

Cristina Viti on Dino Campana
Alan Morrison on David Kessel
Lloyd Lindsay on The One Tribe Quandary
Roy Birch on Stevenage Survivors
Paul Murphy on practically everything
plus Broadsheet and Reviews

Poetry Express

the Quarterly from Survivors' Poetry
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Bumper Issue

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POETRY EXPRESS

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Editorial

James Ferguson

The delay of *Poetry Express* 20 has been due to a number of reasons, chiefly my doing lots of other things at Survivors' which limited my time for the magazine. Also, both Simon and I wanted to expand the magazine. This issue is double the size of the previous one. It is also the first since I've been editing to have pictures and involve the use of a new program for typesetting on our new computers. All this was too much change at once. If we had been sensible, we'd have changed a little at a time.

I think the achievement of the last two issues was a literary one. *Poetry Express* hadn't ever had such literary quality and quantity before. And with this, the magazine still kept the best features of the old-style *Poetry Express*, such as the personal articles.

The lack of pictures in the last two issues was a noticeable drawback. That was a technical problem (no working scanner, having to typeset on my own computer) rather than an editorial decision (I didn't like the fact that the last two issues had no cover pictures, although, to be honest, I liked the no-pictures interior). The technical problems are now sorted out and pictures should be a feature of the magazine from now on.

The last two issues were also too exclusively literary. Too great a proportion of the magazine was given over to reviews. Those in the middle of the magazine were often very long. The layout was very text-heavy (that was partly a consequence of me trying to squeeze a large amount of material into a magazine that had become too small for our purposes).

By the way, contrary to what some people thought, the non-glossy paper we used for the last two issues wasn't any cheaper than the glossy paper the magazine used to use. We were experimenting with the look of the magazine: going for the hair-shirt literary look (most poetry magazines use non-glossy paper.) Also, we didn't have any pictures to necessitate the use of gloss paper.

There is hopefully slightly more space in the layout of this issue; the pictures should provide some eye-relief for those of you who don't like large clumps of text. Nevertheless, this issue is rather text-heavy, and rather review-heavy.

In future I would like the magazine to have something for all readers. By that I don't mean that all parts of the magazine should please everyone. We anticipate that Issue 21 will follow swiftly in this vein in April.

This issue also contains a very simple short article on

poetry, Mario Petrucci's 'Spatial Form'. I'm also pleased that we have two articles on mental health issues: Roy Holland's report on the Mental Health Alliance Rally and Theresa Rahman's report on the Kiss It! XX Campaign.

A first is also the large section of the magazine devoted to Stevenage Survivors, a Survivors' Poetry network group. Roy Birch (who organises Stevenage Survivors and who is one of our new outreach workers) has written a brief history of the group, which is then followed by a generous selection of its poetry, along with a few paintings by group member Bruce. Hopefully the other affiliated groups will pass their work to Roy Birch for future issues.

That said, I think the magazine should contain pieces that are accessible, I think it should also contain longer pieces, which sometimes will be more difficult. Cristina Viti has written an introduction to the little-known Italian poet Dino Campana, which is followed by a selection of her translations of his poems, one of which is a long prose poem called 'The Night'. Paul Murphy's piece *Die Vergangenheit* is certainly not the most accessible piece in here. Based on the author's time in Germany, it blends autobiography, travel-writing, historical speculation and opinion-piece journalism in a very unusual way. The piece moves from idea to idea in associative rather than narrative fashion. The opinions are often deliberately provocative, the facts (which I haven't checked) may be askew. For me, it's an example of what 'survivor writing' can be. I don't think there are many places that would publish it, which isn't a criticism.

Having said that this issue is too review-heavy, I still think it is important that the magazine reviews both large- and little-press books that are either by survivors, or that are of relevance. As well as the short reviews at the back of the magazine gathered by Roy Holland, there is a long review by Alan Morrison of David Kessel's *Collected Poems*. This engaged and comprehensive piece is germane to what the magazine should print: making readers aware of a poet they may not have heard of and also taking survivor poetry seriously enough to give it sustained attention.

For future issues, I'd like readers to send in more articles. Mental health, personal stories, articles about poetry.

A word about the anthology. This too has been delayed. When I've time I will be able to work on it again. When I'm able to do this, I'll be writing back to everyone who sent in poems for it, with details of whether your poems have been accepted.

Prance to the Music of Rhyme

Simon Jenner

Hello again? And yes I did get the job and sorry nobody knew about it. Since I last wrote there have been enormous changes at Survivors' Poetry. We have recruited a National Outreach Worker, Roy Birch and an Esmée Fairbairn Mentoring Co-ordinator, Alan Morrison. Both have already made an exponential difference and have furnished accounts of this on the following page. For six months we had a vibrant London Outreach Worker, Maureen McKarkiel, who promoted the Hammersmith-based black Survivors group, The One Tribe Quandary, through three successful events at Shepherd's Bush Library – including one celebrating the poetry of Langston Hughes – and facilitated Survivors' Poetry's involvement in the Westwords Literary Festival 2005. Additionally, we have a host of new trustees including the distinguished poet Moniza Alvi, the poet and philosopher Charles Lind and union specialist Pauline Bradley.

All this and my own Director's appointment knocked the summer stuffing out of us I'm afraid. There's now just some bits of winter left. I am really sorry but James and I were so exercised with all the forgoing appointments that *Poetry Express* slowed down horribly. We're trying to make up for it now with a double issue. In fact all issues will now be 48 pages. Another factor that was a gaping minus and is now a scowling plus is the necessary familiarity with the new design software for our Dells. You can see the result all over the poetry places, let alone the prose. We think it's an improvement...

After such apologies – well, the future. We're enormously energised with the outfall of events from our National and London outreach programmes: they've included many of you who are reading this. We hope this will increase exponentially so nearly everybody has some kind of personal connection with the magazine.

There aren't many new and flexible dinosaurs about but this is one of them. I'm quite confident that *Poetry Express* in its new format will survive much global, even local warming. Its hair-shirt matt appearance was minimally elegant and the self-coloured cover was great fun to choose from our printer's rainbow selection palate (blue H1567B? done) but serious genetic modification has encouraged a sheeny skin and shed the scales from its rather encrusted eyes. We've sloughed off winter early, but the last issue basked in its serene blue Hockney swimming pool, unruffled by forecasts. Take a look again, the cover says irritatingly, coming up for air.

One of the most exciting clinches of recent months has been the go-ahead for the Esmée Fairbairn mentor-mentee project. What that mouthful means, even the

acute accent, is that we are now finally in the process of selecting mentors and mentees for the first stage (only!) of this rolling programme and pairing them off with each other. Through contacting various national groups – all that could be found – we've already garnered a kind of baker's dozen. Quite a lot of you individually might not have heard anything like as much as you should have done since the last *Poetry Express*. I talked then, and in the previous issue, of the gruesome twosome package and that, anticipating a deluge of responses, thought it was probably a good idea to start with the groups first. Many of these would – and did – produce their own mentor-mentee pairing. But this of course has meant that with the non-appearance of *Poetry Express*, a vast number of potential mentees in particular have been left out. I am really sorry about this awkward stepping up of selections which, although as democratic as possible, didn't reach anybody because *Poetry Express* didn't. The point is that it's a rolling programme; we're still open to all potential mentees who can write in to the normal address, c/o Alan Morrison. We might not be able to select a mentor straight away but will assess the potential of each applicant to benefit from both the critical input and publication strategies: each according to their needs and particular talents. Just keep sending your poetry in – it can always be selected for the poetry broadsheet itself.

Another thing – about that address: we are hoping to get another issue out very soon, by April end. But it will be the last issue in all probability produced on these premises. We are going to move. This has affected everybody at the Diorama by the simple expedient of Crown properties calling in their chips two years earlier than expected. This means that the Diorama is going to be chips too from around 1st July. It's a brown field site and will be redeveloped. Some kind of Diorama a lot leaner and even a lot meaner will emerge from a corner of these art-rich ashes. But this is for the future and we need to live somewhere. If you've been spreading rumours about where we're going to move, stop it at once!

We'll miss this place. So will Roland the Rat who made his last appearance in December and has never been heard of again. That did it for us. We knew then we had to leave. We'd like to thank everybody who has kept us afloat over the past year or more, from the trustees to our long-suffering colleagues at the Arts Council to the largesse of Hilary Hodgson at Esmée Fairbairn and her counterpart Damien Wilson at Lloyds TSB before that. We are entering the most dramatic phase of SP's history since we moved here in 1993, when we were barely two years old. Let's face the music and prance...

Reaching Out

Roy Birch on National Outreach

I became National Outreach Worker for Survivors' Poetry in October 2004. Although the appointment was the realization of a long-standing ambition - enabling me to have a hands-on relationship with an organization I had long been close to and do countrywide and full-time what I'd been doing locally, in my spare time, for many years. Until Survivors' Poetry, I'd never held a desk job and the change hasn't only been an enormous culture shock from which I'm only now beginning to recover, it's also confirmed a long-held suspicion - I hate offices. Having said that however, I am happily able to console myself with the knowledge that without the office I'd be unable to organize the 'reaching out' which is the *raison-d'être* of my employment.

As for the reaching out itself, it has provided me with some wonderful and highly productive encounters in some fascinating locations: two visits to Manchester; to the Friends Meeting House behind the city's Central Library and a session with Manchester Survivors, who run a really mean Workshop; to BBC Manchester and Radio 4's Book Club where I met Carol Ann Duffy; to Truro and the Hall for Cornwall, dinner with D.M.Thomas and a meeting with Penelope Shuttle; to Clifton and a performance by Bristol Survivors' own Stepping-Out Theatre at the Alma Tavern, the city's only Pub Theatre venue; to MIND in Dacorum, one of the country's largest MIND enclaves, at their Hemel Hempstead headquarters, cunningly disguised as a modern semi-detached house; to the Dudson Centre in Hanley, Stoke-on-Trent, a former Pottery donated to the city by its owners and now home to eleven Voluntary Sector organizations; to the Old Grammar School in Letchworth where I was invited to join in the deliberations of the North Herts Mental Health Forum.

Wherever I've been on my Outreach visits I've been warmly welcomed by some truly wonderful people. My thanks to all of them. May there be many more. In addition to my Outreach visits I've helped co-ordinate Phase One of the National Poetry Mentoring Scheme and have established a working relationship with the organizers of some of Britain's finest Poetry and Literature Festivals.

This, of course, is barely even the tip of the iceberg. There are still so many places to visit, still so many people to meet, still so much work to be done. I hope I can survive long enough and well enough to successfully complete a realistic amount of it.

Alan Morrison on National Mentoring

Firstly I'd like to say hello to all readers of *Poetry Express*. I'm honoured to be a part of Survivors' Poetry, an organisation which provides an extremely valuable forum for creative self-expression from survivors of mental illness. I myself am a survivor (of OCD, or rather Pure-O as it's known in certain circles) and a survivor of poetry (semi-joke).

A poet acquaintance of mine remarked recently that he thought mental illness was part and parcel of being a poet - to some extent this rings true if one thinks of the afflicted mental lives of past poets: John Clare, Christopher Smart, Ivor Gurney, Hart Crane, Robert Lowell, Anne Sexton to name but a few. But there might sometimes be a tendency to confuse the proverbial 'creative angst' with actual mental illness. Both can be harnessed and channelled through self-expression, but the latter can also impede creative progress - not to mention the day to day matter of simply being alive - once the unique poetic insights have been exhausted.

Nevertheless, the correlation between mental illness and creativity is and always has been startlingly palpable, which is partly why organisations such as Survivors' Poetry have come into being. And for me the most wonderful thing about working here is to be exposed to the often strikingly distinct poetry of survivors, many of whom have much to teach the rest of us through their unique insights and perspectives.

Naturally in my position as Mentoring Co-ordinator I have been sifting through numerous submissions from poets in the Survivors' network, which has been a privilege. And still is. Most of the mentees for this year's run of the scheme have now been selected along with their mentors and a full list of mentor-mentee partnerships will be published in the May issue of *Poetry Express*. We are still looking for the next generation of ten mentees for next year so please keep submitting (details below). The end result of the scheme will be the publishing of each mentee in their own solo pamphlet under the Survivors' Press imprint. A launch date will be announced later this year. In the meantime, I will keep you all regularly updated on the progress of the scheme.

For submissions to the 2006 run of the Survivors' Poetry National Mentoring Scheme please send up to 15 poems to myself at our usual address at the bottom of page 2. or preferably by email to: alan@survivorspoetry.org.uk

Canvas and Wall

Mario Petrucci on Spatial Form

With modern free verse there is a tendency to discuss the apparent 'absence' of form – or to introduce the notion that form needs to be present in some subdued or 'organic' way. But one of the greatest dangers in 'using ragged lines' is an ignorance of – perhaps, even a violation of – what I term spatial form. Line endings, for instance, are not merely to do with how our lungs breathe the poem; they are also concerned intimately with how the eye 'breathes' it. There is, of course, an iambic heartbeat in the breath. But we must also pay attention (particularly in such a visual age as ours) to the more erratic 'heartbeat' contained in, and by, the scanning action of the seeing brain.

The eye is less interested in metre than it is in space. Behind and beyond the rhythms and cadences picked up by that inner reading voice – by 'the ear', in fact – the eye is busy registering shapes, promontories, vacancies. The eye can instantly differentiate (most) poetry from (most) prose without having to read a word of either. It is worth remembering, with ink and paper, that we have to see the poem to read it; but we need not read the poem to see it. In short: all eyes – and perhaps even (for Braille) fingertips – read through the blinkers of spatial form.

There is a very simple way of highlighting spatial form in teaching or workshop situations: just place a transparency of the poem (preferably a poem unknown to them) on an overhead projector which is out of focus. You will see a blurred, unreadable shape. It is astonishing how much information is carried by that shape, as evidenced by asking the participants what reactions they have to it. They may pick up on such features as the poem's uncertainty or 'raggedness', or its 'martial' or obsessive quality (ordered ranks of stanzas); or they may gain a sense of emotional/ psychological development expressed through the changing form of this sub-textual 'shadow'. Whether this 'shadow development' is later found to support, or undermine, the poem's actual content is interesting in itself. I hasten to add here that

this exercise certainly does not define what spatial form is, nor does it exhaust all aspects of its discussion; but it does draw out some of the key elements.

That moment at which we turn the page onto a poem is perhaps one of the most critical with regard to spatial form. There is always an instant of recognition: that visual, 'Gestalt' sense of a poem which we receive before we begin to read. Until the point at which we broach

a poem's linear sequence of words, our 'typewriter-carriage' brain is not yet enabled. The poem is still an aggregation of geometrical lines and symbols set against white canvas. It remains a primal, patterned bulk on its cave wall. In fact, the poem (unlike the majority of prose) is mostly canvas and wall. These aspects of form constitute a peripheral orbit of semiotics and do not yield as readily to study as, say, etymology or semantics; but, as we have seen with the 'blurring exercise' above, they nevertheless communicate effectively – and unavoidably – with readers.

However, in the eyes' hunt for meaning, it is still only part of the story to point out that poems, on the whole, are – initially – usually taken in as a whole. There are, for instance, more 'local' attributes of spatial form such as

those created through the patterning and visual texture of the letters (one good way to demonstrate this is to simply examine sonorous, or highly-structured poems, for 'typographic texture'). Moreover, there is no obvious reason why the more fluid impressions of spatial form should cease to operate, simply because close reading is under way. In fact, the visual-spatial impact of a poem is like a ghost that shakes its chains down the corridors of every line. Whether for good or ill, that spectre of the 'poem's whole' will haunt the reader even as she wakes into the most minute logic of its parts.

A version of this article appeared in the Autumn 2004 issue of *Poetry News*. More detailed articles, poems and biographical information can be found at Mario Petrucci's website: <http://mariopetrucci.port5.com>



Tribes, Tributes and Tribulations

Lloyd Lindsay on The One Tribe Quandary

In December of 1999, myself and other poets performed for a poetry night at Battersea Arts Centre. It was presented/promoted by Survivors' Poetry along with our hosts/collaborators, the BAC's very own Apples and Snakes.

I must be brave here. At the time I played the Devil's Advocate. In the debate after our performances, I asked the question: was such a thing by any means necessary; didn't this kind of thing create more problems than solutions? That the prime objective is that we here at Survivors' Poetry are survivors of mental distress and/or are working to promote the poetry of poets along those lines. That the colour-line or quandary shouldn't come into it. That shouldn't we rise above such notions (poetically) and so on (as it were)?

Well excuse my story-telling; yet once upon a time a long time ago, William Blake wrote of a black boy having a white soul. Such polarised imagery was mirrored into the miasma of the future, maybe, through the work of poets like the Jamaican George Campbell (born 1918). He echoed in his poem 'Holy' the Blakean first lines: 'Holy be the white head of a negro/ Sacred be the black flax of a black child'.

Fifty five years ago Franz Fanon making much use of poets, Aime Cesaire and (President) Senghor of Senegal, wrote of 'Black Skins, White Masks'. Recently even, it was 'quipped' to me by a self-confessedly, not quite ascerbinably (sic) Caucasian member of the Network, that many of his kind were 'black underneath'. Is that so? In the lyricism of manic-depressive Jimi Hendrix: 'There is so much confusion I can't get no release'.

Thence, that is what this thing, the 'One Tribe Quandary' is all about – Release, liminal (sic) or subliminal, Freedom, and Liberty – freedom of expression, freedom of thought, word and action, of movement, of self-expression, freedom from already established forms. (Dare I go as far as to say freedom from paper, pen, page, plus iambic pentameter?)

Yet, yes, long may it reign – a little freedom can be a dangerous thing; as can a little knowledge. (In the words of Pope's 'Essay on Man' we must therefore 'drink deeply of it'). Though Beauty may be only skin deep, this issue, as beastly as it can be, is not. It is abysmally deep; and when you look into that which is abysmally deep, that which is abysmally deep looks into you. (For instance, who can fathom Franz Fanon?) According to the 'lies, damn lies and statistics', so to speak, as stated in Jason Pegler's manic-autobiographical work 'A Can of Madness',

80% of inpatients soft-shoe shuffling, or not, their way along horrid London mental ward corridors, are of the black minority. How/Why is that? However dark the vision, can someone else enlighten me?

That is why this thing – this 'One Tribe Quandary' – exists: for the freedom to somehow homeopathically alleviate through our art the pressure, strain and 'tensions, springing from the meanings contained in words' ⁽¹⁾, along with reducing the pressure, strain and tension as stressed within our specific strands of the rootlets of our own existential reality. And yes, reality can be this way for all us survivors, a reality which can be as hard as nails – nails scraping like chalk down a blackboard. I know I mix metaphors and do not always make my meaning positively clear. Yet it suffices to announce that we have another dead poet of our society to bring to remembrance.

On 10th November last year we made use of the poet laureate of the Harlem Renaissance, Langston Hughes. This was an extremely successful evening in Shepherd's Bush, which raised the profile of our Hammersmith black Survivors group. The One Tribe Quandary now has a modest yet solid core of about five members, which is a healthy foundation from which to build.

Now we turn our attention to the late, youthful, great Mikey Smith – who incidentally quoted Hughes's work as one of his influences. He is the front, so to speak, for The One Tribe Quandary's evening, as part of the Westwords Literary Festival on the 18th March at 7.30pm in the same venue as last year, Shepherd's Bush Library ⁽²⁾, opposite Shepherd's Bush Tube Station (Hammersmith and City Line). Significantly we are to celebrate the work of Michael Smith – plus forget/reject my specious speculations – who was killed amid much controversy in Jamaica in 1983 before reaching his thirtieth birthday. All are welcome to this night of our work and his.

The 'One Tribe Quandary' meet every second Tuesday at: The Polish Centre, 236-242 King Street, Hammersmith, London W6 in the Shape Disability Arts offices on the second floor.

The priority of the 'Quandary' is to attract more involvement of Black and Asian people in the Survivors' Poetry Network(s). For more details contact Lloyd on 0208 743 2361 or Maureen at the Survivors' Poetry office.

Notes:-

(1) From the 'Wretched of the Earth'.

(2) The Library has disability access.

Kissing It Better

Theresa Rahman on the Kiss it! XX Campaign: March against Psychiatric Assault

Six of them (psychiatric staff) put me in head and arm locks. I cried out for help. They dragged me to a cell where I was stripped bare and forced face down on the floor. Syringes were inserted into my buttocks and I was injected with extremely powerful drugs. The cell door was bolted and I was left to recede into unconsciousness utterly alone, terrified and traumatized. This was done to me repeatedly. Rubbing salt in the wound, they labelled me paranoid ... I am now!

- Testimony of a survivor

No one shall be subjected to torture or to cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment.

- Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Article 5

Kiss It! XX Campaign, launched on the 8 October 2004, was a march-and-protest against the inhumanity of forced drug treatment and psychiatric assault.

The aim of the Kiss It! XX Campaign was to create an opportunity for survivors, users and refusers, friends and allies, to make an 'in yer face' statement, directly and peacefully. The organisers hoped to generate national and international media coverage with a view to highlight the issues, create awareness and provoke the debate.

