

Poetry Express Newsletter #61

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Thinking Man I – Artwork by Sue Whitmore



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Contributions to Dave Russell (Editor) – bricolage92@hotmail.com

Editorial

If we've not all melted yet it's still August, but each month smears into the next, and the only thing keeping us afloat is the thought of those Thursdays and at other times when newish Zoom technology allows us to crowd into the shade of a virtual dark pc and see each other perform, or at least act like a lot of jostling talking heads.

It's an important moment. Not just because of ingenuity induced with lockdown, or the brilliance of Debbie McNamara, Dave Russell and team in organizing this with other peers to all our benefits. Or even that for the first time we're meeting friends in the U.S. as if they're in the room.

It's something else particularly important for survivors. Many who'd like to get to that little basement in Camden can't make it, the events themselves are necessarily a London thing. Living in Brighton I found it just too exhausting even staying for the interval as I'd still get back well past midnight and had to wait aeons for a night bus.

It's what's happening in theatres at the moment that might show that limelight glimmer of opportunity, the way the world changes, occasionally sloughs habit-forming skins. So this moment for Survivors everywhere might shift the way we do things, not just because coronavirus will be with us in various forms for a long time; and we're likely to be more vulnerable than most. It's because we've reached out for the new technology and found people from Newcastle and elsewhere who couldn't *ever* get down to the Poetry Café. And couldn't all crowd in that room anyway even though it's been refurbished rather well. It's a nicer white hole than it ever was a charcoal one.

This brings me to something I've been involved with for three months. **Jack Gamble**, resident Assistant Director of the **Arcola Theatre in Dalston** hosts a weekly zoom meeting where theatre professionals talk through policies, try to influence government schemes, mount campaigns and have speakers on. My penn'orth of at

least one of them is that when theatres re-open, there's bound to be a large number of empty seats, and certainly the main clientele – often older, some disabled – won't be coming in the same numbers. This is tragic for them and theatre.

However, with Zoom and other technologies, there's a possibility I've been outlining to allow a virtual number of audience members to watch online live for a certain number of days in the run. Naturally there's no limit, unless artificially set, to those who'd attend virtually. It means empty seats can be paid for, perhaps younger people be allowed into the theatre for far less, even nothing, and the vulnerable – particularly disabled – no longer challenged by social distancing or the difficulties in attending at all. Some will always make a supreme effort to come. That's the power of theatre. But many might be grateful to see a live performance without going through the agonies of wriggling through the serpentine West End. And of course they can view online any theatre in the world who might offer this facility.

So that's the proposal. It won't resolve all challenges of isolation and I know many will still feel isolated. Though the majority who log on will feel less so than before when they had no option at all. There'll always be a live possibility, and moments of physical connection for those who can make Poetry Café when there isn't a pandemic on. For the rest of us though it's the only opportunity we're likely to get. Think how it might transform us. Probably you already have. It's thinking aloud, or allowed, and I'd welcome any comments.

Stay safe, stay optimistic if possible. Stay cool. Change is coming and in a number of ways it favours us. That of course has nothing to do with the government that seemingly wants the opposite. One other sad and angry consolation is that many more now know or imagine how it feels to be isolated, depressed, sometimes far worse. The world begins to get it. There's much they won't get. But in any case Zoom is one of those things Coronavirus has ensured came of age this March. Let's seize it!

Simon Jenner

We Zoom Ahead!

The lockdown grinds on. But it has caused a vital test of Survivors' Poetry's resilience. In face of the massive closure of live venues, new tech has come to the rescue. People link up with Zoom, Headsets and Web Cams to make vital auditory and visual contact online. So we have 'bridged the gap' of the dormant Poetry Café, and there has been incredible variety and vitality.

June 25th starred **Wendy Young** – ever proud of her roots: “I come from wet soil and long grass.” But in Serendipity she can still say ‘thank you London. Other spots included **Jeanette Ju-Pierre**. **Jo Gosling** made a savage indictment of the lot of the homeless, confined to casual work, and for brutal discrimination against LBQTs. This session ‘went global’ with two contributions from the USA – **Dee Allen** and **Daniel B. Dee** read *The Chasm of My 5th Grade Dreams*, his dedication to the Grand Canyon. Daniel runs a global Open Mic. **Janine Booth** read the powerful poem *Bearing Down* – “Justice is a farce, based on race and on class.” She also mentioned the forthcoming *Corona Verses* anthology, containing nearly 1,000 poems. She further mentioned the **We Shall Overcome** Pressure Group. Great truism in “No-one trusts a banker in a crisis.” **Paula Wichall** performed some sensitive songs – a lament for her deceased boyfriend, and one inspired by the 1961 film *Whistle Down the Wind*. **The Woman Without a Name (Jacqueline Lord)** was back in full force, proclaiming “I’m only now a Hologram.” **David Leakey** made some astute social observations with his song *Abnormal Town*. Substantial contribution from **Francisco Fatou**. A powerful finale from **Véronique Walsh**, consisting of a trenchant protest song followed by an exquisite reflective melody played on an Indonesian Zither – a concomitant of her Ethnomusicology studies.

On **23rd July**, the Guest Artist was **Mark ‘Mr T’ Thompson** (host of new poetry club on zoom: *Poetry From the Grassroots*). **Special Guests: Dee Allen, Pat Flowers, Ju Gosling, Boris ‘Piffle’ Johnson, Lawrence Renée. Remembrance for Declan Piepenbrink** (a frequent, lyrical performer at the Poetry Café: – **Alastair Murray, Javier Fatou** (in Spain, reading a poem written about Declan’s passing by **Broeder Johannes**), **Rona Topaz, Debbie McNamara. Floorspots: Michelle Baharier, Andrew Rea, Mike Wilson** (from N Ireland), **Armored Weston, Toni Hurford, Jeanette JuPierre, Bradley Young, Wendy Young, Dan Brady** (from San Francisco), **Chris Leeds, Alain English, Kelsey, Paula Wichall, Véronique Acoustique. August 25th**: Some truly touching music from **Cina**, continuing the spirit of **Georges Brassens**. **Vince Lewis** once again did his penetrating parody of Boris Johnson. A stirring performance from **Chris Leeds**, with reminiscences of his first performance at Survivors' Poetry 10 years ago. Also **Joanna Newsom**, It is truly heartening that with **Catherine Brogan** (an Irish person now resident in Kuala Lumpur), **Javier Fatou** (English and Spanish) **Mike Wilson** and **Dan Brady** (USA) the global links continue: may this development continue and expand! (*Full report from Debbie McNamara to follow*)

Dave Russell



Ribbon Woman – Sue Whitmore

Sue Whitmore: Poet & Artist

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Biography & Personal Statement

As a child, story for me was both pictures and words, and I've combined word and image all my life. I read Philosophy & History of Art at University College London, and Fine Art at the Central, Wimbledon & Cass Schools of Art. I was lucky that courses included printmaking, sculpture and theatre design. The imagination – 'the private made public' – has always been central to my work, as have the human body and landscape, particularly trees.

From a giant polystyrene Queen Victoria and a rain forest in a Kensington church to an expandable dinosaur for Richard Stilgoe, probably ADHD, I've tended to run multiple lives concurrently – poet, painter, parent, printmaker, theatre designer, arts administrator. For my work on behalf of the arts I was made 'Champion of Culture' in 2012.

I've written epithalamia, painted murals, founded poetry and art groups, taught landscape in Spain, and Life Classes in Kilburn and I still make regular trips to Ireland in a campervan painting – and enjoying – the landscape. My poems have been published and broadcast and my work is in collections in Britain and abroad.

Poetry

Publications

1992: *Sue, Realist: A Selection of Poems & Drawings* (The Maurice Press). This was my first collection, and followed four slim volumes from 1981. It received critical acclaim for its '*interplay of poems and drawings from the imagination*', Anthony Ilona, *City Limits*

1995: *Poems On the Buses*, ed. Alex Mermikades, Big Wide Words – 4 illustrated poems launched with Phil Jupitus on GLR

1996: Radio 4 – winner Afternoon Shift's 'Alternative Christmas Poem' competition with '*Post-Modern Christmas*', 5 re-broadcasts by popular request.

1997: British Journal of Psychotherapy – published by invitation

1999: Haiku in PPQ Haiku competition – the Basho Bash, Bankside Gallery

2000: *Lines from Metroland* (ed. Chrissie Williams)

2005/8: *Markings* – ed. John Hudson (Scottish Arts Council)

2017: *Blood, Fish & Bone I* – a collection of poems and drawings

Launches

1992/94: *Sue, Realist* The Baldwin Room at the Tricycle Theatre & Stables Art Centre, Dollis Hill

2017 *Blood, Fish & Bone I* – a collection of poems and drawings at the Lexi Cinema, Kensal Rise

Performance & General Publication

1995: GLR – launching of *Poems on the Buses* for Big Wide Words

2001: 'For Jessie's Fund' Lauderdale House

2003: University of Maryland – poetry workshop, snowed off!

2005: Ambit Poetry Event, Dissenters' Chapel, Kensal Green Cemetery

2006/7: Amersham & Chesham Bookshops

2009: Corrib Rest – **The Brondesbury Group** launch John McCormack's collection

2011/12: The Bakehouse, Gatehouse of Fleet in Dumfries

2013/4/5: The Poetry Society at the Poetry Café

2013/14: 'Locally Sourced' at La Brioche, West Hampstead

2013/2014: Torriano Meeting House – launch 'Meet the Brondesbury Group' anthology, North West London Tavern

2015: Lumen Poetry in Tavistock Place

2016/ 17: Cold Weather Shelter anthologies: ed. Ruth O'Callaghan Camden Series, Patron Andrew Motion

2017/18: 'Reach' Poetry ed. Ronnie Goodyer, Indigo Dreams Publications

2018: Pamphlet *Human Interest* – Commended in Geoff Stevens Memorial Competition

2018: 'Gitanjali and Beyond' – 'Tagore & the Environment', Edinburgh Napier University

2018: The Universal Bar, Dublin

2019: 'Reach' Poetry ed. Ronnie Goodyer, Indigo Dreams Publications

Other

I convene 'The Brondesbury Group', a Stanza of the Poetry Society co-founded with fellow poet Chrys Salt in 2002. We celebrated our 10th Anniversary with 'An Evening of Poetry and Music' at the Tricycle (Kiln) Theatre and an anthology, 'Meet the Brondesbury Group'. We do readings, solo & group,

all over NW London and mount poetry events in the community.

I've contributed to The Bakehouse's Big Lit Festival in Gatehouse of Fleet many years running.

Visual art

Solo exhibitions

2017: 'Blood, Fish & Bone', The Lexi Cinema, Kensal Rise

2014: Commissioned drawing, Eltham College's 200 year old plane tree

2012: 'Thirty Years on a Tricycle', Tricycle (Kiln) Gallery

2009: 'Una Pintura en la Marina Baja', La Seu, Universitat d'Alacant, Benissa

2006: 'Dark and Light', The Pall Mall Deposit, Barlby Rd.

2005: 'Dreamers', The Dissenter's Gallery, Kensal Green

2005: 'Escapement', Tricycle (Kiln) Gallery

2001: 'Speaking Volumes', Tricycle (Kiln) Gallery

1999: 'Living with Trees', Tricycle (Kiln) Gallery

1994: 'Artist in Jamaica' Harlesden Centre

1993: 'Recent Work – Cumbria', Stables Gallery, Dollis Hill House

1992: 'Sue, Realist', Baldwin Room Tricycle (Kiln) Gallery

1991: 'Images of Ireland', Tricycle (Kiln) Gallery

1991: Selected Irish Landscape, Patrick Clemens Clinic, Central Middlesex 1988 'August in the Auvergne' Tricycle (Kiln) Gallery

1985: 'Scapes and Spaces', Tricycle (Kiln) Gallery

1984: 'Personal Geology', Tricycle (Kiln) Gallery

1982: 'Flat Earth', Tricycle (Kiln) Gallery

These shows featured landscapes from Ireland to Jamaica, from France and Spain to the US, the human figure and work from the imagination. My exhibitions were usually accompanied by my books of poetry. Of my first exhibition 'Flat Earth' at the Tricycle (Kiln) Gallery, Richard Cork wrote (Evening Standard 1982) . . . *even as she gives vent to the conflicts within her, Whitmore knows how a defining line can clarify the most bewildering state of mind*", a review that applies as much to my poetry as to my artwork.

