

Poetry *Express*

issue 28 Winter 2008

extra pullout - including pullout with lament for the day hospital by **brenda williams**

Architecture and poetry in the city - from correspondent **Dave Russell**

art and conflict - a uk first exhibition

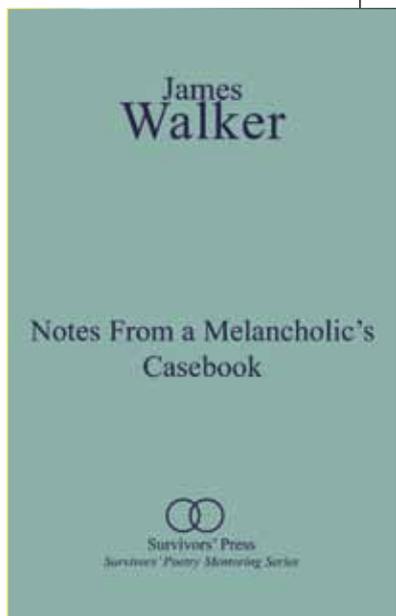
new poems from **Mario Petrucci**

Kevin Coyne Man & Art

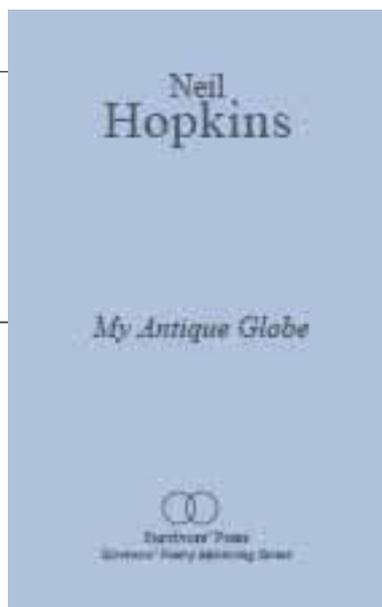


supporting the survivors'
of mental distress

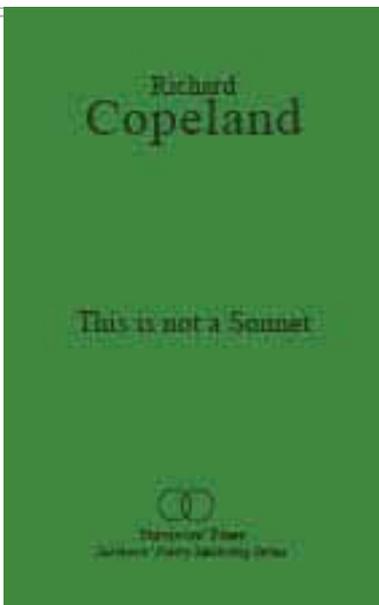
promoting poetry, prose, plays, art and music by survivors' of mental distress



James Walker was born in the north-east of England in the mid-1960s. His education was rudimentary but after leaving school he became something of an autodidact, studying a range of disciplines including philosophy, psychology, literature, and theology. He suffers from a form of schizophrenia, and passionately believes that the mentally distressed should be able to express their creativity without having it pathologised by others. His themes are often based around confinement, guilt, a search for personal identity and freedom. Walker has written several novels, short stories, essays, and a five act play, but his first love is poetry. His natural world poems are an expression of existential themes and a link to a childhood in the North Yorkshire moors and draw much inspiration from Ted Hughes and John Clare, the latter with whom Walker also shares a life of psychiatric institutionalisation. Walker has had poems published in small magazines, in addition to winning prizes in the Koestler Creative Arts Scheme. This is his first published collection.



Neil Hopkins was born in 1970. His poems have appeared in various poetry magazines and journals including The Rialto, Acumen, Staple, The Interpreters House, Haiku Quarterly and Other Poetry. He has previously published three collections of poetry: The Moment of Reflection (1999), Thursday Night Poetry Club (2002) and Aqua (2004). He is currently a lecturer in a college of further education.



Richard J N Copeland has been writing intermittently for about thirty years. He has only recently, however, taken it up as a vocation, since which time he has had work published in a number of prestigious poetry publications, among them Awen, Black Mountain Review, Envoi, First Time, and Quantum Leap, and has taken part in a range of public performances. He is a Poetry Society Stanza rep for North Herts and is currently working on a weighty Sci-Fi novel. He was recently commissioned by the BBC and was filmed performing the commissioned work on BBC TV's Look East.

sponsored by



SURVIVORS' POETRY

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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A view from another place on the path

As the year drew to a close – a longer year than ones I recall, but usefully so, seats on the SP Board swivel around as Marius and I change roles – my elected Chair position (to be fully ratified or not - at the forthcoming AGM) and the appointment of Abdul Jamal as our esteemed and experienced Treasurer ensuring continuity. There are also intended adjustments in emphasis to service the vast demand and engagement of members and visitors from all corners of the globe. No exaggeration, as the web statistics produced by Blanche show keen interest from China to Moldova to the guy (you remember him?) on the upper reaches of the Andes tiring of only coming across dog-eared copies of Smiths Knoll in dilapidated snow-drenched huts with only intermittent wireless connections.

And as Piers Marter returns to the Board from sojourning in the wine tasting arenas of France to (possibly) take back Poetry Express from my over-eager grasp – and Celia Potterton also rejoins the Board adding further expertise and gives, as I see it, an endorsement of where we're at after the times of ACE disinvestment – a word to be used for the last time I'm hoping now. The coming New Year is one of small steps turning into strides, though four miles an hour is an admitted impossibility; a gentle stroll up the foothills taking in the view more apt. While you're contemplating festive rushes into the mass hysteria of spending and the paradoxes of goodwill, Poetry Express 28 is there to be plucked from the fruit trees of poetry and art Shangri la, to mix metaphors and continents. And we include a first – the awesome politically-inspired sequence of poems by Brenda Williams as a co-publication with this edition.

My sincere thanks to Roy Birch and Blanche Donnery keeping the fires burning as Simon Jenner's eye injury caused him major disability for a prolonged period – we welcome him back to base camp in January. Roy Holland's sterling work over the years needs highlighting, and we send him many best wishes for his future endeavours elsewhere, but ask that he'll remember us in writing still those hugely appreciated book reviews and articles. Check out the events - and 2009 would be a good year to really get the events and workshops wider-spread – do give Xochitl and all those involved your increased support. Dave Russell's review articles are now a prominent aspect of SP's work, and again thank you to him for the continuous support; as to all who are there for us.

Bring on next year, but not too quickly! Enjoy.

Phil Ruthen



Hello again. I've been out of action for a while and I have to tell you that the staff who've carried on, with the help of one particular board member in my absence, have put my efforts this autumn to shame. Wherever you're reading this, there's a dedicated team who put these words up; and who do their best to keep an office running, even though they work nominally part-time. Survivors' owes Blanche, Roy, Phil, Dave and others such as Xochitl and Celia a huge debt. 2009 will be the richer for SP having such a team. As I write, we're endeavouring to secure the kind of package that will help us develop SP to its true potential. And salaries for the staff to continue. ACE Literature Officer David Cross enjoyed a convivial meeting with everyone in my absence; and told me that the new office was a culture shock: he remembers the old one, with Roland the Rat. Remember him? There are quite a few things happening next year, but we have to hasten slowly. We need money and it might be helpful if we have a functioning director! Lights, action... 2009...

As 2008 draws to a close I've been feeling a particular affinity with Milton, whose quatracentenary fell on December 9th, being born at that date in 1608. This is because I unexpectedly became nearly blind through an undetected abrasion in one eye that rendered me photophobic in both, and necessitated three eye operations, in my father's old hospital. Quite like old times when I was a child. Milton became totally blind at around my age now. With no sense of irony the man who designs our booklets lent me the audio CD of Milton's *Paradise Regained* to listen to in my cosy little room. It occurred to me that this was how Milton's daughters. To whom he dictated that mini-epic, *Paradise Lost* and all other late works, would have first heard it. It felt peculiarly appropriate, as did the fact that the play I saw just as I fell ill was *Oedipus*, who of course ends up blinding himself. Was I missing something? At least at the moment I look truly Sicilian, blanking with my double shades.

Listening to all those audio CDs in hospital naturally made me think of other things too. For instance the extraordinary reach and relevance of Milton's polemics even now, several of which would be banned if they were republished under another name, especially those on monarchy and the republic. Overcoming afflictions of a temporary sort are easy enough, but it gives you a dark window on how people have to keep on with no prospect - as I've had - of recovery. The fear of losing one faculty, even partially, sharpens what remains. It made me think of a lot of survivors I know who bear other disabilities with fortitude and humour. A couple of these people actually visited me.

But it did make me think too of Milton and free-thinking on a generous scale, such as he essayed in everything from divorce on the grounds of incompatibility (finally adopted in 1977) to the freedom of the press, even of books that are trashy. Burning people was bad enough, he felt, but burning books was a destruction of the human mind (we might reverse his sentiments but he would not have failed to defend James Kirkup - against Mary Whitehouse in 1977 - or Salman Rushdie for blasphemy, as liberal intellectuals signally did). Milton's essay on education too is a model of exposing precisely how stimulating and fresh enquiry was stifled in his day; and whose blinkering conditions are being re-invoked gradually in ours, over the past 20 years. Intellectual and personal freedoms such as Milton espoused, if in rather straitened terms, are the core of liberality that needs fighting for. For instance, the obsessions with icons or fetishes of history without the sense of historicity to put it in context, the sense of emerging from very different narratives on where we come from. Knowledge of Milton and his espousing such liberations as we enjoy now, is one of these. It's doubly under threat: from current practices and the forgetting of such people as Milton, which furnishes a subset of such practice. Disability rights are something Milton understood long before any other polemicist. We owe him a great deal. OK. So Milton was on the side of those who cancelled Christmas and got cross with those who celebrated it. But then he would have pointed to what we've done with Christmas, and was aware of the engrafted Saturnalias that occasioned it. Bah! Humbug!

That said, Happy Christmas and New Year to everyone, and from me particularly, to the people who've kept SP going; which includes quite a few of you!

National Outreach and Mentoring Report

Postscript (the anthology of work by the Creative Writing group at the Felix Post Geriatric Unit of the Maudsley Hospital, which was published earlier in the year by Survivors Press) has been so successful that it is now in a second printing of 150 copies. The official launch of the book takes place at the Maudsley on December 5th and I shall be attending as SP's representative.

The Mentoring Scheme is progressing steadily and three more pamphlets (Richard Copeland, Neil Hopkins, and James Walker) are now at the proofing stage. The Bruce James volume will hopefully be ready by Christmas. Applications for the 2009 scheme are already coming in.

The only negative with regard to the mentoring scheme is that once again mentees outnumber mentors. If there is anyone out there who would like to be a mentor, please make contact.

The Vale House Project continues to thrive. In addition to the work taking place in the Re-Hab, we are now delivering the group to Day Services and have been asked to train ex-residents to be group facilitators.

Mid-Herts MIND have asked for the project to be delivered at their new Well-being centre in Stevenage and funding is being sought to make this possible.

The project delivered a workshop at TheFED mini fest at Faraday House (the London campus of Syracuse University) on November 8th, the upshot of which was that I received a request from the Maudsley for all information relevant to the project. The information is now with the Projects manager.

I have also been asked to record a podcast interview about the project.

As a result of TheFED minifest I am hoping to affiliate two new groups to the SP group network.

As part of the outreach programme it is my intention to set up an SP poetry competition. I feel this could significantly increase SP's profile and possibly launch one or two of our poets toward mainstream publication. It may even pay for itself.

I am also seeking longer works (novels, plays, short-story collections, non-fiction work) which could be serialized via the website. This would enable us to showcase material that we would otherwise be unable to handle, which in turn has the potential to generate more interest in the website. And may help SP authors toward a wider recognition.

As can be seen, the bulk of what I have written here is speculation. But at least, this quarter, there are positive outcomes to speculate upon. If the fundraising is successful, the next bulletin could well be reporting exclusively on live initiatives. Let's hope so.

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Roy Birch

National Outreach and Mentoring Coordinator of Survivors' Poetry.

mario petrucci by Dr. Simon Jenner

The editors of Poetry Express are delighted at last to present Part 1 of this 2-part extended review article of Mario Petrucci's work by Dr. Simon Jenner.

Part 2 will appear in our next edition PE29, Spring 2009

Flowers of Sulphur brings so much together of Petrucci's previous volumes that it marks a nexus of departures that would furnish a classic introduction. It should finally, belatedly, establish him as a major poet of his generation.

The opening poem in Flowers of Sulphur (Enitharmon, 2007) eschews and engages with the very uncertainty principle it evokes:

... His gaze, steady
as bedrock. And exactly one minute
for each glide of that tiny full moon
to extremity on its sky-blue wall.
In which time, the pre-war eyelash will at last
dislodge from the internal housing. Fall
serenely towards gross error.

('Keeper of the Kilogram')

It's Heisenberg's eyelash, you'd think, the measurer's weight and contamination here made incarnate in the experiment, and perhaps retrospectively dislodging previous certainties over seventy years. It's both a cutting comment on those science/poetry interfaces Petrucci shares with David Morley, and as both poets would affirm, a kind of scepticism about scepticism. Being empirical over empiricism distinguishes poets who are also trained scientists. Using science simply as such in poetry is something Petrucci has recently pointed to as potentially flawed: as un-lived and unimaginative (in Acumen, September 2007). This stand-alone poem (many Petrucci collections feature book-end poems, or here, a book-start piece, with an adjunct of blank pages) both introduces a tone and banishes it. Flowers of Sulphur might evoke Petrucci's previous explorations, but it's more personal than anything since his first collection, Shrapnel and Sheets.