Artist Aidan Shingler founded the campaign to fuse art and politics with humour and poignancy. "It is a direct result," Aidan explained, "of the treatment I was subjected to in the hands of the psychiatric establishment that has provoked a commitment and a passion to expose the shameful methods and practices that were imposed upon me and my compatriots within the clinical setting."

Aidan's career as an artist has focussed on communicating 'the spiritual and creative potential of schizophrenia' and redefining what schizophrenia means based on his personal experiences.

"On two separate occasions and in two separate institutions, I attempted to organise a sit in," Aidan continued. "Both times my plans reached the ears of the hospital authorities and both times I was restrained, forcibly injected and plunged into unconsciousness. I vowed that I would continue to protest and press for radical reform of the 'mental health' system on regaining my freedom."

At 11am on 14 February 2005, protesters were invited to apply injection plasters - in the form of two X's - to the seat of their trousers or skirts, and gather at Whitehall Place, London. Protesters then walked past the Department of Health, the House of Parliament and St Thomas' Hospital, demonstrating their outrage with peaceful gestures of defiance, and on to the Imperial War Museum, home to a site where the notorious asylum Bedlam used to be.

Outside the Imperial War Museum, protesters bid a fond farewell to release the sting in their tails.

A Valentine's Day card - with a message that pinpoints the issues - was hand-delivered to 10 Downing Street, but we were told it would not get to Mr Blair on the grounds of being too large! We nevertheless left it with the door reception people in the hope that it might eventually somehow find its way into the hands of the Prime Minister.

Founder Aidan states: "The methods that are employed by psychiatry, and imposed onto those who experience emotionally vulnerable and volatile states are often inhuman. In the clinical environment our requirements and needs are not met, and our pleas, cries, explanations and experiences are invalidated and recorded as symptoms."

"To ensure that individuals do not stray too far from the limited and restricted parameters that define the 'norm', psychiatry implements... Incarceration, physical restraints, pain compliance techniques, forced- drugging, compulsory electro convulsive' therapy', psychosurgery, coercion, and brainwashing...all of which demonstrate the defectiveness rather than the effectiveness of psychiatric treatment...control under the guise of care.

"The disturbance we may experience in our lives is exacerbated and increased many fold by the aggressive insensitivity and gross inhumanity of such methods. Those who are subjected to these treatments are often damaged and traumatised by them."

For more information visit: www.kissit.org

MHA Rally Against Stigma

Roy Holland on the Westminster Horticultural Halls' Mental Health Alliance Rally

Hundreds of mental health service users, carers and professionals attended a rally organised by the Mental Health Alliance on January 31st 2005 at the Westminster Horticultural Halls to question the Government's proposed Mental Health Bill.

The MHA is a 60-member coalition, whose members range from the Royal College of Psychiatrists and the Royal College of Nursing to Mind, the Sainsbury Centre for Mental Health and the National Union of Students. All participants completed forms evaluating current mental health services and commenting on the contents of the Bill, particularly the provisions relating to compulsory treatment in the community.

The afternoon was divided into three sessions, each with a panel including a politician and a user. The first session focused on compulsory treatment, the second on stigma and discrimination and the third on user and carer perspectives. The Secretary of State for Health, Rosie Winterton, was present to defend the Bill.

There were differences of opinion amongst the audience as to whether compulsory treatment was ever justified, but it was felt that one's home should be sacrosanct. There were also calls for a wide range of treatments to be available. One woman boldly spoke up for the efficacy of homoeopathy and prayer.

Terry Hammond gave an impassioned speech on behalf of carers and felt that the Bill excluded them. I actually feel that there are often situations where the patient needs space away from their family, and that the patient's rights should be paramount in this situation.

David Crepaz-Keay, the Director of Mental Health Media and a survivor himself, raised a laugh when he suggested that people without a mental illness should be subjected to compulsory treatment, as they were the group most likely to perpetrate violent crime.

The Bill seems to be the product of hysteria over a small number of violent crimes committed by mental patients and strengthens the stigma produced by media exploitation of this link.

Dr. Joanna Bennett, whose brother Rocky died while under restraint in hospital, felt that the Bill would be even more biased against African and Caribbean young men than the existing legislation, a view supported by Dr. Kwame McKenzie, a senior lecturer in psychiatry at the

Royal Free and University College Medical Schools. All in all, the meeting showed strong support for users' choice and users' rights and questioned the motivation behind the Government's bill. A lobby of parliament is to follow.

The Mental Health Alliance can be contacted at www.mentalhealthalliance.org.uk or c/o Mind, 15-19 Broadway, Stratford, London, E15 4BQ.

The Catcher in the Rye

The hills where children play,
Where soft words and soft catch need not
hold sway,
Are you there now, with your silken nets,
Growing happily old
In a place that's "just so damn nice"?

I'd often wish I was with you,
On the hazel hills,
The staunch grass twisted,
Martyr like, under stamp,
As their faces freeze.

"Holden, look."

And over the hills comes a sky plumping, smog
of black,
And to the children, who are used to only the
hazel hills,
An army of ghosts approaches.

All is still, the black ghosts are nearing.
"Are they coming for us?" A little one asks.
"Are they coming for us?"
Voices come like a tremulous circuit, through
the hazel hills.

"Yes," you say, Phoebe's tears drizzling your cheeks,
As the black ghosts disappear into the air.

Tim Pearson

Tim Pearson is one of the first generation of mentees chosen for this year's run of the Survivors' Poetry National Mentoring Scheme. An already distinctive voice at seventeen.

Die Vergangenheit

Paul Murphy

It was a windy afternoon in Autumn (*Herbst*), dead leaves blew down Karl-Frederich Strasse. In the Guidebook, 'between Freiburg and Baden-Baden, Emmendingen, Psychiatric Hospital.'

It is true that Emmendingen was a quiet village, but the Psychiatric Hospital held more devils for the writers of the Guidebook than for the village's inhabitants, who were mostly untroubled by the local population of mental patients.

On the train to Emmendingen from Freiburg one night, I sat down with a group of punks and Anarchists, and reached for my regulation, well-watered alcoholic beverage, which I reserved for the train. The young man beside me told me that his father was an Apache Indian, and that he spoke fluent Apache. He arched his eyebrows, and said in a Sean Connery drawl, "I'm Bond, James(shh) Bond...."

In the pub *Zum Fuchs* (*After the Fox, or Off to the Fox* - German prepositions were immensely problematic for me: the Germans said the same about English prepositions) an old wino told me that the *Bahnhof* (Station) had razor wire raised above the crossing to prevent the self-harm that the mental patients customarily tried to commit upon themselves. I never went to the Hospital to have a look but I knew that its presence lowered the rents. I had also been told by the Freiburgers not to go near the village, because of the 'mad house'.

The town also had the odd mad artist: in the Café Hinterhaus, a local sculptor with a minor reputation, would customarily come in with leaves and branches in his hair and a plastic bag over his head. Behaviour like this is regarded as eccentricities of genius when a Mozart commits them, but when the perpetrator is a minor or unknown artist, the verdict is 'insanity' - which is not to say that he wasn't colourful. I laughed at his banter with Frank, who served the coffees and ejected the unworthy.

Die Vergangenheit. That is a word with a multiplicity of possibilities; it sounds abstract, harsh and unrelenting, which is what I supposed was the chief characteristic of the German language. The words *Heil*, *Achtung* and *Verboten* came to my mind, mostly gleaned from war films, which peppered our small screens from time to time. I discovered that the little ending *-dom* of some English words was *-heit* in German, hence *Freiheit* is 'Freedom' in English and so on. The word *die Vergangenheit* means 'the past' in English; I supposed it might mean 'multi-storey car park' or something else equally multi-part. German

has the facility to build up new nouns from 'parts', in English we can also fashion many new verbs, but many nouns enter our language through foreign languages rather than as fundamentally new coinages.

I attended many German classes in Freiburg, which was not so much to do with the history of language as language used in common parlance, in everyday speech. This diachronic view of language was only taught in University Linguistics Departments, the synchronic approach predominated in teaching German as a foreign language. For instance, it was necessary the students know that the German word *Volk* is ideologically loaded (with echoes of the Nazis and their definition of the people as a White, Aryan racial group, as opposed to Semitic, Slav or Negroid racial types, who were classified by them as 'sub-humans') but that it simply means 'people' in English. The conflict between a (diachronic) historically rooted view of culture and society and a perception of culture and society as fundamentally ahistorical (summed up succinctly in Henry Ford's famous aphorism, 'History is bunk') coloured my stay in Germany.

I was in Emmendingen to discover the past, which is what interested me most of all, not the present, which was altogether in an exponential falling off into banality, that is until September 11th and the terrorist attack on the World Trade Centre in New York brought the contemporary back with a bump. At first the scaremongering and propaganda convinced me that this was Armageddon (*Private Eye* ran a copy soon after the attack with a cover depicting the President receiving news of the attack and his aide saying 'It's Armageddon Sir' and Bush replying, 'Well Arm a geden out of here,' a satirical reference to the amount of time Bush spent away from Camp David and Washington after the attack, shepherded by Air Force One out of danger - some leading American politicians and even his own staff felt that he spent too long in the air). I imagined my call up papers being sent to my home in Belfast, well, I thought, I can hide out here, while the war takes its course.

In essence, Emmendingen was a very interesting place, with a great deal of history, its depiction by the Guide book as 'a psychiatric hospital' was most unfair, and a gross mis-representation. The salient points of Emmendingen's past were the village's horse painters ⁽¹⁾, the first manned attempt at flight in Germany, which ended up in a dung heap ⁽²⁾, and the meeting of the poet,

⁽¹⁾ *Emmendingen, geburtsstadt des Pferdemaalers Fritz Boehle*: Emmendingen, birthplace of the horse-painter Fritz Boehle

dramatist and novelist, Johann Wolfgang Von Goethe (1749–1832) with his sister Cornelia Schlosser-Goethe (1750–1777) in May 1775.

The villagers were clearly proud of their connection with Goethe, Germany's greatest author, admired sage and creator, for many, of the German language and German national consciousness. By the station, an alley, Cornelia Passage, is named after Cornelia Schlosser-Goethe, who died two years after the meeting, aged 27. The Schlosser's house is now the public library. Her tragic early death struck me as strange, since her older brother lived for so long and came through so many serious illnesses. Her grave was also somewhere in the village, but having a dislike of graveyards, I stayed away.

At the meeting of Cornelia and Johann Wolfgang was Cornelia's husband Johann Georg Schlosser, a local dignitary, a host of other minor officials, and the poet Jakob Michael Reinhold Lenz (1751–1792) a minor, tragic *Sturm und Drang* (Storm and Stress) poet and the subject of an unfinished short story by the German playwright Georg Buchner (1813–1837) ⁽³⁾. Goethe's stay lasted for two weeks. He possibly went from pub to pub, listening to stories and local gossip, or walked into the forest for walks and tours.

Obviously a central element of the past, debated more than any other historical event, that was present by its absence in Emmendingen, was the Holocaust, *Endlösung der Juden Frage* (Final Solution of the Jewish Question), or Shoah (Hebrew for 'Annihilation'). The Synagogue was in the centre of the village until the Nazis dynamited it in 1939, subsequently showing real Nazi contempt by billing the Jewish Community for the dynamite and work time. The local Jews gave the German Government (the Nazis) the Synagogue and its grounds in payment. After the war the ground was returned to the Jews, but they were left with the task of re-building the Synagogue themselves. Today, they are still short of the funds for re-building. Beside the square where the Synagogue once was is a plaque, which ends *gegen Rassenwahn und Faschismus* ('against racial fantasy and Fascism').

Typically, in Germany, these lofty platitudes only appeared after the event. There are now few Jews left in Germany, perhaps as few as 50,000. As I walked around the square, I spotted a little Museum. It was dedicated to Emmendingen's Jews. I went there one Sunday and

⁽²⁾ *An dieser Stelle landete der Ingenieur Carl Friedrich Meerwein mit seinem selbstgebauten Flug-Apparat nach dem ersten Flugversuch Deutschlands, Anno Domini, 1784*: at this site in 1784 the engineer Carl Friedrich Meerwein made the first manned flight in Germany with his self-driven flying apparatus

⁽³⁾ who died at the age of 23 and left us the plays *Danton's Tod*, *Leonce und Lena*, *Woyzeck* and an unfinished short story about the mad *Sturm und Drang* poet Lenz. Buchner was regarded as a scientist who wasted his life with the playwriting and revolutionary politics, which got him into trouble on more than one occasion

looked at the exhibits, mostly objects of importance to Emmendingen's Jews. I went there one Sunday and looked at the exhibits, mostly objects of importance to the Jewish religion and potted histories of the village's Jews. I conversed with the curator, an Italian, and one of the many foreigners (Turks, Kurds, Iranians, Poles: there were many Poles in the apartment block on Brunnenstrasse, where I eventually found an apartment). The former Gasthaus Ochsen (at the corner of Karl-Friedrich Strasse) was originally a Guest House, then a cigarette factory, and finally the Deportation Centre for the village's Jews, who were sent to Auschwitz in 1940. Today it is a doctor's surgery and apartments. (I was offered the top storey apartment when I first went to Emmendingen and noted the irony that obviously none of the villagers wanted to live there, so bequeathed it to a foreigner to make what he could of it. The apartment was clean, unfurnished and very large, too big for me to live in and heat successfully, so in the end I rejected the opportunity to live with the village's past. But as I stood outside Gasthaus Ochsen (Guesthouse Oxen) I contemplated the soft, limpid eyes of the oxen carved on the door's lintel, gazing down at me as if from immemorable time, from out of the distant past.)

The forest surrounding Emmendingen is the *Schwarzwald*, or Black Forest, famous of course for its Black Forest Gateau. That is, at least, my only previous association with this place - apart from the philosopher Martin Heidegger (1889-1976), formerly Rector of the University of Freiburg, where I taught a few creative writing classes. Heidegger is rated as a great philosopher, at least for his impenetrable work *Sein und Zeit*; his contribution to the now unfashionable Existentialist philosophy; and his infamous connection with the Nazis who he had supported. In brief, Heidegger had given a speech in 1933, in his position as Rector of the University, in support of Hitler and the Nazis. His support wavered after this and he ended up, in 1944, being sent to the Rhine Dykes as that 'most expendable of University Professors'. Martin Heidegger is at best a figure of controversy. He was born in this part of Germany and had a hut in Todtneuberg, where he worked on his philosophical speculations.

Another famous person born in the *Schwarzwald* was Herman Hesse (1877-1962) who lived for the most part in Switzerland and India. His fame had peaked in the 1960s and 1970s, when the vogue for India and Buddhist mysticism had been at its height, with everyone from The Beatles to Hesse (who was by then dead) taking their cue from the East. The point is that Hesse had been there a lot earlier than John, Paul, George and Ringo, in 1911, when the Journey to the East was a decidedly bizarre preoccupation for any European.

But my chief interest in the Forest was its metaphorical significance. What did it mean beyond what it was? A

forest, dim and spectral, with mysteries and secrets, where the rehearsal for the Future of Germany, a primeval act of terror and violence, took place, which was to overshadow the future, the present and the past. The Forest represented the unkempt and wild places of the German Romantic temperament and imagination, as opposed to the well-ordered garden of the Enlightenment (in German the word Enlightenment is *Aufklärung*). The two forces, the Enlightenment and Romanticism are summed up for me in the contrasting music of Mozart and Beethoven, the first mathematically sublime, the second elemental and passionate. The historian Craig is very critical of the Romantics and sees them as the forebears of the Nazis, with their emphasis on inspiration against reason, their cult of genius and eccentricity as a sign of genius, and their central

“For the Romantics, history was adumbrated in the dream, the fairy story, the journey”

metaphor of the wood, as against the orderly garden of the Enlightenment. History for the Enlightenment was an orderly space of facts and dates. For the Romantics, history was adumbrated in the dream, the fairy story, the journey; it was a purely symbolic manifestation; a shadow to be deciphered by those who would or could. The Romantics were closer to a Freudian account of the subconscious than we can know but clearly the figures of Wagner, Nietzsche and Freud figure large in any account of the legacy of the Romantic movement in Germany.

One previous encounter with tales of the German Forest had been through the stories of the Brothers Grimm. Jacob Ludwig Karl, the elder of the Brothers Grimm, was born in 1785, and Wilhelm Karl in the following year. They both studied at Marburg and from 1808 to 1829 mainly worked in Kassel as state-appointed librarians, Jacob also assisting in diplomatic missions between 1813 and 1815 and again in 1848. Both brothers had been professors at Gottingen for several years when in 1837 they became two of the seven leading Gottingen academics dismissed from their posts by the new King of Hannover for their liberal political views. In 1840 they were invited to settle in Berlin as members of the Academy of Sciences, and here they remained until their deaths (Wilhelm died in 1859 and Jacob in 1863).

Jacob, one of Germany's greatest scholars, is justly regarded as the founder of the scientific study of the German language and medieval German literature. His most monumental achievements were the *Deutsche Grammatik* (1819-37) and, with his brother's assistance, the initiation of the great *Deutsches Wörterbuch*, the many

volumes of which were not completed by later scholars until 1961, and which has become the equivalent of the *Oxford English Dictionary*.

Between them, and often in collaboration, the Grimms were responsible for pioneering work on medieval texts, heroic epics, legends and mythology and many other contributions to the study of ancient German culture. One of their most remarkable publications was the *Kinder- und Hausmärchen* (1812, with many subsequent editions), which remains to this day the most famous collection of folktales in the world.

Germans have a great culture of 'wellness'⁽⁴⁾ with bicycles everywhere. The trains are generally fantastic but for some Germans there is over-dependence on the culture of the car. Thus, the Black Forest can be viewed from a car, but not as Goethe might have viewed it as he walked on foot through the villages and their streets and lanes. Of course, he may also have had a horse, or a carriage. Thus I only ever viewed the Black Forest from a distance, in a train or car. Distances were also a problem; getting to Kandel, the second highest peak in the Black Forest, took 45 minutes by car. There was an extensive ski-run at the top, and a hotel, closed when I visited it in early December. The climate exhibited a schizophrenia of hot summers and cold winters that was not evident in my native Ireland where, you might say, it was bloody cold and wet all the time.

If the rest of the Black Forest, apart from Freiburg im Breisgau and Emmendingen, was largely unknown to me, these two centres still afforded a great deal. As well as the culture of the outdoors, there was also a culture of saunas and springs. Saunas were literally everywhere. Eugenkeidelbad had thermal waters bubbling up from underneath the Black Forest and lots of saunas, *Schwimmbads* (swimming pools), *Freibads* (open air pools, used extensively in the summertime) and simply more and more saunas. There were also many medical baths. These aspects of German life are very important in informing any non-German reader of the German character (if any people really have a 'character'). At the baths I met many *Volk Deutsch*, Germans from Poland, the Baltic States and Russia, from as far away as Uzbekistan and Tajikistan.

The *Volk Deutsch* I found to be much friendlier than the local Germans. Most of them had left Russia after the *Wende* (change) in 1989-90, and the Communist implosion. Afterwards Russia had descended into criminality: mafia gangs dominated its cities with a plethora of violence and intimidation and the incompetent leadership of Boris Yeltsin had only made matters worse. I watched the new Russian leader

(4) in English the word is 'fitness': 'wellness' seems suspect as an English adjective

Vladimir Putin⁽⁵⁾ give a keynote speech before the German Parliament. His German was very good and he made reference to and quoted from Kant, Schiller and Goethe. The Germans were very impressed by Putin's attempt to speak German well and do honour to their glorious past, another sign of a thaw in Russo-German relations. Obviously, relations between the West and the DDR (Deutsche Demokratik Republik), Russia's puppet regime in Eastern Europe, had been icy in the midst of the Cold War.

I made friends with one Russian from the Baltic State of Latvia (in German, *Lettland*) who taught me Russian in exchange for English. From him I learned that the word *Bolshoi* means 'big' in English; that *gorod* is the Russian word for city and that *God* means 'bog' ⁽⁶⁾. He had come from Riga to do research in semi-conductors at the university. To my mind semi-conductors were largely a mystery, a vast extension of my basic mathematics and physics. He explained to me that he had read Herbert Wells and Robert Burns, both symbols for the former Socialist project, now in a very sad decline. He also told me how sad people had been in Riga when Communism finally collapsed, a fact that surprised me, since I always presumed that the Baltic States were solidly anti-Russian and anti-Communist. During the Second World War many men from the Baltic States and the Ukraine had joined the German army and constituted some of the best SS Divisions that Hitler possessed, committing many atrocities in the East before the demise of the Nazi regime in 1945. He felt that valuable aspects of the former Soviet system could be welded to the Capitalist system to make a synthesis of the two. He explained to me that the strength of the Soviet system had been education, especially mathematics and physics, and that other aspects of these regimes could be models for new, projected Capitalist societies, which would benefit from a synthesis of values.