Group Exhibitions

2020: Ongoing from 2008 – membership, Greenwich Printmakers Association. GPA has its own Gallery in Greenwich Market and an extensive programme of outside exhibition including the Affordable Art Fair, National Theatre, Morley Gallery, the Edinburgh Art Fair, the Barbican Library and Watts Gallery.

2011: 'Experiencing Landscape II', Lauderdale House, Highgate

2010: 'Experiencing Landscape', Lauderdale House, Highgate

2007: RA Summer Exhibition – a sell-out edition of etchings

2005 – 2011: 'Lonely Arts Club Group Shows Norwich

2003: 'Five Artists in Spain' Pall Mall Deposit

2009: **Millennium Library Forum**

2009: Una Pintura en la Marina Baja, La Seu, Alicante University

1999: Pastel Society Mall Gallery

1990-2010: Annual exhibitions with **Brent Artists' Resource**

Other

Visual Arts

2017-2019: Chair Greenwich Printmakers

1990-2004: Founder member and Chair Brent Artists (Register) Resource, an artists' association in NW London mounting exhibitions, workshops in Brent, supporting art policy and the Tricycle (Kiln) Theatre's find-raising Art Auctions.

Poetry

2002: Founded and convenor The Brondesbury Group, Stanza of the Poetry Society

Theatre

1988-2002: Designed productions for opera and theatre – W11 Children's Opera, AAC Opera for All, Studio Vic/Edinburgh Festival for director, Chrys Salt

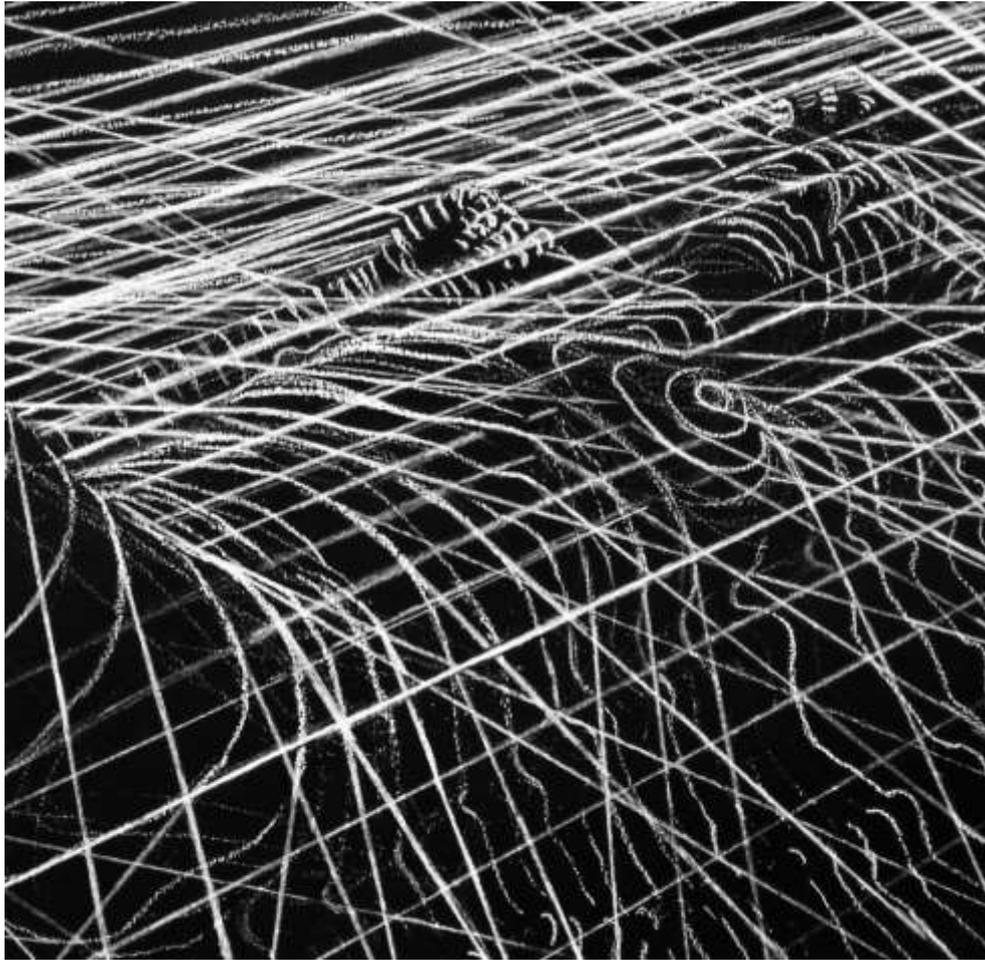
Teaching

1985-2010: Mentor of the Tricycle (now Kiln) Theatre Life Class & Kingsgate Workshop

2001 – 2012: Mentor landscape courses, *Almàssera Vella*, Relleu, Spain.