It's worth briefly tracing his development as Petrucci should now be recognized as a major voice in contemporary British poetry, and his track record – a recent Arvon winner for instance – belies any muffled respect which sometimes greets his work alongside the kind of praise only accorded, as George Szirtes observes of him, 'the best poets'.

Petrucci has explored the personal by angling it like an off-centred history. Shrapnel and Sheets (Headland, 1996) immediately impresses with a register of voices, the packed and very precise imagery. 'Meat Inspector' is masterly in this, and enjoys the obliquity of shuffled eye-contact that put Petrucci neither in any modernist nor mainstream enclave.

Skin and membrane turn to ricepaper
At your touch. Tight buds of heart;
Lobes and cusps of liver, edges cut
like overhangs of mountain ice.
The pink chamois of lung: perfect
Blowholes that pout into nothing...

You catch my eye (did you
Half-read my thoughts?) but look away
To the lolling heads, the grey tongues
Each hung like a thick root
Towards water, towards the blood
Swirling to the drain.
I follow your gaze. One eye
Questions me blankly.

The poem darts in and out of parentheses, and this choreographing of voices bespeaks a poet uneasy in any single dramatization of voice. In one sense Petrucci is a condensed playwright, but his language is naturally too compressed and interleaved to proceed with a simple diffusion. The opening witness poems – Sarajevo atrocities from the perpetrator's point of view – adumbrate a recent historical theme Petrucci realizes in Heavy Water: a poem for Chernobyl (Enitharmon, 2004). The early pieces in Heavy Water are less rich than 'Meat Inspector', quite unflinchingly refusing to poeticize such brutal witness. They remain stark and unaccented with metaphor, quite unlike the later of the Chernobyl poems, and retain their own absolute value in the poet's development.

After Shrapnel and Sheets, what we get is the development of book-length collections of differently-accented attacks on the central theme. *Bosco*, an oblique polemic on conservation and ecology, is the first of these themed collections; a meditation on 'a heartwood of awe' as the blurb accounts it and – unusually – those chemical instabilities underlying the heartwood. The forest is peopled and the poem peopled with more than these. Language, too, is often more staccato, something that would remain a hallmark till *Heavy Water* five years later. The concentration and personified up-draught of nature remain, in the last section, 'Exodus' where one bird incarnates in different poems. In *Il Hughes* is evoked through Redgrove but stippled in a kind of pointillism that thrusts this association away: 'magpie/beating on rarefied updraughts... flash of black//against rags of cirrus./Flicker of white/on darkening indigo.' Poems like 'Oak' are understandably less flecked with speed but own the same interpenetration, the same airiness, not often found in the standard tree poem. Petrucci subverts his own space and that of trees, atomizing himself: 'sap rises in the brain-stem... and if I close my eyes/breathe deep through nostrils/I could be//an ancient forest.' It's Petrucci's careful preparation of this atomizing that allows him to turn himself into an oak fragrance. Such ludic seriousness was to impact on his next major collection *Heavy Water* in an unimaginable way.

Fearnought (*The National Trust*, 2006) like *Bosco* and, after that, *Heavy Water*, addresses those time-caught themes Petrucci has made his own. And it adds photographic images to this mix. Fearnought explores his residence in the Nottinghamshire work house, now preserved as a museum and a Radio 4 broadcast (December 2007) which framed Petrucci's poetry with commentary, airily laced with curators' testimonies of the house's harrowing circumstances. Petrucci's work leavens like a ghost in residence with a special pungency of its own as he empathizes – never merely sympathizes – with the state of a young woman made pregnant by the governor, or the actual state of the walls, by the walls. 'Oak' has seeded here, but this ghosting, and what Petrucci does with voices, develops still further in *Heavy Water*.

And so to his architecture, the later, long-breathed, book-length poems. *Heavy Water* (Enitharmon, 2004) pushes to an almost epic and harrowing scale various voices and flexibility of style inherent up till now. Here they're choreographed in a way that really does justice to them.

The language retains compression though avoids some of the clipped elements of earlier work. A preface and a moving inscription at the second of the poem's three sections summarizes Petrucci's permission, his immersion with Russian friends and others in this extraordinary work: 'If the scientists know nothing, if the writers know nothing, then it's for us to help them, with our lives and our death.' In two ways the poetry ghosts the ghosts – in the obvious sense, and in the new pitch of Petruccian empathy, a hallucinated kind of infusion. Risks with this kind of poetry are obvious too, and Petrucci's unflinching style now thrusts his metaphors into unnerving half-lives of their own. The sequence begins with 'The Man Buried with Chernobyl': 'You could slice him like an embryo... map his contours in roentgens,/reconstruct him in glowing 3D... leaving behind the murdered outline in white carbon.' Slowly, the necessarily grim but ludic trope radiates from one frozen death to 'Answers' ('Whom do we meet there?/Your good selves returning'), through the doomed rescuers whose helicopters crash and 'spill black running guts', to unbearable stresses under which even concrete fails. 'What remains must be done by flesh' ('Ukritye'). The process of evacuation harrows with naked miners burying each other, young women showering again and again, watched by expressionless men – one of the first of Petrucci's dramatic poems where litanic repetition, as in 'Answers', powers the narrative after more densely described poems.

Turning to the minutiae of decay, and indeed the non-decay of irradiation, Petrucci's mastery in these earlier poems is somehow to reinvent – often with shrouded puns and bitter Russian-sounding jokes taken from witnesses – the horrific amplitude of it all. The poems enfold both the swiftly and the slowly dying, husbands, wives, children, and then the longer periods of half-lives taken under the shadow of implosion, like the young woman near the end with whom an uncontaminated man can enjoy sex and study her as a specimen, which she subverts by telling him fictions that turn true: 'Wanted to see if my face was//different from the rest in the act of love... The Reactor... A searing//rod of black so stuck in my crop it made me/fall for someone like him.' ('Black Box'). Plath would have recognized that.

But this is to anticipate. Poems like 'Spring' with the bitter pun on 'May Day' so close to the disaster and Soviet ideology, succeed as lighter-freighted lyrics against dense landscapes we know from Petrucci's earlier work. Here 'A black calf/with hair to the ground... was//eating stones. Its black eyes shone.' ('Powder / Stone'). The detail, pity and pettiness of local living sharpens in 'a man chewing/soft fuel

from the reactor - //watch how his eyes spark/ like firecrackers.' 'Two Neighbours' tragically relates how the War veteran eats rather than buries cucumbers, recalling starvation: 'So we will die/dancing.' 'My parents kissed – and I was born' enumerates from a child's perspective the death of all the family, concluding with the child, who naturally craves the solace of an un-irradiated dark: 'I pick up as much/ of the dark as I can.' 'Soured Milk' again raises the fragility of nature against contamination to a superstition born of fact: 'Don't touch me//against the door. Or it will draw to those walls/another corpse.' This recreates a local saying. One unexpected freedom comes to a Chernobyl gay couple who will now literally not be touched ('Goluboy'). Fall-out is nuclear with families. 'What's// the point? she said. You're Chernobyl' retorts a prospective lover in 'Ivan', fusing man and disaster. In 'Breathing', a child tries teaching his mother how to breathe, from her perspective and sad prescience, now the more so since his is as acute: 'We are/flying I tell him. We are//breathing he replies' (gaps intentional). One man's sister donates bone marrow with her blood already 'watered down' by this experience, amid dark whispers that her marrow was 'messed with' so that:

... Her
hollow bones. And always

in her eyes that look –
that drift back and forth
between our world and his.

'First Light' adumbrates the core of the collection's title:

I try to be water. What mostly makes us
makes us kin. Water can have a past.
Can remember.

'Olya' literally thins the dying of a child ballerina who refuses the Proserpine-invoked quarter fruit, who is exploited in her slow dying by fascinated visitors (another pornography invoked by Petrucci), and yet whose 'rotten' spine still allows her to practice ballet steps in her final spasms. The intimacy of the dying and not yet dying, as in 'Transfusion', erupts movingly in 'Every day I found a new man' and the disintegration of the husband's flesh which endangers the wife, resting 'dissolving heart-chambers' where they are again united in the transparency of his body. Through her devotion he almost 'turned round', and this double

theme dovetails: 'We were that close'. 'The Breath' employs imagined scenarios of contamination, simply breathing in the wrong space days afterwards, many miles away. Or the Yes in 'One Word', which becomes the only thing not contaminated between two new lovers. 'A Name' has you wondering if the narrator is a ghost, as he claims at one point, or the victim of a bureaucratic cock-up by which he's been completely lost. This is Petrucci's refraction at work, as in 'Baba Nadya' where his lovingly grained trees are wept for by the eponymous woman of the title:

as though they were her children. And each
trunk that dies a coffin in the making.

But the poems span aftermath even further afield, where 'Curator' notes a woman furious at her husband's heroic relics in a museum. 'Her mouth// gaping as if all air had turned to glass.' 'Black' has a man knowing his wife will 'feel in his urn//for the intimate shells/of his death' (note the extra spaces, another – modernist – gleam of stylistic range). In these houses and hospitals 'There are many/rooms – Even the dead//fear them'. The science-inflected poem concerning the forms of radiation ('Alpha - Beta - Gamma') reminds us that Petrucci developed the picture on the book-cover. Certainly, he doesn't play as the child does in 'Nana': 'tell me/is radiation//like god?' 'Bashchuk' returns to the detritus of skin:

... How grey

his feet. How heavy.
And the skin wrinkled
like freshly poured lead.

It recalls 'Grey Men' at the beginning, that first anatomy of desiccation, with its 'slow squid/in a moonlit ocean. Our milked bodies//pulse to get between the sheets.' The medics milk them, 'Have everything they need from us.' Each poem tackles such a range of voicing that repetition is never felt, but references back refracted with new vigour and a vast assurance. One might call it solidly imagined, but Petrucci is attempting analogies like the penetration of gamma rays, its delicate intrusion, a proving gentle enough but which leaves skin hanging. The collection closes with such valedictory hymns as the rhyming 'Last Wish' which, after all the leaden coffins with their undecaying cargo, concludes: 'Give some small part of me/

ordinary death.' Finally we're left with the weird science of it, turned to fable in 'Exposures':

Could it be the world shedding itself skin by skin

till a snotty-faced boy picks it up – shrugs then pockets it – because? Just because there's no one

around and it fits so snug in his hand.

'Envoy' reminds us that this will 'Take our words. Enrich them', wrapping up with the chilling phrase: 'It will escape.' Both memorial and the next disaster.

Mario Petrucci's latest volume is : i tulips, with Enitharmon Press
www.mariopetrucci.com
www.enitharmon.co.uk

one pink heart

i ask – that & two grey
halves of sponge – if
wrong flesh must

take me let it have
head to sway me
full into what s-

wells within till b-
lack has clasped each
oilslick lung to put mere

breath in its coma &
nerves rewire to char of
cable & eyeballs grow sable

& stare through their irises of
two bone washers which c-
rack in dark but widen

to light: so ungradually
all of me going the
way of sloey pit

-uitary & black-o
-live testicle as hair
unthins to jet & turbo-

charged with black
turbans up for its tw-
ice-a-day clip i clop to

on charcoal bones fis-
sured & more dee-
ply dark than s-

pace on x-ray as order
-lies watch my blu-
shes rise japped

(for even guarded s-
mile shows molars set
under liver of tongue like

blackcurrant gums)
yet still they help me
nurse each massive black-

bean kidney as if it were
their own & wipe mole
-flesh arse spotting &

spreading then joining my
whole skin over though
i wont mind so long

as i make an ink of
blood oh ill walk that
negative self down the

road invisible against
asphalt – this old body t-
urned antimatter ganger &

all honest tumour except
for will in its two b-
right halves &

under its rib that un-
stoppable fib-
rillant

muscle

Mario Petrucci

Broadsheet

half a year & It

shifts : as any body
must – its lust a
touch looser at

the jowl – that
middling crease of
brow deepened by an

added shade of dark –
a twosome creature
all but one yet s-

hunted through in
-cremental selves by
diet of said-&-done in

downward insistences
of time so slight as to
make all difference :

though to super-
impose what it was
then on what it is now

might draw a gasp at
shimmering blur of
change – at how

unkemptly our
lovely album pro-
-gresses dust – or

put recent snaps side
by side to get them
wrong way round

thinking love in half
a year could g-
row a little

wise & young

Mario Petrucci

After I've Gone

To the mortal eye I am just a fragment;
A photo, an echo, a letter, a memory.
But the truth of me is whole, complete, round and entire.
I am the setting sun, rising on another side,
I am the waning moon, the slice of light is just a part of me,
I am your shadow, a snatch, of who you are,
I am your breath, inside and outside of you
You are aware o me, but cannot catch me
You think I am far from you, on the other side of death,
Bu I am closer to you than I have ever been.

Tania Coinbac

B o r d e r l i n e

I grew up with the knave
A voice scrawled across a cloud
"She will be brave"

A society of denial
Secrecy, false pride

On the cusp of a wave
Freedom I've found
I'm no longer the slave

In secret these robots
Wear their masks well
With faces of stigma
They too know Hell

Tormented, marooned
In a family obscene
Fruitfulness rare
A child treated mean

Speak out!
Walk tall and proud
Vocalize your story
Take off your shroud

Hammered with nails
Completely berated
I frown like Jesus
My crown serrated

Each day is a number
Each number a year
Keep hold of your key
Life's not to fear

Thorns to be pierced
Face cut and torn
A world to depart from
Wishing not to be born

Prolific and golden
Is our Promised Land
If your steps are unsteady
The Universe is ready
To take hold of your hand

As dead as Queen Mother
A hundred and one
My life put on hold
The feud not yet done

Joan Kelly

Bemused and confused
Yet an angel inside
Descending to Earth
A place to reside

B l a c k S p i n i s t e r

A hopeless case
Some of them call us
Silenced again
Before they discard us

No appetite to live, no strength to die,
the spider's dinner struggles in a mesh
of silk. The huntress skulks, a venom eye.
Survival of the fattest. Flesh eats flesh.