He spoke good German, explaining to me that his mother had been a teacher of German but was now a *Rentner* (pensioner) and had given him the proto-typical Russian name, Igor, from the opera *Prince Igor* by Borodin. His father had taught Russian at a State school, fought in the Second World War in the Russian army and had

⁽⁵⁾ *Der Spiegel* – Germany's cleverest and most erudite weekly magazine, now that *Stern* has become more topical and generalised in its focus – called Putin, *Russlands neuer starker mann*: Russia's new strong man

⁽⁶⁾ The Russian alphabet, the Cyrillic alphabet, is based partly on the Greek alphabet, which is obviously of non-Latin origin. I recognised some parallellisms between Russian and German. Russian, like German, is an inflected language (an inflected language has a case system which determines word order; in German the cases are nominative, accusative, dative and genitive, Latin also has vocative and ablative cases. Russian has two more cases than German, English has vestigial cases, but cases proper left English at the time of the 'Mayflower.' In brief, the nominative case is the subject, the accusative case the object, the dative the indirect object and the genitive is the possessive.)

ended up as a headmaster before retiring. He told me a great deal about the Russian experience in Afghanistan (a combined Northern Alliance army and American air force was currently fighting another war in that country). He had known a Captain of Paratroopers in the Russian army, who had told him that killing people was a messy and unpleasant business, a fact which it hardly took a genius to ascertain. He also talked about Russian policy in the Balkans, describing the Kosovo Liberation Army as 'a bunch of murderous thugs and brigands who initiated a war against the Serbs'. The view in the West is that Milosevic, the Serb leader, initiated his paramilitaries in Kosovo to ethnically cleanse the Albanians in Kosovo (some thousands of Albanians were placed in Kosovo after the Second World War and grew to be a substantial minority). The Russians do not recognise the Court in the Hague either, which is now trying the former Serb leader. They see the Court as a puppet of NATO and the West and not as an independent court.

A similar bifurcation of opinion happened when the KLA and its allies once again went to war in Macedonia (the so-called Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia). They claimed that they were fighting for more rights (Albanians are denied language rights in the FYROM, ie their language Albanian is not recognised as an official

“He felt that valuable aspects of the former Soviet system could be welded to the Capitalist system to make a synthesis of the two”

State language) and for representation in the country's Civil Service and Police Force, whereas their enemies in Macedonia claimed that they were fighting for a Greater Albania, a region which would incorporate all the Albanians of Albania, Macedonia and Kosovo in one country. In the end NATO once again had to intervene in this conflict and a compromise of sorts was brokered. Today the region is still unstable and it is perhaps just a matter of time before another war begins in the Balkans, even though Milosevic is now at the Hague facing impending trial for War Crimes.

We often strolled through Martinstor together, Freiburg's central district. Martinstor is clearly a medieval city gateway. I discovered a plaque on one side which commemorated the burning of three witches (*drei Hexen verbrennt*) with the familiar platitudes urging us to think about *Unmenschlichkeit* (inhumanity). Next to Martinstor is the pub *Schlappen* where it was possible to find good food, whisky and beer, the internet café, *Ping Wing*; and a vegetarian restaurant. Igor found a picture of the

witch burning in the museum in Martinstor, but after persistent attempts to find it myself I gave up.

There were four cinemas in Freiburg including the *Off-kino*, which exhibited alternative or arts cinema; the *Cinemax*, a utilitarian cinema showing mostly Hollywood fare, with some oldies and classics on a Tuesday; and the UFA film theatre (7), which was supposed to be an arts cinema, but which showed most of the Hollywood fare regurgitated at the *Cinemax*.

At the *Off-kino* I watched *Shadow of the Vampire*, a film dealing with Murnau's earlier silent era classic *Nosferatu*. In the film the vampire, originally played by Max Shreck, but replaced in this version by Willem Dafoe, devours the film crew at the end, with the exception of Murnau – played by John Malkovitch – having the last laugh as it escapes immolation by the sun's rays at the end of the film. Perhaps the vampire is an incarnation of Hitler, escaping final destruction to be reborn in a different place and time. I mused at the title: is it the shadow of the vampire, or the shadow of Hitler? At the same time the newspaper *Der Spiegel* was running a historical retrospective on the Nazi era, entitled 'Hitler's Long Shadow'. Of course, this was also another revision of the Nazi period: for obvious reasons Holocaust denial is illegal in Germany and France, so *Der Spiegel's* account did not move far from the accepted version of events; as contrasted with the Revisionist historian David Irving (whose revision of the Holocaust was overturned in court in his action against the Jewish historian Deborah Lipstadt.). Watching it in German seemed appropriate, although I struggled to understand more than a few words. At this point I had only been in Germany a few weeks.

Later I saw *Apocalypse Now Redux* in the same cinema, a classic I have always admired. In German it is even more fascinating, even though the studio was full of beer-drinking Germans (8). Another film I watched repeatedly was Tim Burton's *Planet der Affen* (*Planet of the Apes*) mainly for the gorgeous visuals and the humour inspired by a pack of monkeys speaking German. I went one night with a Korean friend who was similarly fascinated.

(7) UFA originally produced films and was Germany's Hollywood in the 1920s with directors such as Murnau, Fritz Lang and many other stars who subsequently left for America after or even before the rise of Hitler. The UFA company was owned by the businessman Alfred Hugenburg, who also ran an extreme Right-Wing party, the DNVP (*Deutschnationale Volkspartei*: German National Peoples' Party) which later allied with Hitler to give him his majority in the 1933 elections. Many high street banks and chains allied themselves with the Nazis, still visible on the highstreet, they suffered only punitive damages after the war

(8) in Germany it is normal to drink alcohol at a public film showing, another contrast with English sobriety in public places outside the bar, and possibly a sign that the Germans had no fear of drunkenness and alcohol-inspired behaviour

At Xmas the two children's films were the main fare, the disappointing *Harry Potter* and the better *Der Herr der Ringe* (*The Lord of the Rings*). In between came *Schokoladenum Frühstück* (*The Diary of Bridget Jones*), which was lighter and funnier: again I was lost because of my lack of fluent German, but picked up the odd word and sentence. Going to the cinema was a good way of becoming immersed in German, since many of the Germans spoke good English and would prefer to practice their English with you than give you practice with your German. In any case, the local dialect, *Badisch*, was supposedly impenetrable, although I understood it quite well after a while.

There was a definite culture of music in Freiburg, in fact the presence of music was everywhere. Concerts were advertised all the time and there was a training school for opera singers in the city I met a trainee, Claudia, one evening on the tram. I went to a Wagner opera, *Der Fliegende Hollander*, at Freiburg's opera house in the Summer time, just before the summer recess; and then a concert of Claude Debussy's piano works; and a concert featuring works by two modern Japanese composers as well as a standard Mozart piano concerto.

The day after I was sitting in the sauna of the Hotel Dorint, which is beside the concert hall, when a diminutive Japanese man entered. 'Are you a performer with the orchestra?' I asked him. 'No, I'm a composer,' he answered. This Japanese gentleman was obviously the composer of one of the suites of modern music. He told me that the term 'atonal' (9) was no longer used, and that it is now just 'modern music'. He added that his opera *King Lear* would be premiering in Covent Garden after his stay in Freiburg. At his concert a woman had remarked to me that this modern music was like science fiction to her, compared to the familiar work of the repertoire. Later I met a German composer in Emmendingen and we agreed to begin work on an opera.

The autumn leaves blew down Karl Friedrich Straße. The house fronts looked like blank, pious faces, eternally silent. The house fronts a bare façade, rising towards me like the faces of pious pilgrims wending their way to church on a Sunday morning.

Emmendingen is a village (*Dorf*) on the edge of the *Schwarzwald* (Black Forest). It is known as the Gateway to the Black Forest and it is here that the Black Forest begins. The locals speak a dialect of German, *Badisch*, which is far removed from the *Hochdeutsch* (High

(9) serial music was pioneered by Arnold Schoenberg (1874–1951) in the 1920s to counteract the atonality he feared and denied fostering in the 1910s; although aspects of atonality can also be seen in Beethoven's 9th Symphony, and in Wagner's operas, particularly the prelude to *Das Rheingold*. These works prefigured Schoenberg's experiments and his atonal system, used in such works as *Verklärte Nacht* – *Transfigured Night* – the atonal system dispenses with the harmonic scale used in Western musical history

German) spoken in Northern Germany (the best Emmendingen is a village (*Dorf*) on the edge of the *Schwarzwald* (Black Forest). It is known as the Gateway to the Black Forest and it is here that the Black Forest begins. The locals speak a dialect of German, *Badisch*, which is far removed from the *Hochdeutsch* (High German) spoken in Northern Germany (the best *Hochdeutsch* is spoken in the area around Hannover). Many of the older people, especially in the little villages speak an even more archaic form of German, *Allemanisch*, named after a Germanic people who lived in this area at the time of the Roman Empire. *Allemanisch* is dying out (I didn't meet anyone who spoke *Allemanisch*, but noticed that there was an *Allemanisch Wörterbuch* (dictionary) in the book shop in Emmendingen), as regional dialects become increasingly threatened by the homogenization of the German language as a result of encroaching American Imperialism.

“regional dialects become increasingly threatened by the homogenization of the German language”

In fact some Germans expressed their concerns that they now compulsorily speak English because of the predominance of America as a world power and American English as the language of business. Is Germany now merely a colony of America? A taxi driver in Freiburg expressed these fears to me one night: 'We are merely a colony of America and we must speak English, our German language is secondary... American Capitalism is ruining the world... Well, I hope I'm not here to see it...'

These concerns exist side by side with an apathetic acceptance of the world and my feeling of a very limited political awareness. I was very surprised how conservative people were, but perhaps that is because I come from Belfast which has been a war zone for thirty years of my life, and where people are naturally politicized by 'the Troubles'. Of course, Southern Germany, Switzerland and Austria all have a reputation for conservatism. In Switzerland, the Swiss equivalent of our National Front polls 25% of the vote, as opposed to less than 1% in Britain. The same is true in Austria, as we have seen with the recent trouble over the election of Jörg Haider.

But I was also told that Freiburg was a *grüne Stadt* (Green City), *grüne* as opposed to *Rot* (Red). Old-style Marxist radicalism, as encapsulated in the DDR (*Deutsche Demokratik Republik*) has little political purchase, in fact it might be said that the old left-wing project is now completely dead in Germany. The SPD's (*Socialist Partei Deutschland*, the equivalent of the British Labour Party)

'Socialism' in alliance with *Die Grüne* (The Greens) is now in power in Bonn. I met some students at the *Stusi* (This is an abbreviation for student accommodation block) Bar who were members of *Linksruck* (Left Turn) the sister organization of the British Socialist Workers' Party. This party's version of Marxism is derived from the life and writings of Leon Trotsky, one of the leaders of the 1905 and October 1917 revolutions in Russia and subsequently commander of the Russian army in the period of the Russian Civil War. In 1939 he was assassinated by an agent of Stalin in Mexico City. They told me that their organization, which was in alliance with the new anti-Globalisation campaign, had been criminalized by the authorities with the backing of Schroeder's 'Socialists', although it also seemed obvious to me that their activities were open and legal, even though the police occasionally read their paper.

When I was in Freiburg I decided to buy some toy soldiers and try to find an opponent for a wargame. This consists of two opposing armies of tiny lead or plastic soldiers 'fighting' each other and melee and other decisions being decided by factors and the roll of a dice. But when I asked if I could put up a little note in the model shop that sold the plastic figures and models I was told that this was not allowed. Freiburg was a Green City and wargaming was really just another rehearsal for the militarism that had blighted Germany's past.

At the same time Schilly, the Green representative in Chancellor Gerhard Schröder's Cabinet, whose party had campaigned on a pacifist ticket, went along with Schröder's decision to support America in its war in Afghanistan, and America's all embracing 'war against terrorism'. Surely this is an example of the schizophrenia inherent in Capitalism as divulged by Deleuze and Guattari in their pioneering study *The Anti-Oedipus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*; or as depicted by members of the Frankfurt School of Marxists, theorists such as Herbert Marcuse, Adorno, Bloch and Horkheimer. I was disallowed from playing a game with toy soldiers that could hurt no one. At the same time a Minister and a Party that had campaigned for pacifism was embarking on a war of dubious legality in terms of international law, a war in which perhaps 20,000 or more people, both Taliban soldiers and Afghan civilians were killed and many others mutilated, wounded, homeless and starving; a war in which, as we have seen, the Geneva Convention was largely ignored.

Just after the September 11th attack I marched in a protest for peace through the centre of Freiburg. Banners with slogans such as *Wir wollen kein Krieg* (We don't need war) and *Krieg ist keine Lösung* (War is no solution), as well as some banners expressing solidarity with the State of Israel (which, as we also know, is completely bound up with state terrorism) were everywhere. Of course, the Germans may have felt that

they had to express solidarity with Israel as a result of Germany's tainted past.

I think that these were chilling examples of those paradoxes that seem to be etched into the very fabric of Capitalism. These bizarre and senseless conjunctions, so like the fragmented and nonsensical utterances of a mad person and yet accepted by seemingly sane people. I was also warned to stay away from a village described as a 'psychiatric hospital', but which was really very quiet, lovely, beautiful, and crammed full of fascinating history. I would have been genuinely disturbed, but these paradoxes do not only belong to Freiburg, or to Southern Germany, they are everywhere, even in my native Belfast.

Heaps of dead leaves, facades.

On Saturday Igor and I regularly went on trips to local towns in France. One Saturday afternoon we left for Colmar, a town over the German border. We took a bus and train connection and arrived in Colmar in the early afternoon. I had only ever been to towns and cities in Northern and Southern France. Colmar had a distinct flavour, not quite French and not quite German. We set off to find a cheap restaurant at Igor's insistence, despite my protest that we were tired and would only wander for hours through the town looking for something that probably did not exist. Eventually, tired and footsore, we arrived at a little café and bought quiche lorraine, but it was not really very cheap. It was Igor's first taste of quiche, he also spoke no French whatever, so it was left to me to order the food and drinks. The quiche was very bad indeed, in spite of this it was still enjoyable, the red wine was sour, as dry red wine often is.

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Carry On Kernow Roy Holland

At the beginning of December 2004 Survivors' Poetry organised a networking meeting for all survivor poets living in Cornwall at the Hall for Cornwall in Truro with the help of Cornwall Mental Health Forum, the Social Exclusion Librarian of Cornwall Libraries and Victoria Field, a former Director of Survivors' Poetry who is now secretary of Lapidus Cornwall.

The day was introduced by the Director, Dr. Simon Jenner, who asked what local people needed from the organisation. Victoria spoke about the work of Lapidus in Cornwall. Roy Birch, National Outreach Worker, ran a workshop. Finally a session of floorspots was kicked off with a performance of songs by Lucia Birch, some with a Cornish theme.

All the participants feel that a follow-up meeting would be worthwhile and would be an opportunity to get an ongoing local group of Survivors' Poetry started in Cornwall, and we have booked a room at the Cornish Studies Centre in Redruth on Monday April 25th 2005. The programme will start at 12pm with lunch and follow the same basic structure, but this time there will be more time for networking and for participants to perform.

If you are interested in attending, whether or not you were able to attend the Truro meeting, please ring Roy Holland or Roy Birch at the national office of Survivors' Poetry on 020 7916 5317 or e-mail us at info@survivorspoetry.org.uk and request an application form. There is no charge for the day and the venue has full disabled access.

Absolute Beginners

Rosa Scott on the Morley College workshop

I seem to be doing a lot of it at the moment, now I am here to tell about writing and writing courses – namely two summer courses that I just did at Morley College, in Lambeth.

Having had two poems published in this magazine, I felt duly encouraged and signed up for a week-long 'beginners' writing course – I learnt to write forty years ago! The deal was 10-4pm Monday to Friday. I got it for the amazing price of £20, as I was given a bursary. I only had to prove that I am writing (and am serious about it) at the moment, which involved showing one of the administrators a bit of my unfinished – will it ever be finished? – typed radio play. He was suitably impressed. The concessionary rate would have been £85, making it inaccessible to me, as I am unwaged. I am having a very difficult time at the moment, not feeling too well, and was wondering if it was such a good idea to have signed-up for this course in the middle of a nervous breakdown. I live in North London, so had to scrape together the £20-odd for a week-long travel card, and set off to cross the river on my writing adventure!

The first person I met on Monday morning appeared to have a similar compulsion for daily diary writing as myself, which was very encouraging. (Why is it that I seem to do my best writing when most tormented?) It was an extraordinary week with writing exercises set up for us in a short story class. The first challenge was to describe a pair of shoes in detail. When this had been committed to paper, the next bit came – put someone in them! I enjoyed this bit of writing hugely, and magically found a character created out of 'nowhere'.

A short story appeared seemingly effortlessly before me on the page with my heroine/character by the name of Venus. The others in the class seemed to enjoy listening when I was asked to read it to them.

There followed all sorts of workshops with scriptwriters, novelists and children's story writers, who told us about being published, and a class which was more jewel-like than jewellery making (I should know – I'm a jeweller). It was an exercise in making a poem out of the four words that the teacher gives you on a slim strip of paper. I was aghast! Horrified! Better do something, I thought. So I arranged them on a line each and again a poem appeared magically in front of me – a profound, joyful and lovely experience. I've been writing poetry since the age of seven, and this was a fresh and new way of writing. Think 'mountain stream', coming straight from a city. This was again an achievement enjoyed by others when I read it out.

My breakdown/pain was firmly put to one side for the week, and on the last day I had been crying all morning and had to go to see my advocacy worker before the course. I felt like a sopping wet cloth – misery filled, as I went across London for the last day. Ten steps away from Morley the pain and sadness swept away like a breeze passing through me, and I was so uplifted as I walked up the steps into the building to my home – writing itself. The nervous breakdown then wasn't central to my life as I had thought. The course was really better than a holiday. I have started a few pieces of writing, which I must continue working with, and have found many new ways of writing. Most of all, I now take myself and writing more seriously and have taken all my writing out of the recesses of the cupboards and corners at home and made myself a writing corner.

At the same time as the writing course, I did a three-week scriptwriting course during which we watched the telly (critically of course!). It was a great and fun class. I cannot say anything about the main courses of the academic year, although I am going to do some. I leave you with a poem which I wrote in 2003.

On a page

branded on to paper
glitteringly alive
never to die
or to be erased
branded onto eternity
words on a page

The contact at Morley College for summer courses is Edward Andersson on 0207 450 1836. To enrol you may ring 0207 450 1889.

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Numberless Calvaries

Cristina Viti profiles Dino Campana

Campana staring out of a bluish print: a determined frown, a hard, uncompromising twist on his lips covered by a long moustache. It's as if he wants to peer at the far horizon that keeps beckoning, towards another voyage, another escape from the hateful normality of smalltown mores and literary circles, but is held back by an imperious need to confront the very realities he abhors.

'I live at the foot of numberless Calvaries', he will say in 1914; but his Via crucis starts in 1900. At fifteen he's a man child who can't stem the violence of his unconscious, the destructive impulses that society teaches us to suppress. Nor has he evolved a structured form through which to express and transform them. Too sensitive for ordinary communication channels but not ready to fully bypass them, he is caught between two worlds, and angered that both should exclude him. The family can't understand how the chubby blond angel who aged two could recite the Ave Maria in French to the delight and envy of the whole neighbourhood has turned into this unpredictable, frightening live wire. His small hometown in the Romagna, Marradi, is already hurling its laughter and stones at him; uninterested in the psychological causes of his unease, the specialist consulted by the family doses him with sodium iodide, a substance still used today in the treatment of hyperthyroidean pathologies.

Three years in different high schools, then shortly after the death of his 'mad uncle' (institutionalized for 'religious mania'), Bologna and the university. Later he will say he chose a degree in chemistry 'without thinking' – perhaps he saw himself in the future as a man investigating and understanding the interaction of chemicals and moods. And his lifelong mood swings are epic, even allowing for the usual hagiography of derangement that always seems to accompany less than ordinary souls. Those who knew him talk of 'Franciscan mildness alternating with violence on the brink of ferocity', and there are reports of him grabbing a dog in the street and throwing it at a girl as she climbed the steps to her home – a succinct theatricalization of the age-old insult *cagna*, or bitch, sadly wasted on the *flics* of Bologna who, according to his account of that episode, '... me laissèrent pour mort dans une rue ...'.

In Florence for military service, he acquaints himself with the world of prostitution that he will later invest with mystical significance in his poetry; but at twenty, dissatisfied with his studies, misunderstood by his peers, he already feels he has no choice but to leave. Arrested, sent back to his hometown and subjected to another

cycle of 'bromic preparations', he is painfully aware that coming of age will mean certain internment. Six months on the road, scared and alone, before he is identified and again sent back to Marradi, to the same institution where his uncle had died. Diagnoses vary: from 'dissociative phrenosis' to 'psychic exaltation'; from 'dementia praecox' to 'neurasthenia'. The local carabinieri call him 'a rabid madman', the town busybodies say there's a little bit of posing in all this madness stuff.

We have reports of his destructive drunkenness and his medical notes tell us he consumes vast quantities of coffee; in later years he will become very fond of tea (his 'only joy' as he will call it), perhaps finding temporary relief from the alternation of bromium and caffeine that has sent his nerves on a deadly rollercoaster ride. After six weeks of internment, he's working as a builder while staying with a farmer in the mountains near Marradi, writing at night. Back in Bologna he deserts the chemistry lectures to study piano and write.