Awarded

'Champions of Culture', Art & Business, 2012



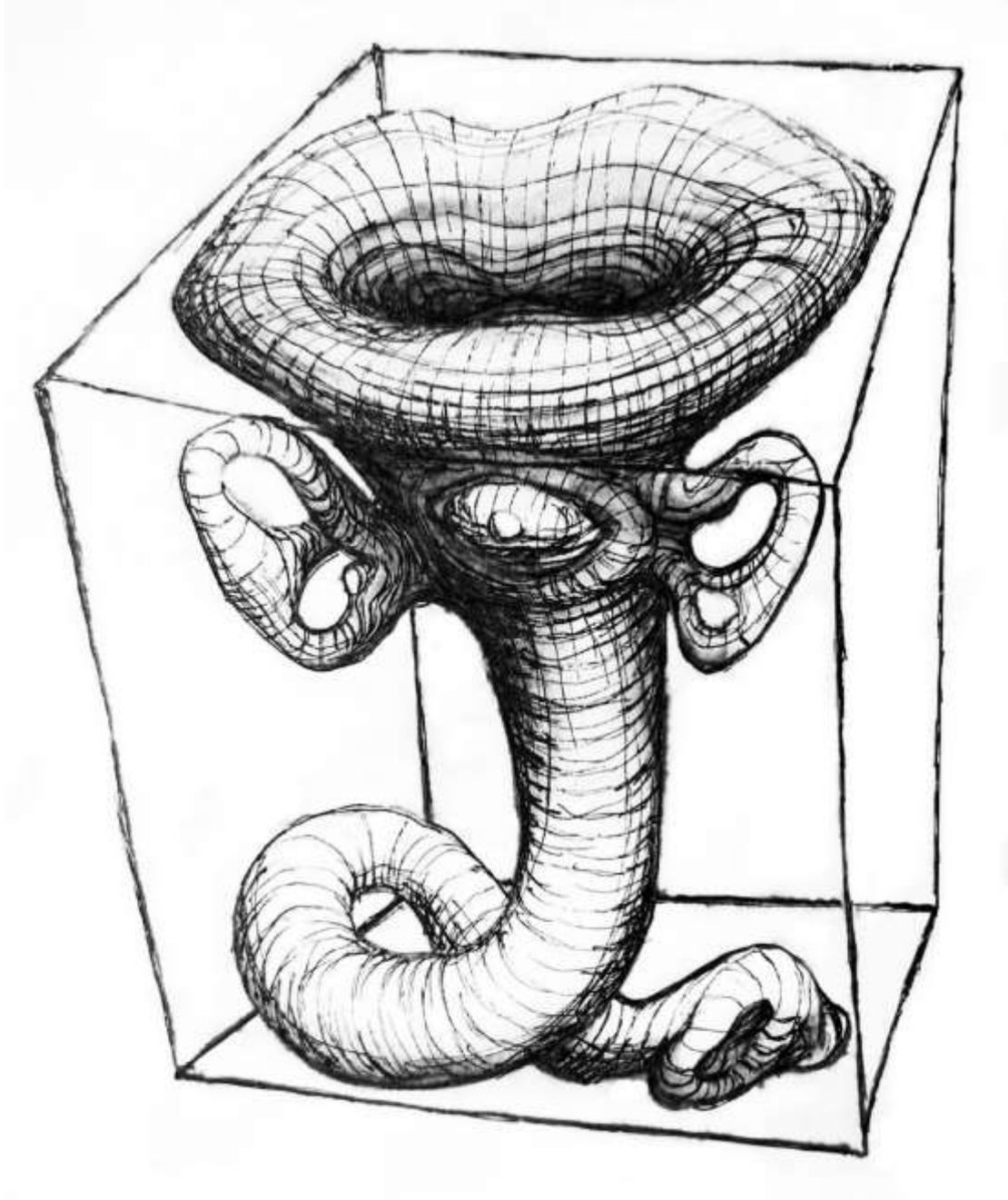
Mesh Woman – Sue Whitmore



Man in a Box – Sue Whitmore



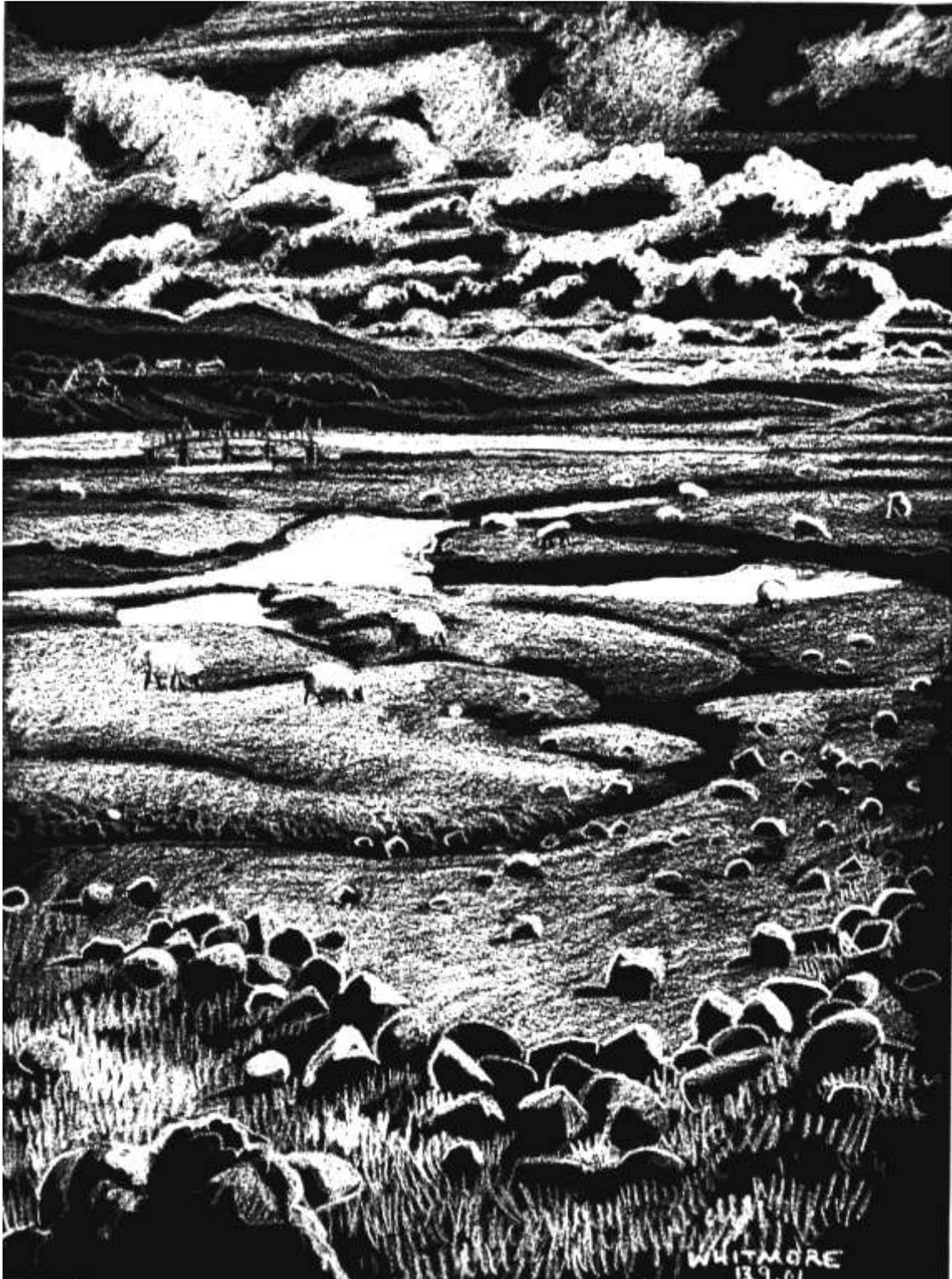
The Poet – Sue Whitmore



The Poet II – Sue Whitmore



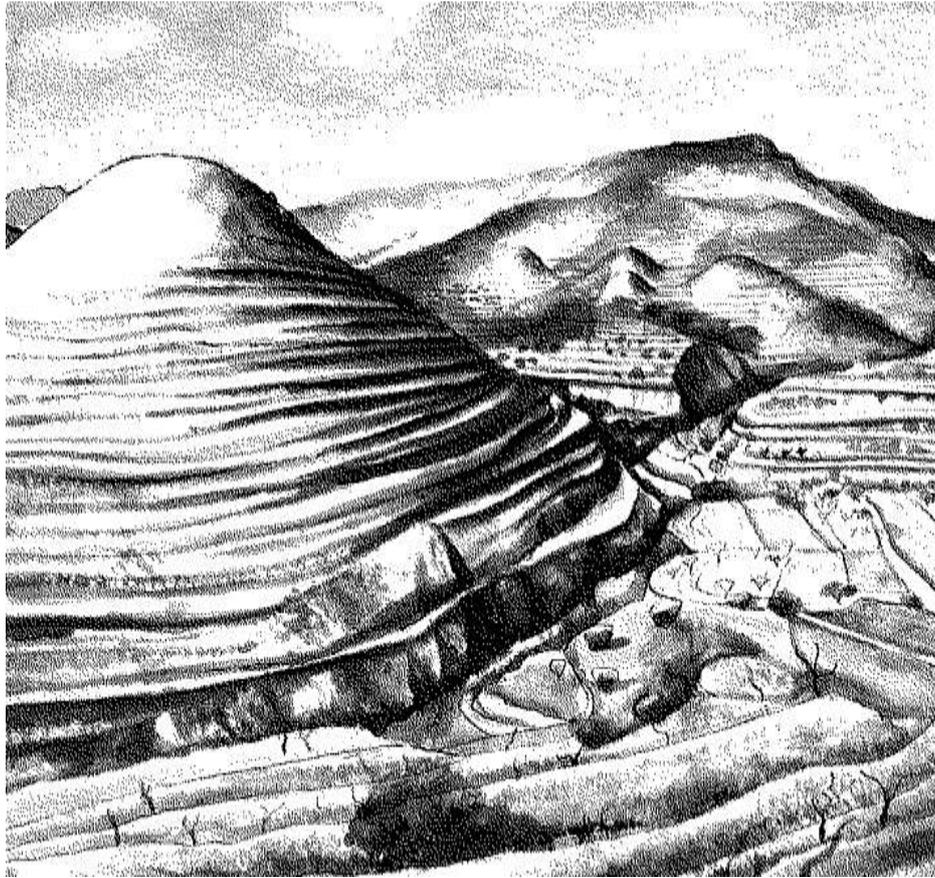
The Child – Sue Whitmore



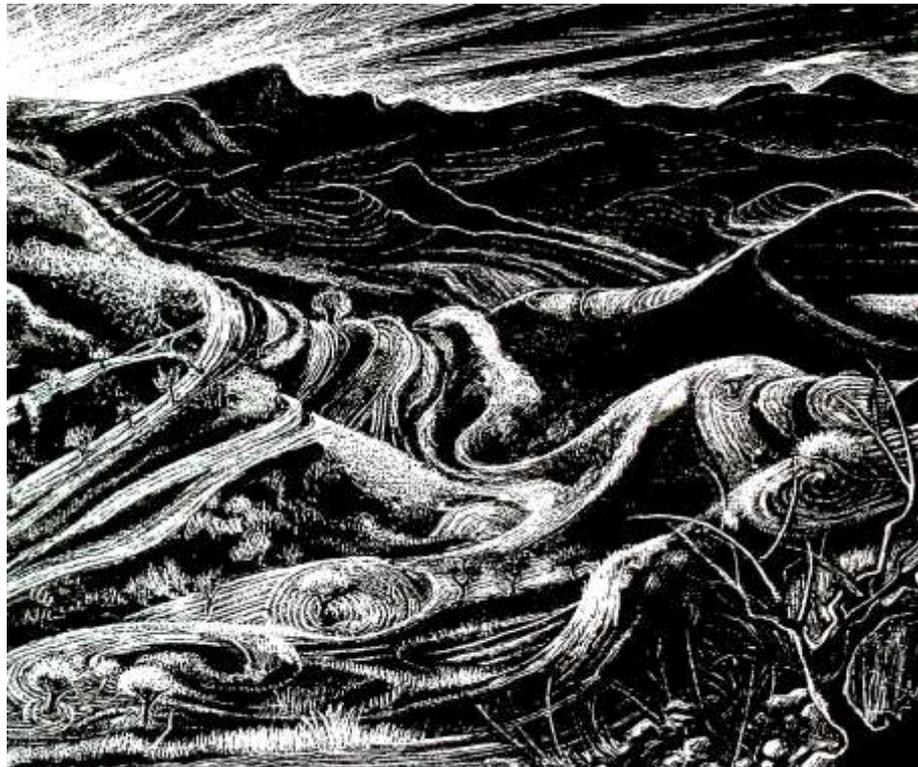
Salt Marsh Mulranney – Sue Whitmore



Merry Go Round – Sue Whitmore



Benesit, the hill behind Relleu – Sue Whitmore



Bancals on the road to Sella – Sue Whitmore



Mermaid Salsa – Sue Whitmore



Masha Sleeping – Sue Whitmore



The Owl and the Pussycat – Sue Whitmore



Sailing in the Firth of Forth – Sue Whitmore



Old Olive Tree – Sue Whitmore



Beech trees, Isle of Whithorn – Sue Whitmore



Reclining Figure – Sue Whitmore



Grief – Sue Whitmore



Hell, Timpanum, Conque Cathedral – Sue Whitmore



Thinking Man II – Sue Whitmore



Plane Trees, Norwich – Sue Whitmore



The Anchor Bar, Duggort Bay – Sue Whitmore



Two Paths in a Wood – Sue Whitmore



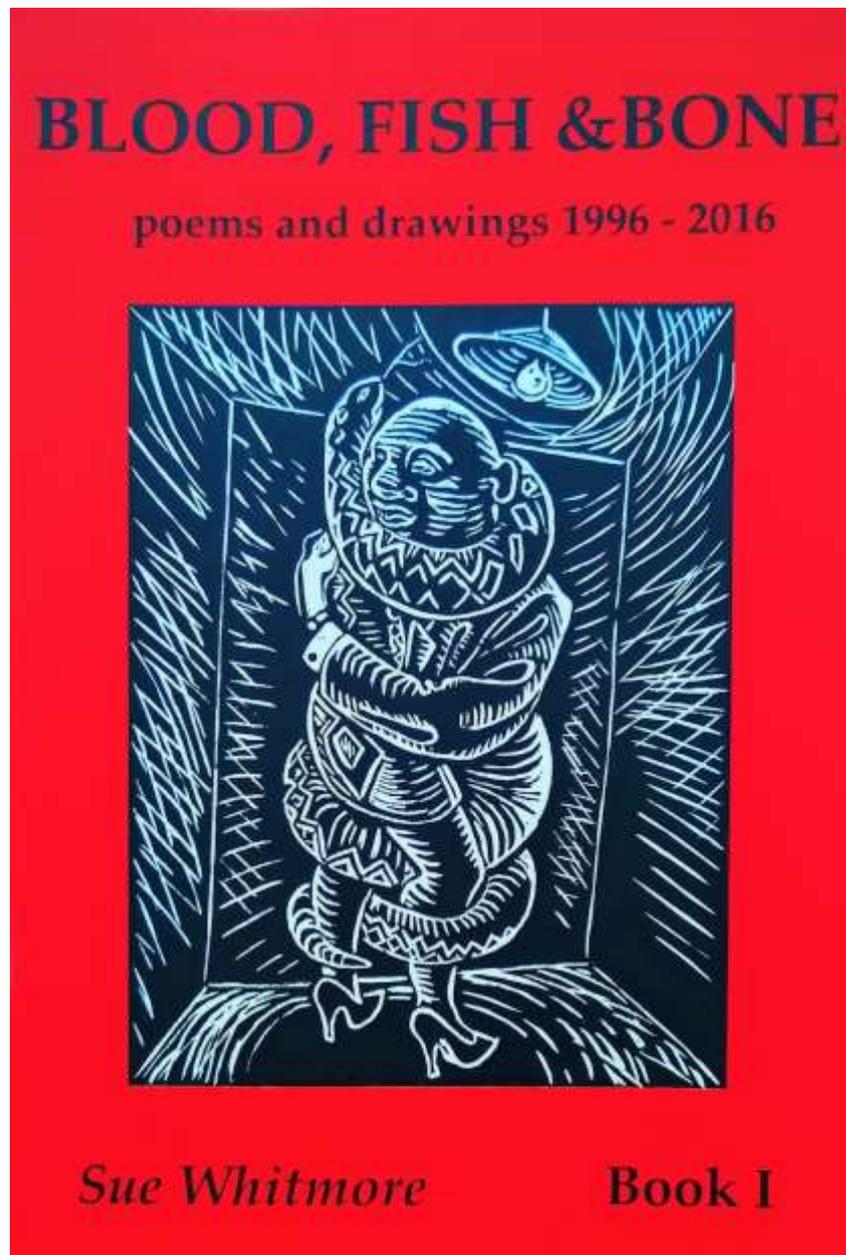
View from the Moorish castle, Relleu – Sue Whitmore



Road on Beare Island – Sue Whitmore

BLOOD, FISH & BONE

BOOKS I & II



*A selection of poems and drawings
1996 - 2016*

by **Sue Whitmore**

With over 140 pages of poem and drawings in each book, the title of 'Blood, Fish & Bone Books I & II', was taken from a box of garden fertiliser. It reminded me of the odd bits and pieces preserved in reliquaries, exquisitely wrought and bejewelled containers of random body parts and seemed entirely appropriate for a collection of poems and drawings. Observations and experiences, confessions and self-indulgences, all have been put behind the glass, even the 'pigges bones', and though equally eclectic hopefully not as venal, fraudulent or reverential.

The collections contain a full bestiary of mosquitoes, cats, chameleons and cockroaches, as well as psychoanalysis and the 'just war'. Some themes developed and threads followed reflect the fact that these poems are a mid-life's work, with an inevitably aggregation of ageing, existential crisis and death. And where would poets be without seasons, love and religion, not to mention poems about poetry itself? Following early anxiety about the contingency of being and the strangeness of things, like many teenagers I was stuck between the paradoxes of cruel certainties and cool scepticism. Though I began to despair of dogmas, poetry and art have remained my primary means of addressing the impossibility of understanding what it means to be human.

In *'Blood, Fish & Bone I & II'*, word and image are equally important continuing a lifelong theme which Antony Ilona reviewing my previous collection, *'Sue Realist : A Selection of Poems & Drawings'* in *City Limits* referred to as the *'interplay of poems and drawings from the imagination'*. With a few exceptions the plates in these latest collections are 'visual poems', ideas in their own right keeping company with words, not subordinate to a particular poem. Many of the images in the books are available as prints.