A story to be told
Complex and surreal
Truth is my treasure
Thou shall not steal

Black spinister so sinister creates
a web of torture, paralysing bites.
Compelled to eat, she sucks, regurgitates
the yo-yo sludge. A swarm of locust nights.

Recovery is enlightening
The agony, despair
Don't follow those who shame us
Those who do not care

No stamina to live, no zeal to die,
she stuffs a void with food, belittles pain,
avoiding stuff, avoiding asking why
she stuffs-and-voids *mad nauseam*, in vain.

With half painted faces
They shame and provide

Buliminal, she spirals in decay
until the predator becomes the prey.

Dear Uncle Ahmed

All the children are OK,
except that Abdul and Tariq
are currently racing each other in
their new wheelchairs, even though
I've told them both, the wheelchairs
are expensive and
"They are not Toys."

Tariq says he is winning and so does
Abdul
What would you suggest as a suitable?
speed limit for the Hallway?

They are like Daleks – defeated by steps,
Trains, and a Bad Press.
When people stare – they answer back – "Hello."
Why are the clever ones always such a handful?
At Eid Mubarak, after the fasting it was
so crowded-there was no room left in the hall,
So they sat at the front, in their chairs, and
we collect them later.

They didn't like the Fireworks;
it reminded them of the past.
We tried to cheer them up with a nice piece
Of cake – until the Iman stopped us;
"They have already had a Full Tray or Biscuits!"

They will eat my curry tomorrow. They both come
First. They both come first.
"Slow Down!" "Careful!" "Don't cut corners!"

Yours faithfully, Leita

Carol Batton

Death of the Local

Sawdust ceiling
with indium glint carpet
where brave words ravish
a lecher of mockery.
Tongues are leaking
the leftovers of politics
listless speak
from a thirsty bar's writhing sea.
Coercive anecdotes
from virtual vandals
cloned marketed minion -
An accented fake.
On pristine table tops
with a fragranced candle,
laminated menu
with marmalade steak.
*I prefer to hear talk
of anguish and candour
then tread floorboards
where muted modernists ponder.*

M J Duggan

from Flair's Grave, part XI

Gordon Brown plants tree in Kenyan slum
we're not the Mail we could stretch to 600
in the Hotel North the monkey never dies
city of invisible rails no sky
chili dogs chase empty beer bottles
see you around Molly raincoat
neon spells bead the narrator is
dead: cinched belt a world without news

Iain Sinclair

Taken from Buried at Sea
ISBN 1-905208-06-5
Worple Press

M i n d o v e r M a t t e r

I walk down the street,
Smiling at everyone I meet,
And people think I am normal.
I sit with my family night after night,
Giggling at my dad's jokes,
Bickering with my brother,
Debating with my mum,
And people think I am normal.

If they could only look a little further-
Glimpse beyond the bland surface of my face,
Towards the centre, where chaos reigns.
That uncontrollable ball,
Which terrifies me in it's power,
Unravelling in it's freedom.

Thoughts race through,
Irrational, nonsensical.
Tormenting. Frightening.
Block them out.
Impossible.
They lurk within my brain,
A constant presence,
Waiting to pounce.
A disease infecting my head.
Spreading towards madness.

Emma Targett

i fly a kite
in the blaq of the night
she stole the ribbons for her hair

a child like delight
pulling glass strings so tight

wood and paper obliquely in the midnight air

atoms unfurl
on her cheek a kiss-curl
as tonight i fly my blue kite.

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Selected from A Yellow Umbrella

C a r a s s i u s A u r a t u s

My mind is a bowl of carassius auratus, Circling round round round,
Weeds wave, shingle stirs;
He sits, stares, questions.
I plunge my hand into molten gold, He watches.
Fish flash. Snatch.
Offer writhing fantail,
He examines, writes notes.
Diagnosis: fin rot

Lydia Hill

Self Preservation Society

The end was nye
Six months in a coma
I know I know it was serious
The definition of self esteem eluded me

Days and days in bed
Not eating
Just drinking water
No thoughts of my daughter

I didn't want to be here
I had my chances and blew them I was a failure
Day by day it got worse

First I travelled in my car to Howgill Viaduct
A scary place, self preservation kicked in
I was too scared to walk across the viaduct
Let alone jump off it

Then I thought about walking in front of a lorry
But the right one didn't come along
Off to the County
What a depressing place

What normal person would locate a Psychiatric Hospital
Next to a train station?
Every ten minutes I heard a rumble
Looked out of the window, thought of the end

I went to the station six times
Every hour a straight through train sped by
I perched myself on the platform edge
But every time I knew I wouldn't do it

They call it self preservation
The end is so final
Jules wake up from your coma
Finish what you have to do

Jules Clare - 11/7/08

t r u e f r i e n d s h i p

make friends with
the poster-man
so adroit
carefully laying each fraction
of new-existing

left leans with the brush
right with the paste

emerging picture builds
section by section
no lumps, no cracks, no tears
juxtaposition impartial
smoothly placed

compelling present here
open invitation

she's replying herself soon

Steve Mann

The Riddle of the Common Thread

Loved by a pauper, loved by a prince,
She came to set the captives free.
What happened in the bright red room that night?
No one knows, not even the man himself,
The blackout man from the darkest abyss.
But us old soldiers, we'll drink to her,
The woman with the all-knowing eye,
But without a face, without a name.
We'll drink ourselves to death...
Till tears in the gutter run dry.

I dare not name her, though we were once close.
She shrieked like the devil, that peerless beauty,
Making music, singing, ascending,
To take the place of God.

And I will give her the whole world,
For it is mine to give,
And I can give it to whomever I please,
It will be hers, if she comes back to me...
I see her now! I see her in the dark, blue,
Dark...blue...eyes of my beloved,
The thread to tie all threads.

It is time to forget the past.
It is time to tie the knot.

Justin Gritt

Bess and the
unicorn approach,
waggoning bladders
of millet. Teardrop
Inn's sun parlour.
Whisket serves
pink lady,
dirt-dishing about
Sparine Castle.

Pink lady,
dirt-dishing about
Sparine Castle.
Quinsy, the
dervish, high-fives
the window. "You
know. You do know,"
Winfrith tells Una
by the hearth.

High-fives the
window. "You know.
You do know,"
Winfrith tells Una
by the hearth. A
wick phuts.
Delphinium seeds
aviate along the
grove.

ADVERTISEMENT-MAKING (screens 76-78)

by Christopher Barnes

Nuclear Waste

I am nuclear waste:
Dangerous. Contaminated. Unpredictable.
They approach, safe in their suits,
Talking through thick helmets;
Voices muffled, faces distorted,
Defences too thick to understand.
I drag at them:
Can't you hear me?
Can't you see me?
I'm begging for human compassion.
They throw me away.
I am nuclear waste, contaminated

Lydia Hill

S a t u r d a y ' s r a i n s

your dirty tongue stuck into a song/ there's a lipstick on the glass
your red skirt drowned in wine/ and a trace of a face that isn't mine
your perfume hunting the silence in the air/ there's a shadow on the table
your cigarette like a flower between your fingers/ attached to a body that isn't yours
your hair upon my lips/ open up the window
your voice/ the sky is thirsty, wants to drink another light
your gentle lift up of the hips/ such a fine night whispers on the terrace
your glorious orgasm/ i can't remember where i left the day
your pillow and your breath/ like always, i can't forget.

Jurat Of Petrof

W i s e O w l B l u e s

Nothing has changed,
The distances remain the same,
Whatever we do,
The differences come through.
Old friends!
And how the memory seemed fine.
Till we bring it in to the present.
And hear the wise owl say-
'You should not try to recapture
The waters under the bridge'.
And cliches too many to a fist.
Nothing's changed,
We look older,
And the sentimentality's the same.
A hug to embrace our walls,
And go off to cement
Our entrenchment.

P C Vealey

A i r p o r t

A lounging
strangers eyes gaze
nervously
at multi-screens of rolling news.
Worn suitcase
used
like a toppled foot-stool
in dull decorated
bars of travel.

Newspapers
shuffled
like a deck of cards
between Rernbrandt's all coloured
breakfast tray.
Piercing
these shrouded walls
the gestured shadows -
That keep stalking the sun.

M J Duggan

T a r e v e r s e

from Sleazy News and Related Ephemera One

Never

I've never eaten suchi,

I've never changed a tyre, Because i am a tramp,

But i will when i retire!

Dan Tuony

As Big as The Bad has been, As Big as The Good will be

When I was little
Ponderous Questions
Did Summon My Mind

In gravelled concrete paths
strewn across bluebells under
mysteriously cruel arched rainbows
landscaping terraces and framing factory funnels

Enshrined in bleak blackness
my little groping mind gazed upon the future unknown

How delicately dangerous
How sweetly mission impossible
These paradigm dreams that scraped
the shifting sky

... of Art Freedom and Nudity
of University lecturing libraries
of blonde blue eyed English English-men

But of Class, Religion, Spirits and Culture
All lies, lies, lies, lies
Did Battle with
Pinching shards of British steel
hammering my mind as nails of truth
I could not deny...

The warm enticement of dark church and pub
Cricket and Flirty robes
Soul Scary
Spirit Evoking and as Incantating
Ear Spanking
Life Revolutionary
Magic Music and Effervescent Books
Relaying in song and word

A scythe of death...
to concrete gravel
to the blasted bondage of power marriage...
its ghastly gold and sari streams flowing with swords
of Bollywood hypocrisy and
Cognitive Torture embedding sinister flashbacks

HALT...!

ALAS...

Life is very strange...
Thus its wonder and awe
This Wheel of Karma et Destiny

Which Pulls and Pushes Us
Like Newton's Laws of Force
To What End...?
To Where...?

The Mystery and Surprise of it all
The gods cheekily hide...

Larissa Saxby Bridger

“poplars: mid-winter”

they sway beyond the tinted-glasses -and day
is almost night this windswept afternoon
three days into the new year but white sky
is proof of daytime with its unwashed sheet

the poplars brush against that something ness
invisible air wave “hello”
and “goodbye” to times’ passing time passing
doesn’t acknowledge such polite gestures

it’s too busy heading onwards -forwards
scattering its long trail of dead seconds
to fall to the cold earth to be trod in

like the poplars’ leaves that fell long ago
and were swept away by autumn’s own brushwork
or mulched by footsteps -cleared by street cleaners

Stephen Francis

Quangoitis?

September

Panting up a hill,
Rain coming down hard.
Eye level contact
With a broolly.
Are you in there or avoiding?
The young nouveau rich,
Playing at men by numbers
In suits they've yet to fill
Are splashing clumsily downstream,
While the World Aid Appeal Merchants
Are considered naive innocents abroad.
In streets of your homes
Lepers in disguise,
Who knows where it ends?
The obsession with unelected dream fakirs
Taking the pain away from you.
Where the quack used to pretend to care,
What can you expect
In this day and age?

P C Vealey

See the Light

My head at the moment is fucked up
I feel just to sic 'n' cut up
But I choose to write
So I can live to see the light!

I could just curl up 'n' die.
But I'd rather choose to cry.
I know everyone has stress
but I feel my life is one big mess.
Going through the same. If there wouldn't
be sick people in this world my
head wouldn't be in such whirls

I know you have to get on but
I just keep thinking why I'm the
One now I realise it wasn't me int eh
Wrong I'll get my head together
'n' be strong.

Some men take the piss!
But deep down I can get
through this.
Now I'll live through the fright
and get on to see the
Light.

Steph Hall

Spit and Sawdust

I want to walk
into a bar
feel the unwelcome stare from the locals.
Breathe the stale smoke that floats snakelike
along stained
barstools of candle yellow.
I want to walk
into a bar
feel the cold silence
from a barmaid.
Watch her titillate
the locals -
Those drooling bar flies at noon.

M J Duggan

Homecoming

I remember that homecoming
When wind blown wet eyed I stood
On the platform
As your train glided to a halt.
I rushed forward only to find
Over known and over rehearsed responses
Numbing my emotions,
So I pressed myself against you there
Like a kind of marble rose,
Frost cold to your touch
Tears Ice brushed
Frozen on my eye lashes,
I took your arm
And we walked home
Together but each one alone.

Pat Bidman

The Lime pip

From the moment of our first word, we have begun a journey of departure from this World

The white strawberries of our infant expression
Are the dinosaurs of this so-called adulthood.

The charms, facades, images and cameos we draw close to,
are where the starlight shimmers upon the dew-beaded
cobwebs of an ice-over dream; the breath of our ears,
the seahorse of a somewhat cubist estrangement.

A misanthropic stare of disillusionment is always there,
in an anti-chamber or box room of the streets and roads
of our cortex.

As we walk amongst the flowers who bloom from shattered concrete
we carry the walking sticks of old age
propping up our empathy and pathos like a shadow clock
at eventide.

The hydraulicon of our arteries make a dissonance absurd,
where only the Gods can claim to have heard.

We ride a penny farthing through the parks of stylist temples
taking care not to get stuck in the tramlines of the wimples.