Aged twenty-two, after various other confrontations with the authorities, he receives a passport ('occupation: scribe') and leaves again, in search of a homeland where 'the free man raises his arms to the endless sky undisfigured by the presence of Any God'.

Again travel and adventure work their magic, and one and a half years later he is back from South America 'beautiful and in great spirits', according to a relative. Whether or not this journey and the many occupations he took to survive (fireman, whorehouse pianist, stable boy, doorman ...) were only imagined, as some have improbably suggested, again the old, unmanageable horreur du domicile returns, and no sooner does he arrive home than he is institutionalized again. Then Northern Europe, washing shop windows and by his own account 'communing with Russian nihilists, two men and a woman' – probably the Anika of *Prison Dream*, since he tells us he spent '...ninety days in a Brussels jail for her!'

Expelled and sent back home, while the family begins to resent having to pay for his care, he acts in local plays before leaving for the contemplative journey to the nearby mountains that will inspire the breathtaking imagery of *La Verna*. Then more odd jobs; a return to university; languages in Florence; literature in Bologna; chemistry again in Bologna. Meanwhile a trip to Genova, and the first submissions to literary journals.

As his name slowly begins to circulate in literary circles, his life continues to fall apart. December 1913 finds him in Florence a few days after the opening of the Futurist

Exhibition, sitting in the corridor of newly-founded review *Lacerba* with the only copy of his manuscript, *The Longest Day*. Elegant editors Giovanni Papini and Ardengo Soffici don't see the fine young poet that breathes Baudelaire and Whitman, Dante and Merežkovskji, Maupassant and Jammes, but only the dosshouse throwback blowing on his hands ravaged by chilblains, bundled up in a brown coat with papers and notebooks bulging out of the pockets and flowered trousers flapping over a pair of wrecked cowhide shoes. They lose the manuscript.

'I need to be in print: to prove my own existence', Campana writes in spring 1914 just before leaving, probably to work in Switzerland to raise money for the printing of the work he is relentlessly elaborating. In June he entrusts a new manuscript to a printer in Marradi, as if to prove his worth to the hometown that will predictably glorify him only after he's safely in his coffin. By October a new collection is in the bookshops of Florence – it's called *Orphic Songs*.

“I need to be in print to prove my own existence”

Despite some positive reactions, café society can only offer baffled politeness to this outcast sitting sideways on his chair and nervously scanning the faces of well-dressed writers. They will talk of his vagrancy and madness, of his walks in the mountains, of the paralysis that cramped his right hand and cheek that autumn. Selling newspapers in the streets of Turin, he plans to leave for France to nurse the war wounded, and signs some of his letters 'the man of the woods'.

As the first reviews of the *Orphic Songs* arrive on his doorstep, he still seethes at the memory of the lost manuscript, threatening Papini and Soffici with duels and stabbings. (The original was found at Soffici's house in 1971, and is widely recognized as an early stage in the evolution of the *Orphic Songs*; but the loss was a huge wound for the poet who had sacrificed so much to follow his ideal, and a severe setback for the punctilious technician continually reviewing his own work).

Nephritis, cerebral congestion, an arrest in Livorno where the police accuse him of being a German spy on account of his 'Nordic' looks. Under attack from patriotic newspapers, writing polemic retorts and still struggling with paralysis, he is recuperating in the mountains when a letter finds him: 'I close your book, /I loosen my hair,/o wild heart,/music-making heart ...'

Once again physical love tries to live up to poetry's ideal, and once again it fails. Dino Campana and Sibilla

Aleramo, both attempting to write their way out of life's horrors, both possessed by the impossible image of an otherworldly Loved One that would satisfy their need for total communion, rush in and out of love like two angels trying to fly on each other's wings and then blaming each other for the fall. The poet's mother advises 'legalizing the union'.

But already Campana is imprisoned again, once more under suspicion of being a German spy, again hunted and running and raving from tabletops, accusing himself of causing the war on account of his love for Aleramo.

Aged thirty-two he is committed to San Salvi, a huge institution in Florence whose disused premises now house the theatre workshops of the Antonin Artaud Centre.

In April 1918 Campana is judged incurable and interned in nearby Castel Pulci, where he looks with indifference on the new edition of his *Orphic Songs*, more interested by now in regressing into his past lives and in his theory that being electric he can survive without eating. He works in the kitchen, leans on the corridor walls reading books and slowly sliding to the floor as he turns the pages, gradually stops attacking other inmates; and tells his doctor he feels fine. In November 1931 his doctor states that he 'shows some tokens of improvement, sanity ... his thoughts and speech became regular'. He starts asking for dictionaries and books, translating from German and French; his doctor quotes him as saying he would like to leave and 'earn a modest living'.

Three months later he is carried to the infirmary: for four days the fever rises, his face is covered in angry red blotches, his tongue furred over and swollen, his hands dancing in the air. His doctor, returning a diagnosis of septicemia, tells us he died raving - as if the demon he described in Meeting with Regolo had returned to hold him to his promise, as if one who had 'never bowed and sacrificed to monstrous absurd reason' could not ever, in any way, survive sanity.

Poems of Dino Campana Translated by Cristina Viti

LA PETITE PROMENADE DU POÈTE

I am wandering around town
Narrow dark mysterious streets:
Jades and Roses are looking down
Behind glass panes above me.

There's some people stagger down
Those mysterious flights of stairs
While behind the gleaming glass

THE NIGHT

I. THE NIGHT

1. I recall an old town, red-walled and towered, scorched on the endless plain in the torrid August, the faraway soothing coolness of lush green hills in the background. Hugely empty arches of bridges on the river marshy with scant leaden stagnations: black silhouettes of gypsies mobile and silent on the bank: in the faraway gleam of a reed bed faraway naked adolescent forms and the profile and Jewish beard of an old man: and suddenly from amid the dead water the gypsy women and a song, from the voiceless marsh a monotonous and irritating primordial dirge: and time's flow was held back.

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2. Unconsciously I raised my eyes to the barbaric tower dominating the long long avenue lined with plane trees. It relived its faraway savage myth above the intensified silence: while through faraway visions, through dark and violent sensations another myth, as mystical and savage, flashed intermittently through my mind. Down there they had trained their long robes languidly towards the vague splendour of the gate – the streetwalkers, the ancient ones: the countryside was surrendering to torpor in its mesh of canals: now and then girls with agile hairstyles and profiles like medals' disappeared on little carts behind the green twists of the road. A bell tolled once, silvery and sweet with distance: Evening: in the solitary little church, in the shade of the humble aisles, I held Her tight, Her rosy flesh and fiery runaway eyes: years and years and years fusing in the triumphal sweetness of memory.

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3. Unconsciously the one I had been found himself heading for the barbaric tower, the mythical keeper of the dreams of adolescence. He climbed to the silence of immemorial little lanes along church and convent walls: his step was noiseless. A deserted little square, huddled little houses, mute windows: by their side in a huge gleaming the tower, eight-spined red impenetrable arid. A sixteenth-century fountain silent in its aridness, a crack running across the Latin inscription in the stone. A deserted cobbled road unfolded towards the town.

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4. He was startled by a door thrown open. Old men's skewed bony mute forms were thronging together shoving one another with piercing elbows, terrible in

the glaring light. Before the bearded face of a friar jutting out of a doorway they stood bowing with shuddering servility, crept away muttering, getting back to their feet little by little, dragging their shadows one by one along the worn reddish walls, each one like a shadow. A woman with a mindless laugh ambled along at the back of the cortège.

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5. Their shadows crept along the worn reddish walls: he followed like an automaton. He addressed the woman with a word that fell in the midday silence: an old man turned to look at him with an absurd gleaming empty stare. And the woman kept smiling her wan smile in the arid midday, obtuse and alone in the catastrophic light.

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6. I never knew how, walking along torpid canals, I saw my shadow again, mocking me from the depths. It led me through foul-smelling streets where females sang in the dead heat. At the edge of the countryside it was drawn to a door pocked with blows, guarded by a pale fat young female in a pink robe: I entered. An ancient and opulent matrona, with the profile of a ram, her black hair agilely coiled on her sculptural head barbarically adorned by a liquid eye like a black gem with bizarre facets sat troubled by childish graces reborn with hope as she pulled strange hosts of languishing queens kings knaves arms and knights out of a greasy pack of tarot cards. My greeting was answered by a claustral, deep, melodramatic voice and by a sweet puckered smile. In the shade I could descry the young ancilla sleeping with her mouth half-open, panting with heavy sleep, her beautiful amber body half bare. I sat down quietly.

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7. The long host of her loves unfolded monotonously for my ears. Ancient family portraits were scattered on the greasy table. The agile form of the woman with amber skin stretched out on the bed was listening curiously, propped up on her elbows like a Sphinx: outside, the green green kitchen gardens between shimmering red walls: only the three of us alive in the midday silence.

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8. Meanwhile the sunset had descended and was wrapping its gold around the place stirred by memories as if to consecrate it. The Procuress's voice had gradually grown softer, and her Oriental priestess's head had yielded to languishing poses. The magic of the evening,

the criminal's languid friend, complicitously steered our dark souls, and its high glamour seemed to promise a mysterious kingdom. And the priestess of sterile pleasures, the eager naive ancilla and the poet were looking at one another, infertile souls unconsciously searching for their life's question. But the evening was descending, golden message of night's cool shivers.

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9. Night came and the conquest of the ancilla was accomplished. Her amber body her voracious mouth her rough black hair the flashing revelation of her eyes in a panic of pleasure wove a tangled fantastic tale. While sweeter still, almost extinguished already, holding sway in the distance was the memory of Her, the seductive matrona, the queen still in her classical line among her great immemorial sisters: for Michelangelo had her bend on knees weary of wayfaring, she who bends, who bends with no repose, barbaric queen under the weight of all human dream, and the thrashing of arcane and violent poses by barbaric storm-blown ancient queens was heard by Dante as it died in Francesca's cry there by rivers who weary of war flow to their delta while on their banks the eternal sorrow of love is recreated. And the ancilla, the naive Magdalene of rough hair and bright eyes was pleading with the shockwaves of her golden and sterile, crude and savage body, sweetly enclosed in the humility of its mystery. The long night filled with the deceptions of varied images.

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10. At the silver gates of first adventures the ancient images mellowed by a lifetime of love rose again to protect me with the mysterious enchanting tenderness of their smile. The locked halls were opened, the light evenly endlessly sinking into the depths of mirrors, the adventurous images of courtesans jaded and sphynx-like in the mirrors' light: and once again, after the roses of youth had faded, all that was arid and sweet returned to life on the skeletal landscape of the world.

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11. In the igneous smell of fun fair night, the last blasts in the air, I could see the immemorial girls of the first illusion silhouetted on the bridges thrown from town to suburb on torrid summer nights: in three-quarter profile, hearing the blast as it swells from the suburb announcing the tongues of fire of restless torches ready to drill the atmosphere laden with orgiastic lights: now softened: soft and rosy, lightened and veiled in the far-gone sky: so soft and rosy by the ancient twilight in the heroic line of the great Roman female figure, stands Saint Martha, the

instruments smashed on the ground, the chords Saint Cecilia accords with the Latin sky already hushed over the ever green landscapes. Memories of gypsy women, memories of faraway loves, memories of sounds and lights: love's lassitudes, sudden lassitudes on the bed of a faraway tavern, other adventurous cradle of uncertainty and regret: so once the roses of youth had faded, all that still was arid and sweet rose again on the skeletal landscape of the world.

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12. On the summer evening with fireworks at the fun fair, in the delightful white light, as our ears barely rested in the silence and our eyes grew tired of catherine wheels, of multicoloured stars that had left an igneous smell, a vague red heaviness in the air, and walking side by side had wasted us with tenderness and elation at each other's too widely differing beauties, she, fine and dark, pure of eyes and countenance, the gleam of her necklace lost from her bare throat, was now walking, unpractised at times, clutching her fan. She was drawn to the shack: her white frock with fine blue zigzags wavered in the diffuse light, and I followed her pallor offset on her forehead by the nocturnal fringe of her hair. We entered. Dark faces like despots', brightened by a childlike festive serenity, turned towards us, shining pure and deep in the light. And we watched the views. Everything had a spectral unreality. There were skeletal cityscapes. Wayward dead in wooden poses were staring at the sky. A rubber odalisque was breathing gently and looking around with eyes like an idol's. And the sharp smell of sawdust muffling people's steps and the murmur of the village signorinas astonished at that mystery. 'Is Paris like that? There's London. The battle of Muckden'. We looked around: it must be late. All those things seen through the lenses' magnetic eyes in that dreamlike light! Motionless near me I felt her growing distant and foreign while her charm deepened under the nocturnal fringe of her hair. She moved. And I felt with a touch of swiftly consoled bitterness that I would never be near her again. So I followed her as you follow a dream you love for its emptiness: it was so that we had suddenly grown distant and foreign after the din of the fair, before the skeletal landscape of the world.

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13. I was under the portico in the shade jewelled with drops and drops of blood-red light in the fog of a December night. Suddenly a door opened on lavish dazzling light. Down towards the front, resting on a lavish red couch, propped up on her elbow, propping her head up, a matrona, lively dark eyes, huge breasts: close by, a girl on her knees, amber and slight, bobbed hair, youthful grace, smooth bare legs under her bright frock: and

above her, over the matrona with thoughtful youthful eyes a curtain, a white lace curtain, a curtain that seemed to be shaking images, images over her, white images over her, thoughtfulness in her youthful eyes. Thrown out into the light from the shade of the portico jewelled with drops and drops of blood-red light I was staring in fixed astonishment at the symbolic and adventurous grace of that scene. It was late already, we were left alone and a free intimacy arose between us, and propped up with the shivering lace curtain as a backdrop the matrona with youthful eyes now spoke. Her life was one long sin: lechery. Lechery but all filled for her with unquenchable curiosities. 'The female was pecking him with so many kisses, on the right: why the right? Then the male pigeon would rest on top, not moving?, for ten minutes – why?' Her questions were still unanswered, and so moved by nostalgia she would recall recall the past for long moments. Until the conversation had faded, the voice all around had gone quiet, the mystery of pleasure had invested her who had evoked it. Devastated, with tears in my eyes in front of the white lace curtain I was following still following white fantasies. The voice all around had gone quiet. The procuress had disappeared. The voice had gone quiet. Surely I'd felt her brushing past me with a light silent heartbreaking touch. In front of the crumpled lace curtain, the girl was still in the same pose, on her amber knees bent, bent with a catamite's grace.

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14. Faust was young and beautiful, he had curly hair. The women from Bologna, back then, looked like Syracusan medals, and their eyes were so perfectly cut that they loved to seem motionless in harmonious contrast with their long dark curls. It was easy to meet them at night in the dark streets (the moon lit up the streets then) and Faust would raise his eyes to the chimneys that looked like question marks in the moonlight and stand lost in thought as the shuffle of their steps faded away. From the old tavern where students sometimes gathered, among the calm conversations in the winter of Bologna, harsh and cloudy as his own, and the crackle of logs and the flicker of flames on the ochre of vaults, he liked to hear hurried steps under the nearby arches. He loved to find sanctuary in song then, while the young hostess, red smock and pretty red cheeks under her smoky hairdo came and went before him. Faust was young and beautiful. On a day like that, from the wallpapered lounge, between the barrel-organ refrains and a flowery decoration, from the lounge I would hear the crowd flowing by and the sombre noises of winter. Oh! I remember!: I was young, the ever restless hand propping my uncertain face worn gentle by anxiety and tiredness. Back then I would lend my enigma to smooth pliable little seamstresses consecrated by my anxiety for supreme love, by the anxiety of my thirsty tormented boyhood. All was mystery to my faith, my life was all

'anxiety for the secret of the stars, a leaning over the abyss'. I was handsome with torment, restless pale thirsty wandering after the larvae of mystery. Then I fled. I was lost in the turmoil of colossal cities, I saw the white cathedrals rising, huge throng of faith and dream with a thousand spires in the sky, I saw the Alps rising like still greater cathedrals filled with the great green shadows of firs, filled with the melody of streams whose song I could hear as it sprung from dream's infinity. Up there among the firs smoking in the mist, a young light unveiled among tree trunks in the thousand and thousand sharp tickings, the thousand voices of silence, through pathways of clear light I rose: I rose to the Alps, delicate white mystery in the background. Lakes, up there between rocks, clear ponds watched over by dream's smile, the clear ponds the ecstatic lakes of oblivion that you Leonardo had fashioned. The stream darkly told me the tale. Transfixed among the motionless lances of firs thinking at times a new melody roamed savage and perhaps sad I was staring fixedly at the clouds as they seemed to lag behind for an instant peeping curiously over that deep landscape and then vanishing beyond the motionless lances of firs. And poor, bare, happy to be poor and bare, to reflect for an instant the landscape as an enchanting and awesome memory deep down in my heart I rose: and I reached reached the place where the snows of the Alps barred my way. A girl at the stream with her washing, washing and singing in the snows of the white Alps. She looked up, took me up, she loved me that night. And still in the background the Alps the delicate white mystery, and shining in my memory the purity of the stellar lamp, the light of the evening of love.

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15. But what nightmare still weighed on my whole youth? O the kisses the vain kisses of the girl with her washing, washing and singing in the snow of the white Alps! (tears welled up in my eyes at the thought). Again I could hear the stream in the distance: it crashed down crossing desolate ancient towns, silent long streets deserted as if they'd been pillaged. A golden warmth in the shade of the present room, lush hair, a panting prone body in the mystical night of the ancient human animal. The ancilla slept, forgetful in her dark dreams: a Byzantine icon, an arabesque myth seemed to dawn whitely on the deceptive backdrop of the curtain.

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* *

16. And then figurations of an immemorial free life, of huge solar myths, of massacres of orgies arose before my spirit. Again I saw an ancient image, a skeletal form living through the mysterious force of a barbaric myth, the eyes mutable whirlpools alive with obscure lymphs, uncovering her vulcanized body, two stains two big bullet holes

on her extinguished breasts in the torture of dream. I thought I heard guitars shivering out there in shantytown, while a candle lit up the bare ground. A savage matrona stared straight and unblinking at me. The light was scarce on the bare ground in the shiver of guitars. Close by the old woman was clutching like a spider at the blossoming treasure of a dreaming girl and seemed to whisper in her ear words I couldn't hear, sweet as the Pampa's wordless overwhelming wind. The savage matrona had taken me: my warm blood was sure to be drunk up by the earth: now the light was scarcer on the bare ground in the metallized breath of guitars. Suddenly the released young girl exhaled her youth, languid in her savage grace, her eyes sweet and sharp as a whirlpool. On the shoulders of the beautiful savage, grace grew languid under the shadow of flowing hair and the majestic hair of the tree of life wove its shadow on the bare ground as the pausing guitars invited faraway sleep. From the Pampa there came the clear sound of a stampede of wild horses, the wind was clearly heard as it rose, the muted stampede seemed to fade away into infinity. Framed in the doorway stars glowed red and warm in the distance: the shadow of savage women in shadow.

II. THE JOURNEY AND THE RETURN

17. Voices and voices and children's songs and lecherous songs rose up from the crooked alleys in the burning shadow, to the hill to the hill. Shaded by green streetlamps colossal white prostitutes dreamed vague dreams in the light made bizarre by the wind. The sea was pouring its salt into the wind, the wind lifted it and poured it into the lecherous smell of the alleys, and the white Mediterranean night was playing with the huge female forms in the flame's bizarre attempts to uproot itself from the hollow of streetlamps. They were looking at the flame and singing songs of chained-up hearts. All the preludes were silenced by now. The night, the quieter joy of the night had descended. The Moorish doors were laden and twisted with monstrous black omens while in the background the sombre azure was a cove of stars. The solitary night was now enthroned, lit up in all her teeming of stars and flames. A street plunged forward deep as a monstrous wound. Outside the doors white caryatids of an artificial sky were dreaming, their faces in the palm of their hands. The pure imperial line of her profile and neck was clothed in opaline splendour. With a rapid, imperially youthful gesture she gathered her light robe over her shoulders as she moved and her window gleamed in wait until the shutters should gently close on a twofold shadow. And my heart was hungering for the dream, for her, evanescent as evanescent love, the giver of love in the harbours, caryatid of the skies of fortune. On her divine knees, on her form pale as a dream surfaced from shadow's numberless dreams, among the numberless deceptive lights, the ancient friend, the eternal Chimera held in her red hands my ancient heart.

* * *

18. Return. In the room where I enclosed her form blossoming out of the velaria of light, a lingering breath: and in the twilight my pristine lamp starring my heart still distracted with dreams. Faces, faces whose eyes laughed on dream's surface, you young charioteers through the weightless ways of dreams that I wreathed with fervour: o fragile rhymes, o wreaths of nocturnal loves ... From the garden a song breaks into a faint chain of sobs: the vein is open: arid and red and sweet is the skeletal landscape of the world.