Nothing of course substitutes for the rather obsessive inner dialogue of

writing . . . and hopefully there is no evidence of the blood, sweat and tears that went into 'Blood, Fish & Bone'. Those who like darker poems will forgive the excursions into something lighter - and vice versa; the poems sometimes go from bathos to pathos at the turn of a page. I easily slip into comic verse, no doubt under the influence of, amongst others Hood, Belloc and Milligan, but I also exercise the right to be philosophical, polemical and occasionally pompous. So, from pun to vituperation and from sexual desire to the burial of dead cats, welcome to my scrambled *oeuvre*. SW London, 2017

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Newsflash from Bradley Young

Hey, guys – I know I am not the most active on Social Media and Messenger but I wanted to share this video with you. Please do share this out to more people, anywhere and everywhere you like.

<https://youtu.be/m4s9qNCAZjY>

Anxiety and depression are something we have all experienced at different times and different levels and in my personal experience that isn't what holds you back.

Anxiety and depression may be a cause: the greater the anxiety and the longer it affects, you the bigger the effect. In my opinion, the effect is telling yourself you can't when you can. Longer you do this the faster your depression and anxiety will increase and affect you longer or at least in my experiences of this. But for me, just like the 'special effects' you see in a movie, it is all fake – it isn't even there unless you chose to believe it is there. By choosing to believe the effect isn't there (which is not always an easy 1-day choice to make or for some people much harder – for me it took as much as a year+) all you are left with is the choice to get back-up. But as mentioned before the cause will only become greater, making the effect harder to overcome, the longer you choose to believe in the cause rather than in yourself.

I have been shouted down, kicked down, name-called down, and rejected in multiple areas and times of my life. You know what I have decided: to refuse to let them destroy me no more but rather shape and craft me instead.

I shall refuse to believe in the effect and I choose to get back up.

Autism, Schizoaffective mental health, and learning difficulties may provide persistent and powerful barriers and difficulties for me. But you know what: if I can't overcome them I will do all I can to squeeze my way around them – because I won't let them say I can't because I can, I have done and I will make a difference – and you can too.

If you are willing to choose to refuse to believe in the effects then I am more than willing to help get back-up for you.

Like I said I am not usually active on Social Media or messenger because the truth is I am sick, tired, and drained by asking the system to change for me, so I will make the changes myself in every way I can.

If you want to change you can make it happen. I am always networking via email and have 8 different contact lists sending relevant information, opportunities, and support out to people based on those lists – whilst at the same time working on 3 systems to support networking, collaboration, and signposting. I expect it to take me another 1000 hours into it just to bring me to date but I am willing to put in 10,000 more: the world can't change itself but you can change the world. Follow your passions follow your dreams and make the changes you want yourself. I and no one else is stopping you if you are willing to see past the effects and chose to get up. This is not easy but it is certainly not impossible. You can have 7 dips and failures a week yet all you need is 1 high and 1 success a week. By doing so you will have 52 highs and successes a year, which can not only help you make, provide and find your own support, but allow you to change and influence the world you wish to work towards. They can be used to make your dreams happen. They can be used to follow your passions and interests, to allow you to build your own reality around you. The failures and dips can and will fade, but your highs and successes will last forever.

Whilst doing networking I am putting my voice in and my voice will be heard and your voice will be heard too. But the conversation will not come to you because you will come to the conversation. You will have your voice heard.

I have set this email up **bradley3young@gmail.com** for you to contact me on for the following reasons:

If you are willing to choose to refuse to believe in the effects of depression and anxiety. As well as willing to try new things to overcome your Learning Difficulties and Mental Health difficulties, then I am more than willing to help get back up with you. These effects and difficulties (for me personally and maybe don't apply for all I refuse to call them disabilities because for me if you can't overcome them you can use immense energy, determination, and passion to squeeze around them) sometimes mean you can't work the same as everyone else but that does not mean there isn't your own way to work towards a common goal waiting to be found.

This is a free service I want to provide, but also an unpaid service – so this does mean even though I will try to get back to you within 1 week it may take up to a couple of months to get back to you. All support will be provided by

email through advice and guidance, as well as information, opportunities, resources, and support I have gained through networking and the systems I am working on. This includes signposting elsewhere. All emails will be answered in order of receiving them. Please send me as much information and details you can feel as comfortable with about yourself as possible, as well as all dreams, passions, goals, and changes you want to work towards, along with all relevant information and details. The more you can share with me and tell me, the fewer emails needed to try and support you and quicker we can overcome this together. I will be happy to support you with this but you need to be ready for this. There is only so much I can do via email the actions you need to carry out yourself. This is why I am putting a limit of 7-11 emails for each person who contacts me: I am only 1 person who is determined, passionate, and genuine from personal experience. So there is only so much time can allow me to do.

You can also contact me for any 0-21 Hour Contracts for job roles you can see value in me to provide, whilst seeing the experience it can bring me. I would be interested in looking at both 7-19 Hour Part-Time roles, 0-Hour Contracts, and 7-21 Hour Temporary Part-Time Roles for up to 1 year. Not only have I created purpose and value for myself. I have done this while squeezing past barriers several times a day to work with my learning and Mental Health difficulties, rather than let them work against me – which they are persistently trying to do so. My passion and determination do not plan to let them too. I can support and empower others to do the same and I am willing to take up every opportunity that allows me to do so.

If you wish to find out more about the networking I do via email please do message me on LinkedIn. If you are aware of the networking I do and have networked with me via email already then please do connect with me and offer any recommendations and endorsement you feel are most relevant and accurate. That would be hugely appreciated as I am extremely new to linked in and eventually want to use it to reach out and support more people. I shall only be adding 3 skills to my profile I would like to request for you to message me or email me any skills that you see in me. For me, I wish for my profile to show skills people say about me not what I tell myself. We all have value and skills and you might be surprised at the skills people that know you will see in you. (<https://www.linkedin.com/mwlite/in/bradley-young-0538341a5>)

The networking I do, systems I am working on and everything that goes with this is currently a fulltime unpaid project. So apologies if there is any delay in responding to messages just know this is not intentional.

TRYING TO MAKE SENSE OF MADNESS

This article is about how I have lived with my neuroses/psychoses – or mental illness, or depression, or madness, or brokenness, or whatever it feels most comfortable to call it. In particular, it is about how I gradually came to understand something of the causes and nature of my illness, and make sense of myself. I think it is possibly a rather bookish article, because reading, and writing, fiction and poetry, have always been so important to me. It is just my story I tell here – and how weary of my preoccupation with it I sometimes feel. Move on! “Get a life!” shouts a voice in my head; I think of the generosity with which some of my friends have given themselves to the world, and the good things they have done in it. Then I think of the novels of, for example, Dickens or le Carré, and how they are all so powerfully driven by their authors’ early experience of the betrayal of love. A happy, or reasonably satisfactory childhood morphs naturally into adolescence, then adulthood, and vanishes, but a traumatic one hangs around, clamouring for attention, resolution. It is difficult to leave it behind. But perhaps, since we are all so interconnected, even the healing work one individual does on him or herself may be of interest to others, or in some way benefit and lift us all.

During the first half of my adult life, there seemed no sense to be made of my mental distress, or none that could be shared with me. Doctors and psychiatrists called it either ‘a chemical imbalance in the brain’, or ‘depression’. I had a minor breakdown at 18, then a bigger one during my Second Year at Oxford, where I spent 5 months in a local mental hospital, the Warneford (about which another undergraduate, Jennifer Dawson, had written a few years previously in her novel *The Ha-Ha*). Three years later, after another breakdown and suicide attempt, I spent some more months in a mental hospital in north London. To be mentally ill is to be in pain, and during these periods even to be awake and conscious was almost to be in more pain than I could bear: I might be so terrified of I-knew-not-what that my body shook, and I dared not speak or move; or I might be overwhelmed by a nameless grief, weeping inconsolably. At the Warneford,

where I spent most of my stay on a locked ward, I twice put my fist through a window; so I think I was sometimes mad with rage, too. This was the 1960s: the treatment was Protective Care, Medication, ECT (in my case, ineffective but harmless), Narcosis (3 or 4 day periods in induced sleep), and just waiting for the episode to pass. There was no reference to my childhood, no discussion of what might be preoccupying my thoughts, no Counselling or Psychotherapy. After the second breakdown, I was referred for weekly Group Therapy at St George's Hospital (held memorably in one of the grand mansions at the top of Knightsbridge, until the whole hospital moved to rather less august premises in Tooting), and this did provide a forum in which I could share emotional problems, and think about my relationships with the other group members, and I am sure it helped to keep me on an even keel. And a lot of the time I was fine, and life developed in other ways. In the 1970s I began to work in publishing; in 1980 I married, and we had two children. At the time I felt I was a reasonably satisfactory wife and mother. In the late 1980s I joined a branch of the Samaritans, and found it so rewarding that I decided to do a 2-year Part-Time Diploma Course in Counselling at a Further Education college. The course encouraged students to have some personal therapy of their own, and in the autumn of 1994 I started weekly therapy with a local psychodynamic therapist practising privately.

I remember how excited I was at the prospect of beginning therapy. I very much wanted to have it because my life seemed to be unravelling again: our older child, now 14, was obviously not thriving, and we didn't know how to help; my relationship with my only sister, always rather strained and volatile, seemed to have broken down irretrievably, for no clear reason; and recently, absolutely out of the blue, I had had a frightening flashback memory from my early childhood. But it wasn't only because I thought I would get help that I was looking forward to therapy. Inside myself, I felt a deep movement towards it. In the month before I began, I cleaned the house from top to bottom; I even dusted out bookshelves and our many books. I think I felt that somehow everything was going to be made new – although later I remembered the passage in St Matthew which tells how a

house may be swept clean of its resident Devil, only for the Devil to return – with 7 other spirits more evil than itself . . .

My therapist was some years older than me, experienced. I soon found myself talking freely about my natal family and my childhood. I had not realised how deeply I disliked my parents. As the therapy progressed I began to feel very uneasy, preoccupied with my past, disturbed on a deep level. About six months into the therapy, two crucial early memories returned to me. This was in the early spring of 1995, when I was 51 years old.

The first memory returned one evening while I was washing up the supper things in the kitchen at home. My husband and our two teenagers were watching television in the sitting room. I was thinking, but I did not know what I was thinking; much was going on in my mind. I lifted a plate out of the water – a blue and white enamel plate decorated with Edward Lear's drawings for his poem *The Owl and the Pussy Cat*, which I still have – and suddenly I knew. It was just the knowing that came in those first moments, no images, no words. As a small girl, about 3 years old, I had been sexually abused by my granny, my mother's mother. I opened the kitchen door and went out into the back garden, still holding the plate. What would be appropriate at this moment? I asked myself. What should I do? I went and sat down on the low wall that surrounded our rockery, and I howled into the suburban night, like a wolf.

The second recovery came a week or two later, during one of my therapy sessions. I had told my therapist what had happened. I somehow expected that I would now start feeling better, but I was feeling worse and worse. That day my therapist, unusually for her, was wearing a skirt and tights. She had beautiful legs. At one point the back of her shoe slipped off her heel. I saw it, and said, "I was my mother's lover." It erupted from me like lava out of a volcano.

I remember the moment. I had found, during the sessions, that I sometimes seemed to be able to read my therapist's thoughts. And as I said this, I felt in her a smile of satisfaction. I guess she had suspected what might be coming, but she had never once suggested, in our time together, that I

might have been sexually abused. Before this I could barely have entertained the thought that a mother might abuse her infant daughter, let alone that my mother might have abused me. In a session soon after this, when I was beginning to try to comprehend what had happened, I said to my therapist, "But is it true? Can I believe this?" She said, "I'm afraid I can't help you with that. You have to make up your own mind."

How could it be true? It presented my mother and my grandmother as paedophiles, and me as the twice-over victim of incest. It overthrew everything I needed to believe about myself and my family. It was hideous. But how could I not believe it? These memories had come from deep inside me; they, and the process by which they had emerged, felt entirely organic. If they were not to be believed in, then how could I trust myself ever again?