Like a genoflex of pure motion we cycle on the air' the cloud of
DaDa's briar where this is not a pipe to bear.

If we choose to walk on water we must risk the aquoid prayer,
as the tempest and the monsters ripple
around mountains of the deep.

The Atlantean and the Nazarene hold the boiling sword aloft,
Of ingenuity and integrity...

We are innocent children inspired.

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Selected from A Yellow Umbrella

Snare Verse

Car

To make you feel alive

Or maybe you could wait,

Until you learn to drive?

Rod

The strapping paper boy Rodney,

Took the philosopher off guard,

With a question trickier than any posed,

By Francois Lyotard

Coping

When life was very difficult,

And she felt she couldn't cope,

She'd write a nasty letter

And send it to the pope!

Dan Tuony

“ r o t h k o : a p e r s o n a l v i e w ”

intense – and, beautiful: though not beauty
as the meaning of the word they speak
without uttering a word: a vow
of silence like that unheard scream in space
a “dies irae” verdi couldn’t compose
imagine the smog of london sandwiched
between two moonless -starless -sabled nights
too dark for hell -and far to black for death

open your mind to them -more than your eyes
and behold the mindscape of the artist
breathe in the chainsmoke -feel it in your lungs

but turn your gaze towards the brightness too
for the suicidal tendencies there
may grasp you tighter than a workbench vice

gallery spaces become like chapels
the sacredness of his labour’s hung there
not to be praised -nor worshipped(that’s not art)
it’s the inner-sanctum of the gazer:
that personal wave of sheer emotion
gently lapping -violently crashing
within the domed-wall of the cranium
stand close -or sit alone -absorb them

let the mind discover what eyes see
ignoring those so-called “connoisseurs” of art
that’s like being given secondhand thoughts

you decide whether you like -dislike -works:
if there’s only the work -that’s art;
it’s already spoken -without speaking

were it possible i’d lay my head down
upon his canvasses: they’d pillow me
into a sense of deep serenity
my tired mind sometimes needs such comfort
but all i can do is imagine this:
not even a full-scaled reproduction
will suffice others -too intense-
are the stuff of dark thoughts -graveyard cold days

where overcast skies are of a grey
undertaker black -elephant heavy
the mind’s plague -world-weariness

-but the soft-pillowed ones are mothers’ arms
are small children’s smiles -erasing
stress and discomforts of these madhatter times

i imagine his blackness as smoke
inhaled by the packetfuls each day
were his lungs to be squeezed-dry of matter
the gung would appear as thick as oil
his greys the cold sombreness of mood-swings
a carousel of old grey mares -blemished
caused more by neglect than anything else
the stillness as driftless as the doldrums

marooned on maroon -he sat chainsmoking:
thinking -thinking -wandering his mindscapes
standing -stepping forwards -moving backwards

something needed to be added: but what?
a darker shade of maroon? an oblong?
an oblong up-ended -almost doorshapped?

it’s only my imagination of him:
allowing imagination set-free
there’s no getting inside of his crammed head
and perhaps it’s best kept the way it is
for i may become lost in pitch-black cloisters
manic labyrinths within labyrinths
finding no way out so i gaze at them
letting my mind wander like a tourist

through unchartered spaces: shades and colours
spread-out far and wide like time’s passages
frozen -and yet somehow moving slothlike

the bright ones dazzling the mind’s eye: sunlight
snowblinded -snow trodden and sludged where trudged
by those footsteps only the mind can cause

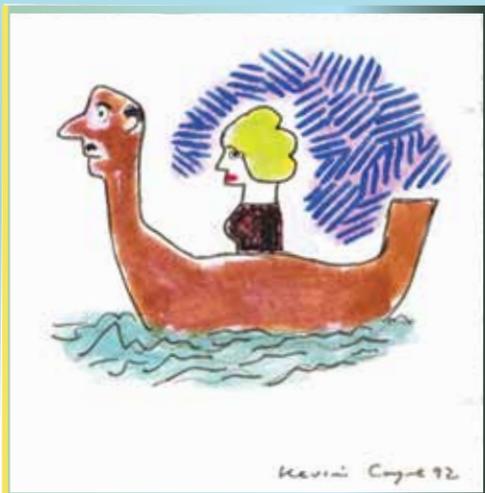
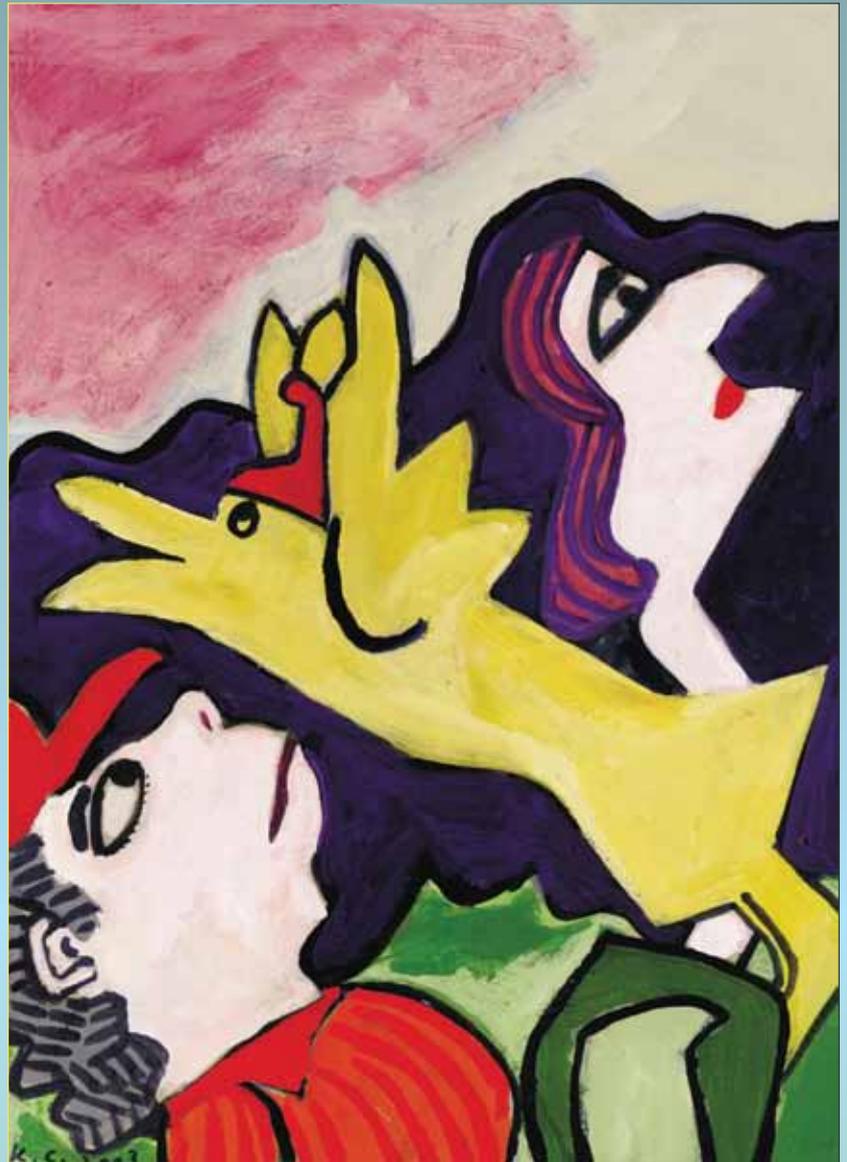
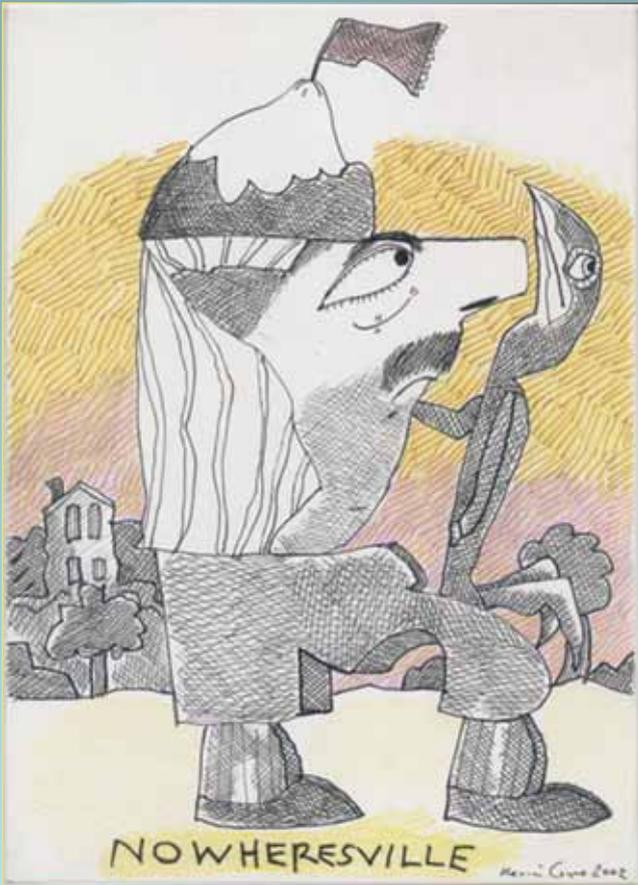
Stephen Francis

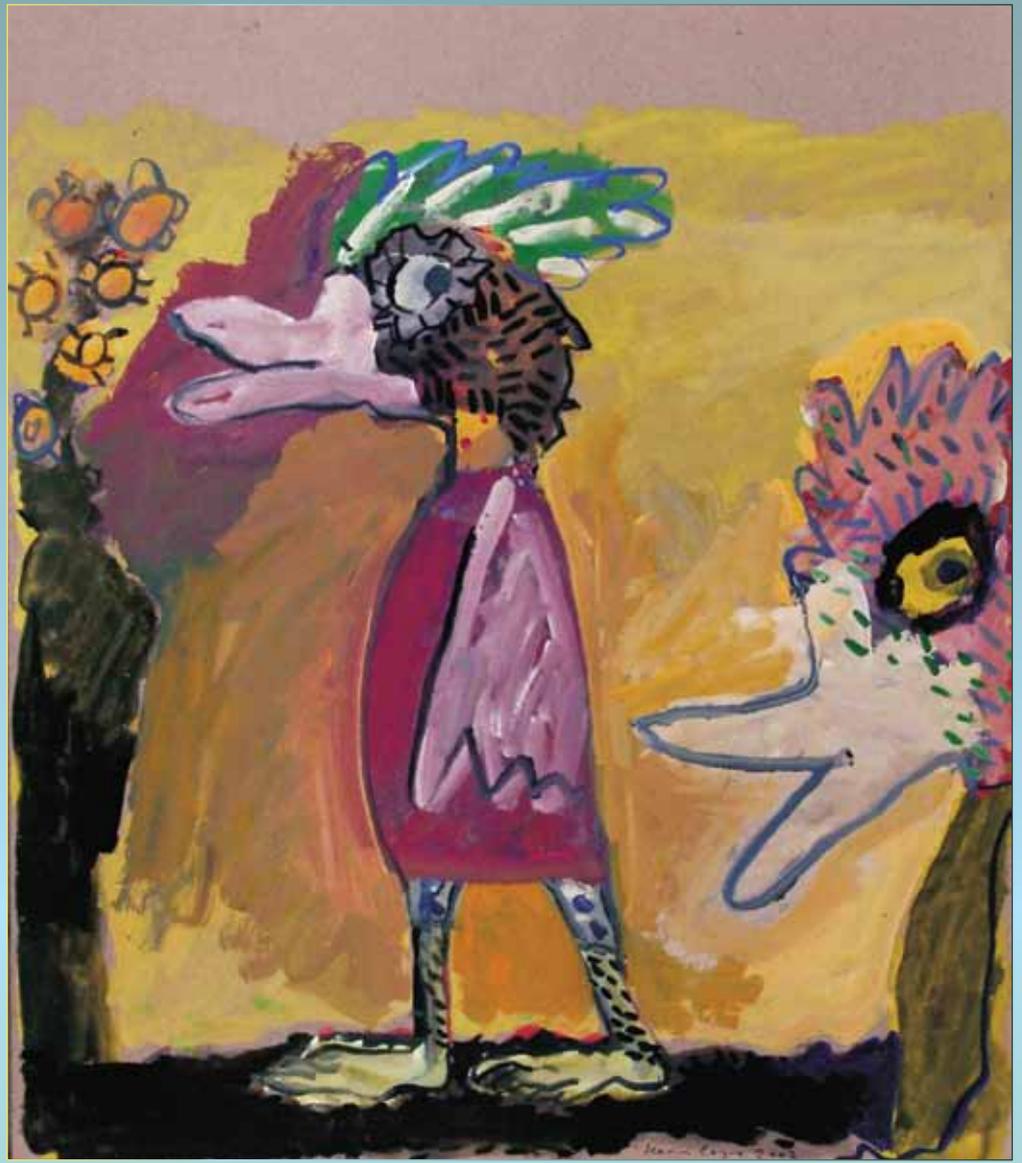
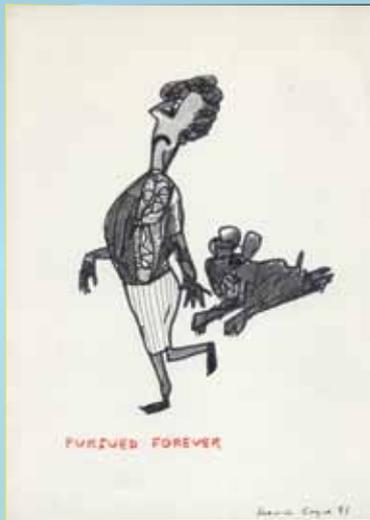
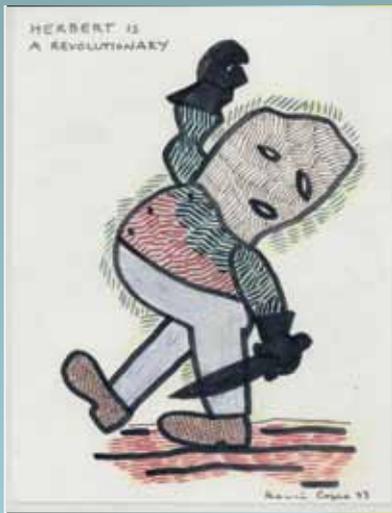
(c)the sutton drop-in club, belmont, surrey

featured

Kevin Coyne

artist





short stories by Kevin Coyne



A WRITER'S LOT

In an attempt to write another major work he found himself writing about a collapsible ferret, a biting creature with clockwork claws. "Where do these mad ideas come from?" asked the man in the next bed (he was in hospital for a minor operation at the time). He couldn't think of a suitable answer.

