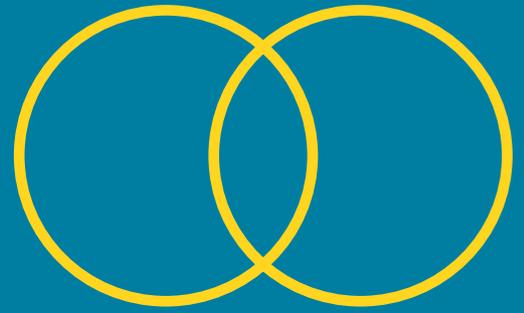


POETRY Express

A quarterly newsletter from survivors' poetry

january february march 2001

number 11



“The healing
power of
poetry”
our friends in
the north...

promoting poetry
by survivors
of mental distress

INSIDE

Personal Stories
News, Articles
Events, Readings
Performances, Workshops
lots of New Books
& your Letters

PLUS

Survivors' Theatre,
Somers Town Blues
continues ...,
The Poetry Café Society,
Network News,
and more ...

who's who. at survivors' poetry

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... from the Chair

John O'Donoghue writes,

The first year of the new millennium is nearly over. Where does it leave Survivors' Poetry? Endings and beginnings are times of great psychic turmoil; both require huge amounts of energy. Think about the celebrations across the world, the feelings of optimism and joy which greeted that new dawn. Then contrast those feelings with those which you, along with myself, may now be experiencing. Gloom at world events (I write this towards the end of November, a time of bus bombs and child-slaughter).

Turmoil indeed. So it seems right that Survivors' Poetry should reflect this turbulence. For we also have seen our fair share of endings and beginnings.

2000 was the year in which we said goodbye to a number of people closely associated with Survivors' Poetry. Richard Hallward, Danielle Hope and Anne Rouse resigned from the Board. We wish them well and thank them for their support and hard work, given freely and for no financial reward. We also bade farewell to Clare Douglas, our Director, Lisa Boardman, our Information Worker, and Demet Dayanch, our Finance Worker. Three people without whom Survivors' Poetry would not be where it is today.

And where is that? There is no denying the difficulties we have faced - are facing. We are in the final stages of the Surviving the Millennium Project, funded by A4E to the tune of £250,000. Those Brewster's Millions are nearly gone. The achievements of Surviving the Millennium - and all connected with it - are still being felt. Survivors' Poetry has shown what a small but determined group, with vision, commitment and endless stamina can do, given the chance and the resources. Those achievements are not just the tangible outcomes realised so far - the anthologies, the network of over thirty affiliated groups up and down the country, the newsletter, the events, the workshops - but also the intangibles, the sense of empowerment and pride so many Survivor poets have been given, have taken for themselves and have relished.

I cannot finish without mentioning our new beginnings, what the millennium sun has risen on for us. There are many exciting prospects for Survivors' Poetry. I have been grateful to welcome into our organisation such luminaries as Peter Greig, ex-Arts Council, currently working at the GLA, someone I know who will be a first-rate Treasurer. Sharon Holder, with her cool-headed leadership and Emma Parish, with her patently can-do attitude, join us as Acting Director/Outreach and Information/Administration Worker. Their contributions have already made a significant impact on the work we do.

Finally, there's myself. I became Chair this year and look back with immense pride and gratitude on Y2K. I will update you in forthcoming issues on all the exciting ventures Survivors' Poetry wishes to take forward. Survivors everywhere. Having survived one millennium, this one ought to be a doddle.



CALOUSTE
GULBENKIAN FOUNDATION



... from the Editor

Here it is! A full edition of Poetry Express (after September's 'Poetry Espresso!'). It has both a pleasure and a challenge putting Poetry Express together (my first full issue as Editor). Thank you to everyone who contributed to this issue.

I've been thinking about the title, Poetry Express - I like it! It encompasses the idea of expressing experiences through poetry, of feelings finding expression on paper. It also reminds me of a train analogy; of being 'off the rails' or 'back on track'. Interesting questions about mental illness and so-called 'normality' are opened up.

Please do keep sending in your stories, articles and poetry news (send to Emma Parish, Editor - Poetry Express, Survivors' Poetry, Diorama Arts Centre, 34 Osnauburgh Street, London, NW1 3ND). It would be great to hear from you.

With warm wishes for the holiday season and a very Happy New Year!!

Yours,

Emma Parish
Editor



contents

Who's Who and From the Chair	2	John O'Donoghue
Our Friends in the North Facilitator Training Course News	4	Kate Mattheys & Sharon Holder
News...News...News	5	Various
A Mother's Story The Healing Power of Poetry	6 & 7	Georgina Wakefield & Emma Parish
OUR LONDON EVENTS Performances and Workshops	8 & 9	Alistair Brinkley & Xochitl Tuck
NETWORK NEWS News from our Regional Groups	10	Manchester Survivors' Poetry
Survivors' Theatre	11	Isha
LETTERS PAGE	12	Various
i am @ Tate Modern London Arts in Mental Health Forum	13	Alister Brinkley & Joe Kelly
NEW POETRY AND NEW BOOKS	14 & 15	Quibilah Montsho Carolyn O'Connell Isha
The Scent of Seagulls... by Mala Mason		
Transformatrix by Patience Agbabi		
War Chronical by Eamer O'Keeffe		
Naked Songs and Rhythms of Hope by Frank Bangay		Stephen Garbaoni
The Journals of Sylvia Plath		

Roy Holland

Poetry Express is a quarterly publication. Its purpose is to publicise events and activities organised by Survivors' Poetry and by Survivor-led Poetry groups all over the country and to offer a forum for debate in which to share and discuss information and experiences. Please send us articles, small features, photographs, artwork and events listings about your group or about anything that you think may be of interest to our readers. Work should preferably be typed or on disk. We cannot guarantee publication and the editor reserves the right to edit any contributions. No more than 750 words please. The views expressed in this publication are not necessarily the views of Survivors' Poetry. The next copy deadline for the April/May/June issue is Monday 5th March 2001. Poetry Express is distributed free around the UK.

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our friends in the north

News from August's Facilitator Training Course

In August 2000, Survivors' Poetry ran its third Facilitator Training Course, just outside Newcastle. As part of our Surviving the Millennium Programme, we have been targeting elements of our work at groups that are often excluded. This course was aimed at young survivors, aged 18-30. It was held in the North East to follow on from the youth focused seminar Survivors' Poetry held in Newcastle in 1999.

The three day course used a mixture of informal activities, exercise and reflection to look at a number of issues relevant to facilitating writing workshops and being a Survivor. The overall aim was to provide a solid introduction to facilitation, as well as looking at what is involved when setting up a Survivors' Poetry group.

