* stories he is the bearer of a mountain containing healing herbs.

Her doctors at the hospital will have known that she had attempted suicide before. This summer Amita was again experiencing a suicidal bout of depression that saw her on a mental health ward for about ten days. Yet, it seems that they let her go on day release on 14th July - and with no accompaniment arranged! But why am I surprised? I, and many in Survivors' Poetry, fear that cuts in NHS and Council Services' mean that our society grows more uncaring and more suicides will follow. Amita Patel's was a valuable

life that should not have been allowed to be extinguished. With sadness I now read the concluding words of my Preface to her collection: "A 'survivor' in the truest sense of the word, Amita's poetry glows with clarity and wisdom in a chaotic world." In the commonly understood sense of the word, Amita herself cannot still be called a 'survivor' as she no longer shares the world with us. But she and organisations like Survivors Poetry have ensured that her words continue to survive and to inspire.

Debjani Chatterjee

(Amita's Mentoring Scheme pamphlet, *Paper Road*, is available from Survivors' Poetry office)

Amita Patel

I've written elsewhere about the impact of cuts to Disabilities and mental health, and the attendant coercion of vulnerable people to inappropriate employment. I've just been to the funeral of the fine poet Amita Patel, mentored by Debjani Chatterjee. Amita threw herself off Beachy Head as cuts ensured she was not supervised for a 24 hours release.

I first got to know Amita in 2003, when she ran Lambeth MIND's poetry workshop. She was the most generous and rigorous, as well as formally comprehensive workshop leader, I came across. The workshops were specifically themed around forms or other modes of exploration. Her poetry collection was one of the most prized - and sold out. Her death is a great loss not simply for her and her future, or even for family and friends, who feel it most. For a part of a society who knew her it rends something irreplaceable in London's survivor community, Amita's workshop colleagues and the poetry world at large.

The original sense of the word 'asylum' has returned to usage with 'asylum-seekers', and the return of the true (not Victorian) asylum model for some mentally distressed persons (not the NHS's revolving doors at the moment) would be a way forward. But that argument will need to wait - paradoxically - for sane times.

So one of our poets has died as a direct result of these cuts. The general political malaise had also got to her, apparently. Many feel as in H. G. Wells' words at the end of *Mind at the End of Its Tether*, that 'there is no way out nor round nor through.' We've not come to that, but we must now make a vigorous and aggressive case for our joint and general survival.

We're particularly grateful - and humbled - by the generous donation to SP from Amita's family.

Dr. Simon Jenner

Director of Survivors' Poetry

Outreach conti...

Home-Brewed

Your apple eyes,
Juicing me,

Pulping my knees,
Seeding anarchic heartbeats,

Flushing rosy,
Then russet,

With waiting
To be eaten.

Amita Patel
Paper Road
ed; Dejeni Chatterjee

Following Neil's reading books are purchased; signed by the authors. The wine is finished, there is more networking, the chairs are packed away. Dara (Neil's partner) washes up. There are hugs and kisses, handshakes and farewells. David's Bookshop empties. The event is over. Fine poetry in a friendly atmosphere at a superb venue. Paul is so pleased with the evening that he refuses his commission. For Stevenage Survivors, a bonus - three potential new group members.

Hard rain. A final thank you to Paul, a dash for the car. We unravel ourselves from the one-way system and head for home.

Flashing lights. Hissing tyres. Rattle of rain against the windscreen. The ghost of Woody Guthrie. This song will never end.

It was lovely to be able to facilitate book launches outside London, something which rarely happens. And to be able to create relationships with bookshops. And to create a local bestseller. Which is something I have never before been involved with.

The Mentoring Scheme is looking healthy again. General Outreach is still quiet. Travel is costly and setting up new groups even more so (and seldom, if ever, cost-effective) and our budgets are tight, all of which conspires to limit outreach (currently) to a largely armchair role. But each moment is a new beginning, and who knows what may be lying in wait for us financially. In spite of Cameron and Clegg.

letters & emails

E-mail from Anthony Moore:

tanx so much for printing my 2 poems in your Broadsheet: it really meant a lot to me-great stuff. Yours published A Moore 19th April, 2010.

E-mail re: PE32 Review; 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-justnew-trendy-illness.html>. by Martin Walsh in association with CoolTanArts.

Hi, I'm Joe Platt, I've got anxiety/depression. I don't think much of Jane Street Porter's comments saying that Depression is a trendy illness, I've had it since leaving school 30yrs ago. I've just read that some people want to be diagnosed with Bi-polar? J.Platt 29th August, 2010.