Back at home he continued, this time with a concrete poem in praise of Germany and the German people. "It's very long," whispered his wife. She passed with her lover. He started to cry but gave up after he'd made some scrambled eggs: The World Cup was on television.

In his forty-fifth year he obtained a quickie divorce and married an ill-fated seamstress from Central Europe. It's all the fashion here he told his mother on the telephone.

His literary ambitions remained. At the age of forty-seven he started 2 series of epic plays about the life and times of three Serbian peasants. On completion he presented the manuscripts to his young wife. She blushed. In his fiftieth year he discovered complete happiness when twenty-six of his shorter poems were published in a chic magazine. He was lionized for two weeks, sufficient to keep him content for the final twenty-two years of his life. His young wife was devoted to him seeing true innocence in his cherubic smile and total futility and silliness in his occasional rages. "I'm not a feminist," she said one day in the garden. "Why not!" he demanded determined (as ever) to support every current fad and fashion. "Because I don't want to be," she replied fondling his knee with one hand and eating a tomato with the other. "You're a reactionary," he bellowed. "What do you mean?" she asked - puzzled. With this he shook his head so hard his glasses fell into a bowl of soup she'd just prepared. "I give in," he mumbled after a long pause for breath - "Where did you put my newspaper?"

GETTING BETTER

He sat down to write... "In the midst of the hallucination of time a steamroller squashed his violet pumps." He was Oscar Wilde - or was he? He'd been mad once (or was it twice?) and the thoughts of entering that screaming dark world again shocked him. He decided he wasn't Oscar Wilde; that he was really himself writing about Oscar Wilde. He felt better.

Some days later he was carrying a heavy parcel to the post-office when he was stopped by a woman with piercing brown eyes. "I'm Maria Callas," she said. He paused for a few seconds then called a policeman. "Fetch a doctor!" he shouted - "she's not well." Later he regretted his decision. What if she was Maria Callas? She's dead he thought, and felt relieved. Madness was for other people.

The months passed and the days were sweet. The rancid smell of tortured mind passed through his ears and nose and drifted into clear air.

His eyesight seemed sharper (was it the new reading glasses?) and existence seemed worth the existing. "I'm well," he called to a passing sparrow and then added sadly... "but I can't fly." This great truth resounded through his considerable cranium, his vanity truly exposed. "Time for tea," called a voice from the direction of the French windows. He stood rigid - softened - then turned to walk indoors.

DAYS BY THE SEA

From your little firework. I explode, sparkle; fornicate with the winter sky. "Caress my soul," you murmur, "make play with my senses." I try, but words splutter out before actions. "It's the barmy eyed poet in you," you bluster, sniffing a bit.

Pause. Think. Describe:

We have a room on the same corridor. Drunken members of this therapeutic community of ours frequently defecate by our doors. At meetings in the orange painted refectory we protest. "Billy shit in front of Mildred while I was Hoovering up," you say, screeching with indignation. Bleached blond Derek, noted troublemaker and one of the most brazen skitters around, laughs. I find myself reaching for his neck to strangle him. Tall nurses prevent me.

And how, you might ask, did we get here?

In a blistering hurry stuck in gleaming pink perambulators pushed by fussy pushy mothers wearing plaid skirts, sensible shoes, knitted hats. In wooden Spitfires piloted by snooty pilots hurtling fast across landscapes strewn with nappies. "You could see the shit stains from the air," you gigglingly remember after I remind you of it all. But laughable it certainly wasn't. Criminal though - certainly.

I'm your baby jolly boy stuck fast to your whims till you tell me otherwise. You shout "fetch the crayons for picture making" and I scamper about till all is prepared. This kiddo seeks to please, would break wind at a papal gathering if you so wished.

And does God help us?

A crucifix hangs over the bed in every room. Five saintly priests visit our establishment in rotation. Cocksucking is forbidden during waking hours. We take our pills and dwell upon the afterlife. We apply ourselves to all therapies with a diligence that astounds the casual visitor. Who amongst you in that outside world of yours could live as we do? It takes discipline and order to thwart the devils within. That horned beast of a being has no place on our tennis courts and football fields.

Pause. Think. Try to relax.

The sea is close by. On designated happy days we're allowed to frolic on the sands. Your love is at its best when active during these periods. You become playful; slip my heavy denim overalls to my knees, smother my pubic hairs with fine sand. The sun (if it's out and in the mood to give succour) never fails to add a magic to the proceedings. "And a good time was had by all" are words our supervisors use frequently at the conclusion of these fun occasions. We are then stared at meaningfully, required to nod in agreement. I, personally, never have problems performing this simple physical task. Days by the sea are always a thrill.

Change. Adjust. Compromise?

If being part of your society means wearing froggy glasses and pip popping away at a computer keyboard you can count me out.

THIN WALLS

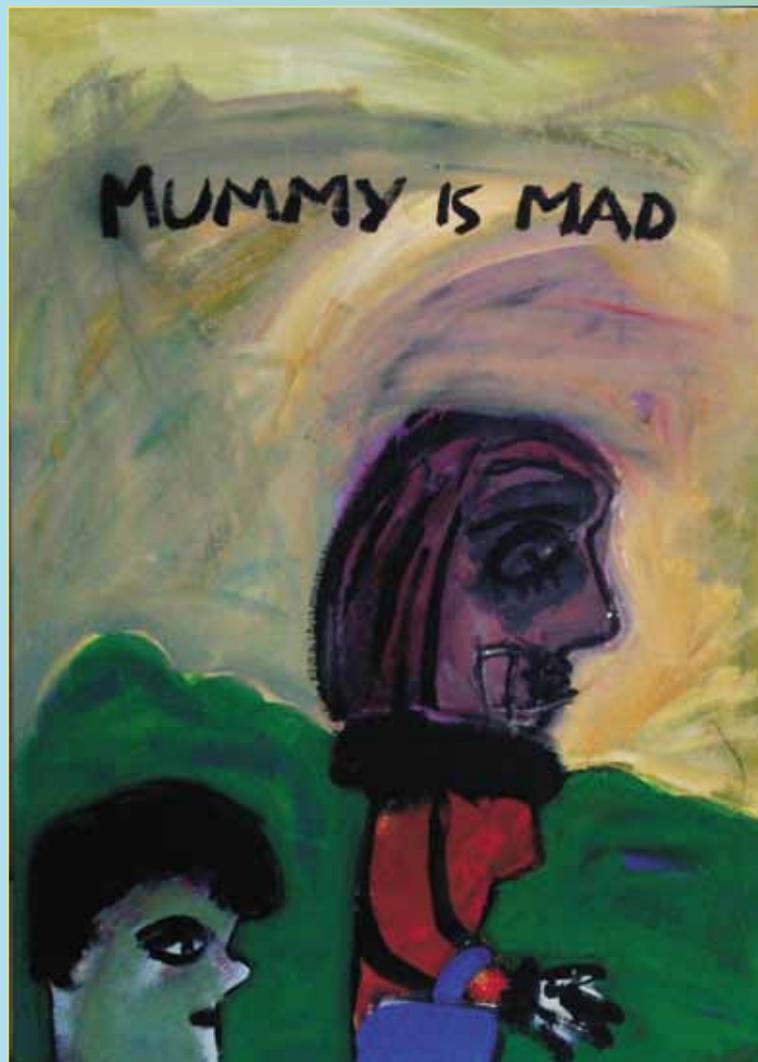
Now the moon has gone and the neighbours click dominoes in the dark. Thin walls, all my life I've been a martyr to thin walls. We of the lower classes would love to be party to thicker walls but near poverty has condemned us to the thinner type. It's to do with expensive bricks and mortar. Those with lots of money can afford to splash out, make walls stout, and ensure they are secure. We without the wherewithal are forced to do with plaster board. Our opinions on housing and the like are very rarely asked for. Where's the justice, chamois leather purses, hands bedecked with fanciable rings? I'm barely employable. I can't afford anything. They were fighting next door last night. She was heard to hit him with a metal object of some sort, one that caused a shimmering cymbal like sound that gave me earache.

I meant to complain when I met them on the corridor this morning but was afraid. Last time I protested the male cuffed me round the back of my head, called me "Kenneth the Pipsqueak." I was humiliated to the point of becoming suicidal and buying a very sharp bread knife. Do you like sliced bread? I don't. I'm utterly browned off with both its consistency and its ability to stick in the throats of young children. "Oh no, he choked on the dough!" I heard a young mother scream once in the casualty ward of one of London's most famous hospitals.

A bread knife would come in handy. I should buy some proper curtains. Since she went off with the kids to Birkenhead I've had very little time to concentrate on practicals. My ambitions remain undiluted though. The life of a papal dignitary still interests me. She, quite naturally, didn't think much of the idea, often choosing to make funny faces behind my back if I so much as mentioned the topic. Little did she know that I frequently caught her at it in my shaving mirror. I wonder why she always did it when were standing in the bathroom together? The few times she got down on her knees to lower my underpants to my ankles with her teeth were interesting. Our last two years together were shit. Being alone isn't the epiphany to divine silence I expected it to be. Thin walls lead to noise. Ghosts, I've found, find them easier to travel through. First there was Dennis Wooley, a former school chum, who emerged a month ago to lecture me about my unwashed duvet, boldly suggesting that I was "turning into a tramp" and "wasn't worth a twopenny toss." I took offence of course, but couldn't kick him in the balls because the elusive nature of his transparent state. Ghosts are arrogant, quarrelsome, over familiar (they talk as if they know everything about you) troublemakers. Take the eternally petite Linda Wantage, for instance. What a saucy bit of cosmic fluff! She once danced wide-eyed and nearly naked on the end of my bed, then proceeded to call me "a dirty-minded voyeur" afterwards for, "staring all the time." It was all so frustratingly illogical. Her sexual teasing succeeded, although she denied me my pleasure by spreading guilt. Thin walls lead to truculent female ghosts imposing themselves on men. I must somehow persuade my landlord to make them thicker, perhaps to forget the costs and consider the sanity of one of his tenants. I've been left high and dry by a woman without a heart. My two sons (still so young!) have probably forgotten me by now. My kind are made for crouching dumbfounded in quiet corners, stuffing themselves with stale sandwiches from rubbish bins in railway station waiting rooms, belching to amuse themselves in arctic Salvation Army dormitories. The next time my neighbours pass me in the hall they'll more than likely wrestle me to the floor. It's to be expected. They have the upper hand. I'm the one that creeps round his flat in socks to avoid making excess noise when they're at their dominoes and gin rummy. I'm the one that shakes their doormat every weekend because the female of the house has an allergy to dust. I'm just mouse droppings. The rats will chew through my exceedingly thin walls soon, making sure they sing me a happy song as they jangle on their banjos. They could eat my feet off. Its been done before. My brother in Derby suffered this fate a few years ago.



artist



The editor of Poetry Express 27 would also like to thank Kevin's widow Helmi, and family, for their kind approvals and assistance." Kevin Coyne's official website :

www.kevincoyne.de

Touching the Sky

by Dave Russell

This was an inaugural event for the opening of Kings Place – a uniquely historic occasion, as this is the first time a major complex including a concert auditorium has been opened in England since the Barbican Centre was completed in 1982.

The presentation was chaired by Jonathan Glancey, Architecture Correspondent of The Guardian (whose offices are now based there). It featured major Architects Sir Jeremy Dixon of Dixon Jones (Kings Place's architects), and Sunand Prasad, President of RIBA. There were also contemporary poets Simon Barraclough, Paul Farley and Guyanese writer Jacob Sam La Rose – a multicultural panel indeed! The theme of the presentation was the multi-faceted relationship between architecture and poetry.

The Building

Kings Place is an architectural masterpiece, transforming the aura of York way, formerly so drab and desolate. The most original, radical methods were applied to its design and construction.

Dixon Jones (responsible for the National Gallery, Royal Opera House and Saïd Business School) were appointed its architects by developers Parabola Land Limited. The concept was truly multi-purpose: to create a major arts venue and creative hub, elegant bars and dining areas, a conference and events centre, and a Grade A office complex – aiming to make culture and commerce mutually supportive. Kings Place is an environmentally sustainable development. Peter Millican, its developer, had that rare combination of strong business sense and true love of the arts – commercial proceeds enabling arts areas to be let out at peppercorn rents.