* * *

19. O your body! your perfume was veiling my eyes: I couldn't see your body (a sweet sharp perfume): there in the great mirror naked in the great mirror naked and veiled with violet smokes, kissed at the top by a star of light was the beautiful, beautiful sweet gift of a god: and the timid breasts were swollen with light, and the stars were absent, and not one God was in the violet evening of love: but you were sitting weightlessly on my knees, nocturnal caryatid of an enchanting sky. Your body a thin-air gift on my knees and the stars absent, and not one God in the violet evening of love: but you in the violet evening of love: but you with downcast violet eyes, you who had robbed an unknown nocturnal sky of a melody of caresses. I remember darling: light as the wings of a dove you laid your limbs on my noble limbs. And my limbs fluttered joyfully, breathed their own beauty, fluttered towards a clearer light inside your docile cloud with its divine reflections. O don't spark them! Don't spark them! Don't spark them: all is vain vain is the dream: all is vain all is dream: Love, springtide of dream you alone you alone can appear in the veil of violet smokes. Like a white cloud, like a white cloud next to my heart, o stay stay stay! Don't grow sorrowful Sun! We opened the window to the nocturnal sky. Men like roaming spectres: they roamed like spectres: and the city (streets churches squares) fell into place like a rhythmical dream, as if sprung from that roaming through an invisible melody. Was the world then not inhabited by sweet spectres and was the dream not reawakened in the night, triumphal in all its powers? Which bridge, we mutely asked, which bridge have we thrown across infinity, that everything appears to us as a shadow of eternity? To which dream did we raise the nostalgia of our beauty? The moon was rising in her old dressing gown behind the Byzantine church.

III. THE END

20. In the warmth of the red light, in the locked

halls where light evenly endlessly sinks into mirrors, whitenesses of lace blossom and wither. The doorwoman in the shabby regalia of her green corsage, the lines on her face softer, her eyes veiling black in the light, is watching the silver door. Love's indefinite charm is perceived. It rules an older woman mellowed by a lifetime of love, the smile the vague gleam in her eyes is the memory of tears of pleasure. And they move, wakeful, copious with the harvest of love, light shuttles weaving colourful fantasies, they roam like luminous dust alighting in the mirrors' enigma. The doorwoman is watching the silver door. Outside, the night with mute songs as her headdress, pale love of the restless.

Translator's Note

Campana's work and his whole life can be seen as an extreme attempt to connect the present to the archetypal realm that the intuition of poets and mystics can sense beyond ordinary reality. 'Great art', he would say with a shaman's metaphor, 'like great life is nothing but a symbol, a bridge to cross'.

And to embark on the perilous Orphic journey into the unconscious, the poet must necessarily subvert the linearity of everyday language, drawing inspiration not only from the great poetry of the past but also from other languages and other art forms.

Campana employs several stylistic devices - repetition, circularity, extended anastrophe, archaic vocabulary, idiosyncratic punctuation etc. - to achieve the texture of an antichronological filmic narrative structured in hazy images on the brink of dissolution (interestingly, the long poem we know as *The Night* was originally titled *Sentimental Cinematography*). But when the reel snags on ordinary reality, other registers and techniques come to the fore: invective and devastating irony; street talk rhymes and sudden accelerations like bouts of tachycardia; the stripped down detachment of cubist metacontext or the cutting up and collage of quotes and fragments.

**“Great art, like great life,
is nothing but a symbol,
a bridge to cross”**

To do even partial justice to the poet's complexity and tone, the translator must in my view stay as close as possible to the form and rhythm, the breathing pattern so to speak, of the original. This is what I have tried to do, for as Erri De Luca has pointed out (*Sulla traduzione letteraria, Il Portico, 2000*), 'translation is not a free passage, but a guarded transportation'.

Stevenage Survivors

Roy Birch tells the story so far...

In April 2000, six members of Stevenage-based Performing Arts group Parnassus Performance, met in one of the Band Practise Rooms at Bowes Lyon House, the town's Youth and Community Centre. I was one of the six. We did not, however, meet as Parnassus Performance, but as the newly-formed Stevenage Survivors. We had, a few months earlier, performed – as Parnassus – at Somers Town Blues Night, which was then Survivors' Poetry monthly performance event. This, our first visit to a Survivors' Poetry event, had inspired us to use our own artistic abilities to help in the alleviation of mental distress. At the time, Parnassus was in decline and there were crippling tensions within the group. So we defected, and became Stevenage Survivors.

Our first year was hardly the most auspicious. With few friends and little finance, our principal achievement was survival itself. But there were lights in the darkness; the first coming in September, when, after four months of persistent phoning, we were at last granted permission to hold a workshop and reading in the Mental Health Unit of the town's Lister Hospital.

We sat in a large circle, some thirty of us, a mixture of staff, patients, and Stevenage Survivors. I spoke briefly about the group then read a poem and we took it from there. The session was enjoyable and successful, so much so that with almost one voice patients and staff asked us to return and hold more sessions. Unfortunately NHS bureaucracy intervened, and after another four months of letter-writing and telephone-calls, we were informed that the Lister was amalgamating with the QE2 in Welwyn, and all projects were on hold for at least a year. In spite of our best efforts, that was the group's last contact with Lister Hospital until July 2004.

In October 2000, we received a grant of £100 from the Heartlands Project, an area-based community arts endeavour funded by the Single Regeneration Budget. This enabled us to organize our first Network Evening.

The Network Evening had a dual purpose. Firstly to put survivor and non-survivor performers on stage in front of a survivor and non-survivor audience. Secondly to get representatives of the local mental health voluntary sector under the same roof at the same time and actually talking to each other. And it worked.

The evening was enjoyable and informative and the representatives of the mental health voluntary sector actually did meet and communicate, something they tend to do only at seminars – and then somewhat grudgingly.

In November we were invited to give a reading to the University of the Third Age. A seventy-strong audience received us enthusiastically, listened attentively, enjoyed what they heard, and insisted we return, which we did, in March 2001.

During that first year the group acquired a new member, a recovering alcoholic who had been part of the initial intake at Vale House, East Hertfordshire's only major residential drug-treatment centre. He suggested contacting the rehab centre, as he felt we could be of service there. Contact was made, and we were given permission to hold a poetry evening. The session took place in April 2001, almost a year to the day after our first ever meeting. It was a huge and unqualified success, and we have returned fortnightly.

Our second year consisted mainly of our monthly meetings and the Vale House sessions. We gave a third reading to U3A in October, and in November we received a grant of £300 from the Co-operative Partnerships Award Scheme. We were, in fact, the last group to be funded through that particular scheme.

In January 2002 Stevenage Survivors became the first poetry group to be on the bill at the Diorama Blues Night, the Survivors Poetry monthly performance session at its new home, the Diorama Arts Centre.

In February we became part of the Federation of Worker Writers and Community Publishers. We continued to hold sessions at Vale House and in June spent half our £300 to produce *The House That Hope Built*, a collection of poems by Vale House residents.

2003 began with a grant of £1,200 from the Hertfordshire Community Foundation, the money to be spent on four network evenings, two anthologies, and a quarterly newsletter. This grant was followed closely by *The Space Between*, the first collection of poems by members of Stevenage Survivors. This, in turn, was followed closely by a grant of £3300 from the Hertfordshire Community Foundation Key Fund, for the purpose of running a programme of twenty creative writing workshops, culminating in an anthology/workbook. A generous but somewhat complicated grant. The Key Fund exists to dispense European Social Fund monies to voluntary sector groups to help them

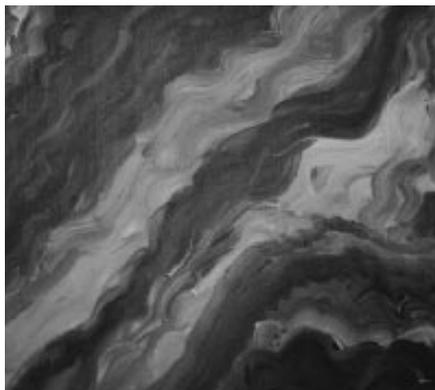
run projects which will improve the employability of the marginalized and excluded.

We accepted the grant, though feeling somewhat fraudulent. There is no way in which twenty writing workshops and an anthology can possibly render anyone employable who wasn't before the project began.

The first workshop was held at the Friends Meeting House in Stevenage, on Friday 14th March. Only seven people attended, but the atmosphere was excellent and the work produced was of a pleasantly high standard. Fourteen attended session number two, and seventeen took part in session number three.

The beginning of April saw the appearance of the first issue of our Newsletter.

And so to year number four. The workshop programme, the Vale House sessions, further issues of the newsletter. In August we forged a link with Parentline Plus in Hatfield and gave a reading to an appreciative audience of around forty, who participated wholeheartedly in an enjoyable interactive session.



In early September we received a grant of £925 from NHS Local Decision Money funding, to enable us to run a programme of creative writing workshops at the local Mental Health Day Centre. Unfortunately we had to return the money, as the venue became unavailable before we were able to confirm that it would be possible for us to run the programme. It was suggested that we could run the workshops

elsewhere. Sadly not: the reason for holding the sessions at the Day Centre was that the clients feel safe there and are not keen to meet anywhere else.

Also in September we held our most successful network evening so far. The event was attended by David Royall, the town's Mayor-in-Waiting (who is now the town's Mayor-in-Office) and local M.P. Barbara Follett (wife of novelist Ken, and one of our keenest supporters) who came not as political celebrities in search of a photo-opportunity, but as human beings genuinely wanting to be involved. With singer-guitarist Dave Russell and London Events Co-ordinator Xochitl Tuck representing Survivors' Poetry, and active participation by members of Parentline Plus and local self-harmer support group First Steps, it was a truly memorable evening.

On 25th September, Stevenage Survivors was again one of the guest acts at the Diorama.

At roughly the same time, the internal politics of Vale House, combined with our own individual commitments, caused us to take a break from the rehab.

In November, we gave another reading to U3A. In December, the Workshop programme came to a close.

2004 began with a spate of publications. The group's second anthology, *No Margins*, was followed by the second Vale House collection, *From the Vale*, and *The Work Book*, a bumper selection of pieces from the Workshops.

In February we returned to Vale House, where the success of the sessions inspired the management to allow the residents to attend our workshops – under supervision of course, but nonetheless a huge compliment to the group, as residents are not allowed off the premises after 6.30 pm except for AA or NA meetings.

In April, Stevenage Survivors began its fifth year with a visit to Fedfest, the annual festival of the Federation of Worker Writers and Community Publishers, where we took the Friday-evening Reading Space, and filled the gap left by the enforced absence of the evening's guest performer, Rosie Garland, by turning the session into a jam which lasted for an hour and a half. We also ran a successful writing workshop on the Sunday morning.

The workshop programme has continued throughout the year with unabated success (an average attendance of fourteen) and, if anything, increased enjoyment. We are currently waiting to hear about funding for next year's programme.

In July, a conversation between Marianne Allbrighton, founder of First Steps, and Sue Neat, locum head of Occupational Therapy in the Mental Health Unit at Lister Hospital, led to Stevenage Survivors being invited to return to the hospital after a break of almost four years. This we did in mid-August.

Though we were extremely well received, this has proved our most challenging project to date. Sue Neat has moved on, the head of OT in the Unit has remained unapproachable, and the ward staff, while not antagonistic, do absolutely nothing to help or encourage us. But in spite of the difficulties, the sessions have so far been most enjoyable.

The workshop programme is drawing to a close (four sessions remain). We are preparing two more anthologies and another issue of the newsletter. Beyond that, the future is unclear. Staff apathy at the hospital, staff shortages at Vale House, uncertainty over next year's funding.

Stevenage Survivors' Poetry

Next Please

A room for waiting ..
The glorious spirit of frustration and angst ..
beaming down on us
from the tea stains on the ceiling ..
Multiple pile-up of accidental furniture
life and comfort crushed
from an imploded two seater ..
a grimace of springs and frayed arms.
The waste of past consumption
stacked upon tormented tableau
chess eternal played out with filth
and abused food ..
the cracked piping
full of abducted lung ash
the black liquid stench of happy hour ..
Of crushed chatter and bitterness
lying on a carpet
you could dig and turn over
fertile with dead skin and plastic
a crucible of shame without compass ..
bulbless sockets of permanent twilight
unable to penetrate grey netted glass
shattered, critical and inert ..
a passover of life -
the penultimate high

Geoff Clarke

New Day

New day, great blue sky
bigger and brighter than my mind's eye
birds singing, heart filling
wind whispered leaves
a morning greeting.
Dewfresh brambles, so sharp, so sweet
free as the nettle's sting
on hands and feet
moving through green
where the musky fox has been
down to the tumbling stream.

Lucia Birch

Beseeking Death

I am always wanting to hold you
I am always trying to locate you
I want to know part of you
But you think you're me
Telling everyone you won't help me
Because I am pity
And I am shy instead of smiling
I always know you and yet confused
My eyes, my ears, my mouth, my soul, my heart
My person
You expose
Leaving me cold
Dead in the head
Dead in the heart
Dead Dead Dead
My life is passed

But look what I ain't a God or
power tool
I Spill blood
Like a river drying from the
heart
Tell me friend is this the end or
the turning point
Your choice before my might
spirals and lands in my hand
Death are you willing to fight
again
Again I know as much as you
Could I control the labour?
I think so

I wrote this because of suicide

Earl Irish

Harwich

People were gradually returning from work.
They took up half the road in queues
on their way home from transit docks.
I navigated a swell of fumes

to get to you, alone in a cold room.
My mind was surprisingly clear
despite the noise and the gloom.
I wanted your silence lifted from here,

placed down in a space quayside
as returned cargo for overseas.
Your laughter used to radiate light,
banish briefly winter's slow unease.

Neil Hopkins

His Best Friend

Wearing his tattered clothes,
Shouting wherever he goes,
Without a care in the world,
A can in his hand,
He wonders why?
Some people don't want to know.

Not understanding,
His shouting gets louder! Throwing his can,
He then spits at his friend.
Swearing, shouting,
Arms thrashing about,
He wonders why?

Why some people don't want to know.
Stopping, he opens another can,

Starts smiling, being
humorous,
Forgetting he spat at his
friend,
His only true friend.

S.T.L.

A Disappointed Man

Dusty words,
Humming the air,
A Hive disturbed.

In the manner of the grave

he was far away from me
In the dark reaches of the sea
they are all awake
Vibrating water,
the last efforts of a spent storm.

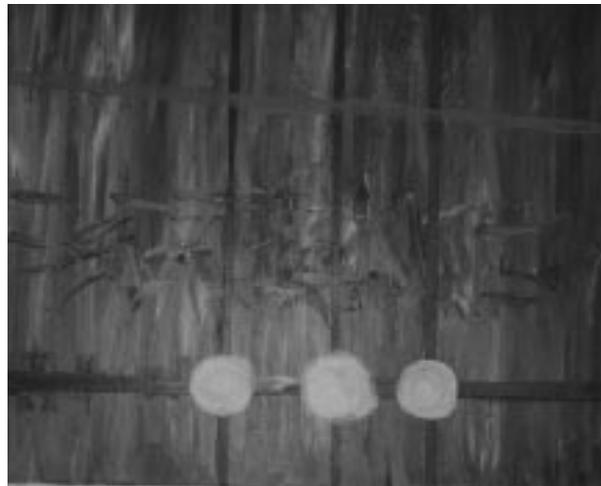
Shrivelled to a blood red pea,
the moon floats away without a flicker,
an aberrant light
a lustrous vault over
a still and silent sea.

Words
Hum air like
a disturbed hive.

More than a little dead, he made
a race of it,

Feather tossed by a mighty force.

Ann Copeland



Raw

If I could show you the singing of words
I wouldn't be telling it like this
we'd be howling or shooting or
squawking like birds.

If I could say it like it is
I wouldn't ruminant, pen poised
but sidle up to you
and let being speak

We might not sit dumb & transfixed
plainly succumbed by the remote controlled pix,
the soft cotton, the elevated boredom of our
armchair living room theatres

Our solitary threesome & foursomes
glazed, mesmerised, TV eaters

If I could show you the singing of words
I would cut off my head and let my heart speak.

Then perhaps we'd sing together
hug-dance, argue, struggle

And then breathe the ether

My pen is poised on the edge
of the unsayable.
When I cry
please
look into my eyes

Darren Messenger

Earth Music

Listen; listen to the sound of.....
What do you hear?
I hear the bee's hum
droning in the near
flowers, and a bird's song
then another - question and reply.

Then follows the drumbeat of the earth's heart
- The wind through the reeds long
a swoosh and sweep of a heron's wing.
A true cacophony of song.

At night I hear the sparkling
crackle of the starshine
and the owl's note.
Then the soft scurry of a small night mouse.
A lullaby sublime.

Cynthia Price

Untitled

Psychedelic waves of paralysing passion,
Riding the crest of amalgamated emotion,

The hyenas grinning laughter,
The pain of babies first breath,

Settling down like leaves after a storm,
Floating like pollen in a breeze,

Restlessness creeps through the impatient child,
Yet fear displays the neediness once again,

The desire grows like a seed in germination,
Confused green fingers fear the water and sun,

Scab screams for a scratching finger to attend,
The gate creaks as I grit my teeth once more.

Tony McClure

Planet

the world is cloven-hoofed
is centaur and satyr
is chopping into green
is chasing stars
over the house of time

its bright berillium eye
the nickel and iron
that spin within it
share the hide of horse
the prancing hair of cyclops

the rusts of its teeth
the whole snaps of its jaw
paralyse the home system
into a piercing buzz
tinnitus within the outer worlds

the mate of it
just off beluga
spates out its core
of tangerine and cerise
known as street static
of the nebraskan heights

here it is faun
cedar and sea-nymph
all the jingles of signals
will never appoint it
wild and free with re-birth

Bruce J. James

Words Will Not Come

Words will not come. They drag themselves
reluctantly forward, fearing the light
or hide, priest-holed and trembling for fear
of discovery. Boldness eludes them.

Words will not come, they need coaxing
to cross from their limitless world to this.
They lurk and peep, calling out, twisting
ever around, stringing sentences,

lost in their being; the nouns, verbs, adverbs,
labels word-dangled, clinging
like molecular bonds chain-forming phrases
down a line of sound and spilled ink.

They taunt their wrong moments,
tease the speaker, sometimes spark
and inflame - a useful tool when put to use
or turn to weapons when the tongue is sharp.

But for now, in concentrated silence, tightened,
they play possum, lie low - attempt escape.

Thoughts drift, dreams fade,
nothing connects
when words will come.

Richard J. N. Copeland

'When the glass empties ...'

When the glass empties

then
and only then

can we begin to drink.

Even Stillness
is an intoxicant

even Truth
is a false currency.

If I had wings
would I be a butterfly
or a warplane?

Don't answer

(Especially if you know)

Roy Birch

In and Out of Court

You know it's not a parlour game,
Although it has its rules;
There ain't half been some pompous ones,
There ain't half been some fools.

Alone again with animals,
Off the beaten track;
Inspiration interrupted
Only by a quack.

At court they act so civilized:
'How reasonable we are!'
Out here they follow nature –
Red in tooth and claw.

Not every prey is easy meat –
Some know how to act:
Some fight, some fly, and some curl up,
And some just do it back.

Emzi Zimisiyu



from Serenity

Every sinew maps
a story

A jungle of anger
debilitates growth.

However, encompassed is
a bundle of joy.

And with this in mind
I consult my higher power

For this dis-ease
I release the need for

Muscle aches
And muscle pain

I hand my life
Over
to God again.

And each new day
I say
repetitive affirmations

And old ones
gradually die
or re-align themselves
by order of belief

Broadsheet

And new ones
sprout inner beauty
whilst growing up
in river chi
Restoring me
to sanity

And graciously
they feed
from the mustard
seed.

And my belly
at times
breathes orange calcite

Reflecting citrus
glowing
in facial delight.

And, oh,
By the grace
of my highest good
that invests love
Obliges my every thought
Every action
for my own sake.

Alison Dady

Nature's Magic

I was driving to the beach
And I passed it on the road.
A dead crow.
It lay in the middle and was
A reminder of all things to be.
The force of nature defeated
By man's subtle aggression.
Its wings were torn and ripped
From its tight and clenched body.
The head was cracked
And its eyes were dank in madness.
Yet in death it still remains
A powerful symbol, magic and spirit.
When I finally arrived I thought
About her crushed and lifeless body.
I couldn't but help think she was alive,
Flying from tree to tree.

Graham Hardie

Sunday

He snuffs out the radio and
Hums and laughs.
For Sunday is a day for laughter
If nothing else.

From a broken room,
From bloody, salty sheets,
Laughter cuts the street.

He flips the radio back on,
And dances to the brink of
Life and beyond, pushing,
Straining, wanting nothing.

From a broken room,
From a strobe's darkness,
He studies the sword of broom.

From a broken room,
Another spies.
A snippet, a glimpse,
The broom in the air,
And oh, minutes before the fall,
He looks up as to the sky
Of another world.