Blanche Donnery would like to thank Ayelet McKenzie for the lovely thank you card, for designing her book cover. Blanche would also like to thank Dave Russell for all his editorial support, and encouragement during the production of this issue.

Amita Patel
Paper Road
ed; Dejeni Chatterjee

Word of Ear

(Inspired by Pascal Petit's 'The Ant Glove')

From your mouth I saw ants march, hundreds and thousands, each carrying a word, three times their weight, describing your pain and anger.

I lay down so the ants could crawl into my ears as I did not want to miss a single syllable of each word.

They brought news from childhood, a valley where some rarely play. I recognized the blasted oak perched on the edge of your mother's tunic and I longed to wrap myself in my mother's sari. Each of its pleats rose and fell, expanding and withdrawing like a harmonium when she walked.

The night the lightning struck, I was deaf to her call.

Wrapped up in peepal leaves, I slept under my father's big toe, thinking it was a canoe waiting to right itself so I could climb aboard and travel to his heart.

She never called again.

Overnight her name was erased from the floors, walls, and ceilings.

When the ants from your mouth crawl into my ears and then my mind, they sting life into the corpses buried there.

Today it is mother who walks out, looking like the last picture taken of her. She will always be younger than me.

Network

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

New Group

The Bread is Rising Poetry Collective

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

Events

The Poetry Cafe

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

Dates

Features

- 14th October **Steve Tasane** [Performance Poetry]
The Desperado Housewives [singing
Blues away.] -**Kath Tait, Jude Cowan,**
Helen.
- 11th November **Peter Campbell** [Performance
Poetry & Singing, SP Founder.]
- 9th December **The Sybilline Sisters** [Performance
Poetry & Singing], Madrigal &
Armored Weston

Dave Russell & *Razz* feature on a regular basis

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

North London Survivors every fourth Thursday of each month



399 High Road
Tottenham
London
N17 6QN
Tel: 0208 365 0653
<http://www.multimap.com/s/y6qTt6v8>

Dates

Features

- 28th October **TBC**
- 25th November **TBC**
- 23rd December **TBC**

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.

CALL FOR VOLUNTEERS

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

Expenses only. For further info please telephone the office or email blanche@survivorspoetry.org.uk

call for volunteers to help with promoting Survivors' Poetry.

We need someone local to help with office work. 4-8 hours depending upon experience. Must have good English and computer skills. We welcome all backgrounds. We can arrange access for anyone disabled. You may be asked to seek an ISO certification and a CRB [SP will cover expenses.]

Please contact:
blanche@survivorspoetry.org.uk

Tel: 020 7281 4654

Donations:

please send a cheque payable to Survivors' Poetry or go to mycharitypage.com and make an online contribution - click on link on the bottom right of this page or visit our website

if you wish to

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

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



When you make a donation via mycharity page.com YOU will be CHARGED a 2.8% fee. For example if you donate £5 you will pay £5.14p

Amita Patel 1957-2010

Last Words

I too will take the slow train, and cherish what I can along the way. It is nice to be cherished too, and in the cherishing of others there is a vast joy that fills me up with courage – to continue for another day, another week.

Soon I will be well, and I know I may not be able to run, but I'll try to walk in beauty when I can.

When the sea is full
She comes to me
With her billowing
And I surfboard
On the highest
Of her waves
When she is replete
With her offloading
She returns again
To her sandy boundaries

While she visits
I try not to take
Lorazepam or clonazepam
For I see her
For what she is
My own desert
In need of watering.

It seems I may be going home tomorrow. I'm feeling nervous, but if it's to happen, I think I'd like it to be soon. Sometimes drawing out the inevitable can be worse.

I'll try and keep in touch with you

Bless you

Amita

The poem was written by Amitia in response to a poem I sent her on an occasion when she was in hospital.

Frank Bangay 2010

Last Words

In memory of Amita Patel.

At our last meal together, we feasted on our poetry lives. You said: "let's do this again at *Ravi Shankar's. next time. And bring more poems" I agreed, happy that our fledgling friendship was growing.

When we parted, you said: "Impermanence Mala" "Impermanence Amita" I replied. How was I to know those were the last words we would speak to each other?

I have many friends who have come and gone in my life. Our last words were "Take care" But this..... for you grew wings, and flew too near the sun of your desperation and like Icarus, fell to earth.

All I have of you now is your poetry
- you sing out in every line.
And when I read them, once more
you become alive for me.

* Ravi Shankar is the name of an Indian Restaurant

by **Mala Mason**