What is it like, suddenly to recover the memory of a traumatic childhood event which has lain 'forgotten' all your adult life? Because it was such an extraordinary experience, one of the first things I needed to do was to try and find ways of describing it, explaining it – to myself, as much as to anyone else. These are the images I came up with:

It is as if you were standing on the shore, looking out over the sea. The tide is in, the sea is calm; it is that old grey English sea you have known all your life. Suddenly you seem to notice something lying in the water – Yes: you can see its outlines now. It is some kind of huge, flat organism, like a giant amoeba, many feet across. It is lolling with the movement of the water, just not breaking the surface. There is something horrible about it, sinister, menacing.

Or it is as if you were looking at a much-loved family photograph. There you all are – as you were that day, gathered together, some smiling, some solemn, some making a face. Everyone in the family loves this photo and has a copy of it; it's on your mantelpiece, and you often cast an affectionate glance at it. But this time, as you look, something catches your eye. What's that? That's not something you have noticed before. There, at the back, in the corner, there is something horrible going on, something unthinkable.

These images still feel right to me. I feel they convey the shock and horror of the experience, the momentousness of it. How it must radically alter the life and perceptions of anyone who undergoes it.

As the therapy continued, and I remembered more – the memories did not return as violently as those first two, but gradually surfaced and accumulated around them, as if they were the volcanic peaks of a whole sunken land – the forgotten country of my childhood became visible. Both my mother's and my grandmother's sexual abuse had stopped well before I became articulate enough to talk about it. My mother's abuse certainly stopped when my father came home from the war, at Christmas 1945, when I was 32 months old. I must have "forgotten" it very soon afterwards. As soon as my father was at home, closeness of every kind ceased between my mother and me, and when I think of the relationship the two of us had from that time onwards, I think of two sheets of glass sliding against each other: just surfaces, no connection. The sexual abuse was part of a general picture that included emotional abuse and, when my father came on the scene, physical abuse too. The fact was that both our parents – my sister's and mine – had suffered extreme emotional deprivation in childhood; they had never been loved children, and so they did not know what it was to be a child, and they did not know how to love and be loved. When they had a child of their own, of course they treated it as they had been treated themselves. They followed the model they had been taught. Perhaps it was even a relief to them to express and act out some of the painful behaviours they carried deep in their memories. Even so, I think that sometimes the parenting instincts that are present in most living beings, the loving, nurturing feelings, came to life in them, and it may be that they felt freer to express these with their second child, my sister, than with me.

What I had now to learn was that I had been shaped by the way I was brought up. My body, mind and feelings held powerful memories of pain which sometimes 'broke through' into my adjusted adult self and caused it to 'break down'. And because the abusive treatment was so comprehensive, and began so early, some of my most basic formulations about life – about the nature of people, relationships, love, sex – were distorted and

dysfunctional. I had learned quite the wrong lessons. I had learned to make a good showing by observing and imitating other people; but when my guard was down, as in, say, close or long-term relationships, or unusual or stressful situations, that early, instinctive me and her behaviours resurfaced. I was largely unconscious of this aspect of myself. I liked to think of myself as a kind, warm, spontaneous person, but there was a more fundamental and powerful me, fearful, heavily defended, calculating, non-functional in important areas of human feeling, capable of serious cruelty.

I had also to see that I had been to our first daughter the same sort of mother as mine had been to me. I had not sexually abused her, but after the early months I was unable to be close to her. I did not know what it was to be a child. I did not know how to love her. When she was 2.5 years of age I 'broke' with her emotionally, as my mother had broken with me. By this time I had a second daughter, and she became the 'good' child, my first daughter the 'bad' child. It would be hard to overestimate the suffering, the deep damage, I caused her.

For her, as for me, those precious, impressionable early years, when you can learn, hand in hand with your parents, to love and trust yourself and others, and to find the world a good and exciting place despite its horrors, are long past. They cannot be recovered. But you can still learn, and change. I have had many, many years of therapy since those first sessions in the autumn of 1994. In therapy, partly by talking freely about my life and relationships, but primarily by being in relationship with the therapist, and watching how that developed, I could gradually become aware of my unconscious assumptions and attitudes, and understand why I had them. And once I could bring adult reason and feeling to bear on them, I could work to change them. It seemed vital to do this, not only for myself, but for the good effect these changes could have on my family, and especially on our older daughter. He is now a trans man, and has worked on himself too; the two of us have worked committedly at our relationship. It is hard, often painful, but endlessly rewarding.

During this long battle with mental illness, several ideas have become important to me:

The idea that we are programmed to self-heal. I remember going on a tour of a little local park with its enthusiastic young head gardener, and how he showed us an old tree that seemed to have a substantial, rather spongy mass in its trunk. “Trees self-heal,” he said. “At some point this tree got a long split in its trunk – structural damage that seriously threatened its survival – and you can see that it has produced this stuff to repair the damage.” I had always accepted without thinking that my body would do its best to heal a wound or fight off a virus; but when I look back at my life, I am astonished to see the way the organism that I am found ways of protecting me psychically as well as physically, and promoting healing when mental health was compromised. When the sexual abuse happened, I ‘forgot’ it, so that, as far as possible, I was able to continue growing and accomplishing the stages of child development. But the injury was still there – strange little episodes half-reminded me of it as I grew into adolescence, though at the time I did not understand their meaning – waiting until I was strong enough, mature enough, to deal with it. I feel sure that the intention of the life-form that I am was always that I should remember, and make sense of it, and return to wholeness as far as I could. When I joined Samaritans, I began to learn how to be with pain and dysfunction – albeit other people’s – and to address it with compassion and understanding. This experience led me into further explorations in psychology. When it was relatively safe – when I was not only in therapy, but also on a counselling course that offered me the support of fellow students and tutors, I ‘remembered’ what I had to remember. I feel sure that the being I am wants to comprehend all that it has experienced, and experiences. I find that thought so steady and encouraging; at times of despair, so inspiring.

For a long time, I thought that, if you had suffered serious psychic damage, this instinctive push towards healing could only be activated and encouraged by psychotherapy. I do rate therapy highly: for me, to embark on therapy has been to go on the kind of dangerous and revelatory journey

that is a recurrent theme in literature – the quests of Sir Gawain, and Sir Parsifal, of Don

Quixote, and Frodo and Sam in *The Lord of the Rings*, the journey W. H. Auden writes about in his poem *Atlantis*, and of course the voyage of Homer's Ulysses from Troy back to Ithaca, which has inspired so many writers. How much Ulysses must have found out about himself during his time with Calypso, as he devised a way of getting past the Harpies, outwitting Polyphemus. How much it changed him, so that, when he got back at last to the home he thought he longed for, it was not, now, where he wanted to be. But Psychotherapy may not be for everyone, and now I think there may be as many paths towards healing as there are people who want to make the trip. I feel that to engage with whatever gives you real pleasure, whether it is work or a hobby, may be the start of a healing path for many people. “Beauty is truth, truth beauty,” Keats said – and if, for too long a time, your truth has been ugliness – a sense of being worthless, or bad, what could be more restorative than to do something you like doing, that you feel you may be good at, that satisfies and encourages some inner enthusiasm. There is no interest so apparently trivial or superficial – knitting, stamp collecting, beer-making, train-spotting, flower-arranging – that cannot give enormous pleasure and can also, if or when one is up for it, get one meeting new people, bring one alive to aspects of History, Geography, Art, Science. **Follow your thread.** I loved writing poetry when I was a child, and during my first year at secondary school, two teachers stopped me in the corridor to congratulate me on a poem of mine in the school magazine! Then I got ill, and I did not write poetry any more – until I started therapy, and then, almost at once, that voice revived in me. A few years ago, in a moment of desperation, I shut my eyes, put my finger down on a random page of a collection of Robert Frost’s poetry I had been reading, then looked to see what I had landed on. My finger was on a sentence that read: “The muse will take care of you.” And so it/she does. Writing poetry is my way forward. It moves me on – I can't quite explain how.

The idea of forgiveness also continues to be important to me. This has been the hardest part of my article to write.

I want to forgive. It is so obviously the generous, warm, loving thing to do. It is a move away from fracture, towards healing and wholeness. Clearly so much better than being fixated on justice, which often prolongs and perhaps escalates hostilities. What a good feeling it gives you when a novel or a play ends with people who have been set at odds by some dreadful event coming to understand one another's point of view, forgiving each other, reconciling. "Give me your hands, if we be friends/And Robin shall restore amends." But then I think of the power in novels and plays that end unhappily, when bodies litter the stage, when Iago refuses to say another word about his calculated, cold-blooded treachery, when there is no silver lining, and the only thing to do is sweep away the mess and start again. Good fiction and drama that end in this way strike a deep chord in me. They feel human, they feel real.

There are so many reasons why I could forgive my parents. Of course I have many deeply unattractive qualities of my own, and, like my parents, I betrayed the love and trust of my child. How can I expect to be forgiven, if I cannot forgive? My therapists forgave me; they sat with my vices, with what I had done, and did not condemn, but helped me do better. My parents had no such help, and the suffering and deprivation they endured as children was extreme. And as a result of my therapy I have learned to see things in a less judgmental way. I know now that each person is a world unto him/herself, with its own logic, its own imperatives, its own strictly limited set of options. Perhaps no one is really free to be the person he would like to be. But, on the other hand, there is such a heavy weight on the not-forgiving side of the scales. My parents cast such a blight on my life, my sister's life, my son/daughter's life. And they have never moved a step towards acknowledging this. When I told them about my recovered memories, their response was to say that they were nonsense, and I was simply having another breakdown. My sister felt the same. I lost my natal family then – if I had not lost them long before.

I looked up 'forgive' in the dictionary. 'To forgive' is the same verb as 'to pardon'. Both words have come into English from the Latin 'perdonare', 'pardon' by way of French, 'forgive' by way of German. They both mean the same: 'to give completely'. But if I 'give completely', what is there to push back against, to give me definition? What is there left of me?

I don't know how to resolve it. I just don't know.

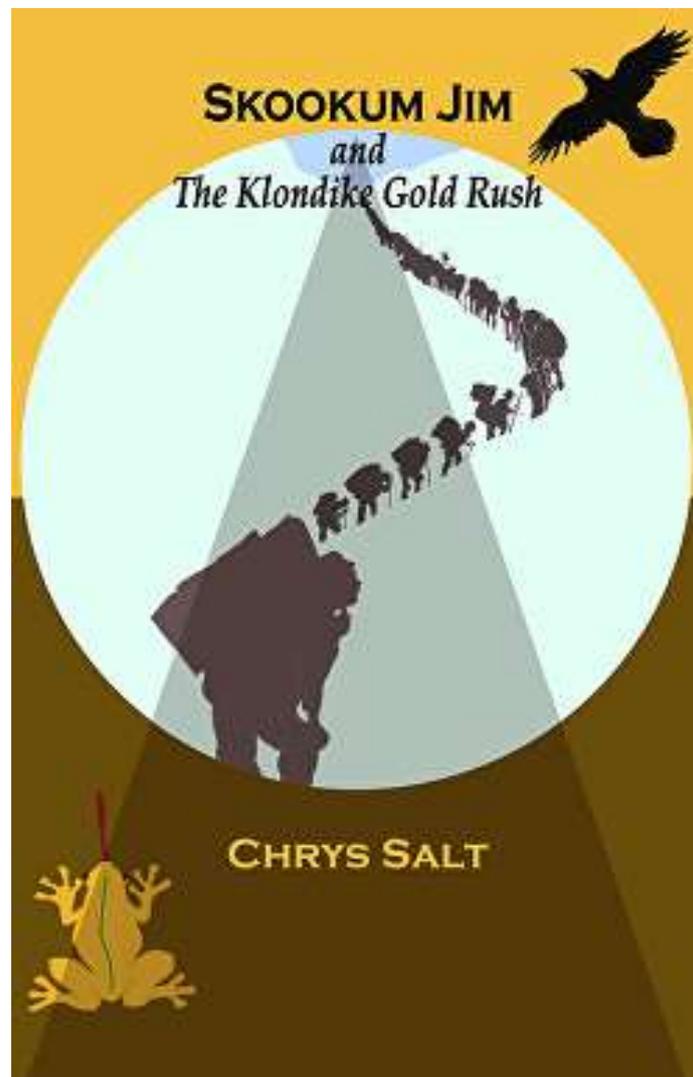
Two things come to mind – strange, to put them together, but it works for me. Carl Jung said that where a conflict cannot be resolved, you need to move away from it, and let a possible answer come to you out of left field. And the great 18th century actor-manager David Garrick said, "Any stroller can fool the town with tragedy, but comedy is a serious business." Perhaps (at the tender age of 77!) I can forget about my inward-looking preoccupation with forgiving or not-forgiving. I've spent my time in the dungeon. It was a dreadful place, but nevertheless I learned a good deal there that fits me better for what life I've got left on the outside. Now I'm going to go out there – quite pleased with myself! – and enjoy what the world still has to offer me. I pray that my dear son/daughter may escape too.