“Where else in Britain will you find a commercial building given over as much to the arts as to business and rents . . . a privately funded concert hall, designed by Jeremy Dixon and Ed Jones, architects of the . . . Royal Opera House and National Portrait Gallery?” (Jonathan Glancey)

The complex was planned to blend into the surrounding

area. The northern façade of the building sits next to the Battlebridge Basin section of the Regents Canal near early industrial buildings to the east. The design

also took into account the planned developments to the north and west. The design accommodates the difference in scale in the local landscape by dividing the building into three basic components: one block on Battlebridge basin and the rotunda on the north-east corner are connected to a long rectangular block facing York Way. Between these components, running west to east, is a street-like atrium.

A precondition of Kings Place's development was that it should be no more than seven storeys high. So to make full use of the site area, a basement was created, unusually deep and needing a propped diaphragm wall 25 metres high. Kings Place has the deepest propped basement ever to be built in London, creating three extra floors, occupying a depth of 17 metres.

The large column-free voids containing the auditoria and gallery required three transfer structures to be cast in reinforced concrete. Above the ground-floor slab, the office floors were erected by slip-forming concrete cores to the height of the building.

The main auditorium was built as a box within a box, the inner box assembled from a steel frame of beams and columns, the soundproof outer box from two leaves of high-density concrete supporting a concrete lid. The inner box, including the steel columns, is encased in high-density fibreboard panels and finished in European oak veneer.

Erecting of the Jura limestone façades facing the canal was difficult because there was insufficient space along the waterfront to erect the scaffolding needed to lay the ashlar on site. Therefore the stone was cut to size at a quarry in Germany and transported to Trent Concretes works in Nottingham, to be pre-assembled into panels with concrete backing. These were then loaded on to barges, floated to the side of the building and the panels assembled.

Environmentally Friendly

Kings Place was planned as an environmentalist showpiece, with half the CO2 emissions of a similar size office building – whilst maintaining an excellent working environment for people in the space. This is aided by the centre's location close to a public transport hub, reducing the pressure of motor traffic. Displacement ventilation, combined with high levels

of fresh air, enables the building to meet the internal environmental requirements for extended periods of the year without need of cooling. 'Free cooling' is achieved by introducing large quantities of outside air through the displacement system. Whenever the outside air is below 18° c the building can meet most of its cooling needs without resorting to refrigerant cooling.

This design helps the environment and significantly reduces running costs for office space. Improved thermal insulation will reduce heat loss through the fabric of the building, resulting in halving the overall demand for electricity.

Electricity consumption in the building is reduced through the use of high efficiency lighting and the provision of daylight controls, with all perimeter zones exposed to good daylight penetration. High efficiency motors and reduced fan power through oversized distribution systems minimise electrical consumption. Gain from solar heat in an office can be three to four times all heat gains from all other sources. At Kings Place, glass wall the triple glass wall on the south and west dramatically reduces solar gain.

The column-free voids containing the auditoria and gallery required three large transfer structures to be cast in reinforced concrete. Above the ground-floor slab, the office floors were erected by slip-forming concrete cores to the height of the building.

A significant number of cycle spaces are provided for both office occupants and visitors, together with shower facilities. A 'green roof' area has been installed to enhance the ecology of the scheme and to encourage bird and invertebrate species. Bird and bat boxes will be introduced on the roof. It is distinctive indeed, and possibly unique that a modern complex should have a wildlife conservation area integrated in its design. Traditionally, the presence of such wildlife is associated with neglect and decay of a building.

Finally, sustainable materials are specified and used wherever possible.

Special Features

Oak Panelling

The oak veneer covering the wall and ceiling surfaces of the auditorium and the doors, desks and seat backs, was cut from one immense 500-year-old tree named 'Contessa', which grew in an ancient hunting forest in Bavaria that now belongs to the local community. In

that forest there is no formal replanting system: when a tree is felled and acorns fall, the forest reseeds. The woodmen were eager for the veneer to be used for a major architectural project and sold it in a single lot. Contessa was cut down under the full moon before Christmas 2005. The tree was tall, with few side branches, so it had excellent grain. After felling, the timber was cut into 5-metre lengths, boiled at 80°C for one week in a water bath, and then sliced with a 5-metre blade. That one tree has produced an acre of superb veneer, which was used in Hall One to cover the panels, columns, roof coffers, backs of the seats, doors and desks. The veneer was also half the CO2 emissions of a similar size office building – reducing by around 1,000 tonnes of CO2 a year used for the panelling in Hall Two.

Glass Façade

A distinctive design feature of the building is the three-layered undulating glass façade covering the west-facing York Way frontage – a free-standing transparent surface made up of hundreds of very slightly curved glass sheets, produced in a factory near Venice. Not only a beautiful design statement, it also has practical benefits – from allowing Kings Place to be seen by visitors from as far as Kings Cross station to reducing heat gain from the sun.

This wavy glass wall reads as a continuous curtain when approached up York Way, but in fact it breaks to form the entrance, which is inserted into a red slot, cut through the glass from top to bottom.

"The façade is a theatrical glass curtain rippling along the length of the building that appears to change shape as you walk beneath it. Its wave-like form, composed of three layers of curved glass, is not gratuitous: designed to mitigate the effects of dazzle and heat, it also happens to resemble a hi-tech version of a stage curtain . . . You can imagine yourself sweeping open the curtain and strutting on to the stage-like space of the building's central atrium. The glass curtain was made in Venice and, as you walk through the building and out the other side, you find yourself faced with a canal basin and, if not gondolas, then plenty of barges. It's a place of peace, space, light . . . quite a surprise after the cacophony of the main road." (Jonathan Glancey) Atrium

The main entrance on York Way leads to a magnificent public space at the building's centre. From the ground

reviews by Dave Russell

floor the visitor can see all seven above-ground levels, and views towards the canal and back onto York Way. The Atrium is designed to bring as much natural light as possible into the building and contains public facilities such as the café, bar and restaurant; it leads on to the music, gallery and waterfront areas.

Concert Hall

“The upper level is enclosed by a . . . timber frame, with each wooden upright appearing to represent a classical column. The coffered ceiling adds to the neoclassical effect, though this pattern is the consequence . . . of acoustic rather than architectural needs. The adjustable curtains between the columns are there to control reverberation, but when these are lit a Mediterranean late-evening blue, the impression is of sitting inside a classical pavilion with the sky and music all around. A smaller, 200-seat room for experimental music and other performances, with a window looking into the building’s central atrium, complements the main concert hall.” (Jonathan Glancey)

The event explored in depth the relationships between poetry and architecture. Surely the full ramifications of architecture are intrinsically poetic. The basic geometrical structure has a prosody; the weight of vertical columns on horizontal bears an affinity to stressed syllables. Repeated motifs evoke alliteration. The execution of an architectural plan evokes the articulation of thought and emotion. Occupation of a completed architectural structure by organic forms is living growth. True poetry is verbalised living growth which breaks the frameworks of objective formulae. To some extent, buildings have an organic life-cycle. During the evening, there were graphic descriptions of buildings falling into disuse, being demolished, and the site ground being reclaimed. Buildings in decay provide environments for other users, be they mammalian, avine or vegetable. Perhaps this symposium should have touched more on the processes and implications of restoration, the aim of which is to make some buildings ‘provisionally eternal’. The implementation of architectural designs often involves dismemberment of trees rock strata in quarries or elsewhere, metallic ore deposits – to reassemble the fragmented components, following a vision.

Sir Jeremy Dixon claimed that architecture should be influenced by poetry, and it is to architecture’s loss

when that influence is not reciprocated. For want of poetic awareness and sensitivity, there was “a lack of reality in Le Corbusier’s dream”. Berthold Lubetkin, pioneer of modern architecture, designer of the Finsbury Health Centre, definitely considered himself a poet. Special reference was made to Christopher Alexander’s seminal work ‘Essay on the Art of Building’ which emphasised that architectural structures also have their intrinsic life:

“Centers are those particular identified sets, or systems, which appear within the larger whole as distinct and noticeable parts . . . The life or intensity of one center is increased or decreased according to the position and intensity of other nearby centers. Above all, centers become most intense when the centers which they are made of help each other.”

Several seminal poems related to the theme were discussed in the evening. They included ‘Architecture’ by Lemn Sissay, which touches the sensitive nerve-ends of all levels of striving and ambition:

“Each cloud wants to be a storm
My tap water wants to be a river
Each match wants to be an explosive . . .”

This is intrinsic to the struggles of architects, who have to think in vertical terms, and especially pertinent to a structure which had to build downwards because of height restriction.

‘The Silken Tent’ by Robert Frost, makes an architectural structure of the beloved. ‘Haunted’ by Emily Dickinson vindicates her claim that “art is a house that tries to be haunted.” In ‘Abt Vogler’ by Robert Browning, the narrator refers to “Raising my rampired walls of gold as transparent as glass” – a premonition of the Kings Place façade! John Betjeman’s collection, ‘New Bats in Old Belfries’ gives much food for thought about a structure into which a new belfry is incorporated. Betjeman, after all, was both a poet and an architect by profession. Of the poets’ contributions, Paul Farley’s ‘Treacle’ stood out. This poem nails down the architectural significance of a utility artefact:

“By that I mean the unstable pitch black
you’re careful not to spill, like mercury
that doesn’t give any reflection back,
that gets between the cracks of everything
and holds together the sandstone and bricks
of our museums and art galleries . . .”

Farley was deeply affected by the decay and subsequent reconstruction of his native Liverpool. He read 'Liverpool Disappears for a Billionth of a Second' – rightfully a Forward Prize winner, which eerily captures the traumas of the transformation of an environment.

Simon Barraclough read his evocative sonnet 'Converting St Paul's'. He is clearly fascinated by the splendour of this building, which should dominate the landscape, but is obscured through many historical and social processes. He has in fact written a series of poems about St Paul's: as well as 'converting', there is 'retuning', 'protecting', 'wearing' and 'immuring'. He conveys a sense of its architecture by comparing it to music (via tuning an organ), and clothing fabrics. 'Nato e Morto' portrays a traveller's aesthetic quest for key, evocative landmarks. Barraclough denied that there was a formal connection between poetry and architecture, but accepted that there was an affinity between the two areas. He can certainly see poetry in the construction process:

"The dot of the groundsman's tractor grows
from the squint of an avenue's vanishing point."

Jacob Sam la Rose was a participant in London's bid for the 2012 Olympics. One of his key expressions (as in his poem 'Magnitude' is "to make the abstract more concrete", to approach poetry in the spirit of architecture.) 'The Tower' concerns a building in Lewisham he took to be haunted; the building was architecturally nondescript, but it became the stuff of poetry when infused with the associations of childhood (. . . about a thin tower in my old neighbourhood that became the "haunted house" we feared as kids. I wonder now what its purpose might have been . . .). He further emphasised the analogies between architecture and mythology, referring to the Norse creation myth of Ymir, which describes the world as having been constructed from the body of a frost giant. There are many similar myths throughout ancient culture. He also read 'How to be Urban' (about being urban, being a city); '2012', a poem he was commissioned to write in response to the planned 'regeneration' of parts of London for the Olympics; an untitled piece about a new development, a hotel in Singapore, near the airport, that was in an "almost there" state when he passed it. It was beginning to take on signs of something complete, but there were still parts of it exposed. "Someone dreamt of this /

and it became." A highlight of his performance was 'An Essay on the Nature of the Building' dedicated to the library building at the London School of Economics. La Rose is a sensitive poet, dynamically involved in community projects and passionately concerned about the relationship between architecture, the environment and society.

The programme gave an excellently balanced overview, embracing established bodies and radical voices.

Jewels in the Poundshop

by Dave Russell

(CD available from Frank Bangay, 28a Edgar House, Kingsmead Estate, Homerton, London E9 6QE; 020 8985 1859; frankbangay@yahoo.co.uk: £10 + p&p)

Produced at Core Arts, Homerton, Jewels in the Poundshop (2006) is the third CD of Frank Bangay with musical accompaniment, his second being This Topsy-Turvy Life (2004), recorded at Mick Hobbs's Life and Living studio; his first, A True Voice Singing was recorded at Core Arts in 2001. As was this. Music certainly adds a new dimension to his work. Frank has long made a point of scrupulously learning most of his poems by heart, for oral presentation. The excellent facilities of Core Arts have enabled many to extend the range of their expressiveness. Frank Bangay has in many ways pioneered this development, and given great encouragement to many others in this direction. This collection highlights the great collaborative potential of Core Arts.

Mad questions the concept of madness, a label which is often tagged on to any expression of real feeling. There are two exciting changes of tempo here, slowing down for the reflective middle part, and speeding up again for the conclusion. The instrumentation includes Frank's own slide guitar, and some skilful use of percussion in the concluding part.

Down the Lane is gentler in style, introducing the acoustic guitar sound of Tunde Busari. This is later augmented with of the sound of the Kilambra – a South African instrument similar to a xylophone (at the suggestion

reviews by Dave Russell

of South African Tina Pinder), with penny whistle, and finally a penny whistle chorus combined with multi-tracked Kalimbra. A happy evocation of the questing roamings of childhood.

I Almost Forgot to Worry – pleasant fairground nostalgia. Some very imaginative keyboard work here by Tina Pinder, who switches to $\frac{3}{4}$ time, evoking brass bands in parks, and accompanying Frank's take on The Last Waltz – and another tempo change for the finale, very original.

Dreaming Blues – exciting 50s railroad guitar rhythm. Frank is extremely good at moving back and forth along the lanes of living memory, shades of the skiffle era and the teddy boys! Some really exciting codas on lap steel guitar from Tina, as Frank takes us on a conducted tour of the Northern Line.