The feedback from the participants was positive, even though there were some challenging and difficult moments. Dealing with emotions, our own and other people's and sharing our writing affected all of us, but we were able to come through. The feedback also made it clear that three days is not long enough to fully deal with the issues raised, to provide practical experience of facilitation or allow the group/individual the space they need. These points will be taken on board for future courses.

The diversity of the group brought a richness to the course that was invaluable, as well as laying foundations for future work. A big thank you to all the participants, especially to Catherine for the photos and to the editorial team. I would also like to thank facilitators Raman Mundair and Leah Thorn and support worker Hannah McCallum. Without such a solid team the course would not have been such a pleasure or success.

Anyway, enough of me, over to one of the participants, Kate Mattheys, to tell you her thoughts...

I was the youngest on the course - had I not been in an adolescent psychiatric

unit,

I don't think I would have realised that any young people were part of the system. To be honest, I was absolutely petrified about going. The idea of having to stand up in front of a crowd of strangers and recite one of my poems filled me with absolute dread. I'm shy enough at the best of times, not exactly 'Big Brother' material. But I didn't want to be laughed at for being a coward, so I found the courage and forced myself into the car. The main highlight of the course was the people who were on it. I went there knowing no one and came away feeling relatively close to a lot of people. Much of the work we did meant that the group had to open up and trust one another. In mental health, this is a pretty daunting thing. But right from the start, the facilitators made every effort to ensure that the group was 'safe', that people could talk openly or get upset or have a laugh, and that this was OK. There was also a totally class support worker, who was there in case anyone had any difficulties and needed someone to talk things through with.

After the weekend, I felt like I'd been through a course of therapy without any of the hurt, and with a lot more enjoyment. What surprised me was that on the second day, I got upset and had to leave the rest of the group for a while. People rarely see me upset, yet ten people who I'd known for less than 24 hours saw this. The second surprise was that when I'd

sorted myself out a bit, I had no fears about going back to the group. I just thought, "right, I'll have a cigarette and then I'll go back in". And I did. That was bizarre, I would never have imagined myself doing that. It's usually at that sort of time that I decide to walk away and not come back.

From there on in, I spoke a bit in the workshops, I learned performance skills, stood in front of the rest of group and spoke a few lines from a poem. On the last night, I stood up in front of everyone and read out two poems. Absolutely mental. Kate Mattheys spoke in front of an audience? Kate Mattheys cried in front of people? No. Never.

One of the main things I took away from the course was the memory of the other people that were there. They were all absolutely amazing - from the hippie soul-mate I shared a room with, to the visual artist who had me creased over with laughter all weekend. I also learned a little about myself on the course, about the side of me that I'm not usually inclined to show. I share a flat with a few friends at university and we don't have a television yet. I was out shopping last week and found myself inexplicably drawn to a 'colouring bucket', complete with crayons, chalk, poster paints and Playdoh. Of course, my flatmates thought I was cracking up, but the amount of fun we've all had with it! I think it was partly the course that allowed me the scope to be stupid and to be a kid and do fun things like that. I would recommend the facilitator training course to anyone who is interested in facilitating workshops, and wants to enjoy themselves whilst doing so.

Thank you Survivors Poetry!



Survivors' Poetry would like to thank the Arts Council of England, under the Arts For Everyone stream, and Northern Arts for funding this project and for their continuing support.

news...news...news

Collecting 2000

Over the past year, the Museum of London has been collecting donations from London's groups to illustrate their interests, passions and beliefs at the turn of the 21st century. Collecting 2000 is an exhibition of objects chosen not by curators, but by Londoners themselves. From T-shirts to teapots, prayer mats to websites, the objects donated cover the range of issues that matter to city-dwellers today.

Survivors' Poetry donated a copy of our book *Fresher Than Green, Brighter Than Orange*, poems by Irish women Survivors living in London (published by Survivors' Press in spring 1999, edited by Eamer O'Keefe and Lisa Boardman). The Museum of London has kindly issued complimentary tickets to all of Survivors' Poetry's members (your free ticket is enclosed with this Newsletter). See Survivors' Poetry's donation in the Caring section next to the entrance. Enjoy the exhibition! *Fresher than Green, Brighter than Orange* is available from the Survivors' Poetry office, priced £2.95.

Power to the People

Manic Depression Fellowship invites you to a BIPOLAR POWER POETRY open mic. performance poetry evening on Monday 29th January 2001 at the Poetry Cafe, Covent Garden, London. This is an opportunity to enjoy your poetry and meet new friends informally. Poems can be about any subject - witness the extremes of experience in the spoken word. Please arrive at 7.30pm for an 8pm start.

MC: John Weedon. Prize draw. Admission £2.00 (£1.00 concessions). Contact Luke Chatterton at MDF on 020 7793 2609 for further details.

Open Poetry Competition

Judge: John Burnside. Prizes: First £200, Second £100, Third £75. Leicester Poetry Society's 2001 Open Poetry Competition is open to all UK-based poets. There is an extra Leicestershire Award prize of £50 for winning entrants resident in Leicester. Entry fee £2.50 per poem. Closing date 6 April 2001. No entry form necessary. Poems to be typed on a separate A4 sheet with no identifying marks. A separate sheet listing title(s) of poem(s) entered, name and address of poet and where you heard about the competition should be sent with £2.50 entry for each poem (payable to Leicester Poetry Society) to Competition Organiser, 15 Braunstone Avenue, Leicester LE3 0JF. Good luck!

New London Writers Awards

London Arts is offering eight bursaries of £5,000 each to London writers who have published a first book of fiction or poetry, and who need to 'buy time' to complete a second work. Three runners-up will be offered places on a mentoring scheme to help develop their work in progress.

The judges for the New London Writers' Awards 2000/01 include Maura Dooley and Patience Agbabi. Deadline: 5.00 pm on Friday 14th January 2001. Further information and assistance are available from Senior Administrator, Kate Mervyn-Jones on 020 7608 6168 (kate.mervyn-jones@lonab.co.uk).

Film 2001

LDAF invites all disabled film makers to submit their films in the 3rd Disability Film Festival. Film Submission deadline: 28th February 2001. For information and

an application pack or an informal discussion please contact Caglar or Julie on 020 7691 4203 / 020 7916 5484 (voice) or 020 7916 5396 (fax). Submissions: submit.dff3rd@virgin.net Information: info.dff@virgin.net Or write to: DFF3, LDAF, The Diorama Arts Centre, 34 Osnaburgh Street, London NW1 3ND

Russian Poets

The spring 2000 issue of Poetry Express included an article about Survivors' Poetry's forthcoming publication, *Ten Russian Poets*, translated by Richard McKane and to be published by Survivors' Press in conjunction with Anvil (expected publication date - late spring 2001). It features one Survivor-poet for each decade of the twentieth century. There will be pre-publication readings from the book in English and Russian led by Richard McKane, who is himself a Survivor, at the Pushkin Club, 46 Ladbroke Grove, London W11 4AP (Nearest tube: Holland Park). The event will take place at 7.30pm on Tuesday 30th January 2001 (Admission to non-members: £3.50/£2.50 concessions).