Claire McLaughlin

SKOOKUM JIM and The Klondike Gold Rush by Chrys Salt

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Indigenous communities' struggles land rights and other rights are now acknowledged as a salient feature of the present world political climate. This has been the case for a long time, but until relatively recently they have tended to be suppressed. The Tagish First Nation, the original inhabitants of the Yukon area of North Canada, are one such community. They suffered the consequences of the Klondike Gold Rush of 1896, and their sufferings continue. Chrys Salt's book embraces past and present. A visit to the Yukon in 2014 enabled her to see present-day conditions, and encouraged her to study them in depth, as well as learning the background of the Gold Rush.

She explains in her Foreword how Skookum Jim, a member of the First Nation, in the company of some white prospectors, discovered gold and helped bring disaster onto his own people. She gives strong emphasis to the threatened culture of the First Nation – “many of whom strive to regain the way of life they have lost.” Her thoroughness has embraced contacting Skookum Jim’s family.

Panning for words encapsulates the sheer drudgery which was the sad lot of the vast majority of prospectors. I feel compelled to put it alongside Seamus Heaney’s *Digging* in making analogies between hard physical labour and literary endeavour. *Han* – gold first discovered in China. Yes: for so many ancient civilisations, it had a purely decorative – and aesthetic – value.

The Storyteller seems to refer to a bardic tradition among the First Nation. It suggests ceremonial dress for the poet/raconteur. There is also the suggestion of the use of glove puppets. Do the bards include animal imitations in their recitals? They seem to be equipped with magic boxes. Of course they lament the ravaging of tribal lands. In her final stanza, Chrys states her aspiration to take over, extend the function of the bards, in her own voice, transferred to a book, but keeping the bardic spirit: “. . . revive some willing ghosts of words/to dance my stories on.”

Part 1: *Skookum Jim and the Frog* is taken from a First Nation legend. Some startling ‘shape-shifting’ here: “I changed into a needle from a pine”. In that form, he is swallowed by an old man’s granddaughter – then, presumably, emerged from her body in human form. He gained the confidence of the old man, who trusted him enough to open up his special casket: a Light Goddess emerged. He then did another ‘shape-shift’ into a raven, and grabbed Light. They went on a spectacular flight, to see the splendours of the world. This makes an extremely bizarre and complex comparison with European legends about frogs turning into princes.

Keish’s childhood 1850s describes a tribal society’s strong sense of identification with animal species: ‘child of the Wolf Clan/Bear was his brother.’ There follows a survey of an oral poetic tradition closely bonded with elemental struggles: ‘tracked as a wolf might/the caribou’s wandering.’

The poem concludes with a proclamation of inexorable fate: “when words are spoken/there is no unsaying/when earth is broken/there is no returning.

Frog Song (1) – I get the impression that the frog is a sacred animal to the First Nation. This particular frog seems to have an alter ego, watching himself from a distance. He seems to have been grabbed by a human being, ‘cupped in a furnace of strange hands’. He jumps to freedom. The third stanza suggests that he is watched by a predatory bird, who finally leaves him alone.

The Story is told through the persona of a white prospector in appropriate brogue. Yes: racism rears its head, with terms like ‘prairie nigger’. Skookum Jim is attacked and badly injured; a ‘coast frog’ feeds on his blood. Jim miraculously recovers. *Frog Song (2)* pursues this theme further. There is a suggestion that the frog’s licking the blood helps the wound to heal. The Frog seems to be a saviour, a benign entity. *Frog Song (3)*: the raven, mentioned before, now steals the Sun. As an amphibious creature, the Frog has special, benign powers: “. . . mine was a gift of Elements,/to pass from land to water,/enter dreams,/sing Frog Song in the ears of men.” ‘Frog songs’, presumably, are morale boosting chants for the benefit of humanity. In the second stanza he seems to enter a human body, then do a ‘shape-shift’ into a ‘woman shape’, and guide his charge like a supreme benefactor.

Love in Three Acts – Act 1: romance between a girl of the First Nation and a prospector. She teaches him her native woodcraft. He has abandoned a child in California, and is circumscribed by two obsessions: gold and his beloved. She prevails: “Her sky becomes his sky,/ her ways, his ways.” *Act 2*: They have got married and gone to California. In *Act 3*, everything has gone sour. She is brutally ditched; her husband has found a ‘Yankee paramour’. She is driven to desperation, alcoholism and Criminal Damage.

The Story (repeated title): This is a ‘flashback’ to George Carmack and Katie’s earlier life. The couple have ‘gone missing’ from their Yukon neighbourhood. Skookum Jim is concerned, and goes in search of them. George had obviously incurred disapproval from the other prospectors because of

having 'gone native'. There was a feud with another prospector, Robert Henderson, who resented a native having any share of the gold 'spoils'.

Salmon Song – as far as salmon (and probably other fish too) are concerned, the Frog is some sort of prophet or seer. The salmon are an allegory of the native people, who are told 'to find a dreamscape in a white man's head'. Formerly, they had enjoyed a high level of dignity, comparable to that of the First Nation before the arrival of the white man. Men were 'unmaking us' (the salmon) as the white man was 'unmaking' the First Nation.

Tourist Tableau, Bonanza Creek 2017 – a flash to the near-present. The tourists presumably come dressed up 'retro' like 1896 prospectors. Interesting observation 'no telling which is white man, 'Indian'. Chrys considers the tourists to be empty headed fools, with no conception of the original prospectors' traumatic experiences.

Panning Bonanza Creek 2017 – tourists like playing at being prospectors, without 'burning their boats'. Their greed, however, may be comparable to that of the original Gold Rushers. Stones from *Bonanza Creek 2017* – some raw details of animal slaughter, followed by a seeming flashback to a 'heroic' past: "a rich brother from another age,/dressed in the future, promising the earth."

PART 2: THE KLONDIKE GOLD RUSH

Gold! Gold! Gold! Gold! – this poem is a brilliant synthesis of historicism and contemporaneity. Presumably there are still some Gold Rushers in existence who, in the spirit of 1849 and 1896, are prepared to 'drop everything' and take colossal gambles in search of fortunes. The references to Bonmarché, permafrost and Klondike bicycles are thoroughly contemporary. The vision of abandoned cities and sardine-packed 'boat people' is very near to our current chaos (including the Pandemic). There is final pathos in the poem with the reference to a 'stupid photograph'.

The Fever captures a prospector's sense of desperation. He finds a fleck of gold in a fish's innards, which spurs him on to feverish panning. This is the mentality of the total gambler – 'the last ace poised/above a Royal

Flush/when fire kept its tongue.’ A wry comment at the end: “the future in its breathing out/would open at the bookmark/of his coming back.” (In all probability empty-handed).

Song of the wise Chieftain seems to be an allegory of the culture of the First Nation, threatened by white civilisation. Hammer Water and Mountain are harbingers of doom, whilst Raven, Moon and Bear are the saviours and protectors of the tribal way of life. *Bennett Lake* – again a blend of past and present. The first two stanzas evoke the turmoil of the 1896 prospectors. But then “The landscape’s different now.” The prospecting site has been abandoned, and nature has reclaimed its own.

What the lookout saw – the lookout is one of the First Nation, alerting his people to the incursions of the white man. He is horrified by ‘this loud flotilla on the water snake’ and the swarming influx of whites; he is deeply pessimistic about the outcome: “‘Until our fallen warriors return,’/the wise chief says,/we will be moose calves in a land of wolves.’” *A Sinking* describes a boat wreck, of which there must have been many in the Gold Rush era, and quite a few in the present day. *Caribou* is a graphic description of the traditional practices of a hunting community – one dash of white man’s modernity with the mention of a truck. *Black Bear* is predominantly benign, though she does show a hint of menace when she turns away from the humans.

Dyea 2017 – as per its sub-heading, a description of a ghost town: “There’s no one left to speak for it/but stories of a past it scarcely owns’. An interesting comment on documentary reconstruction, putting the progress of time into reverse gear to ‘perfect’ the old wharf and boat; final reference to ‘random clues and photographs’. It feels as if the abandoned town amenities could be of quite recent date. *Slide Cemetery, Dyea 2017* draws an analogy between the Yukon and Flanders of World War I. The Gold Rush must have claimed masses of lives, of those bearing picks and shovels instead of guns.

The Chilkoot pass – relatively secure, comfortable tourists retrace the paths of the prospectors, without any of their anxieties, apart from ones about

slipping and falling. *He wishes for the Internet* is a lament from someone still not 'plugged in'. My general impression is that people on such expeditions now are always equipped with laptops or camphones. In *Five Finger Rapids*, the rapids are portrayed in terms of a savage beast; the tide is 'famished'. There was a tragic boat-wreck; one prospector lost everything except a locket of his daughter's hair. *Chipmunk above Five Finger Rapids* – a crucial part of the ecosystem's fauna menaced, like so many species, by 'the greedy madness of the age'.

Grand Forks Hotel 1899 is a laudable attempt to reconstruct the raw, elemental conditions of that time and that location. For some reason. The word 'packers' here feels a bit anachronistic; I may be wrong. *The road to Dawson 2017* – Chrys met a woman with the body of her husky dog which had just been run over. She offered some comfort and assistance, but the woman was totally cold and unresponsive.

Riding Shotgun 2017 – that phrase means travel as a guard next to the driver of a vehicle, ride in the front passenger seat of a vehicle. The term originated from shotgun guards who travelled on stage coaches. There is an aggressive couple of tourists imposing themselves on the pilot of a small aircraft, without much consideration for the pilot or for the aircraft's capacity. And what is the purpose of this imposition – 'a box to tick, a story in the bar.'

The Chilkoot Pass from the air – a panoramic view of the landscape, seen from a rickety aircraft; a sense of insecurity: "We're fragile as a butterfly". She describes the terrain as if it were a gigantic building: 'the sheer hewn stairs, the stiff road banister'. She admits to being at some 100 years' remove from the Gold Rush era, and from all its concomitant hardships: 'too far from the story anyway/to slip inside their skins from here.' She can neither get under nor into their skins.

Robert Service's cabin, Dawson City 2017 – Robert Service was a British-Canadian poet and writer, often called 'the Bard of the Yukon' (Wikipedia). The poem seems to refer to an actor doing a reconstruction of part of Robert Service's life-cum reading of his poetry – to some extent an empty

gesture, because he never got anywhere near the poet's real trials and tribulations. One of Robert Service's best-known poems was his dedication to the cremation of Sam McGee. The actor probably never got anywhere near the dignity of that ceremony. In his background are the brutalities of the ecosphere: 'frozen horses/fed to skinny dogs,/in their turn,/eaten by famished men.'

A Call Girl's Tale: Grand Forks Hotel 1890 – a valiant attempt to reconstruct the rawness and ruthlessness indispensable for survival then and there. An important side-light on white-Native American relations. *The Gold Rush Museum, Seattle 2017* is a cynical take on the Museum Culture. A strange legend-cum-vision of Skookum Jim throwing gold and bank notes from a balcony, and white men below pilfering gold from their friends. In the third stanza 'a baying tide of balaclavas' suggests a gang of protesters, as does the pepper spray and the woman with a banner saying *Immigrants Go Home*.