Tim Pearson

Asphyxiation

Asphyxiation of the soul,
The walls choke me as they close in –
Vast vacuum, with a dark control,
Against which freedom cannot win,

This cruel ward has an aching toll –
The worst chains are beneath the skin,
My thoughts trapped, blank, no longer whole,
Shredded by fetters that begin

To narrow, tighten, crushing me –
Schizophrenic, non-entity –
The prisoner who has no air,
My mind locked up, and bolted down –
A sea of acid where I drown,
This 'medication' and this 'care'.....

Zekria Ibrahim

Skin

I couldn't get out of my skin.
Have you ever listened to the screech
the bubbles make in the bath
when you squeeze them between your fingers
like polystyrene, it goes
right through you?
It's supposed to be beautiful
Have you ever lain there so long
the skin on your legs turns flaky, then grey
and floated cold
miles away in a muddy river
and felt like you were dead?
I put rock salt in and even that wouldn't work.

Rosie Edwards

Arms

A bitten white chocolate tab
the defaced mosque flits past
as our tube flashes overground.

A hand fletches to my shoulder
around a black guy; his lover -
another man flicking airily at the mosque.

They hug. He collects his sudden
family, buggy-stood all the while at the doors.
For minutes I'd felt him relaxed,

cupping my complicity at the edge,
an accident's fraternity *a trois* -
his local worship a snatched feature.

All's displaced, like his woman
freckling oblique to the exit.
Only body warmth slow fades on the seats,

now carpeted with the two minutes hate
from tabloids; page three to stiffen
resolve, spray mosques with your prick.

If bodies answer everything. It's how
you touch and leave your time
smiling to the accent of the dumb.

No. The time's autistic as a nerd.
Warmth outside the circuit of a
family vein is overload, blood-heat grudged.

But I want forgiving for my eyes,
snapped connections, wired to my body's
yes to fingertips, nothing but yes.

Simon Jenner

O The Windows of the Bookshop Must Be Broken*

For David Kessel

Is that the Cockney poet who sings splintered cities
Sat, a damp jackdaw, on a bench-perch there,
Succouring a spindly, smoking twig? Licked
Rhetoric: I recognised him at first sight;
Or myself through the gulled glass of a parallel life –
So this was what obscure compassion looked like:

Moony, two-way mirror eyes, fogged with thought,
Reflecting ghosted furniture of the room
And the wall shadows; the soul of the muttering door;
Obscurities crimped in schizophrenic things:
Animist glimpses of the chronically nerved –
Channelled through sentiment projected in objects;
Tangible triggers re-shaping blanched traumas.

Face: sallow, sunless, the shade of curdled tea,
Faintly lit with sincerity's buttercup shadow glow;
Flashes of a harassed child – Little Time grown up
In hand-down, tight, untranslatable insights –
A sheep-eyed Leopold Bloom in itching hair-shirt;
The conscientious misanthrope every city needs;
The ghostly conscience stalking visceral streets;
Dreaming giro stories to capsize pickled lives;
Tapping Socialism trapped in bricked-up histories
Of peeling terraces – a lust corrosive as spit
Rusting the tongue that would taste the world
But for the hampering of pill-slugged speech.

Do you see yourself as a survivor? I ask in another voice –
Me? I suppose I am...surviving, he stammers
Adding, as an afterthought, often left just that:
I'm chronic! More emphatic than a big, black, monstrous,
Insurmountable full stop: *I am chronic.*

O but a light shines undimmed in his dark eyes!
O his Captains cluster in his dampened spirit:
Saints with cluttered brows: Noonan, Keir Hardie
Ghosting his sunless skin; shivering inspiration;
Obscurity can't trample down the Muse-struck tramp,
He tramples on to saddle-stitched skies.
It's true thoughts' Pillar'd Mansions shrink on paper –
But the gamble's to be published and be damned,
Better the salvation of the page –
The printed line forfeit for public interpretation –
Time to rise up Proletariat - once you have woken
Reclaim The Means of Publication
From the inky paws of milk-float laureates –
O the windows of the bookshop must be broken!

Alan Morrison

[This poem was inspired by my first meeting with David Kessel and by his striking poetry. The title*, taken from David's 'Glass Is Dynamite', is explained by the author at the end of the following article]

Chipshop and Battlefield

Alan Morrison on David Kessel

Occasionally one is struck by the work of a particular poet to such an extent that it is an inspiration to review them. Two modern poets I have felt this with before are Donald Ward (I hope to review *The Dead Snake* in the near future) and the late Nicholas Lafitte. David Kessel, like Lafitte, writes powerfully about his schizophrenia; but his subjects are blisteringly diverse and always passionately explored and evoked. Whether they be painful paeans to sex, death or London (the term Cockney appears ubiquitously throughout the collection), Kessel strikes the reader with the force of a repressed romantic who is only superficially a pessimist flirting with misanthropy. I have always felt deep down (and regarding most of my own writing) that poetic pessimism is simply repressed optimism: a true pessimist probably wouldn't even bother to lift his pen to write about it in the first place. For me, most creative expression derives from a pulsing drive to improve the world.

Although parts of Kessel's intense and unsettling poetry smacks of Larkin's more visceral moments with phrases like 'cunt-love', and sporadic 'fuck-s', as with the better known poet, Kessel's occasional expletives serve to betray a deep-seated embarrassment and Puritan disgust with his own physical urges. This leads to a sort of emotional onanism in much of the poems and the occasional intellectual dissection of sex, which rarely bears fruit in poetry in the human sense, though often inspires supreme obscurities of insight (Keats' 'Ode to Melancholy'). Possibly this isolated, unengaged sexual energy is symptomatic of the poet's own sense of distance from the 'great and troubled city' he exists in. Whatever the explanation for Kessel's powerful and perambulating style, the only obvious fault I can find in it is his occasional tendency towards obsessive trammelling of certain themes. His diction too, as with most poets, often pushes a small group of adjectives to the fore as perhaps those most felt by the poet: Keats loved his 'cloying'-s and 'oozing'-s – Kessel loves his 'gutting'-s and 'splintering'-s, as well as 'fuck'-s of course.

Exploring more closely some of the most notable stops along this turbulent collected journey, quite appropriately the opening poem reverberates with the vividness of his often quoted favourite (presumably) Keith Douglas. 'Arnhem' is written in memory of his 'father Lippy, a battlefield surgeon', and spreads across the page with all the lucid, prosaic confidence of Douglas himself: 'No use', he thought, his inalienable Anglian guts lying across his sten;/ Uncanny how he felt no pain in his dying guts, only an/unbearable pain in his heart for his Suffolk Daisy./ 'No use Tommy', the Dutch nurse said calmly, passionately caressing his fingers./ 'Uncanny' the crow thought, as it

watched the fourth battalion being mown down north of the railway line'. There's also something of an anarchic Kipling about Kessel's voice when writing about his father's Second World War experiences. The biting, as-if-you-were-there style of 'Arnhem', reminiscent of Keith Douglas, is all the more startling as Kessel is writing not about his own experiences, but those of his father's. Kessel is not all spittle and pith however, he is not afraid to sound more romantic at times: 'The piano scatters wide her mournful seed' ('In a Southern English Seaside Town'); 'Eyes melting like song in the evening street' ('In North London').

There is also the suppressed idealist in him, a heart-on-the-sleeve Socialist with a hint of the hair-shirt. In 'Arnhem' he alludes to a Seventeenth Century social idealist as a simile for defiance: 'Down to twenty and like Lilburne won't be beaten'. 'For Zoe' is a sonorous prayer-like meditation in which he offers us 'Keir Hardie's eyes', 'The smell of stock in Haworth churchyard', 'Rough Somerset cider and cheddar' and 'Robert Tressell's passion'. Again, in 'Beautiful Ireland', Kessel empathically conjures the Socialist author, as well as *Wuthering Heights'* temperamental creator (to whom he eulogises obscurely in 'Emily Bronte'): 'With the passionate commitment of Emily Bronte or Robert Tressell, / I could enter the terrible marrow of my age'. Tressell, immortalised in left-wing circles for his socially prophetic *The Ragged Trousered Philanthropists*, is a name which might have struck me all the more for the fact that I have just finished reading his acclaimed book. One can't help wondering, incidentally, whether Kessel subconsciously omitted the second 'l' from 'Tressell' in order for the name to more resemble his own (he does this on both mentions of the name).

Many of Kessel's poems begin with Keith Douglas quotes; one poem is dedicated to Drummond Allison and another to Sidney Keyes; another quotes Charles Sorley. It is probably quite fitting that Kessel is so strongly influenced by War poets as what else is schizophrenia, indeed mental illness, but a battlefield? Clearly this is a writer who strongly identifies with those who have inspired him whether through literature or politics, and this I think is quite a common ingredient to creativity: the wish to express oneself through the eclecticism of formative inspirers – as a man is the sum of his memories, so is a poet the sum of his influences.

Kessel's imagism is striking, and some of his poems are like lists of beautifully-imbued urban drudgery, almost like a poetic take on the absinthe-drinking peasants in early Impressionist paintings: 'A listless fury in my right arm./ A greasy bacon butty in June hail/ And the fervour of dogs

fornicating in the park./ Anger at love that disturbs the malicious street/ Leaping in the gutter with petrol and stubbed fags./ The rusty smell of the sea and misogynists' guilt...' ('A Mug of Black Coffee'). Nor does he show any more mercy with nature: 'Trees are shitless and the giving wind knows/ Great despair' ('Possessed'); 'The tree and the drunk are breathing deeply' ('In Finsbury Circus'). Kessel might well be called the poet of the Fall with his preoccupation with decay and deterioration: 'Perversity in the heart, the redolence of a magnificent/ September turned to prurience in the dust'; 'Despair in a girl's heart, where wild/ chrysanthemums should be. Desire in the heart, gutting anger'; 'A deadly man with loveless breath./ Time eating the stomach. Can't afford fags' ('Disintegration'); 'A Cockney cleaner moves home eastwards/ into the bright slums of humanity' ('In Finsbury Circus'); 'in the terraces, slow cancerous Edwardian deaths' ('On Broadstairs Beach'). Kessel is certainly the poet of 'splintered cities': 'Lives of crass expectation and bloody illusions/ In emblemed homes fenced against the planetary wind/ And the sighing earth'; and juxtaposes the mundane with the apocalyptic brilliantly: 'The rain is falling/ On chipshop and battlefield' ('For Drummond Allison').

For a poet with such a striking descriptive power – 'Tramping an Irish road I think of the woman I love/ And of her lover, and by my boots beating the tarmac/ Of their intimacy...' – Kessel is unafraid to occasionally admit defeat, but with a sort of ecstasy, in the giant shadow of nature (which is something many lesser poets erringly refuse to do): 'And I, alone, sit beneath a tree,/ The magnificence of which I cannot describe'. There is truly something sublime in many of Kessel's similes: 'Listening to the soft rain on the leaves/ I hear the decency and realism of friends' humour'; '...learn to help others./ Become as helpful and as selfless as the rain'; 'I who am as dangerous as these cliffs/ Strive to be as kind as the meadow'. He is not scared of explicit images: 'The church is harder than my desire/ Though much less real,/ As hard as my patronising lust,/ And so I masturbate in the wet grass'; 'If I could cut out my bullshit intellectualism/ As easily as I crap in heather/ There would be no more wars or leaders'. Nor does he shun psychological candour: 'Too long I have been running from my sexual passion/ From fear of lusting my mother' (all quotations from 'Beautiful Ireland').

Kessel speaks often of Ireland and the Troubles which have 'made this land schizophrenic' – possibly a motif for his own divided self. Few can deny the evocativeness of the poet's words: 'A man/ Who carried a gun now has a hacking cough./ On bended knees this land lives, hard/ Slog and the crack at street corners./ A whistled son and the jackdaw soaring/ Over misogyny and open serious faces' ('Ireland'). There's something of EA Robinson in the curious portrait 'Mike Mosley': 'Grey, calloused, forgotten at fifty,/ he has given his all; his wiry heart,/ his

skilled locked fingers, his/ chipped backbone, his broken welding/ language, for this choking fag,/ this dark blinding pint,/ this scouring Irish lament'. Echoes of Robinson again in the couplet: 'Plain Michael Faraday brought down the sun/ To clean the house and have some fun' ('The Hungry Heart').

As the poet's friend Arthur Clegg mentions in the Introduction, "David's poems are difficult but well worth sticking with ... there is pain in some of his poems of an intensity that almost frightens me". Kessel is intense, morose at times, but always powerful: 'a baby's shrieking embodied cosmic terror,/ the terribility of love on wet and windy mornings' (Desire, subtitled 'in gratitude of London busworkers'). In his frequent juxtaposing of sexual love with militaristic metaphors and politics, a strong link with the Roman love poets is evident: 'Today a sweetheart's sigh is more dangerous/ Than massed armies' ('Desperate Sex'); 'I fear this mountain I must climb more/ Than I fear fascism in a loved-one's eyes' ('Beautiful Ireland').

“there is pain in some of his poems of an intensity that almost frightens me”

Kessel's voice sometimes quakes like a world-weary soothsayer: 'Established poets are idiots and liars, also/ By definition great poets sleep in gutters/ Love is pure contingency/ The eyes are everything' ('Schizoid') (one can't help being reminded of the excellent invectives of Barry Tebb here). Kessel's versatile voice has many facets: Kessel the Apocalyptic: 'A rasping melody of char-lady morning challenges the conscience./ One day her acid rain will scour Soho/ and men see themselves cut-up in its razor light./ Now the hellish throbbing's stopped/ a drunk's daydreams break across unfamiliar streets'; Kessel the self-chastising Stoic, occasionally surfacing: 'Will I and my world-joining hope of socialism be drowned in this lusting ocean?' ('Songs of Soho'). He sees the virtues in the itinerant: 'Only in the cold churches do they struggle/ to win some divine life./ The desperate vagrant is more solid./ He remembers ... the rich flint earth' ('In Memory of Jude'). He despairs, but defiantly, at junk culture: 'Before the triumph of tyranny on the television/ dreaming of news from nowhere' ('England, O England').

Shades of *The Wasteland's* apocalyptic atmosphere seethe through Kessel's 'Glass is Dynamite', dedicated to Virginia Woolf, Joseph Conrad and TS Eliot, though it is a sparse and suggestive piece. 'O the windows of the bookshop must be broken' is a tantalising line standing on its own, worthy of Rimbaud, as is: 'And I'll follow the night-train to distant starved cities/ To bleed and pain and sing' ('Bus No 253'). More darkly Romantic exclamations abound in 'For Emma Aged 10': 'Till you find that land which

Edward Thomas knew/ Between the bloody trenches and the pathetic mansions./ O the glory of that kneaded, furrowed, tortured land'; and a little less elevated in 'To Bleed With Her': 'O to share a fag on wintry evenings/ In a lonely street – all iron and sleet'. Only a romantic Socialist could coin the beautiful line: 'For there is within the soul of labour the tenderness/ Of the violet beneath the shaking lonely chestnut'.

Kessel is not afraid to sing the praises of more popular icons: 'Hancock and Lennon have passed through here without being heard/ To find peace in the burning innermost slums./ And I in my June guilt know some of the sources/ Of this sorrow, and crave for Hancock and Lennon to break/ Wide the desperate streets with laughter and weeping' ('The Barren Age', 'For the Londoners of my Generation'). Here Kessel firmly establishes his place as a long-suffering, sedulous disciple of misunderstood outsiders. But Kessel has no delusions of grandeur (in terms of reputation that is, not talent, which he possesses abundantly) regarding his obscurer existence: 'We live with uncertainty,/ Our giros and our dreams' ('New Cross'). His sense of artistic solidarity is also highlighted in the brief dedication at the end of his preface: 'to my friend the late Howard Mingham – a great working-class poet who was tragically murdered at 31'. Nor does he place himself on a poetic pedestal above the 'splintered cities' he writes about: 'I go in search of a raging hunger to meet/ These silent clouds between silent rows of Brockley terraces./ This is the way it was before I was corrupted/ By cant, double-dealing and leadenness/ To meet this earth in full flight/ Between its suicide and the market-place café' ('The Park'). Kessel does not loom aloof over his subjects, but feels with them and is one of them, albeit one who takes a step back frequently to describe the Lowry-like picture he feels misplaced in. Is it of himself Kessel speaks in 'Man-Stone': 'Below he weeps for his mate, above/ Scornful of language and erosion,/ His bleak body mortared by prayer'? It probably is, and I suspect the 'Cockney' who keeps cropping up, often at the end of poems, is also one of this extraordinary poet's many alter-egos.

I might be slightly biased in aspects of my assessment of this highly gifted poet: I sympathise with his Socialism and heart-felt pessimism; Emily Bronte, Robert Tressell and Joseph Conrad are three of my favourite writers; Hancock is my favourite comedian of all time, and Lennon is one of my favourite songwriters. I certainly share many of the tastes and opinions of David Kessel, but even if the poet espoused passions and interests completely opposite to my own, I could not help admiring his work and finding true fascination with his style and subjects. For me, Kessel's beautiful, mordant voice serves as a tribute to the great poetical insights that can be salvaged from the turbulent pool of schizophrenia.

But in the end, I think Arthur Clegg sums Kessel up poignantly in his introductory tribute, which should also serve as a warning for contemporary poetry: 'I long thought of David as a poet of compassion... Few, if any, have the strength to sustain compassionate poetry for long just on its own. He has another characteristic of the true poet – sincerity... What he feels he feels. He does not pretend to feel something because he thinks he ought to or because it might suit an audience or a market, all of which are the death of poetry'.

When I visited David at his home in Whitechapel recently I asked him what he meant by 'O the windows of the bookshop must be broken', my favourite line in his collected poems. David replied: "The only things that were alive in Hampstead were the books in a shop I went into. I thought, the windows of the bookshop must be broken, so the books can spill into the streets".

***The Ivy: Collected Poems 1970-94* by David Kessel (Aldgate Press). A new selection of David Kessel's poems is forthcoming from Survivors' Press.**

Two short poems from *The Ivy* by David Kessel

Schizoid

Brighton and Hove without the psychology
Seediness without the pip
This is a practical life
Rape in heaven or tender in hell
An old woman's love
Shopping on a Saturday afternoon without memory
Words keen
Established poets are idiots and liars, also
By definition great poets sleep in gutters
Love is pure contingency
The eyes are everything

For Zoe

I would give you
Keir Hardie's eyes
The woods of Raasay
Charlotte Bronte's care
The smell of stock in Haworth churchyard
Fred my brickie friend's hands
The song of a blackbird over Clerkenwell
Robert Tressell's passion
Rough Somerset cider and cheddar
Bengali children playing in Spitalfields
Summer rain over Stepney
The tenor sax of Lester Young
Sparrows nesting in a Hackney tenement
The Bothy band
The revolutionaries of Ireland
A Yiddish love song
Hérons flying across a Norfolk fen.

Diorama Drama

Roy Holland

I am very glad that the Little Angel Marionette Theatre in Islington has had its funding restored. Some years ago I saw a wonderful production of *The Little Mermaid*, which is more typical of its work, being aimed at families with children. But the new *Venus and Adonis*, a play based on Shakespeare's rather bawdy poem and co-produced by the Royal Shakespeare Company, is aimed at an adult audience, and has the same freshness and exuberance.

The production was partly inspired by Japanese Bunraku puppetry, with the visible puppeteers manipulating half-lifesize puppets, and a musician – in this case a guitarist playing Elizabethan music – and a narrator, Michael Billington, at the front of the stage to left and right. The story tells of Venus's attempts to seduce Adonis, who is preoccupied only with himself and the hunt. The sets are beautiful, especially Venus's shell chariot. Adonis's horse disappears after a mare, unlike his master, and the giant puppets of the horses are brought on and off through the audience. Adonis is killed by a giant bloody snouted boar during the hunt, and Venus curses love and plucks a red flower from the spot where he fell.

An international team built the puppets in the workshop at the Little Angel. My overriding impression was of a Jacobean masque brought to life, and the Director, Gregory Doran, and the whole team are to be congratulated. It would be good if funding could be found to mount a tour of the production.

We should all support Yellow Earth Theatre Company, whose offices and rehearsal space are at the Diorama Arts Centre. The company and its actors provide a link between Britain and the Far East, and I caught up with their new production of *58* at the end of their national tour at the Soho Theatre, which has a reputation for putting on new and exciting work.

The play tells of the fifty-eight Chinese immigrants who lost their lives entering Britain at Dover in a container lorry in 2000. The Director, David K S Tse, carried out interviews with the relatives of the dead in China and with the British officials who dealt with the situation on arrival. We see on the one hand the poverty and lack of freedom in China which forces ordinary people to brave the Snakeheads to emigrate, and on the other hand the incomprehension and racism of the police here, symbolised by a police woman with an unemployed husband up north, and the fears of the Chinese interpreter brought in to assist.

The sets are brilliant, being used to represent both the inside of the container lorry and the office at the

police station surrounded by filing cabinets. All the cast are first-rate. There is a strong message to deal with refugees and immigrants sensitively, as the story unfolds against a backdrop of video footage mainly of teenagers, initially coming out with the crassest of racist remarks but eventually admitting that we all have immigrant blood. The policewoman seems to learn from her Chinese colleague and to be on the verge of personal independence at the end. The inclusion of the spirit world from traditional Chinese culture and the culminating exorcism of the three unidentified bodies provide both a brilliant dramatic device and a form of catharsis. At the end of the play you feel that there are small things you can do in human terms to prevent the same thing happening again. I recommend anyone to support Yellow Earth and their future productions.