Bright Sparks

Peter Campbell has recently performed a number of successful mental health awareness training sessions based on his poems, his personal experience of mental health services and knowledge of Survivor issues. He is interested in making contact with anyone who has done something similar and/or is interested in developing this idea further. Peter thinks it may be possible to seek funding to create a workshop that could be used for a variety of audiences. If you are interested in working with Peter please contact him at 33 Lichfield Road, London NW2 2RG.

A Mother's Story

How poetry healed Georgina Wakefield

Poetry plays an important role in Georgina Wakefield's life. Her son, Christian, was diagnosed with schizophrenia at the age of sixteen. 'For nine years after Christian developed his condition, I was a shell of myself and was consumed with grief', says Georgina. 'Then my sister said a prayer for me and Christian in the chapel at King's College in Cambridge. A week later I woke up, began writing frantically and did so non-stop for five weeks.' Georgina found herself writing her story - 'A Mother's Story'. 'It was the most powerful experience I have ever had. It was almost as if someone was guiding my hand over the page, and yet I am not a religious person. I would write on anything I could get my hands on, even old birthday cards'. Her writing was so frantic - she often wrote for days on end, working through the night - her husband, Paul, worried that Georgina herself was becoming ill. However, says Georgina, 'the therapeutic effects were incredible'. Not only that, the poetry that poured out of Georgina's heart is strong, honest and painfully beautiful:

One Day Mum

Nine long years have been and gone -
are we any further on?
The years they seem to come and go
Recovery grudgingly, savagely slow
Others outside looking in
Just can't perceive the pain I'm in
They think she's fine,
They think she'll cope
I sleep, I breathe, I live in hope
I grieve for all the things you've missed
For all the girls you would have kissed
The friends, the fun you've been denied
Countless times I've sat and cried
The normal things that bring us

pleasure

Far too numerous to measure
Trips abroad, parties, driving
Whilst you're in rehab ever striving
Striving to be well someday
One day Mum, you say, one day.

When I feel I cannot go on,
I think of you, my precious son
I feel your strength that rarely falters
I wait and wait until life alters
Alters for you and for me
And then at last we will be free
Never ever give up hope
There is no other way to cope.

Georgina has written over sixty poems. Together they make up her book. 'Fighting Back', as yet unpublished. Georgina is trying hard to get 'Fighting Back' published. She has read many books about schizophrenia and mental illness but has found nothing 'written from a family point of view'. She hopes to help many other people who are going through similar experiences. She also hopes to change a few attitudes:

'The Word'

Schizophrenia; there, it's done,
Doesn't quite roll off the tongue.
Nine years it stayed within my mouth,
I've finally managed to spit it out.
It certainly set me one hell of a test,
But at last I've put the word to rest.
A sad achievement but there, it's done,
A label for my precious son.

We thought naively they'd be able
Within weeks to make you stable.
Sadly, you sleep your life away,
16 hours on an average day.
Now you're timid, quiet, subdued,
Not fiery, angry, hyper, rude.
My senses scream, my senses shout:
For God's sake, what's this all about?

GP gave me Prozac and, after a while,
I'm flying high, I wear a smile.

We both feel exhausted from the strain.

We watch you struggle, feel your pain.

Split mind, split personality?
Get the leaflets, then you'll see,
Just ask me, I've read them all,
It's really not like that at all.

Like many of us, Georgina and Paul Wakefield have encountered 'a lot of ignorance as far as mental illness is

concerned'. One of the saddest moments for the Wakefields in the past nine years was when they were asked how Christian 'caught' schizophrenia, as if it were an airborne virus. Georgina is often asked if her son is violent; 'Chris is a very caring person... it makes me angry that a lot of people think that most people with mental illness are potentially violent'. Georgina is acutely aware of the injustice of the mainstream press' portrayal of mental health issues:

Extract from 'He's a Human Being'

A paranoid schizophrenic
went berserk today,
A paranoid schizophrenic
is what the papers say.
A paranoid schizophrenic
and not a human being.
How stark, how cruel, how obscene,
And how hard for his family seeing
Their son portrayed in this way...
...Sicko, Schizo, Psycho, Nutter,
Don't tread him down
further into the gutter.
He should never be so abused,
And those words should never be used.

Several of Georgina's poems focus on the isolation of mental illness and the destructive impact it has had on family life. Georgina says; 'The illness hasn't only isolated Christian. It has also isolated us, his close family. It's hard to be with people when we feel so sad a lot of the time. Paul and I are the only people who really know the depths of our son's suffering'. Georgina's poetry has the power to communicate - and, in some way, to share - her family's most painful

feelings:

'Isolation'

Isolation for you, desolation for me;
When dear God will we be free?
An emotional rollercoaster ride,
We brave the journey by your side.
Rising high then falling low,
Spiralling down and down we go.
Another drug,, Olanzapine,
Must be patient.. Give it time,
So many times, it's so amazing.
We see you clearly both guns
blazing,
Only to be lost again,
In your world of so much pain.
Maybe after all these years,
Filled with heartache, sadness, tears,
After struggling hard to keep on
track,
At last we'll see you coming back..

Christian is making steady progress. He has changed to a different drug and is 'the best he has been for ten years'. Georgina delights in seeing her son's improvements. 'It's like watching tiny seeds begin to turn into new shoots'. She believes his present good health is 'not just due to this new drug. I think it is also thanks to Christian's iron will and my writing'. Both Georgina and Paul Wakefield are immensely proud of their son. Georgina's pride and pure mother's love radiates through her poems, imbuing them with the power to challenge misconceptions about mental illness and to reeducate:

Extract from 'People With
Schizophrenia'

"My son suffers from schizophrenia",
I frequently hear myself say.
I try to educate people,
I try to show them the way.
People tend to get embarrassed,
They are not too sure how to react,
I do understand the reasons
When I say it so matter-of-fact..
It's hard to believe it's me
After covering it up for years,
Never daring to share my sadness
Never sharing any fears.
I was always so very scared
For years I hid it away.
"He suffers from his nerves"
I prayed it would just go away.