Mountain Voices – the voices in question here are those of a volcano: graphic portrayal of the wreckage caused by its eruption, claiming the lives and possessions of many a prospector (and presumably many a tourist thereafter). Some of them were buried in lava. A bitter comment: "Do we learn anything from history,/the stranded polar bear, the rising sea?" A final touching vision of a man holding a 'plaster cast' (embedded in hardened lava) body of a child – one of the victims.

In *Coda*, Chrys acknowledges that her background had none of the hardships and intensities which face the Five Nations. But she feels a deep affinity with their struggles: 'your stories walking in my skin' and has a mission to proclaim it to the white man's world. The poem is followed by a brief summary of the First Nation's struggle for its rights.

Afterword expresses a longing for an idyllic state there "the only gold was sun". The benign Frog reappears with an apparent power to remove the bodies, living and dead, of the intruders, including the tourists: "Greed lounged with sandwiches/and fished/then catching nothing, fell asleep."

This collection is admirably lucid and reader-friendly. My impression is that it is in the vanguard of an area of ecopoetry speaking for the rights of indigenous communities worldwide.

David Russell



Lidija Golc is a teacher of Slovene Literature and Language at a Pharmaceutical College in Ljubljana. Her students are immensely well read and they are getting prizes for essay writing under her professional and heartfelt tuition. She has been writing and publishing poems for 20 years, but these are the first translations in English. These poems were written during the time of Coronavirus, when the schools were closed.

They speak of the teacher and of students – of the survival as a new challenge.

Slovene language, she writes book reviews...

The last few sequences - from page 15...where you see these lines

During this unusual time

unusually large quantity

of bread and cake and biscuits -

this poem and to the end... are good examples of the school atmosphere during the virus...

Newsflash

Zvon, the oldest Slovene magazine for literature, culture and questions of social life, is 150 years old. It comes out 6 times a year – based in Slovenia, in the capital **Ljubljana**, but it dedicates considerable space to Slovene writers who live abroad, in Diaspora. It presents poetry, prose, essays, book reviews, art-criticism, interviews. Translations of contemporary or classic writing are always encouraged, for instance parts of a novel, a poem or two, always with a short note about the author. In this issue **Peter Townshend** is presented by an extract from his book *Postman from Nagasaki*, which was translated and published by the Slovene PEN, and two short stories by H. C. Andersen, who is only recently being discovered in Slovenia as a writer for adults, not only for children. **Gary Coyle**'s poem was seen in *Poetry Express Newsletter*; it was considered by the translator and by the editors as a very relevant poem describing life of nowadays, as it probably ranges all over Europe.

Ifigenija Simonović, a writer, potter, translator, used to accompany Survivors (**David Russell**) when living in London (1978-2002); she joined the Poetry Olympics movement (Michael Horovitz) after returning to her native country. She is a translator and currently a president of the **Slovene PEN Centre**. Her

collection of poems *Striking Root* was translated by **Anthony Rudolf** and published by the **Menard Press** (1996).

NEWCORONAVIRUSLINGS

Coronavirus.

Fire.

Earthquake.

Stressing distress.

It is all for real now.

*

Just as ulcers –
popping up in the coronatime
like coronasecrets

out into
lethargic,
condensed,
contracted,
shivered

day to day.

They allocate
priorities,
they draw open the curtains
of truth
and they start
hammer them hammer
hamerhammer them
into concrete
of no recognition,
of no understanding,
of no preconceptions,
of no acceptance.

Secrets
are tired of hiding
in the background,

in subconscious,
tired of being covered up under the
coats
of understanding,
of tolerance,
of forgiveness,
of adaptation
of habits, good and bad.

Secrets shake off their secretiveness
by themselves.

Coronatime
gives them wings
self-evident, legitimate
and legal right.

All the way – from the underground
to the freedom
of the coronatime.

*

Masks, blue, grey, colourful,
made of paper, painted,
washed and disinfected,
ironed,
stretched between the root of the
nose
and the root of the chin,
from ear to ear.
blocking breathing in or out,
blocking breaths – dry or wet.

We walk wearing them,
we greet each other wearing them,
we nod to each other
and we hide from each other
wearing them.

Elbowing,
not shaking hands,
wearing gloves,
no hand-squeezing.

What are our eyes seeing?
What do they sense:

is it you?
is it not you?
are you in pain?

All of us,
together, not apart,
all of us
towards better times.

*

Enough time for realization.

Love at a gulp,
huge hugs,
protective self-confidence,
where is it coming from just like this -
this precious friend -
out if thin air, out of clear water,
from the sun?

Eternal, the strongest
love didn't allow
neither bare reason nor anticipation
nor deep breathing either
in order to get expressed.
Love put everything in order,
hid everything, put up with it all.

Love stifled responsibility,
it burned it at its core;
waitedwaitedwaited
without any hope of victory,
all lonely, lonesome, faithful,
staunch, unbeatable.

End there comes the time of the
enoughtime.

Sweetheart keeps moving under
one's feet,
patiently evoking sad memories
of pleasant walks along the coast,
your hand resting in another's -
from one cliff to the next,
from one snare to the next,
from one wound to the next.

*

Looking back
the heart
stops
from time to time.

O, love,
o, time,
pray for me.

*

Who works the hardest
during the coronatime:

What
turns, makes noise,
wants to step out,
opens, closes door,

ruminates, discloses,
jumps,
buzzes,
stops and starts again,
what doesn't sleep
not even during the night.

What takes care of us
without bragging;
calming us down, opens door,
waits,
not for long . . .
hugs again, shakes,
smiles stoically,
always there,
actually alone
and not quite ...

Our washing machine
(no name given – you have your
own).

*

Why not wearing a straw hat,
why not having long hair,
why not putting music on really
loud?
Why not wearing a swimming
costume,
why not sandals,
belly hanging over, and a belt, too?
Why not wearing perfume
from the back of a drawer,
why not dancing
in the middle of winter?

Or in spring, summer,
when there is nothing to do,
why, why, why -

because of the coronamonth of
May.

*

And one needs some sun rays,
a few a day, on a balcony,
yes, one does.
There comes rustle and bustle
from balconies, telephones are
ringing,
chirping, talking.

Over there one can see a flat roof,
it is usually lifeless,
now it is occupied by a couple
in sweat-sets,
each one on his/her own
blanket,
hands under heads.

Balconies felt peaceful.

Those two kept lying
and lying and didn't get up
even when all the other balconies
were asleep.

It was probably the little goblin of
the chimney –
he bewitched their souls and their
bodies
so that they were closer to us
and to heaven.

*

Hunger for words.
Hunger for warmth.
Hunger for a hug –

never subsides,
never calms down,
never stops to wonder.

Hunger should be taken care off,
as if it was a child.

*

Quarantine can be endured.
So can its consequences
(they can even be turned into
something better).
One can endure too much work.
One can endure too little of it.
One can endure waiting for the
virus-test.
One can anticipate with pleasure
a negative result.

But one can not endure the panic
after the positive result,
all the lamenting,
self-pity and pestering.

One can step out to the balcony,
one can lock oneself into the
bathroom,
one can have a walk down and up
the stairs.
Go for a walk, go,
let the bike wait,
let the running be postponed.

There is always an alternative.

*

You are pushed into the corner,
facing yourself only.
trying to evade it,
no way.

There are no exits,
all have been used,
one is naked, small, humiliated.
Wanting it or not, one is close.

There is no one responsible nearby,
no one convenient
to take over, no shoulders
one could shift the burden on.
No opportunity
to run away.

Compete now, do,
Let's see.

Tracing it.
Relaxing measures.
Should one climb over
or ignore the fence?

*

The silence now is now
quite something different.

Listening to it, one can hear
it rustle, being overtaken by worry,
restlessness, responsibility.
There is no easy going plans:

no fancy trips,
no concerts, no visits,
no walking around lakes,
no finishing off with a creamy cakes,
even if one doesn't like them:
eating just for the sake of friends,
just for the pleasure of the parents.
Silence – sinister in spite of
sunshine,
warm, windy,
silence of the internet contacts,
of the mobile phones,
silence of wiping the doorknobs
and doorposts, handles, buttons,
steering wheels and keys.
Silence of disinfecting.
Silence of waiting.
One doesn't have to know
Stephen King.

But That thing is on the way
bringing the other silence.
Bringing it to us, not to the cinema.

*

Eighty steps
in a four-storey house:
there are the **coronasteps**.
Sixteen for each floor.
Staircase: freedom,
space, draft . . .
thank you for the steps,
thank you for the straining
while going up and going down,
stepping slightly sideways,

one more time,
while the head is thinking – making
plans
the four legs are walking
autonomously,
cutting no corners,
linking the moves into one.

The best is walking early in the
morning
or late in the evening,
or after lunch, too.
Walking fast one starts to sweat.
Meeting others is forbidden,
it is possible to avoid others
only by stepping sideways
into the corridors.
There are no chance meetings
because the foot-steps are audible –
not so if people wear sleepers
or if the walker is sunk in thoughts.
No masks are needed,
no gloves either.
All is done correctly,
we speak from a distance –
if we speak at all.

But the other day
a cyclist almost knocked you down
at the fourth floor.
He carried his bike over his shoulder
on his way to his grand mum.
He was extremely severe:
“Baby, step in and don’t chat,
and same goes for you, old lady,
right!”

When he was coming down
and you did hide yourself, he almost
banged
somebody else
and the neighbour shouted:
“One can’t even take the rubbish
down
without meeting a madman.”

This made you change your routine:
not from top to the cellar anymore,
from now on from the third to the
forth,
from the forth to the third,
nineteen steps
twenty times.

Back in the flat – hiking sticks in the
corner,
washing hands,
taking a shower, drinking water,
getting in a good mood.

*

Coronadreams

Of course they are traumatic –
they resist being written about,
they resist getting on plain paper –
and yet they are very clear,
they get introduction,
they reach their central point,
they arrive to their pick
and they don't ever end.

Where: serpentines

at Rebecca Hill.

Who: your mum,
your friend S., your small child,
holding on to you like a tick,
holding your neck, silently.

The goal – downwards,
down the bending road,
skiing or somehow
like this.

The bends are all different, some
less steep,
some more abrupt.

S. and your mum are some distance
away
in front of you.

You stop in front of a precipice.
Just.

Legs have to be firm –
a few centimetres:
you fall.

How far to the bottom?

Legs have to endure.

They do,
just.

*

They come from the TV firm
to save grand dad from loneliness,
their ninth customers today -
not the last.

Saying goodbye they say:

“masks and gloves are in the car,
we should wear them
but we keep forgetting.

*

Coronaparting

at the graveyard.

You see eyes,

very few,

some wear masks and gloves.

Three large wreaths of flowers,

inscriptions, names of grand

children.

Names of other relatives.

Arrangements of candles ,

condolences written on cards.

The priest wears a mask, too.

People are gathered for the last

Farewell.

What will the photographs be for?

New golden lettering

on a grave stone.

New plants

on a grave,

all in matching colours.

A speech at the right moment.

A song at the right moment.

A photo is given into your hand.

The photo is in the kitchen now,

in the house

which is nobody's home anymore.

Grand dad is solemn, handsome,

his hat on,

proud, almost content.

The neighbour brought flowers from

her garden.

They smell beautifully in the vase
next to the picture.

Automatically watering flowers

around the house -

how come it doesn't feel like home?

And afterwards:

the house is being tidied up,

windows cleaned, the cellar,

the attic, the pantry,

the garden, the staircase

has to get mended, the balcony

door, too,

window frames painted ...

What to sow first?

No, one starts with the painting.

What is for the best?

The bills keep coming in.

The house is still a home,

all that happened there

and around

didn't disappear.

The house, dear dad's daughter,

who was loved by him the most,

is not regarded as property,

which will or will not

change hands,

it is not a real estate

of considerable worth

for daughters and sons,

it belongs to him,

who now lives somewhere else,

far away, in a strange land

beyond the sea,
he will keep letting it out and
mending it.

A house is not just a property.
A house is a home.
And it has always been and it will
obviously remain
a pain for grand-dad's son.