At the Diorama Theatre last week we also witnessed the British premiere of *Opening Night Carmen*, directed and co-written by Mark Ross, the Diorama Arts Centre's Director. Co-author and performer, Julie Goell, gives us the cleaning lady's complete version of *Carmen* after the Royal Opera has shut its doors for the night.

We learnt how to fluff up the hair in a single gesture to become the Maestro and how to create a critic out of a mop and some drapes. The funniest scene was of Carmen unlocking her prison door, here represented as an inverted trolley. I couldn't help feeling however that all the slapstick did insufficient justice to Julie Goell's talents, in Commedia dell'Arte, as a bass player, as a linguist - she sang mostly in French, and above all as a singer. I kept willing her to launch into a spirited rendition of the genuine article. I wasn't sure either if you'd get more out of it if you knew the original opera well or not at all. So the performance was enjoyable, but open to improvement.

SUTTON AND MERTON SURVIVORS

I am aiming to start a survivor-led poetry/lyrics group in the Sutton/Merton area and would like to hear from anyone interested in being involved as members and/or facilitators. The group would be primarily for people who have suffered from mental distress – but could be opened out to others by consensus later. My long-term aim is to do shared reading/listening/writing workshops.

If interested, please contact email on
JoSilverH@aol.com or phone
020 8 644 3396

A Pack of Bards

Alan Morrison

In The Company of Poets: An Anthology celebrating 21 years of readings at Torriano Meeting House

Edited by John Rety

Hearing Eye (2003)

£14.99

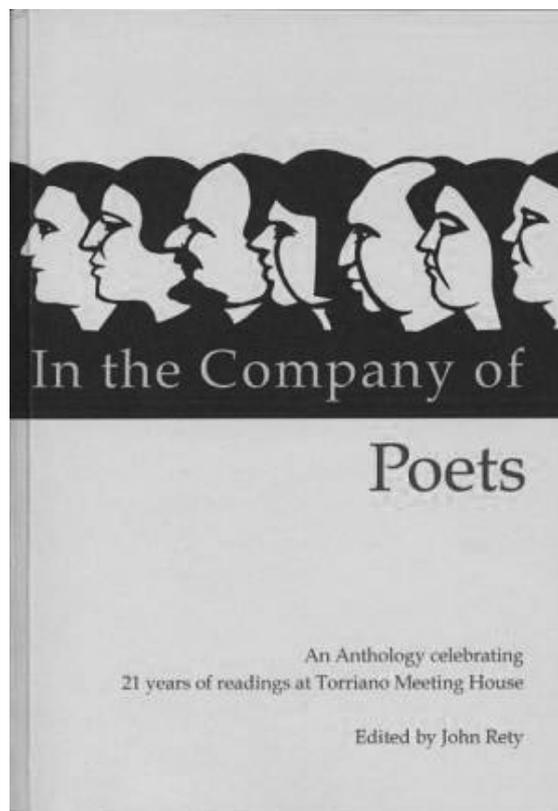
To have a voice, 'all a poet can have' as WH Auden once said, is, I would think, the ultimate goal of any poet. Whilst having a preliminary thumb through *In The Company of Poets* to test the water or get the feel of the terrain, depending on which metaphor you think suits best, I was struck by how some of the poems I stopped off to read spoke to me in what could easily be the same 'voice'. I then thought about the wide gulf between a poem which seems to speak from the page in its own way, and a poem which requires its writer to literally speak it in order to give it its 'voice'. I genuinely feel a lot of contemporary, mainstream poetry has this rather lethargic uniformity to it; you can skip from one poem to another in some modern anthologies generally feeling that most of the poems could have been written by one person instead of an apparent number of people. Whilst some of the poetry in this anthology inspired this train of thought, others, on closer inspection, I am happy to say, contradicted it. *In The Company of Poets* is a shuffled rather than mixed bag of 'voices'; the difference being that any irregularities and contrasts are more serendipitous than characteristic. But I don't wish to dwell on what I think are the paler voices in this nicely produced and well-presented book – the cover by Aldgate Press is an attractive, unpretentious design of seven anonymous profiles emerging from dark green and English mustard yellow – I wish to dwell instead on the more distinctive 'voices', which spoke to my own particular ear, because by and large these are 'voices' with something to say.

Kicking off alphabetically is 'Dog on a Beach' by Dannie Abse, the poem which opens the book with a meditation on mortality: 'The dog, attentive to the inaudible/ world of Eternity, faces/ the unfolding, funeral-paced,/ incoming

waves of night', unsettlingly resonant for anyone who has contemplated their own smallness whilst looking out to sea. Shanta Acharya's riddling 'What You Don't Know' is a nice bit of amusing pessimism, including the tantalising line '*for what is worth knowing is what you don't know*' (the poet's italics). Pat Arrowsmith's 'Slow Motion' makes me think of how Stevie Smith might have written had she had a hip operation, but this isn't to detract from the deft flashes of Arrowsmith's own witty 'voice'. Michael Bartholomew Briggs' 'Say It With' contains the thought-provoking line 'Cheap-shoe streets of shabby pubs/ are grimed by quiet pessimism'. Briggs also contributes

the striking 'redundant coal-hole covers punctuate/ the Yorkstone pavement like full stops/ hammered by an iron-handed typist/ with insufficient care about the shift key' in his 'Led by the Nose'. Joe Bidder's 'White Knuckled' could, I think, have ended more resonantly on the powerful 'silently/ praying to a god you don't believe'. Julia Casterton's 'Here Is The Room' is rather haunting. John R. Clarke contributes thought-provoking pieces such as 'Ash' and 'Weeping Future', the latter ending with the intriguing 'Lives encased within the endlessly/ Tolling perfumes of farewell'; this poet eschews the use of commas entirely which gives an uninterrupted flow to his lines.

Margaretta D'arcy's 'Death Is Expected' is a very curious poem: 'Oh Romans/ furniture and things/ collected over the years:/ forgotten Romans'. Bob Devereux's contributions are engaging and innovative. Anthony Edkin's 'Resistance' is a solid piece. Jane Elder's work is very tangible and you feel you can almost touch it; she is perhaps a little too preoccupied by colours though. 'My Grandmother' by David Eliot speaks for itself with beautiful lines like 'Wax stalks luminous as bones' and 'The night hangs overhead/ Tangled with impossible stratagems'. F could stand for funny with witty contributions from Shelah Florey, David Floyd, Nigel Foxell and Leah Fritz. Katherine Gallagher's 'Gwen John Swims The Channel' contains some nice descriptions such as 'a sketchbook washing calm' and 'Dover's scribbly-white cliffs'. Whether pretentious or simply esoteric, Raymond Geuss certainly has his own 'voice'



– ‘Only when the gout’s got me/ do I get poetic’ (‘O Felix Morbus!’) – is this haiku?

John Godfrey strikes me as one of the more skilled of the ‘voices’ in the book and is dextrous with sense impression: ‘The dry flutter of wind snatching at open windows’ (‘The Permanent Way’). Miriam Halahmy’s ‘My Uncle’ and ‘Washing Apples’ are interesting pieces. Christopher Hampton’s poems are very well-crafted, if a little preoccupied with walnut trees – the close to ‘Bedfordshire Sunset’ lingers in the mind: ‘*Hands that reach out cannot heal/ nor words weighed out like bread/ give hope to those who have no bread*’ (poet’s italics). Melissa Harman’s ‘My Father’s Hands’ has a lovely theme surprisingly missed by many poets before. Danielle Hope’s ‘Legends and Dustbins’ is descriptively rich with its ‘From leather books/ murmurs rise’ and ‘A barbarian breeze snakes over your arm’. Miroslav Jacic’s ‘His Biobibliography’ is deceptively self-indulgent: as one reads through it a touchingly self-deprecating personal epitaph emerges. Roland John’s contributions are spare and well-crafted. Jennifer Johnson has a sincere confessional ‘voice’.

Jeanette Ju-Pierre’s two poems contrast strikingly with each other, ‘Last Words’ ending on a pathetic and poetic stanza worthy of a Robert Tressell observation: ‘When they laid you to rest one summer,/ Your sunken eyes were still saying in earnest,/ I must collect my pension before it/ begins to rain’ – while her ominously entitled ‘Mango Tree’ (some Sunday-supplement poems tend towards too many fresh fruit metaphors for my liking) with its Jamaican-English is actually quite amusing. Judith Kazantis’ poetry is wistful, as well as skilled, as shown in her villanelle ‘After A Life Time Together, Will Norma Ever Leave John?’ Lotte Kramer’s observations on faded old men are touching, as is Phillipa Lawrence’s slightly more harrowing one of her dying mother ‘gazing through milky glass, darkly’. Sarah Lawson’s ‘Visit my Website’ is hilarious. Eddie S. Linden’s ‘The Man in the Black Suit’ and ‘The Concert’ are striking portraits. Alexis Lykiard boldly and colourfully poeticises on such taboos as cat-sick and wanking – one can’t help wondering whether his candid ‘White Thoughts’ was originally called ‘Masturbation is the Thief of Time’. Sue Macintyre’s ‘voice’ is indeed an ‘insistent whisper’. Kathleen McPhilemy’s poems flare with original flashes: ‘a door that opened and closed/ breathless sentences, half-spoken’; ‘a strawberry paragraph/ indecipherable, faded to brown’; ‘children scrabbling in the dust of their bombed-out lives’; ‘lines reinforced on their cheeks/ by thirty years of unchanged opinions’.

Jehane Markham’s ‘The Blue Apron’ ends beautifully: ‘For what I did not know, I cannot mourn/ Yet unformed words are beginning to form.../ It was as pale as dried cornflowers,/ Bleached to a gossamer sail in places,/ The stitches like train tracks over blue fields’, while ‘The Tenant’ is an emotive villanelle. David Miller’s ‘Spiritual

Letters’ are perplexing prose pieces but extremely colourful. Nick Orengo’s ‘Shall The Dead Speak’ has something of the Zarathustras about it and is quite striking. Mario Petrucci’s ‘This Is Lust To Say’, subtitled ‘A Spellcheck Poem’ is a rib-tickling rearrangement of Carlos Williams’ acquired plum. Peter Phillips’ ‘Menorah’ is touching. Jeremy Reed’s ‘Elegy for David Gascoyne’ does both poets justice with a gentle, lingering ending. Tom Rubens’ ‘St. Paul’s’ is as intricately chiselled as its subject. Bill Sherman’s ‘To End with a Thought from Thomas Wyatt’ is stylistically innovative with its sentences starting in lower case and slightly archaic phraseology. ‘Marginal Note in Time of War’ by Stephen Watts is a poignant vignette of the suicide of a man whose last walk is ‘up the scarp slope of his melting reason/ to where he was abandoned by language’. Brenda Williams contributes two of her dexterous sonnets. Ray Willmott’s ‘The Walnut Gatherer’ is a tangible portrait. Dilys Wood closes the anthology with one of the most spare and unusual of the tome’s numerous ‘voices’.

All in all this shuffled pack poses far more aces than jokers and one must appreciate that any alphabetically arranged anthology is bound to surprise the reader irregularly, though of course poetry is a very subjective medium. *In The Company of Poets* is in the main aptly titled and well worth a shuffle now and again.

Survivors’ Saturday Poets

at

The Torriano Meeting House

99 Torriano Rd, NW1
Nearest tube: Kentish Town
(Northern Line)

Last Saturday of each month
8 pm start

March 26
Stevenage Survivors & Lee Wilson

April 30
Melted Demerara, Sybil Madrigal & Alex Ward

May 28
Frank Bangay, Joe Bidder, Peter Campbell
& Hilary Porter

Floosspots are welcome - please contact Xochitl
Tuck on xochitl@survivorspoetry.org.uk

Reviews

Various reviews, long, short and tall

Alan Morrison:

***Giving Light* published by Waterloo Press;
Feed A Cold, Starve A Fever and *Clocking-in for the Witching Hour* published by Sixties Press;
Picaresque published by Survivors' Press
Reviewed by Graham High**

These four books, by a remarkably ambitious and prolific young writer, were all published during 2003 and 2004, and between them indicate the wide range of Alan Morrison's writing so far, as well as the promise they hold for future achievement.

Feed A Cold, Starve A Fever and *Clocking in for the Witching Hour* are both single, book-length poem sequences, a difficult genre to get noticed or published, but both reward the reader well with their breathless forward impetus, the sparkle of the kaleidoscopic imagery, and the constantly moving agility of form and thought.

The former book, an astonishing sequence in fourteen composite parts, takes on the put-down phrase 'confessional poetry' up front, by subtitling the poem 'Confessions of an Absentee'. What follows in this densely packed, but clear and cogent poetry, is a first person outpouring about someone suffering from Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder in which the medium is also the message. Morrison may be subject to OCD himself but the poetry, for the most part, is not at all an uncontrolled splurge, and the considerable skills required to construct, pace and sequence a sixty eight page poem are everywhere in evidence.

The free flowing form, shortish lines in paragraph sized blocks, draws you on and is free enough to impel you through the narrative. These lines –

... the sound of my mind
ticking. Ceaselessly winding round
between hurdles of breathless minutes

could be a description of his style. Held in by the occasional opportunistic rhyme, the poetry is perhaps, at times, a little too loose, with line breaks that seem to have been made according to line length rather than with sense and rhythm in mind, but the assurance and energy of thought and the variety of imagery commands one's interest throughout.

Clocking in for the Witching Hour has a much more angry and political tone. Formally inventive, with a style, laid out in two columns, like dialectical Marxism, the poem draws on memories of a Father worn down by labour, of the conditions of the writer's childhood home in the West

Country, of leaving that home and through it all, the aspirations of a socialist inclination. The whole is a very contemporary example of post-modern life writing, using, like Jackie Kay in her *Adoption Papers*, different voices and inputs to explore a variety of angles on his subject. The tag-team blocks of text, the sections of dialogue, relay race each other and create a great energy and forward impetus. One has the aural impression of several voices and one is reminded that Morrison's talent is essentially a dramatic one, involving exchanges and dialogue.

It seems inevitable therefore, that Morrison should have experimented with an overtly dramatic form with his book *Picaresque*, a play for voices. Originally a long performance poem, this new published format has been extensively revised as a more substantial play. Concerned with the dilemmas of charity and the problems of homelessness, it conducts its concerns through a piratical cast of characters which is both engaging and powerful.

After the density of the other publications *Giving Light*, a collection of individual poems, may seem comparatively light-weight. Some of the shorter poems seem to search for the self-referencing wisdoms of an isolated mind and remind one of the aphorisms of William Blake. All the poems strike sparks however, and if only some of them catch fire it is well worth the reading.

**for more information on Alan Morrison's poetry visit
<http://www.alandmorrison.blogspot.com>**

**Review of *Never Quite Prepared for Light*:
Arrowhead Press, £7.50
Reviewed by Carolyn O'Connell**

Robin Ford's book opens and closes with light: 'New Year's Day, 27 November' is a poem of realisation with an 'old year' of depression and shadows: 'they drown in blinding brightness'. A caesura precedes two lyric stanzas of creativity, before reducing into nothingness, leaving the poet 'never quite prepared for light'. In 'Sudden Light' the reader is taken through a similar experience but instead of being in the depths of the Central Line, experience is one of the countryside and 'oak leaves like prayer flags'.

Robin has been widely published and is a prize-winning poet. Titles entrance, as each poem belies expectation. 'This is the Life' won second prize in the Frogmore Papers Poetry Competition 2000. Here he skilfully delineates the set of 'the big house', 'secure in its panoramic views'. 'The new lot no-one knows are

holding court' in a modern summer party where 'the moon itself must surely be by Prada'. He contrasts their heedless unfulfilled success with the past when the house and lane was used by smugglers 'to fill the children's mouths with bread' and how eventually the sea will claim everything.

Inspiration and knowledge run through this book. There are poems on such diverse subjects as music where he uses Shostakovich as a theme for survival, 'Grand Guignol' to illustrate a dark legend. 'Nocturne' is a three-sonnet poem on marriage and work. The first being a musing on home life, the sustaining mundaneness of relationship, turning to surprise at what he does, before concluding in three lines that return to the satisfaction of home life.

Those who read the top poetry magazines may have come across 'A Long Way from Adlestrop' and 'John Clare at St Lawrence'. 'The River Medina' is a sonnet sequence in a section on his home county, Dorset. He is a true heir to the poets of that county and I love his work.

The Bohemian

By Zack Samuel

Published by Q.Q.Press Collections

Reviewed by Carolyn O'Connell

Zack is a Survivor in his fifties; his poems record his experiences of the health care system. It is through his poetry that it is possible to gain an insight into his journey, from a loveless childhood summarised in 'There Are So many Things', hinted at in 'Words on the Record Player'; through time in hospital which he says is 'full of care, / everybody loves each other' and especially his contact with others and with his wife Lesley and her daughter Louise. They are the bedrock of his turbulent life and the poem 'My Lesley' is a beautiful roundlet in praise of her. Zack is a poet of the beat generation and writes both in free verse and rhyme. Many poems are prefaced with quotes from Bob Dylan ('C'est La Vie', which tackles the realisation of his diagnosis, together with that of his wife's illness), Lou Reed ('A Psychiatric Hospital'); and Keith Richards. ('I Got My Driving Licence Back') and are peppered with references to them, politicians and current events. Some of you may have heard Zack read his poetry for he is known as the Bard of Bletchley Road.

Weird Planet

By Mark Williams £3.50

e-mail markw2167@yahoo.co.uk

Mark is a Cornish poet who has been writing since 1991, but this is his first publication. The founder of a

therapy group, he has self published a chapbook of thirty poems. Writing in rhyme, often using it both visually and metrically, impact is enhanced eg: in 'Stars' where tiny words scatter across the page. In 'Reality' internal rhyme and dactylic dimeter, coupled with trimeter and tetrameter, dominate before the stillness of an iambic closure. Mark has drawn inspiration from many places. Naturally the landscape figures in several poems, 'Storm' is particularly atmospheric, while the 'crisp raw crack of unfrozen ground' and 'the mist that hangs heavy, gradually subsides/ fading slowly to earth, like ebbing tides' perfectly evokes 'Dawn'.

Podding Peas

By Valeria Melchiorretto

Published by Hearing Eye, 2004 Price £3.00

Reviewed by Roy Holland

Valeria Melchiorretto has for many years been one of the Camden Survivors' Workshop facilitators, and is also a talented printmaker to judge by her exhibition at the Poetry Café eighteen months ago. It is thus a special pleasure to see her first volume of poetry in print as one of the prestigious Torriano Meeting House pamphlets.

The language is rich and concentrated, probably best seen on the page. Valeria has an incredible memory for her childhood, and the first poems in the pamphlet trace her grandparents' and parents' influence over the small child. I particularly like 'Concerto', beginning 'The grand piano is in the pockets of my mother's apron' and 'The Normal Head', in which 'mother says... Turquoise rivers of reason flow with the tide'. But 'deep in her kit I find black clouds... / She doesn't associate them with the normal head. / Those are the parts that hurt most.'

In 'The Eleventh Commandment' Valeria looks back to the trenches and finishes 'the world is like a war wound on the tip of my tongue./ I insist on my right to remain silent as I recover from my illness.' There is a feeling of unease in 'The Virtue', which describes 'the fishbone I swallowed as a child and no one has ever seen'. 'The soul of this fish ... / ... causes a constant silent spot in my throat.' In 'Reason for Knocking at an Empty House', 'mother took me to an empty house where rows on rows of unmade beds / waited for a woman's touch, waited for redemption'. In 'Spheres Unrequited', the flight of buzzards, also likened to Japanese characters, 'always makes the same / shapes, like something her mother used to say, over and over.' Valeria's family appear in her dreams.

One poem is particularly violent. 'The Girl with the Shoe Fetish' 'will rip your balls off and sew them to the slippers as pompons', having watched 'as if reading religiously an ancient text on rejection'. In 'The Mississippi Flows Through Our Living Room' we find the

protagonist 'with a chainsaw in my handbag, whistling to Freud'. We have strong women and inadequate men. Lazarus in his ghoulish proposition of marriage begs 'Marry me and puke in my face.'

The last poem in the pamphlet, 'Meeting Mondrian by the Red Square', passes through a series of colourful and joyful meetings, but ends: 'Meet me tomorrow./ Share your most urgent question/ equally among the knowing/ and leave.' So after sharing all the emotions of childhood memory and feeling the poet's anger, we are invited to keep our distance. We can meet 'at the edge of the red square' and 'in that thin black line', but we meet the poet 'in secret' and we must leave.

**Fields Away by Sarah Wardle,
Published by Bloodaxe, £7.95
Reviewed by Diane Mangal**

Sarah Wardle, in her new book *Fields Away*, refers to herself as being schizophrenic, and you feel something is likely to erupt as you read it. Her work is clinical and wordy, and you have to really follow the lines to get the sense. 'When passions move faster than the thought it generates, then mania is set up behind.' The details do not grab you straight away. But if you get past the biological wordiness, you find sensitivity and illumination into feelings. She sums up space like a window looking in on life.