For one so very young to have
suffered

For such a long time.
How dare I hide it away
As if he's committed a crime.
I tell them I'm proud of my son
And frequently use his name.
Gone are the feelings of secrecy
Along with the feelings of shame.
They came from not enough
learning,
But I do feel it's fair to say,
If 'schizophrenia' hadn't touched my
life
I'd surely be the same way.
So that's why I've written our story
In the hope that in time we'll find
With a little understanding
People will be more kind.

Georgina describes poetry as her 'best friend'; 'It has quenched my thirst and dampened my rage / comforting my soul' ('Life Without Poetry'). She recognises that her 'consuming urge' to write her feelings down has been beneficial to herself and Christian; 'Writing poetry has given me an outlet and helped me support my son much more than before.'

I have been able to tell a small part of Georgina's story on these pages, but I am aware that Georgina Wakefield has a more powerful, complete story to tell. I hope 'Fighting Back' is published so it can touch many more Survivors.

DAiL Magazine is available free to disabled individuals and is widely respected as one of the foremost voices for disabled people in this country.

At DAiL our definition of 'disabled' is inclusive. In other words, if the individual considers herself to be disabled, then so do we. For example I, as a Survivor of the mental health system, did not identify as disabled (even though I received DLA) until I started working on the magazine.

DAiL has been in existence since 1986. What started off as a local newsletter has developed into a widely-circulated publication with national and international relevance.

DAiL is run entirely by disabled people, in association with the London Disability Arts Forum. The magazine covers the latest news and views, including art and leisure events, books and films.

Survivor art is also covered in the magazine. A few recent examples are the Mad Pride Anthology, a gig by Section 3 (from Hackney), the Mind Your Head conference and the launch of Survivors' Theatre.

DAiL Magazine includes comprehensive listings of events and opportunities, news of art commissions and job vacancies relevant to disabled people and artists in particular. It is produced in print, tape and Braille versions, and is also available on disk.

Our latest innovation is an internet site which is at www.dail.dircon.co.uk. We will be expanding this site over the next six months to include articles, links, an art forum and advertisements, as well as a monthly-updated website, which covers disability art events and interpreted talks and performances for two months ahead. If you would like to subscribe to DAiL (free to unwaged disabled individuals), please contact me, Chas de Swiet:

**Tel: 020 7691 4204 Fax: 020 7916 5396
e-mail: enquiries@dail.dircon.co.uk**

News of our ev

Somers Town Blues Night

Poetry and Songs by Survivors



Mala Mason



Julie McNamara



Joe Bidder

The Superbly High Quality of Performances at Somers Town Continues... by Alistair Brinkley Somers Town Co-ordinator

The December 2000 event at Somers Town did not take place. There was no response to my request in Poetry Express issue 9 asking for views on the subject. Everyone I spoke to advised that we would never get an audience on December 30th. With regret, the gig slipped gracefully from the schedule. Speaking of slipping gracefully, I notice that the kind of weather feared by brass monkeys has blown in from the Arctic once again. Fears of global warming are placed on hold as the lakes and flooded plains of Olde England become a vast ice rink.

So! Get your skates on and head for Somers Town Community Centre on Saturday January 27th 2001 when one of Survivors' Poetry's founders, Joe Bidder, will emcee a top class bill of fayre. Welcome returns are extended to co-founder poet of Survivors' Poetry Hilary Porter, Otis Orbison a.k.a. George Tahta and the one-and-only Julie McNamara. Already booked for February 24th 2001 we have Roy Birch, Ken Smith and Fiona Branson (see page 10 for Fiona's news). A springtime show on March 31st 2001 includes a set by Scott Verner and a celebration of the launch of 'From Lead to Gold', an anthology of work from the participants of Survivors' Poetry's excellent Camden workshops. Expect performances from Hannah, Hilary, Mala, Razz and a host of the usual suspects. The superbly high quality of performances at Somers Town continues into 2001. I look forward to seeing you there. Best wishes for the festive season to everyone.

Saturday 27th Jan. 2001

Joe Bidder, Hilary Porter,
and Julie McNamara

Saturday 24th Feb. 2001

Fiona Branson, Roy Birch and
Ken Smith

Saturday 31st Mar. 2001

Scott Verner
and 'From Lead to Gold'

Somers Town Community Centre, 150 Ossulston Street, (off Euston Road), London, NW1.

7.30pm - 10pm with interval. Doors: 7.00 pm. (If you wish to do a floor spot on the night please aim to arrive by 7pm). Admission: £3.50, concessions: £1.50, floor spots and current inpatients: £1.00

Tube: Euston/Kings Cross. Buses: 10, 30, 68, 73, 168, 188 and 253. Wheelchair Access. Accessible Toilet. Induction Loop.

NB. If you wish to walk with somebody else from Kings Cross BR station to Somers Town you can meet with

Write on the Edge - Poetry workshops by survivors for survivors

The Garden Studio, Diorama Arts Centre, 34 Osnaurgh Street, London NW1 3ND. 7.30pm: FREE

Survivors' Poetry holds fortnightly workshops for survivors. These provide participants with an opportunity to have work reviewed and discussed in a friendly, supportive environment. Participants of feedback workshops should bring along a poem typed, or clearly hand written from which we can take photocopies.

Tuesday 9th January 2001

Tuesday 23rd January 2001

Tuesday 6th February 2001

Tuesday 20th February 2001

Tuesday 6th March 2001

Tuesday 20th March 2001

Please contact the Survivors' Poetry office for further details about the Write on the Edge workshops.

ents in London

“WIRED ON WORDS”

Survivors' Open Mic. at The Poetry Café

Poetry Café Society

by Xochitl Tuck, Poetry Café Coordinator

We would like to extend our sincere apologies to anyone who came to the Poetry Café expecting an October event. There was confusion over the date and the Café was closed for refurbishment on the 12th October. We tried to hold the event in an upstairs room, but only three people found us. We had a very successful November event, and now have the dates for next year and are confident that nothing like this will happen again.

“We all left feeling inspired”

In November we harvested the yield of two months' suppressed poetic inspiration. There were several new voices as well as the regulars. David was first up, moving and lifting us with heartfelt words dedicated to much-loved friends. Ian's classical delivery and serious verse contained a stunning, romantic quality. Mesmerizing raps with rhythm earned Tony total cred. The wild antics of the imaginary dog 'Phil' verbally walking on his non-existent lead had us cheering (as did the moon-hugging aspirations of the poet). Lloyd's carefully constructed allegorical ironies revealed the joy and sorrow of our vulnerability, and his delivery was richly dramatic. George staged an unusual, experimental scenario, a conversation with himself about the intimacies of relationships. Nuala apologised for “not being a real poet”; but her determination on so many levels is awesome. Thank you to everyone. We all left the Café feeling inspired.