Jewels in the Poundshop – this song provides the link with the cover motif. There is a pleasantly sentimental guitar and accordion accompaniment in a minor key. Frank's slide guitar provides some emphasis, including percussive effects at the end. Lyrically, the number wistfully traces the neighbourly association between Mrs Jones and Mrs Baxter. Leisured, rummaging shopping expeditions are crucial foci of social exchange. And Poundshops are often treasure-troves of old heirlooms. Interesting imagery of discarded food wrappers and a diver in the lake on the nearby common.

Our Melody – this has a heavy grunge-chord blues backing. Very forceful – though perhaps some bass and drums might have augmented it.

I Love My Home – the inclusion of Mel Green's voice adds a tender sensitivity to this number, which touches on the utter universality of the home environment. Almost anywhere can be a home – even if it happens to be a bleak hospital room. Extremely effective, though the final guitar fade-out is perhaps a bit over-long.

Throughout Frank's work, there is an emphasis on a warm and familiar urban world – one, of course, which is threatened by redevelopment.

Conflict and Instability

by Dave Russell

Thursday, November 6th, Lloyd's Building, Leadenhall Street, EC2. Featuring Tishani Doshi, Tobias Hill and Aoife Mannix.

There was radical motivation behind this event, organised Lloyd's and Poet in the City: this conjunction shows that business and commerce are facing social problems:

“. . . business typically sees itself as neither part of the problem nor part of the solution in areas of conflict and instability, and often remains on the sidelines. However, a growing body of opinion suggests that closer engagement – both at home and abroad – can bring a wide range of benefits both to the business itself and to the wider community.”

In this instance, Lloyd's took the initiative in approaching Poet in the City: “This picks up on an important theme in the ‘ideas leadership’ programme championed by Lloyd's . . .” Poet in the City, for its part “is committed to demonstrating the relevance of poetry to all aspects of life and its power to explore even the darkest and most difficult terrain.”

Tishani Doshi opened the evening with a vital cross-cultural, anglo-Indian perspective. Her first book of poems, ‘Countries of the Body’ won the Forward Prize for the best First Collection. She was a winner of the all-India Poetry Competition in 2006, and of the Outlook-Picador nonfiction competition in 2005. ‘The Dream’ conveys the sensations of someone living under threat:

“Imagine, then, if brick and mortar
were to unleash blood . . .”

One does not have to be surrounded by a formally declared war to be a refugee. In ‘9pm on an Indian Railway Platform’, she does not flinch from the extreme realities, including defecation. In ‘The Immigrant’s song’ she touches on the theme of migration and transposition in childhood, in the formative years. ‘The art of losing’ sensitively relates issues of personal loss to the background of a whole world in jeopardy. ‘Lament of the Urban Immigrant’ portrays the relationship of urban and rural, the theme of persecution, and the

loss of sense of identity and direction. The conclusion is particularly powerful: "I want to . . . feel water filling the voids of my soul/until I am shaped back into existence."

Aoife Mannix (who has been involved in the Survivors' Poetry Mentoring Scheme) has been involved with many Primary and Secondary School groups, and in the B.Tec Fashion and Design courses. Her school placements are part of the Conflict and Instability concept. In her workshops, she has elicited children's and adolescents' feelings about knife crime, and about how young people are drawn to gang warfare. 'On the Way Home' scarily links the themes of love and delinquent violence, as an object of adoration is brutally attacked. 'Blind' darkly paints the background of inner urban warfare, showing an environment bound by fear. One of her poems, 'Outside the Bakery' relates to the death of Jimmy Mizen, murdered at the age of 16 near his home in a gang attack – one of 26 teenagers shot down or stabbed this year in London. At the end of the set, Aoife turned to lighter-hearted themes, with 'Wonderwoman'. As mentioned in the Introduction, she has a special concern with knife crime. This has highly evocative imagery like "a mouth full of spare change". She has moments of humour, such as her reference to "a champagne cork inserted in my navel". Some black humour, indeed, with "a belt studded in bullets, and the reference to a boa constrictor round her neck.

Tobias Hill is distinguished as poet, novelist and journalist. He opened his suite with two vital quotations, the first from Claude Monet: "To paint the sea, you need to look at it every hour, every day"; the second from Ralph Emerson: "Cities give us collision". In 'Star' and 'Flight', he skilfully fuses the viewpoints of refugee, soldier and war correspondent. 'Nocturne' (not included in the publication) skilfully related gang warfare to full-scale military warfare. He concluded with 'Five Ways of Looking at my Grandfather', also not included in the publication. This sequence dwells on the theme of longevity and durability, where "hidden cylinders have kept their shape", and the need "not to dwell on things forgotten". His approach makes an interesting counterpoint to the other two, in that he considers himself a messenger, bearing news with some regret: "Think of me kindly, as the messenger, /deserv-

ing of your kindness most of all/when it is hard to hear the things I tell./Love me, whatever news it is I bring."

Poet in the City did an excellent job of producing an accompanying booklet, with full texts of most of the poems read at the evening, together with highly detailed background information which will fill in many of the general reader's blanks about conflict and instability in general, as well as relations between commerce and social awareness. The publication was generously sponsored by Axon Publishers and HenDi solutions, and is fourth in this series. As said in the introduction: "these suites amount to an important body of new work, combining stunning imagery with wisdom and mystery".

Not Your Average Type

by Dave Russell

(Core Arts Voices)

ISBN 978-0-9557934-0-0; £15.00

"Here a new poetry emerges; one that doesn't rhyme or scan happily; a poetry of groans. A poetry broken down, a poetry that laughs aloud hysterically in its next breath. Here you will find the incomplete works, the uncollected essays, the missing words."

This collection (books and CD) would probably have met with William Burroughs's approval. It is based on a good radical concept – to invert/subvert the premises of a formalised/edited publication. The imagination often functions at its fullest power when the groans are loudest, when things seem broken down, when hysteria seems to rule. There can be no element of originality if these chaotic elements are not in some way captured. How they are finally presented can involve a wide range of processes. There is definitely a case for keeping them as close as possible to their raw essence.

Formal works are sometimes illustrated. But the relationship between the written verbal and the visual image is a subtle and complex one. How many writers

draw doodles when struggling for or with inspiration? How many painters scrawl the odd notes while they are struggling for visual expression? Very good that the back index mentions all the media involved in the artwork.

Voices is a varied, provocative collage. But it is salutary to have a clear idea of what one is subverting. Frank Bangay (pp10-11) made a good point in presenting both an edited and an unedited text. "I don't feel happy about having Imagen He Said in the book in the form it was in. Since I wrote that I have made some amendments to the text, and made it a stronger poem. Also I feel that as it is, it would be very hard for someone with poor eyesight to read." There is sometimes friction between literal meaning and visual impact. It is also very salutary to take into account the needs of possible readers with disabilities. (Incidentally, Frank's powerful 'He Was A Poet' is presented in straight printed form – to great effect).

This publication is graphically and typographically rich and varied, with handwriting ranging from the copperplate to the chaotic. The cartoon sequence on pp 12-13 is particularly striking.

Lost for Words makes a good balance of typescript and author's notes. 'Mkanudoti' on pp18-19, gives the papier-mache palimpsest effect. A perfectly valid gesture, substantial texts can have several layers of meaning.

Very vital portrayal of an impulsive writer/collagist/DIY expert in action on pp 20-21.

One criticism: I feel that there is too much white space. The right amount of white space in any publication gives strength and emphasis where it is needed. Excess of it suggests poverty of material and ideas. White space was used very effectively on pp22-23, to accompany a brief, bleak headline about a suicide. In the inner urban jungle, some graffiti are enhanced by being surrounded with huge blank walls. This is tastefully followed by an untitled, reversed-out poem – very sensitive, good calligraphy too!

The illustration on p30 suggests that the word 'terrified' may have been tattooed onto a bare hand. The poem on p.31 is perhaps a bit unfortunate. At first glance,

it looks completely blank; the numbering of that page is extremely faint. The poem is barely readable; I feel that a darker shade would have done the trick. Good print collage on p.34. Interesting parody of the dictionary on p35.

I find p.43 poetically the strongest piece in the selection: "... noise drowned hungry men ... a thousand waking figures slept/through an avalanche that never arrived". Pp 44-45 contains the best prose in the selection, a beautiful lyrical portrayal of Silver the Sea God. The handwriting is neat and clear, but one wonders if a parallel printed text would have been in order. 46-51, good sequence of poems punctuated by linked graffiti.

The image is that of the scratched-out hoarding on pp 54-55 is quite forceful. There is a vital inner urban dynamic to the painting and defacement of graffiti. Some excellent photos: the turf carvings as on pp58-59 stand out. 'The Kidnapper's Story' on p.49 has an interesting picture, and the smudges are lively and 'natural'; but I would have preferred to see some story.

Good to have a word-association passage presented in reversed-out form on p 63. There is also a rich range of handwriting styles – from the impeccable calligraphy of copperplate dictionary manuscript on p14 to the scrawled hieroglyphics of p57. Good to have exercise book facsimiles as on pp 44-45, and the collage of miniatures (plus receipt!) on p 64

This publication also includes sound poetry on the accompanying CD. Some exciting, provocative word association here! But perhaps over-scratchy! When I first put it on, it sounded as if there were interference as when there are particles of dust on a CD. I then discovered (I think) that the effect was intentional. Perhaps a more 'cleaned-up', clinical sound might have been more effective. It would also have been good to have the CD fully labelled. But again, that might have gone against the anarchical concept: if so, perhaps a few words of explanation on the CD label! I feel some instinct to formalise the contents and presentation to some degree, but would never wish to detract from the impact of this exciting and innovative volume.

No more CRWAP, here comes TheFED

TheFED minifest – a reminiscence by Roy Birch

November 8. The day of TheFED minifest. Up at six-thirty. Lucia, Pat and Sandra were already up. Pat and Sandra had come down from Pecket Well the previous day. Washed, dressed, breakfasted lightly, loaded the car with help from Sandra. After a few false starts we succeeded in all being in the car at the same time. Picked up Geoff, a Fed debutante and the third member of the Vale House Project workshop team (the other members being Lucia and myself) then headed for the Friends Meeting House and our rendezvous with the rest of the party – fourteen souls and the Viewpoint minibus.

Our boot was full to repletion with simple but magnificent foodstuffs for the Minifest, which meant the car itself was awash with people and luggage. We loaded some of the foodstuffs into the minibus, which enabled us to empty the car of all but essential items of luggage, thus rendering our journey to London at least potentially less traumatic. In the event the journey was barely traumatic at all. In addition to an excellent driver (Andy) the minibus possessed a semi-intelligent SatNav and a highly intelligent communicator (Simon), whose text messages to Lucia enabled us to anticipate difficulties and direction changes so comfortably that the journey was rendered almost commonplace, and we arrived at Faraday House (the London campus of Syracuse University, who were hosting the event) with nothing more problematical to report than an initial overshoot which necessitated our circling back around the One-way system before landing exactly where we wanted to be.

We checked in, unloaded the vehicles, unlocked the kitchen, made it feel wanted by the simple expedient of filling its innards with foodstuffs, got the Tea Urn on the boil, greeted those revellers already ensconced, and, with their help, set the wheels in motion for what was to be a truly wonderful day.

It was essential to conduct a head count, to ascertain who was on site and who was not, and to collect

such monies as were owed. A task I allotted myself and which proved in no wise difficult and not a little enjoyable. During this period Ashley arrived from Hastings, accompanied by members of her new group GROW (Grass Roots of Writing) and a crate of information packs, an item probably second only to food as an essential component of a successful Fest.

The packs were passed out and then the wonderful Lynne Clayton, scion of a lineage of Pure Blood Town Criers, called us to order, welcomed everyone, explained the rules of engagement, and sent us off to our morning workshops. I attended Lynne's workshop 'Re-building The Fed,' a discussion of the best way forward for an organization which was still effectively little more than a group of friends meeting annually to celebrate their friendship and their creativity. A laudable undertaking, but not something funding agencies are keen to give money to in difficult financial times.

The session was well attended, the discussion fruitful. Dave Chambers, a true Fed stalwart, brought that most essential of working tools for any new organization – a constitution. Among the several things decided at the session was the intention to ratify the constitution at the AGM.

Although I was sadly unable to attend any of the other workshops, I am happily able to state, via reports I received, that they were all of the enjoyably high standard expected of Fed workshops. The only sad note being that Ken Baldwin's 'Three ways to beat Writer's Block' did not materialize. Let us hope Ken is well.

Following refreshments and networking the AGM ratified the constitution and created a working committee which has agreed to meet at Pecket Well College in March of next year. Lunch was then served, after which the afternoon workshops commenced. As I was involved in the delivery of one of them I was again unable to attend any of the others, but the reports I received confirmed what I already knew would be the truth – they were all excellent. Again sadly, the Helena Wojtczak workshop 'How to publish your own book' did not happen. Let us hope she too is well.

More refreshments and further networking was followed by the highpoint of any large Fed gathering – the Celebratory Reading.

Fifty-five Fedders attended the Minifest. The bulk of us now formed a seated circle in the Auditorium. Dave Chambers and I acted as MCs, randomly drawing readers' names out of a large cardboard box. First up was Richard Copeland, a poet I have had the pleasure and privilege of working with over a number of years. It doesn't get any better than Dick Copeland, a poet and reader of immense ability. But somehow it did. Each performer gave an impetus to the next and it just went on and on, wonder after wonder after wonder, concluding with George Tahta (aka Otis Orbison) and his beautifully nostalgic and erratic poem about Hughie Green and the sixties. The spoken word was counterpointed by John and Maria's accompanied poem and three very different but equally powerful musical offerings; Lucia's gentle, beautiful and passionate 'Like Love,' Sharon's incredible unaccompanied version of 'Summertime,' and Roger Drury's unusual, funny and chilling sing-along number about the environmental dangers of the unbridled spread of fugitive plastic bags.