She uses the concept of space in an interesting way, as she joins one landscape to another 'like a path to the other side of life'. She says: 'You could stand beside the signpost where the three lanes meet'. The words and rhythm lull in your head. Some beautiful lines appeal to the sense of hearing as in 'Music of an empty ballroom'. Each atom of the mind is caressed with a descriptive word. This definitely makes her poetry good.

Though in some poems she wants the reader to play the part of the soul-mate, scenes switch quite drastically from the individual psyche to a dramatic scene in history. 'Would we loop back to the dinosaurs?' is possibly a slight wish-fulfilment on her part. Some things you cannot honestly believe. Feelings may be over-sentimentalised: 'and watched a storm of starlings gathering for flight.' But there is always the unique line or word: 'Today I wish you blue, where the future never ends', or a clever line: 'The subject hides in a Latin verb, like a pearl inside an oyster shell'.

At the end of the book Wardle notes that people do have their own lives and coyly refers to her work as 'a planet the size of a pebble' where she and the reader 'invisibly move the earth'. It is worth a read, especially if you like to curl up and meditate on your thoughts and feelings.

**Lucia Joyce: To Dance in the Wake
By Carol Loeb Shloss
Published by Bloomsbury, £20 (hardback)
Reviewed by Roy Holland**

James Joyce's daughter, Lucia, has suddenly come into the news this year with a short run in the West End of Michael Hastings's play based around her relationship with Samuel Beckett and the publication of Carol Loeb Shloss's biography of her, subtitled 'To Dance in the Wake'.

In 1934 James Joyce wrote 'Whatever spark or gift I possess has been transmitted to Lucia and it has kindled a fire in her brain'. Both executors and scholars had left the impression that Lucia's mental illness made her a burden on the family and on Joyce's creative work. Now the new biography reveals, in spite of the destruction of most of the correspondence relating to her, that Lucia was the one member of the family who understood Joyce's development of *Finnegans Wake* and almost acted as his muse. She also chose dance as a profession, in which she had some success before the onset of mental illness. Yet she spent the last three decades of her life forgotten in an asylum in Northampton.

Shloss has attempted a painstaking reconstruction of Lucia's life and on the whole it is quite convincing. The evidence only seems a bit thin in certain aspects of Lucia's dance career. There is a lot of background material relating to psychiatric treatment in the thirties. Joyce was clearly willing to shop around for his daughter in the search for the best treatment. He even approached Jung, although the latter rubbished his writing.

Lucia's antipathy to her mother, Nora, and initial signs of eccentricity can easily be explained by the rather dysfunctional family life of the Joyces. Nora many times threatened to leave Joyce with the constant moves from one country to another, the cramped quarters and her husband's borrowings. Lucia was never encouraged to have a life of her own, and it was a great blow to her when Samuel Beckett did not reciprocate her feelings. Joyce and Lucia were very close however, and before his death he made enormous efforts to get her to safety from the asylums in occupied France where she was totally isolated from her family.

Lucia's main artistic heritage comprises her contribution to *Finnegans Wake* and her sustenance of Joyce during the writing of it. He said her mind was 'as clear and unsparring as the lightning'. Shloss does make the contemporary parallel with Scott Fitzgerald and his wife, Zelda, who tried to achieve her independence by taking up dance as an adult and who died in an asylum fire. In fact I was very much reminded of Nancy Milford's biography of Zelda, which came out over thirty years ago. They share the tragedy of women who tried to break out from the

mould in the days before feminism made an impact upon wider society.

Lucia's story is essential reading for anyone trying to overcome their background or their personal problems through creative activity. From time to time it can make you angry, but I found over all that the act of reading was therapeutic.

Away...

Driftwood Publications (2002)

By Pete Morgan

Reviewed by Alan Morrison

Pete Morgan's poetry is easy-flowing, accessible and commendably sincere; the style of the poems in *Away...* pull subtle punches that bruise slowly on the imagination. This is an unpretentious twenty-nine-page pamphlet of poem portraits of various patients at Whittingham Psychiatric Hospital in Preston, Lancashire, where Morgan had a spell as writer-in-residence. Morgan's poetry is refreshingly free of creative egotism (which is often, I feel, a symptom of a writer without worthy subjects), putting his subjects first; his empathic poetry stands up against contemporaneous chroniclers of mental suffering at first hand, such as Brenda Williams, Nicholas Lafitte and David Kessel.

Also worth mentioning is the nicely produced cover sporting a macabre painting by Philip Wroe, an anthropomorphically nightmarish image of what appears to be a little girl dressed as a fairy with the red eyes and shiny nose of a bloodhound, hinting forbiddingly at the more disturbing of the subjects explored within.

Morgan provides us with valuable and vivid portraits of mental suffering and splintered consciousness: 'His is the language of distorted sense: / the single phrase repeated and repeated /intention gathers/ the final words into a galloped gab' ('Walter's Ramble'); 'Quick as a light he gets his price/ in the passageways of poverty/ where the sale of the cig. is the sole economy' ('Michael on the Make'). In 'Oink!' we are shown a patient who grunts like a pig but has no 'hoggishness in him, / no swinish gluttony'. 'Eliza's Tango' cleverly conveys the irony of how Eliza manipulates the retreating steps of unwilling partners into the very dance they are trying to avoid, to music only she can hear: 'and in that quick, quick, slow/ he also, briefly, brilliantly, / dances' – is she hearing things or are the rest of us tone deaf, as possibly symbolized by the unconscious tango of the unwilling legs? One of the most memorable characters in the book is the one-hundred-year-old Minnie MacKenzie in 'Bedtime Story' who is portrayed as a shrivelled little lady whose mouth takes on 'the perfect "o", the fifteenth letter' when she laughs – 'There's nothing shifts/ that Lilliput of symmetry – / in its miniscule rotundity/the mouth

rings "o", "o", "o", and "o"'. But despite occasional light-heartedness, Morgan isn't scared to let chilling glimpses of the reality of some of these mental conditions seep through as in 'Amy's Bedside Photo': '...in faded pencil, / the name's confusion, the year's preciseness – / "Arthur now Andrew: aged six, 1948"'

Apart from the slightly EA-Robinson-esque character study style of many of the pieces, there are others a little more poetically concentrated: 'Amy, hunched as a question mark, / no longer listens, fails to hear' ('Night Sweats'); 'who wreaked such ruin where we went to praise/ and stamped each star with his slow staggering' ('David in the Daffodils').

Arguably the most successful poem is 'Taking Leave' as it combines sincerity, empathy of observation and feeling with accomplished poetic evocation: 'She wants the curtains closed and grips the hand/ which draws the rayon harshly on the rail. / That same metallic screech is in her cry' and 'All night the thread of light/ between the shutters drills in on the eye'.

In an age where listless meditations on diluted, middle-class love and sexual fruit metaphors seem to be deemed eminently printable by Sunday supplements, Pete Morgan's observational and empathic poetry serves to remind us that one of poetry's most important functions is to explore other people, particularly the polarised or forgotten, and not only the self. The subjects of this interesting and emotive collection are very important and long may poets such as Pete Morgan shine a light on the shadow lives of those shut off from society.

Poems – David Gascoyne

Selected by Judy Gascoyne

Greville Press Pamphlets (2001)

Reviewed by Alan Morrison

This reflective collection of deftly crafted poems by the long established David Gascoyne is beautifully produced with a simple, attractive, slightly antediluvian orange and brown paper dust jacket with elegant lettering for the titles - the exceptional trademark production values of the striking Greville Press Pamphlets. This complements the contents by this elder poet, a veteran of the Georgians, with a hint of the Romantic, especially in some of his blank verse, strongly reminiscent of Keats and Wordsworth. There are also similarities with Bernard Spencer and George Barker, the latter to whom Gascoyne dedicates his poem 'The Sacred Hearth.' I think however it is for its intensely poetical insights that this selection stands out, one which was incidentally compiled by Gascoyne's wife Judy who mentions in the introduction how she came to meet David, a survivor of depression:

“...we met at the Island Psychiatric Hospital where I was reading poetry to severely depressed patients. When I chose to read ‘September Sun’ to the class, I was surprised when a tall, sad looking man told me he was David Gascoyne and he had written the poem. I wasn’t sure whether to believe him or not but, over a cup of tea, he convinced me.”

Whilst some of the poems selected might be included for particular associations and sentiments held by his wife rather than as necessarily the best examples of Gascoyne’s work, many of them are highly accomplished and contain some unforgettable lines.

Frequently Gascoyne broods on the paradoxes and limitations of poetic expression: ‘So much to tell: so measurelessly more/ Than this poor rusting pen could ever dare/ To try to scratch a hint of ... / Too soon all sparks/ Of vivid meaning are extinguished by/ The saturated wadding of Man’s tongue...’ (‘Lines’), and most profoundly in ‘Apologia’: ‘Before I fall/ Down silent finally, I want to make/ One last attempt at utterance, and tell/ How my absurd desire was to compose/ A single poem with my mental eyes/ Wide open, and without even on lapse/ From that most scrupulous Truth which I pursue/ When not pursuing Poetry. – Perhaps/ Only the poem I can never write is me’. This could serve as a great epitaph to this deeply contemplative poet.

A seemingly idyllic childhood is evoked elegantly in ‘A Sarum Sestina’ (To Satish Kumar): ‘Schooldays were centred round the tallest spire/ In England, whose chime-pealing ruled our lives’.

The sublime ‘Odeur De Pensée’ opens thought-provokingly with: ‘Thought has a subtle odour...’ It concludes with a powerful bombardment of compelling imagery: ‘But of that obscure/ Deep presaging excitement shall remain/ Briefly to linger in dry crannies of the brain/ Not the least breath when fear-benumbed and frail/ Our dying thought within the closely-sealed/ Bone casket of the skull has flickered out, / And we’ve gone down into the odourless black soil’.

One must put David Gascoyne’s *Poems* in its correct context as a selection of pieces drawn from the archives of former movements in poetry. Some readers may find his tone a little Romantic in places, but his timeless themes are ever-relevant and no one can deny the reflective power and dextrous craftsmanship of this highly accomplished poet.

Alan Morrison would like to explain his ubiquity in this issue as the result of having been asked to binge on a Babel-like tower of review books when he first joined Survivors’ Poetry. But he did enjoy binging.

Glad to be Mad

By Kim Schroeder

Reviewed by Esther McLaurin

This is a delightful collection of poems about life and loves. Reflecting life, there is something here to strike a chord with each reader. Some poems are autobiographical and others are humorous and delightfully quirky, such as ‘Spring’. It is an honest collection and the gusto and feeling comes through the works. The poems will make you think and reevaluate your situation.

The poems take the reader on a journey, jumping backwards and forwards with an eclectic mix of works about different characters. There appears to be a large autobiographical element and it is almost as if the author wishes to impart advice and share what she has learned in life. You can understand some of the catharsis undergone by this author through reading the works, with many aspects which one can empathise with and reflect upon.

Certain poems in the collection are esoteric and this challenges the reader to think and to interpret their own actions and mindset from a different perspective. Most of the poems read like lyrical train of thought excerpts from a diary. One poem says ‘Every day should be a day for love.’ And there has been much love and care which has evidently been lavished on these works, which ring true.

Creation of this collection has obviously been a therapy, and the optimism offered in many of the poems is very heartening to readers looking for assurance that it is possible to work out problems. The poems also have a sense of humour and a quirkiness to them which gives the collection a fresh sense of movement and of spontaneity. Fascinating, an inspiration and a great achievement. Bravo!

Poems for Central America

By Steve Bindman

LSP Press

Reviewed by Lucía Moral Baena

Steve Bindman has been a member of Leeds Survivor Poets since 1993. It’s noted at the front of this pamphlet: ‘All proceeds from the sale of this booklet go to hurricane relief work in Central America, so please give generously’.

This is a collection of 15 poems which reflect the state of some of the countries of Central America.

It is not intended to be pretentious, but gives an angry description of so-called American imperialism, ever

I became very insecure and paranoid....As I sank deeper into depression, I took to Self-Harming. I would cut my stomach with a razor. I would go to the bathroom and lock myself in. I would cry and call myself cruel names as I sliced away; as I bled I felt relief. Sometimes I would have as many as 30 to 40 wounds on my lower stomach.”

Julie’s husband eventually took her to see her G.P. who prescribed Prozac, beginning the process of recovery. Love and Prozac. An unusual but potent combination.

Doorways In The Night contains stories about surviving suicide and escaping suicide (‘The Rabbit Intervention’ by Char March is a fascinating monologue on the joys of being alive on a journey whose intended destination is death); stories about surviving the mental breakdown caused by both a violent marriage and an arranged marriage; stories about Bulemia, Schizophrenia, childhood abuse and the horrors that can lurk in a stammer.

Doorways In The Night. Buy a copy, read it, give it to a friend. Survival involves all of us. Be involved.

Local Voices is a Leeds-based Mental Health Steering Group; a voluntary organization comprising a mixture of service users and Mental Health professionals.

Eloquent Catatonia
By Dolly Sen
Published by Hole
Reviewed by Simon Jenner

Dolly Sen is some kind of marvellous philanthropist: she has produced some wonderful print-on-demand volumes including a very large one by Barry Fitton which is yet to reach a definitive text. Her own volume, *Eloquent Catatonia*, is a fine testament to a superb, contained performer and a curiously magical poet. Her volume contains various prose pieces, like ‘Low Life’, which is an eloquent slice of it, but Sen’s particular uniqueness is reflected in her poetry.

On her father’s dying in ‘Death Bed Insomnia’, she can write:

he looks into our eyes
and says
“you will never grow old,”
is this some strange,
paired,
magical,
apologetic statement of the dying?
no, it’s an ordinary fact
his eyes will remember
when it gazes into its permanent
purple amnesia.

Somehow he belongs there:
life did not suit him; he didn’t know

what to do with it, except make us
wish he was where he is now.

This mixture of the haunted end of someone’s day neither flinches from its naked recognition nor moves away from that curious twilight stage of recognition often associated with dying and its death bed exchanges. It’s a curious high-wire act, clarity painfully rasping against the numinous and half-said, almost mutating into another kind of vision. ‘The Angel’ can begin in layers, quite literally:

I’m in a cheap room with wallpaper older than
me
with life and death older than me

This poem begins and ends in staring at the wall, even turning her face to it. In the middle is an encounter with the kind of saviour the poet has dreamt of; unfortunately she has come literally to the wrong address and is meant for a 75-year old incontinent next door. This curious and comic layering of real and surreal, with its suggestion of the misdirected social workers almost feeding off the accidia of deprivation, is something Sen is well-versed in. Death comes along quite frequently; even the final poem ‘Waiting’ is only a mild affirmation of holding back and exclaiming at the end:

Don’t take too long.

The joys of childhood again celebrate that happiness is where Sen is not. They are

outside my window
not where I lived.

Sen doffs however the obligatory clown’s grace of a terrible and desolate humour:

life is shit but it’s a good job
shit looks like chocolate ice
cream, I told a friend

She concludes:

half-empty or half-full
what’s the fucking difference:
it’s still piss in a glass.

So much for half-full then.

Other poems attempt a kind of affirmation and then fall back from it like ‘Flight’ or like ‘The Holy Atheist’ cauterize a narrative from somewhere else but still end up with:

eternal life is beautiful, but occasionally
you have to watch it die

This summarises Sen’s strengths: a kind of epigrammatic mastery as at the end of ‘Now Time for a Commercial

Break' (I seat in Heaven available in blue) :

karma – a great bargain
buy one life, get one free.

Sen's lyrical stabs can often mesh superbly with her epigrams. There is as yet a rather slim tone to much of the improvisatory language and Sen needs to condense her own voice perhaps till it hurts with a real shiver of laughter. But she has made an original and certainly arresting debut and I look forward to her next volume.

Publisher

By Tom Maschler

Illustrated by Quentin Blake

Published by Picador, £20

Reviewed by John Horder

This is a heartbreaking book by a publisher not able to tell fantasy apart from reality. It will add little to what most intuitive readers will have already gleaned about the incestuous world of publishing.

Tom Maschler, chairman of Jonathan Cape from the Sixties until it was swallowed up by Random House in the Nineties, knew everybody whom he considered worth knowing, from Doris Lessing, the author of *The Golden Notebook*, to the late John Lennon. In knowing everybody he knew nobody, least of all himself. He is the most brutally judgemental of men. He became depressed at the end of a career which he falsely imagines still continues to this day.

The last two lines of *Publisher* tell us everything we need to know about his grandiosity and three year old boy's omnipotence: "I find my publishing life so exhilarating that I cannot imagine the adventure coming to an end. Though of course I know that one day it must".

Presumably this excruciatingly boring collection of turgid snippets is meant to demonstrate his immortality. It does no such thing with two exceptions, which he hasn't seen for himself. We shall come to them shortly.

Maschler, who has lived in Chalcot Gardens (off England's Lane), describes Doris Lessing's "modest house in NW6" (in Gondar Gardens, West Hampstead) disapprovingly: "If you visited her you might imagine you were in the home of a relatively modest art student". This is a typical Maschler put-down. Transparently Lessing's life style doesn't support his grandiose fantasy of her ever winning the Nobel Prize for Literature, with him in Stockholm to bask in her reflected glory: "For Doris to win would be the most marvellous event", he grandiosely concludes.

But would it be that marvellous? "This, too, will pass", as the Sufi legend has it, particularly to be mulled over

during life's happy events.

Maschler mentions Lessing was friendly with Idries Shah, the Sufi master, whose inner work helps wean seekers from confusing surface appearances with reality: a task which could conceivably last for many lifetimes,

It was Shah who led Lessing to embrace Sufism with 100% commitment back in the Sixties. This in turn led Maschler to publishing some of Shah's books, including *The Pleasantries of the Incredible Mulla Nasruddin*. It is the most amazing and funniest collection of Sufi stories ever written. It is also most intuitive about the unconsciousness which blights most of our lives.

Here is 'Wanted: a Foolish Man' from Shah's latest, *The World of Nasrudin* (Octagon Press): "Nasrudin was sent by the King to find the most foolish man in the land and bring him to the palace as Court jester. The Mulla travelled to each town and village, in turn, but could not find a man stupid enough for the job. Finally, he returned alone. "Have you located the greatest idiot in our kingdom?" asked the Monarch. "Yes," replied Nasrudin, "but he is too busy looking for fools to take the job"."

The most ironic thing in *Publisher* is that Maschler remains ignorant that he has published one book that will be remembered in three hundred years' time. There are other examples of his ignorance. When Russell Hoban's children's book, *The Mouse and his Child*, was first published, I stated that it was a masterpiece of storytelling when reviewing it in *The Times*. Hoban, just eighty, remains one of our most heart-opening and -warming writers for adults and children alike. Maschler tries here to wrap up his amazing genius in just one and a half pages, predictably only mentioning his novel for adults, *Ridley Walker*, being hailed as a masterpiece in *The Observer*.

When Hoban left Cape for Bloomsbury, he wrote to Maschler: "I want to thank you for turning down (my novel) *Angelica's Grotto*. You did me an enormous favour. It is so good to be with Bloomsbury. They really love my work". He was speaking the truth. Unlike Maschler, Russell Hoban has learnt in the course of his long life to tell fantasy apart from reality.

This review is soon due to appear in *The Review* section of *The Camden New Journal* and is the copyright of John Horder.

We are always on the look out for new reviewers for *Poetry Express*, so please email contributions to Roy Holland on roy@survivorspoetry.org.uk.

For poetry submissions to the broadsheet please email alan@survivorspoetry.org.uk (you can still post us poems but we prefer email submissions)

London Events

Xochitl Tuck

Survivors' Open Mike at the Poetry Cafe

At the Poetry Cafe
22 Betterton Street
London WC2

Nearest tube: Covent Garden

8 to 11 pm, second Thursday of each month

Date	Guest poet(s)
April 14	Lucia Birch Roy Birch
May 12	Adam Horovitz Razz
June 9	Sea Breeze
July 14	Al Murray

Survivors' Saturday Poets

Last Saturday of each month
8 pm start

Please note that this event is now held at different venues, so please check the venue carefully!

Date	Guest poet(s)
April 30	Melted Demerara Sybil Madrigal Alex Ward

Venue: Torriano Meeting House

May 28	Frank Bangay Joe Bidder Peter Campbell Hilary Porter
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Venue: to be confirmed

Floosspots are welcome - please contact Xochitl Tuck on xochitl@survivorspoetry.org.uk

Write on the Edge

Razz

Poetry workshops for survivors of mental distress at The Diorama Arts Centre
34 Osnauburgh Street
London NW1 3ND

Nearest tube: Great Portland Street
(Hammersmith and City/Circle Line)

All workshops are free

The following workshops are at new venues:

Natural History Museum Please meet outside.

23rd April 2 pm Workshop
Razz & Franceen

Swiss Cottage Library

21st May 2pm Workshop
Razz & to be confirmed

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lease at the Diorama is coming
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02079165317**

pick up that phone and help