Congratulations to Liz Prest and the gang from ATD Fourth World (who came to three Survivor evenings at the Poetry Café during the summer). The group has published a volume of poetry entitled 'Out of the Shadows' (available at £5.00 from ATD Fourth World, 48 Addington Square, London, SE5 7LB).

Thursday 11th January 2001

Thursday 8th February 2001

Thursday 8th March 2001

Poetry Café,
22 Betterton Street,
WC2 9BU

(nearest tube
Covent Garden)

8pm - 11pm

Admission £2, £1 conc.

A wonderful opportunity for new and more experienced poets to have their work heard in a friendly and supportive atmosphere. There is a lift to the lower floor and a wheelchair-accessible toilet. Smoking upstairs, non-smoking downstairs.

In you want to read or perform your work you need to arrive between 7pm and 7.30pm in order to book your floor spot.

The doors will open to other audience members from 7.30pm and the performance will start at 8pm sharp. We do not have a finish time for the event and this very much depends on the amount of people who want to do floor spots.

There will be a break halfway through the evening. See you there !!!



ara



Performer Focus: Fiona Branson

I'm really delighted to be performing for Survivors' Poetry. I've been working as an actor/musician professionally for over twenty years. When I had my nervous breakdown in 1995, one of the scariest moments of my life was when a psychiatrist told me that my entire career in the entertainment industry had been a 'delusion'. As if all the work I'd done, all the contracts I'd fulfilled, my qualifications; all of it wiped out in a moment by someone who didn't know me, had never seen my work, but had the power to deny me my history. I hung on in there though, in part thanks to Survivors' Poetry. I'm still writing and performing - and still looking for work, despite the feeling I get occasionally that some entertainment industry professionals must believe mental health problems are contagious!

In the last year I've been working with Proteus Theatre Company as an actor on a forum theatre project, performed in day and community centres for people with physical disabilities and mental health service users in and around Basingstoke. Forum theatre has been described as 'rehearsing the revolution' as it encourages the audience to try out a variety of strategies in scenarios where they are represented by a protagonist who is undergoing various forms of oppression. The production was devised in response to workshops with the Basingstoke user group, and was very successful. Social Services wanted to use the programme to train social workers to recognise bad practice. So far though, no further funding has become available for a re-tour. This autumn I'm going to be recording some of my music, and I carry on writing, and playing, thinking and gardening.



Photo by Debal

network news

There are now over 30 Network groups affiliated to Survivors' Poetry. We are delighted to have contacts in each of the Arts Boards regions. Affiliation to the Survivors' Poetry Network is free to any groups of Survivors who come together to write. For details of your nearest group please contact the Survivors' Poetry office.

Poetry Express plans to search out the talents of Survivor poets up and down the country and bring you a sampling of the life and work of each regional group. In this issue we focus on Manchester Survivors'

Manchester Survivors' Poetry is a lively, welcoming group, organised by volunteers. We meet every Monday (apart from bank holidays) at the offices of Commonword, a community writing and publishing organisation in the centre of Manchester. And we write! As one group member said, 'it's the only writing group I've ever been to where writing actually happens!'. This year our workshops are being run by Pat Winslow, Quibilah Montsho and Rosie Garland. Workshops are varied in scope - from writing and music to preparing for performance and group poems. We were delighted to welcome Jackie Kay to be our special guest this year. We received some funding from the Manchester Healthy City campaign, and Jackie ran a fantastic workshop for us on the subject of 'Doubles', as part of Manchester Poetry Festival and World Mental Health Day. The workshop was completely packed and some very inspiring work came out of it.

So far, we have no group publications - but watch this space! Two of our group do have solo collections out; Emma-Jane Arkady and Rosie Lugosi. If you are interested in either of these, send £5 for each book (incl. p&p) made out to Survivors' Poetry Manchester and we'll send you a copy!

We have put in an application to the Regional Arts Lottery Programme for funding for a two-year project supporting women Survivors, working in partnership with Manchester Rape Crisis and the Pankhurst Centre. Keep your fingers crossed for us!

For further details about Manchester Survivors' Poetry please contact:

Illusory Blue

Above is how it is:
Dragon fliesglide in upside down trees
Ghosts shadows twist
Soft light disperses
You wobble as the water hits you
Jagged ripples net you
Pull you, draw you in.
Surrender.
No, resist.

Follow the light magnet.
Break the surface.
Take a deep breath.
Above is how it is:
The tree looms
The sun has turned to moon
It belly flops
Onto obsidian water
There is no such thing as still

Survivors' Poetry Manchester, c/o Commonword, Cheetwood House, 21 Newton Street, Manchester, M1 1FZ. (0161 881 5743 - Rosie)
This poem grew out of a wonderful writing workshop facilitated by Pat Winslow, a great local poet, who first ran workshops for us in 1999



Andy Elston
photo by G.Knight

Survivors' Theatre...

from little acorns

In Autumn 2000 Isha launched Survivors' Theatre (a user-led theatre group) and ran a series of events at Jacksons Lane arts centre, London. Here she talks about the hard work involved and her plans and hopes for the future of Survivors' Theatre.

In late spring 2000 I stared at a page advertising commissions for Jacksons Lane's autumn Disability Arts Season. £2,000 was on offer. I decided to send in a proposal and wrote down three things I wanted from my fairy godmother; a launch of a Survivors' Theatre, a residency and a one-woman show of my own (which I've not done since 1987 owing to break-downs). £2,000 wouldn't cover my fee for residency and the other projects, "but", I thought, "if I do the show on a shoe-string and the writing in my spare time... and Jacksons Lane will do most of the publicity, reducing the amount of work involved...it might just work".

When I heard back from Jacksons Lane they liked my proposal. But the news was not all good; I was offered just £1,400 to cover all three projects. The excitement had already gone to my head, and I said yes. The £600 difference meant I wouldn't be able to employ someone to do the office-work. I realised I would just have to somehow do it myself.

I got the full go-ahead in July, and threw myself into letting people know about the launch. I was soon shattered. Potential volunteers came forward. Unfortunately they mostly came to nothing. Sometimes, in desperation, I phoned someone who'd offered to help, but, like many before me, I discovered that when it comes to it no-one's available to do the job that needs doing.

Suddenly there were just a couple of weeks until the start of the Disability Arts season, 'Transitions'. Much, much too late to pull out. Jacksons Lane lost their Publicity Officer: hardly any publicity had been done. I'd had no time to write my show - to be called 'Loose Joints' - let alone learn it. I batted down the hatches, stopped sending out publicity material, and got my nose to the paper. I had a meeting with Jo Hannah-Silver, a theatre director, consultant and Survivor, and strutted my stuff. She made some wonderful suggestions and my hopes

improved.