At the conclusion of the Celebratory Reading a large team of spontaneous cleaning experts materialized from among the revellers and cleared the building of all traces of our occupation. Within fifteen minutes the Minifest was finished, Faraday House was closed, and groups of people were saying their farewells out on the pavements of Old Gloucester Street.

There was a small downside to the day, which consisted of a delay caused by the refusal of several taxi drivers to take one of the Minifest attendees as a passenger. The delay meant that Pat, Sandra and Geoff were left hanging around while Lucia and I attempted to sort the problem out. Which eventually happened.

By the time we finally started for home the minibus was long gone, which meant we were travelling somewhat blind. But, as I said earlier, the minibus contained a semi-intelligent SatNav and a highly skilled communicator. The minibus itself was bogged down in traffic in the Haringay area so Simon sent us by a different route, one which I was soon able

to recognize and which enabled us to make sufficient progress to be able to pass the minibus on the A1M. We arrived home at about 8.30 warmed by the glow of a job well and enjoyably done.

An appeal for financial donations to help prop the organization up realized over £100.00. A very large and heartfelt thank you to all who gave money to this appeal. With the addition of the admission payments I was able to collect £403.00, which Lucia has now banked.

Thank you everyone who attended the event and made it such a memorable day. Particular thanks to Ashley and Lucia for organizing it; to Dave Chambers for creating and presenting the constitution; and to Simon (of SatNav fame) for filming it all.

I would like to conclude this piece with an offering from The Bread is Rising, a Brooklyn-based Poetry Collective with whom TheFed has close links. They were unable to attend the Minifest and so sent this as a greeting and good wishes for the success of the event.

Dear Lucia

As you requested, Carlos and I would like to share some words for the Saturday minifest in greetings from The Bread is Rising Poetry Collective. Because we have just survived the most hotly contested election we can ever remember, we can say that the next step is to do as we are doing with the Fed - rebuilding our groups and organising our movements for real change. With that in mind, The Collective and our sister organisation (and Fed members) Precious Promise Arts Circle will continue to organise, organise, organise!

Saludos a mis hermanas y mis hermanos en Fed UK
Copyright Carlos Raul Dufflar

On this beautiful day we will send you
a bucket of red roses
to embrace our affection and joy and friendship
each and every day
a poetic doo wop we will survive the cloudy winter

This rose will always grow
even on the distant plane that unites us
Our dreams above our love of humanity
with a word song
of peace and not war on earth
between our marching for universal love
in exchange for a kiss is just a kiss
We shall see each other sooner or later
As the spirit of The Bread is Rising Poetry Collective
keeps on marching
un amor puro

Fed 2008: The Resurrection Poem
Copyright 2008 Angel L. Martinez

May our days together be many
May our unity always be strong
Just like our songs
May the peace for which we have so long struggled
erupt in festivals of words
May we as sisters and brothers come always together in
love
May our words refresh as the rain replenishes
And to speak of words
more profound than the size on the page can ever show
May we always remember the final word:
organise!



if you wish to contribute a review of an event
you think will be of interest to our readers
please e-mail:
dave@survivorspoetry.org.uk

Survivors' Poetry Mentoring Scheme & Mentor Phil Ruthen Chair of SP by Claire Monger

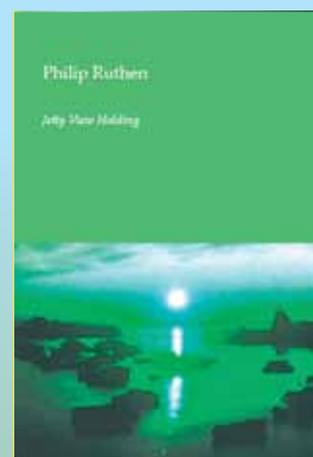
First Published by Time Together Winter 08

Phil Ruthen is a trustee and mentor with Survivors' Poetry, a national charity established in 1991 which promotes the writing of survivors of mental distress.

The mentoring scheme at the charity, which is funded by the Esmée Fairbairn Foundation, supports poets from the survivor community who, for a variety of reasons, might have found it difficult to express their potential.

Phil and the other mentors guide new poets through the journey of writing, self-affirmation, self-criticism, the craft of poetry and finding an audience to receive their work. It also helps emerging poets gain self-confidence and professionalism in performance, and the publication process. Where appropriate, the scheme encourages mentors to guide the poets through the process of submission and publication, when specific advice about which magazines best suit their talent is supplied.

Phil's own published poems, book reviews, short fiction and occasional articles can be found in a wide variety of magazines and journals in the UK. He had his first collection of poetry published by Waterloo Press in November, it's called 'Jetty View Holding'.



OUR SPACE GALLERY

Reproduced by kind permission of the national charity Together: Working for Wellbeing, and the team there including Vicki Kington and Claire Monger; this review article first published in Time Together magazine, Issue 2 Winter 2008, copyright Together: Working for Wellbeing 2008.



A selection of work from the Art section of the exhibition

art & CONFLICT

AN EXHIBITION IN TWO PARTS

together
WORKING FOR WELLBEING

COMBAT
STRESS
EX-SERVICES MENTAL WELFARE SOCIETY

AA
The British Association
of Art Therapists
100, The Quadrant, London WC1R 4EH

Together's Our Space gallery and Combat Stress, the ex-services mental health charity, have worked together to produce an exhibition of art, art therapy and poetry exploring the impact that psychological trauma has on the lives of veterans.

Since the end of the Second World War, the majority of the British People have known nothing but peace. But it has been a very different story for the men and women of the armed forces serving in Brunei, Borneo, Malaya, the Falklands and the Gulf - and for those playing a central peacekeeping role in the Balkans, Cambodia, Sierra Leone and Afghanistan.

Each of these conflicts, without exception, has resulted in psychiatric casualties. And for many who are affected, the problems may take years, perhaps decades to surface.

Art and Conflict explores the impact of psychological trauma on the lives of veterans

by displaying work they have produced while receiving treatment and support at Tyrwhitt House in Surrey, one three treatment centres managed by Combat Stress. The veterans taking part are aged from 30 to 86 and have served in the British Army, Royal Navy, RAF, Merchant Navy or the Reserves.

The exhibition is in two parts.

Art – an exhibition and sale of work produced by veteran artists

The art displayed in the ground floor gallery at Our Space was created by veterans who visit the Activities Centre at Tyrwhitt House, where many find that the creation of art work provides a focus that

takes the mind away from intrusive memories of past trauma.

27 different artists have contributed a total of 30 paintings, drawings and photographs in a variety of styles to this part of the exhibition.

Combat Stress was the Affordable Art Fair's charity of the year in 2008 and enjoyed good sales of work at that event. In particular the work of Bill Duckworth, 85 and Albert Cheverton 86, both veterans of the Second World War proved particularly popular.

The proceeds of each sale go directly to the veteran who produced it, minus a 10% gallery fee to support Our Space.

Conflict – first ever time a collection of veteran art therapy displayed in UK

The 30 visual images and sculptures displayed in the mezzanine gallery at Our Space were produced during art therapy sessions at Tyrwhitt House. The result is that the works in *Conflict* provide powerful, personal insights into the effects of trauma on the lives of individuals.

Rather than diverting thoughts away from experiences of conflict, art therapy, a form of psychotherapy that uses art media as its primary mode of communication, provides an opportunity for veterans, many of whom have Post Traumatic

Stress Disorder (PTSD), to make sense of their experiences.

Jan Lobban, a registered art therapist who works with the veterans at the Centre has structured *Conflict* into a journey that begins at the point of trauma and explores its impact on all aspects of life, including reactions within the Forces, becoming a civilian and family relationships.

The concept of frozen time runs through the imagery as past trauma is relived in the

present in sensory fragments. There is also a resonance with experiences of service personnel throughout history.

This section of the exhibition received sponsorship from the British Association of Art Therapists (BAAT).

Poems written by the veterans, written not during art therapy, but spontaneously during their admissions to Tyrwhitt House, are displayed alongside the work in the *Conflict* section, none of the

work in this part of the exhibition is for sale.

Liz Felton, Chief Executive of Together: Working for Wellbeing says: "We are so pleased to hear reports that the veterans taking part in *Art and Conflict* have said that having a place where their work and experiences can be shared has helped them. It is a privilege to work with Combat Stress, a charity that also strives to raise awareness that there is a real need to try and better understand the full

impact of mental health problems on people's lives and provides specific assistance."

Art and Conflict is at Our Space from 2 December 2008 – 16 January 2009.

For more information about the exhibition contact: claire.monger@together-uk.org or visit www.together-uk.org

For more information about Combat Stress please visit: www.combatstress.org.uk



Cell

Mike Lyons

Royal Welch Fusiliers 1975-97

Post Traumatic Stress Disorder is like a prison sentence. It can drive you to despair. In the box a figure is holding onto a lifeline to Tyrwhitt House



No Exit

Tony Montgomery

Royal Marines 1979-86

A day in the life of someone with Post Traumatic Stress Disorder



Coming up at Our Space



British Association of Art Therapists

An exhibition from The British Association of Art Therapists will be held at the gallery in February 2009. The exhibition is to support and promote the powerful visuals and written narratives explored during art therapy that come from people's experiences of challenging and life changing situations.

The Individual Within

Congratulations to artist Tracey Brown at Together who has received a £5,000 Arts Council grant to host her own exhibition at Our Space in 2009. The exhibition, which is entitled 'The Individual Within', will explore her personal experiences of living with mental health issues.

More details about The Individual Within will be circulated once a date for the exhibition has been set.

Ashworth Advocacy Exhibition

Art produced by service users supported by the Independent Patients' Advocacy Service, which is based within the Ashworth High Secure Hospital in Liverpool, will be displayed at Our Space next year.

More details about this exhibition will be circulated once a date for this exhibition has been set.

The Poetry Cafe

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

Dates: Featuring

8th January 2009 **TBC**
12th February 2009 **TBC**
12th March 2009 **TBC**
9th April 2009 **TBC**

Maggie's Bar

Maggie's Bar
98-100 Church St.
Stoke Newington
LONDON N16 0AP

Dates: Featuring

22nd January 2009 **TBC**
26th February 2009 **TBC**
26th March 2009 **TBC**
9th April 2009 **TBC**

Open Mic is a wonderful opportunity for new and more experienced poets 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. We do not have a finish time for the event and this very much depends on 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.

We are a Nationwide Literature and Performance Organisation dedicated to promoting poetry by Survivors' of Mental Distress through workshops, performance, readings and publications.

contact: email: xmtuck@hotmail.com

Tel: 07796 831 935

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

Open Space Gallery

Art and Conflict

Our Space Gallery and Combat Stress, the ex-services mental health charity, have worked together to produce an exhibition of art, art therapy and poetry exploring the impact that psychological trauma has on the lives of veterans.

Art and Conflict is at Our Space from:
2nd December 2008 - 16th January 2009

Together Working for Wellbeing
12 Old Street
London EC1V 9BI
Tel: 020 7780 7300

Contact:
claire.manger@togetheruk.org
or visit
www.together-uk.org

SP Groups

Bristol Survivors'

contact: steve henessey
email: cd007g8825_2@blueyonder.co.uk

www.stepsingouttheatre.co.uk

Wakefield Survivors

contact: Tim Grayson
email: timg@touchstone-leeds.co.uk

North London Survivors'

if you are interested in performance poetry
please contact:

xochitl@survivorspoetry.org.uk

Simon's Blog: click link to access
[to://www.survivorspoetry.com/pages/home/simon-s-blog.php](http://www.survivorspoetry.com/pages/home/simon-s-blog.php)

classifieds

CALL FOR VOLUNTEERS

SP is looking for assistance from an academic with experience of translating from *Spanish* to English. To assist with a prose project. If you are interested please email Dave Russell for further information: dave@survivorspoetry.org.uk

CALL FOR VOLUNTEERS

SP is looking for assistance around the office; dealing with general office admin, filing, general enquiries - we are particularly keen to hear from anyone from the *Survivor* community returning to work. CRB required - SP will fund. £5 per day, plus expenses.



The Survivor's Pledge

Survivors' plans to set up a Survivors' Pledge Account, by asking those that wish to see us continue to undertake our good work make an annual subscription pledge.

We are looking for those who would donate an annual pledge, details of which will be uploaded on our website News page soon.

<http://www.survivorspoetry.com/pages/home/news.php>



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

if you wish



if you are interested in starting a new group in your area and wish to learn more: please contact Roy Birch

royb@survivorspoetry.org.uk

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

Poetry Express

issue 28 Winter 2008



brenda williams extra [click here](#)

**happy christmas to all survivors
from survivors' poetry**

Navidad Feliz
Noël Heureux
Glückliches Weihnachten
Buon Natale
Gelukkige Kerstmis
Natal Feliz
Счастлиное Рождество
Glad Jul
幸福的圣诞节
幸福的聖誕節
幸福な christmas
щастлива Коледа
Bon Nadal
Sretan Božić
Veselé Vánoce
Glædelig Jul
Masaya Christmas
Hyvää Joulua
Καλά Χριστούγεννα
Senang Natal
Szczęśliwych świąt
Bożego Narodzenia
Priecīgi Ziemassvētki
Crăciun Tericit
Сретан Божић
Veselé Via
Srečen Božič



*Supporting the survivors'
of mental distress*



ef Esmée
Fairbairn
FOUNDATION