Ian McLaren, Xochitl Tuck and Justin Aggett miraculously created my theatre-set (thank you, all!) and Jacksons Lane's technician, Tony, achieved something magical with the lighting. My show began and I was back doing theatre again in front of an audience of all of 20-plus people. The next night there were far, far fewer.

Next came the residency. There were three weeks of workshops, including voice, comedy, and performance feedback workshops. Attendance was again disappointing. Two workshops attracted just two people and the maximum attendance was five. Andy Elston and Ken Burke came to nearly every one, and Ian McLaren came to many. But where were all the others who had written asking to go on my mailing list and saying that they wanted to come to the workshops?

Before I knew it we were approaching our final week and the launch party. There were just 23 people, but the enjoyment and feedback afterwards was tremendous. Highlights such as Andy Elston's hilarious floor-spot, Rona Topaz's acting and Julie McNamara's set left people giddy and asking for more.

At present I am taking a few weeks' holiday from Survivors' Theatre and thinking about how I'm going to earn some money to make up for the months of having had no income at all. There is still a strong interest in Survivors' Theatre. I am receiving phone calls and letters from people who want to know what's happening next...

I met David Calladine on 2nd November. He told me about Disability in Camden and their ideas. He plans to set up some Survivors' Theatre workshops in Camden early in 2001.

If you would like more information about the Camden Survivors' Theatre workshops please contact David at Disability in Camden, the Peckwater Centre, 6 Peckwater Street, Kentish Town, London (020 7530 6480).

I would be pleased to hear from individuals or organisations who are interested in Survivors' Theatre. My contact details are: Isha, c/o Marysia Kurowski, 5 Victoria Park Court, 130 Well Street, London, E9 7TN (survivorstheatre@isha.freeserve.co.uk). The future of Survivors' Theatre is coming.

TRUSTEES WANTED

Survivors' Poetry is seeking to develop the membership and diversity of its Board of Trustees. We would particularly welcome applications from women, young adults and members of black and other ethnic minority communities.

If you have up to one day a month to spare, can meet in the evenings and are able to offer telephone/e-mail advice and support, we would like to hear from you. We are especially interested in marketing, legal or fund-raising expertise, but would be happy to hear from you if you have other skills to bring to the organisation.

If you are interested in becoming a Trustee please send a CV to the Survivors' Poetry office (for the attention of John O'Donoghue), with a covering letter highlighting the skills you would bring to the Board and

the reasons why you wish to become a Trustee of Survivors' Poetry.

letters page

We would love to hear from you. Please send us your letters on any subject which you think might be of interest to our readers. You may wish to respond to what you have read in this newsletter. Send to:

"Letters", Survivors' Poetry, Diorama Arts Centre, 34 Osnaburgh Street, London NW1 3ND

Dear Survivors' Poetry,

Thank you for the summer issue of Survivors' Poetry. I found the article by Suiee Nettle (pages 10 and 11) entitled 'You'll never work with children again' a very powerful piece of writing. It was so full of her honesty, her pain, her struggles and her determination to fight for a different future; I found it both moving and encouraging. So please pass on my thanks to her.

I have been an inpatient for about twenty months. I use poetry to try to understand my own emotions and feelings, which I can sometimes share later with care workers.

But the reason for my writing is to express my interest in a daytime poetry group. For me, the evenings are the worst. I find travel difficult, so I would like to hear if any groups are planned for north London.

Yours sincerely,

S.A.H,
Archway.

Sharon Holder replies:

There have been a number of requests for daytime facilitated workshops, similar to your own, some specifically in north and south London. Earlier this year a small group met to look at how

they might work together to address this. Survivors' Poetry is currently planning a pilot series of monthly facilitated daytime workshops. Our intention is to offer between three to six workshops in north and south London, guided by two facilitators, most probably on Tuesdays or Thursdays.

If you'd like to be updated on further developments regarding these workshops, please contact Roy Holland at the Survivors' Poetry office (Mon-Weds) and ask to be added to the Daytime Facilitated Workshops Pilot mailing list.

Dear Survivors' Poetry,

I've been writing poetry since I was a teenager. I'm now 28. For me it has been a vehicle of expression to myself and sometimes it has served as a bridge between myself and the outside world.

Through the very dark times of my life I have often thought that my poetry has saved my life. For without its value of traversing such barren and rugged terrain, I may not have been able to communicate such powerful and yet sensitive moments.

Franz Kafka described his ability to write as another organ of his body, sustaining him. I feel the same

way. When I need to communicate with myself deeply, I find a quiet moment and I soon feel the words surfacing in order to give me support, comfort, encouragement, insights and much understanding. I think that poetry is about experiencing something - a memory, a feeling, a unity, a separation - and then finding a multitude of ways of expressing its incredible depth. To express the complexity, the simplicity, and everything in between.

Finally, when I write, there is a coming together of the world; the senselessness is being made sense of. But equally, in another poem, the senselessness will be important. Whatever it has been, it has been who I am and has guided me through the vicissitudes of life.

Thanks to Survivors' Poetry for all you do.



Adam Large,
Watford.

SURVIVORS' POETRY GOES GLOBAL

i am @ Tate Modern

Reviewed by
Alistair Brinkley
and Joe Kelly

Swiss Survivor-poet Rita B catches up with the UK news at her home in Rethymnon, Crete.

I am @ Tate Modern was the title chosen for the first London Arts in Mental Health Forum organised by the 'Inspired Arts Movement' on Tuesday 10th October 2000. A sprinkling of Users/Survivors mingled with a sixty-odd throng of movers and shakers from the Art/Mental Health industry, and many new contacts were made.

Speakers told of the Inspired Arts Movement's history and the potential creative possibilities of networking; 'it is time for the mental distress lobby to move from Health to Arts' ... 'Art can dismantle the notion of mental health as an illness' ... 'Art as therapy / recreation - that which is beyond human experience' ... 'Nowadays we can't get away from the Freudian notions of psychoanalysis - much more interesting is the dialogue

between psychoanalysis and art'

The Chair of Survivors' Poetry, John O'Donoghue, gave a wonderful talk about John Clare, the eighteenth century Survivor poet and contemporary of Shelley and Keats, who ended up in Northampton County Asylum. John's rendering of Clare's poem, 'I Am', left hardly a dry eye in the old power station.

An extensive discussion led into an expensive lunchbreak, after which we broke into smaller groups and played with felt pens and flipcharts. The chance of a mini-tour of the galleries was gleefully grabbed by some of us, while others eagerly participated in an art/poetry workshop facilitated by Anne Rouse. Joe's poem, 'Tate Modern', was written at the workshop:

In-house, outhouse, ginhouse,
powerhouse, mickey mouse,
Dayhouse, nighthouse, poorhouse,
tatehouse, public house,
Landscape, still-life, portrait,

installation, truelife,
Guide, model, security, outside, inside,
Evolution, revolution, elocution,
persecution, institution.

The poem struck a chord and was well-received. The summing-up session produced some good one-liners; 'Can an observer catch schizophrenia from a work of art?' ... 'Is a work of art measured by the mental health of the creator? The spectator?' ... 'It is important we can withstand one another even if we can't understand each other' ... 'Chaos is the lifeblood of Art...'

A good dialogue has begun and we hope it continues. We are promised that the day's events will be written up by the organisers and a report issued indicating the way forward. We feel the future lies in greater links between the mental health movement and the mainstream.

A day well spent. Let's do it again. We were @ Tate Modern!

Extract from 'John Clare' Lecture by john o'donoghue

We meet today in this vast temple of modern art to consider that most ancient well-spring of creativity: inspiration. And I hope we shall all come away today like apostles from a pentecost, fired by passion, speaking with the tongues of our art to all nations, and that many shall be converted. I hope that we shall leave Tate Modern inspired and empowered to inspire. For it seems to me that we suffer a double stigmata as members of the Inspired Arts Movement.

There is first of all our identities as artists. Even saying that word artists in this great palace of art seems to make claims those without these walls would think foolish. Who are we - murmurs Joe Public - to think of ourselves as artists? Look around you, mate, I hear him say - there's a lot of proper artists in that Tate Modern. A lot of chancers as well. But the likes of Picasso, Dali, that Belgian geezer, Margaret. D'you really think you lot are like them? At once we feel the stigmata of being an artist in

a society vaguely suspicious of artists, of giving ourselves airs in a nation which thinks too much air might go to our heads. Which brings me to our second stigmata - the stigmata of madness, of insanity, of the looney, those bogey-figures we've become. The interesting distinction between these two vocations - artist, looney - is that whilst we choose to call ourselves the first, the second is usually thrust upon us.

Which is why I want to talk today about John Clare's poem 'I Am'. That it neatly fits the acronym of the Inspired Arts Movement is, of course, inspiring. But it is also - to me personally - a poem which bears testimony to the strength of mind and spirit of another figure bearing that double stigmata, artist, madman. John Clare is, I think, a founding father of our movement and 'I Am' a canonical text, part of our Book of Common Prayer.

NEW POETRY &

The Scent of Seagulls... the Sound of Yellow Flowers

by Mala Mason
Reviewed by Quibilah Montsho

Mala Mason's second collection is an array of experience, light and dark, as she takes us through her lives as child, mother, woman and beckons us to the sea shore. Her memory of *'the sharp tin tang of salt in the air'* (*'Blue Day'*) transports us to the ocean's line.

In retrospective thought she shows us her realisation that *'my childhood ghosts were not the house's fault'* (*'Survivor'*) and deftly paints words that reflect the contrast between memory and reality. We have to listen to her and accept there are now alternatives to dark recollections.

'The Promise' shows us a subtle yet clear view of the automatic agreement a parent may make only to forget about it completely. We feel that child's disappointment and how it extends to all around us, as her *'too cold Knickerbocker glory...tasted like the grey salt sea mist'*. Mala's use of imagery powerfully encapsulates the importance of words made as promises. The strength of the mother does not take a back seat. For Mala Mason, hers was *'like a Russian tank'* (*'To My Mother'*), which, as a first line, roots us in the rock solid foundation of this parent. The comparison of the ocean bed with the root of faith is a lovely refreshing song in *'Building Piers'*. Almost as a mantra we are reminded of *'the ocean floor... unaffected by the elemental tides and furies'*.

Available from Mala Mason, Flat 8, 21 Carburton Street, London, W1P 7DQ, priced £2.50.

Transformatrix

by Patience Agbabi
Reviewed by Carolyn O'Connell

This second collection by the renowned performance poet Patience Agbabi is an undoubted winner. Divided into five sections, the thirty-one poems, some of which take re-reading to appreciate (especially if you haven't heard Patience perform), encapsulate different stages and states of womanhood today, from conception to old age, and their voices.

The section *'High Flying Femmes'* is a rapier expose of bureaucratic cunning laced with satire and sympathy for women on the edge either of love or life. In *'Joyrider'* she accelerates into the world of the women's prison; its *'tea and tranqs'* fly into Heathrow as the outsider *'UFO Woman'*. She gently explores teenage relationships in the prose poem *'Buffaloes and Silver Stiletos'*. In contrast, *'69 BPM'* and *'IF'* take less acerbic themes, while she writes in the voice of the racing spiv in *'The Headdress'*. On National Poetry Day the prologue of this collection, *'Word'*, was rightly chosen as the inspiration for the *East-Side Educational Trust's* Guinness world record attempt.

I love words being likened to *'dolly mixtures'*, and, being hopeless at maths, her *'school of mathematics equals verbal acrobatics'* would be perfect. If you are looking for the title poem, please don't read it until you have read the others. It's a sweetmeat to be savoured at the end of the feast.

Available from all good bookshops, priced £7.99. Published by Canongate Book Ltd, Edinburgh (www.canongate.net/payback). ISBN 086241 941 7.

War Chronicle

a found poem composed of headlines and news stories from March 1938 to September 1939
by Eamer O'Keefe
Reviewed by Isha.

This little book tossed me from the state of curiosity of a three-year-old (*'Face-slapping in the Commons'* Why, Mummy, why?) to a sort of hollow slap in the face of my own (*'Child refugees eat their labels'*) to a wish to pack a gun and go assassinate the party host (*'Hitler gives speech on peace'*) and back again. All this via recognition, sadness - all the more so for nestling amongst the jollity of trivia - an unpleasant goose-pimpliness (*'Buchenwald has bad reputation'*) and a feeling of hopelessness for humanity.

I feel like rushing up to the national newspaper library, setting up camp for the winter and delving deep. Who was the 14-year-old who was pawned by her father? What happened to her? Was it illegal at that time? How did he get caught?

Some of Eamer's juxtapositions possess a poignancy; *'Eagle gets a wooden leg. Hungarian Jews missing in Egypt'*. Others are damningly logical; *'Italy wants more space. Pig's head nailed to synagogue door'*. And others plain mysterious; *'Spies busy on Maginot Line. Can an umbrella fight a sword?'* The overwhelming effect is a rhythmical, provoking countdown to the horrors to come, which are suggested but all the more effective for not being explicit.

If you have any reason to be interested in the Second World War, if you have a parent or grandparent who was involved in it, if you have an interest in people, or in social or

political history, if you love to be emotionally tossed about or to be

NEW BOOKS

made to think, or just have a deep imagination, then this book is for you.

I leave you with this gem:

'Give a woman a tin opener, and her life will blossom like a rose'.

Available from CICATRIX, BM Cicatrix, London, WC1N 3XX, priced £3.75 (p&p 35p extra). ISBN 0 9522404 4 0.

Naked Songs and Rhythms of Hope

by Frank Bangay.

Reviewed by Stephen Gharbaoni

Honesty, experience and humility. The language in *'Naked Songs and Rhythms of Hope'* is not complex, yet it has a depth of effect and integrity that is not common enough. Frank's poems reflect what is inside many a Survivor of mental distress and the psychiatric system; *'I cried last night but my tears were a mirror of the sadness of the world'* (*'Solidarity'*). He is explicitly a man, a drunk and a punk music fan, yet his insights and testimony appeal to everyone. Frank's willingness to struggle on despite his admitted frailties by harnessing experience in words is an inspiration and a succour. He also pulls no punches about the limitations of the psychiatric system; *'Damaged/A little vulnerable/ Surviving gives us strength/I refuse to be a victim'* (*And the Walls They Do Listen'*).

I can only learn from the openness in this collection. My favourite poem is *'The Laughing Flowers'* because Frank uses the imagery of mixing beauty with suffering to tempt us into loving him. To know oneself is to know the world; to show oneself is to bestow a gift on others. I feel my fragilities, but accept that there is hope enough to cope with life, thanks to Frank.

Available from Spare Change Books, Box 26, 136-138 Kingsland High

Street, Hackney, London E8 2NS, priced £7-95. ISBN 0 9525744 6 2.

The Journals of Sylvia Plath, 1950-1962.

Edited by Karen V. Kukil.

Reviewed by Roy Holland

In view of the continuous stream of biography and criticism churned out by the Plath industry over the last forty years since her death, it is wonderful to greet a substantial addition to Plath's published works subsequent to the appearance of Ted Hughes' *'Birthday Letters'*. *The Journals* chart her inmost feelings from her time as a student at Smith College up to 1962, though Hughes destroyed the final journal kept before her suicide.

Plath managed to preserve a childlike approach to the totality of human knowledge. She wanted to be a Renaissance woman, and when she found she could not encompass everything from botany to languages or that to enrol for a Ph.D. in psychology would take a further six years she felt extremely dejected. Plath's constant checking of herself gives her a manic appearance amidst her *'merry-go-round whirlwind of activity'*. She is obsessed with lists and projects, yet speaks of *'moments snatched, and wildly snatched, between duty and duty'*.

Plath's attraction to the natural world, including its darker side, dates from her upbringing and undoubtedly brought her closer to Hughes. Even when she describes the couple's attempt to save a fledgling she is not sentimental. There are wonderful descriptions of a dead mole and of fiddler crabs burrowing in the mud as

she watches.

Plath felt she was *'translating wish to reality'* in her work. Writing could open up sores, *'breaking open the vaults of the dead and the skies behind which the prophesying angels hide'*. Creative work could also channel her anger. She writes; *'Fury jams the gullet and spreads poison, but as soon as I start to write, dissipates ...'*. Plath had been brought up with a very strong competitive spirit, and though she was initially enthusiastic about Hughes's success, she acknowledges; *'Jealous one am I, green-eyed, spite-seething'*. Therapy with Dr. Ruth Beuscher directed Plath towards the expression of strong feelings towards her mother. She cries out; *'I'd kill her, so I killed myself'*. Whatever the pros and cons of therapy, it probably enabled Plath to pen her last ecstatic poems such as *'Ariel'*.

Plath has been an icon for sufferers from mental distress, and for Survivor-poets in particular, long before the Survivor movement came into being. *The Journals* provide remarkable insight into the relationship between 'madness' and creativity and are a must for every Survivor-poet's bookshelf.

Available from all good bookshops, priced £30.00. Published by Faber & Faber, 2000. ISBN 0 571 19704 3.

IF YOU ARE INTERESTED IN WRITING REVIEWS FOR SURVIVORS' POETRY PLEASE WRITE TO ROY HOLLAND, REVIEWS EDITOR, AT OUR USUAL ADDRESS. MANY THANKS TO EVERYONE WHO HAS OFFERED TO WRITE REVIEWS. WE WILL CONTACT ALL REVIEWERS AS SOON AS POSSIBLE

IF YOU HAVE PUBLISHED A BOOK OF POEMS OR ARE PART OF A GROUP WHO HAS PUBLISHED A COLLECTION IN THE LAST SIX MONTHS THEN PLEASE SEND A COPY TO THE SURVIVORS' POETRY OFFICE AND WE WILL DO OUR BEST TO REVIEW IT ON THESE PAGES.

Survivors' Poetry is a national literature and performance organisation dedicated to promoting poetry by survivors of mental distress through workshops, performances, readings and publications to audiences all over the UK. It was founded in 1991 by four poets with firsthand experience of the mental health system.

Our community outreach work provides survivors with opportunities to actively participate in writing or performance training workshops, poetry performances and publishing projects throughout the UK. We support the formation of a nationwide network of survivors' writing groups and work in partnership with local and national arts, mental health, community and disability organisations.

workshops

We hold regular workshops in London at the Diorama Arts Centre, NW1 and organise many one-off projects in London and throughout the UK.

performances

We have regular performances twice a month at two separate venues in central London. These give space for new and established survivor poets to read or perform their work in relaxed surroundings. Survivor Poets regularly take part in literary and poetry festivals throughout the country.

publications

We have published a variety of poetry anthologies and are currently undertaking a number of translation projects within our *Surviving the Millennium* project funded by the National Lottery through the Arts Council of England. Please do not send us poetry for publication. We regret that we do not have the resources to give feedback or criticism regarding your work. We will ask for submissions through this newsletter when we publish our next anthology.

support to writers' groups

If you are involved in a writing or poetry group you may find that there are benefits in your group becoming an affiliated member of the Survivors' Poetry national network of writing groups. We offer workshop facilitator training and other training opportunities for members of your group. There are opportunities to visit or take part in literary festivals and the chance to share skills and information with other writers and writing groups throughout the UK. Contact us for further details.

free mailings

We publish and distribute our *sixteen* page, *Poetry Express* newsletter four times a year. Its purpose is to publicise events and activities organised by Survivors' Poetry and by Survivor-led Poetry groups all over the country. We publish articles, features, personal stories, news, letters, events listings and book reviews. Through joining our mailing list you will receive this newsletter, quarterly - completely free of charge!

survivor@survivorspoetry.org.uk