I shall not write a letter to
a daughter of Slovene hardworking
parents,
they both are now in another world
–

it is you who doesn't acknowledge
their world, this one, the familiar
one –

or have you forgotten
while having lived abroad
having chewed foreign crust of
bread
for thirty years.

Grand-dad, grand-mum –
how good it is that they are not
aware.

Foreign land
took care of their oblivion
by taking away their fidelity.

*

Your honest, sincere
and soft core
was invaded by
fierce reality –
like if it was marched over

by army boots.
Horror of being powerless
creeps over the compelled
and passive waiting.
The heart
grows dumb, wakes in the night,
nightmares get translated
into prayer
and prayers turn into grace.

Time is late,
time is bitter, time is lost.
Giving and giving away
seem like escaping
from self-realisation,
from the need to flare up,
from the past, from a turbulent
river.

It all thwarts action.

Enumerated prayers are condensed,
**there is still a long way to complete
the wording.**

*

Poems for two pockets:
one for you and one for me.

Come on, one life
is enough for drama,
while **dramatic poems
can fit into one pocket only.**

*

A new page in the book lingers
when you hesitate:

to go forwards, to turn it back?
The page swings to and fro.

I got across a chain and a pendant,
there is **an engraving – it will help me**

to decide
to turn the page – forwards.

*

At last – a true novel
and plenty of time to read it.

Why do you turn the pages in haste,
do you know what you are reading?
Do you hold on to the threads of the
story only,
are you unravelling them, do you
understand them?

You are already eying the next novel
(luckily it is not in your immediate
reach).

Sitting up, lying down,
gulping pages, not grasping
paragraphs.

Will you admit it,
will you be honest
and start reading
the novel again?

Thank god
one can go back while reading.
In other cases – you know . . .
(Just think of your daily
beginnings and finishes.)
Think of enlightenment

(Valentin Vodnik), easy.
There are other examples,
look it up.

One can not catch the wind,
less so the flame.

What do you think, Jiri Kočica,
will the boy be able to start again,
will he be able to get pleasure
from the *Original*.

*

Roberto Benigni
created a film
Tiger and the snow.
Experiencing this film
in a deeper sense
one can accept one's own
longings:
they become real, legitimate,
possible, acceptable, attainable
and light as a feather.

Today, 22nd March, 2020,
**the seventh day
of the coronaquarantine.**
No more snowing,
the wind playing
with snowflakes.

You open the window,
deep breath,
a stretch,
seizing the whiteness of
early spring.

*

Some time later
one goes for a coffee
and gets one or two
tiny bags of sugar.
Coffee would be too sweet,
so one takes the little bags,
puts them inside the front pocket
of a knapsack –
one has knapsack for the street and
one for the hikes
(one hasn't used a handbag
for a long time – not quite right for
a lady).

If one keeps little bags of sugar
inside one's pockets for too long
they get torn
and eventually one has to throw
them away
together with bits of emergency
chocolate
and both aspirins.

One keeps three boxes for little
sugar bags:
a green oval one from Corsica,
a black round one from Paris,
Hediard,
a shiny metal Illy Clasico.
Eventually they are all full
and you share the sugar bags:
some for mum, some for the office,
some for the summer retreat.

It feels good to share.
It feels good to collect.
Drinking coffee is a ceremony.

Going for coffee,
getting one or two little sugar bags.

*

During this unusual time
unusually large quantity
of bread and cake and biscuits
containing different combinations
of seeds, additives, flour, cream
or decoration
were baked and eaten.

At least half of all these
were given away,
left at so and so many addresses
and hanged on to doorknobs of so
and so.

No hugs, no kisses,
no chatting.

People hug from a distance –
offering bread, cakes and biscuits.

*

And advice is given constantly:
life is not . . . life is
life is not . . . life is
life is not . . . life is

One's thoughts are being directed,
this way, that way,
quite confusing.

Everybody has one's own
way of coping.
One's own survival plan.

Stay active.

*

Ms. Professor, I found your number
on internet.

I have a problem, I need a
notebook,
it is not here, I left it at school,
you know I am from Semič town.

The school is closed,
winter holidays on top of it . . .

But everybody get together:
the housekeeper, the secretary,
two schoolmates from a friend
of a friend.

A team got together on time,
the notebook found its way
to the right address.

**As soon as this coronatime will be
over,**

we shall go for coffee
and we shall get to know each other
at last.

*

School program is in full swing:
homework well done,
deeply thought through,
illustrated,
strengthened by examples,
well revised, well practised . . .

radio plays, documentaries,
theatre pieces,
all available, all there . . .

Everybody is working,

teachers and students alike –
let it be, let it happen . . .

Let this abnormality
not become normal . . .

Let's let each other know
what hurts, what makes one worry -
problems at home,
problems at work,
no work,
computer not working,
frost in the orchard,
lovers parting,
because of not being in touch.

There is a list:
revision, realism, question time,
homework, home reading,
questions and answers . . .

There are messages:
we miss each other,
we love each other . . .

*

Ms. teacher, excuse me,
do we really have to watch the film
Flowers in autumn?
What a good homework, the best!
Regards, yours Arnela.

*

Waiting for Zoom-time.

Is the camera working,
are the loudspeakers on,
are you sitting high enough,

and what about your hairdo?
Looking at the time –
Don't call them too early –
take care not to lose time,
allow the shortest greetings,
shift questions effortlessly
if needed.

Finish on time.

Let the marking go well.

*

Summer heat
is sneaking through the blinds,
windowpanes are finally cleaned,
curtains smell fresh
in the time of
Sunday silence.

Anticipating
what will happen
who will break the spell,
who will open the door
and windows,
who might put on some
jolly music.

Wait for an echo

of your wish:

everything will happen
even if you stay like this -
eyes closed,
totally silent.

Waiting for luck – there it comes.

Waiting for trouble – there it comes,
grinding.

Lidija Golc

Translated by **Ifigenija Simonović**

Receptionist

I left my GP practice in tears
Most times,
Upset by S. at the desk.

During the virus crisis
When everything closed down,
I made, amazingly, a new friend
And things opened up.

Junita

We did litter picks on Wanstead Flats,
Enjoyed Interesting Conversations.

'What GP d'you go to?' I wondered.
Same one as me.

'When I first registered,' she said,
'S. asked me where I was born.'

'Malaysia.'

'I've never heard of that', said S.

'It's near Singapore.'

'I've heard of Singapore.
'I'll put that down.'

'No!' said Junita,
'I wasn't born in Singapore.
'You can't put that down.'

'Then S. told me
That my name was spelt with an 'a':
'Juanita.

'I told her it wasn't.'

As an international human rights lawyer
(Or even if she wasn't),
She knew how to spell her own name.

'I looked round the waiting room
'And I was probably the only person there
'With English as their first language.
'How on earth do the others cope with S?'

I changed my GP.
Now I leave with a smile.

Ros Kane, 18 April 2020

Jigsaw

Staying up stupidly past midnight,
I struggle with all those tiny pieces –
Sky, earth, a hat ...
Clock ticking, life running out.
Surely this piece and that go together?
But I can wiggle them slightly,
Remove my specs for a good look,
Face facts:
They are sadly, almost tragically,
Not a pair.

I despair.

Driven by ambition
I try and try
Till yes! This bit of sky is destined to click
precisely
With that.
You just know.
An inevitable achievement.
Encouraged, I continue.

I had a perfect enough fit.
You just know.
Death intervened.
Amongst all the similar pieces of sky
A particular one must lurk

To be discovered
In the ticking of time.

Ros Kane 18 April 2020

SUPER NATURAL

OR

AN EXPERIENCE OF PSYCHOTHERAPY

It led to Heather's house, that quiet road:
Heather, my therapist. In memory
I turn the corner, and in front of me
the long perspective of the avenue,
my weekly pilgrim path, runs straight and
true.
I pass the Georgian cottages again,
the church with slender spire and spinning
vane,
the weird Darth Vader fortress of black glass,
the pavement bench set on its plinth of grass
- each of them marked a stage along the way
to Heather's house. And on that walk one day
a little cat slipped through a garden gate
and stood in front of me, and made me wait.
I looked at it. I thought I might be mad,
For every hair, of all the hairs it had,
stood separate and on end, and streamed
with light.
Life showed itself to me; too bright, too
bright.
Then as I looked, the great light seemed to
wane,
and all the hairs lay flat and smooth again.
The cat went on its way, and so did I

A small, square, corner room, her therapy
room,
with windows on two sides, and full of light;

pale rug on polished boards, walls painted white,
white nets that floated inwards on the air from windows wide in summer. My hard chair
stood by the door, and opposite was Heather's,
a master-quizzer's throne of worn black leather;
a silky shawl hung on one padded arm, to wrap her round in case of psychic harm.
An ice plant on a sill; and sometimes flowers made innocently bright my therapy hours.
The room, and Heather, held and cared for me.

It was a form of love that let me be myself. No thought of mine, no memory, was turned away. Those four walls set me free.

But once I saw another presence loom between our chairs. Enormous in that room, like a great force of nature paralysed, a horse stood, shivering, sweating, wild-eyed. it could not move, it had nowhere to go

Bench, fortress, church and Georgian cottages - the landmarks in reverse as I return down the long, leafy avenue, and turn the corner back into the real world.

As if, just here, a boundary-line unfurled, and now I step across, and leave behind that other magic country. In my mind, and in my heart, a blankness holds at bay the long, slow agony of the walk away ; and even before I get up from my chair, turn from the room, and walk down Heather's stairs,
and say goodbye at her front door, I feel the disconnect begin; nothing quite real; as if a chilly vapour gathers round me, a gauze between me and the world around me.

Just once I knew the intensity of my grief: passing a hedge, I saw that every leaf

held in its palm a spot of blood; That red showed where the quick and green of me had bled.

I stared, and turned away, and journeyed on.

-So many years since I walked down that road and sat in Heather's room; that time is gone; but what she brought to life in me lives on, and now I learn to cherish it on my own, to be with others, and to stand alone.

- In a church hall, one Sunday afternoon, a local orchestra plays jolly tunes from Pinafore, Mikado; there I see, sitting alone a few chairs down from me -I stare along the almost empty row - my father, who died twenty years ago: handsome, unhappy, charming, cruel, clever, he's sitting there as elegant as ever.

Of course, he's come to hear the G and S, not be with me. he loved its bounciness, it cheered his heart. And I've survived the blow

of his unlove. I know he did not know how to be different. Although I feel the hurt has gone too deep fully to heal.

I gaze at him again, then leave him be

And, in a dream, I saw my sister too.

Years since we've spoken. In the time before -before we said goodbye, and closed the door each on the other - I could see her face shutter itself to mine, as if disgrace were what she saw there, something to despise,

disown. my troubled questions, her replies, glanced off, like arrows off a castle wall too stony-thick to penetrate, too tall.

Shut out - and with no words to say why. What could I do but walk away.

Yet no day passes but I think of her, and in my dream, I sat and talked with her in the old way, alive to every trace of laughter, interest, warmth on her loved face.

We teased, confided, sympathised, consoled,
just as we did before the air grew cold.
I felt I saw her as she was - would be
more gladly, now, more fully, without me.
Something is broken here, beyond repair

My mother never figures in my dreams.
I wish her well. - And so, in celebration
of this unknowable phenomenon
we're all a part of, I live every day
as mindfully and gladly as I may.
Some happy days bring small epiphanies;
some days are overcast. On one of these
there came a moment when the cloud gave
way to
a vision of a glowing ripe tomato!
I laughed, because it was absurd! because
I suddenly saw how beautiful it was:
all things in one, delight for every sense,
sweetness and salt, refinement, opulence,
so fresh, so round, so ripe, so full of Life.
Beside it, in my vision, lay a knife,
steel blade, steel handle, one continuous
shaft,
a fine example of the cutler's craft.
The fruit, the gleaming knife - what does it
mean?
All I can do is tell you what I've seen.
Give me your hand now, as we say goodbye.

REPREEVED

"Help me!" he shrieked
"Help me!" she screamed
Hell held them
wheels, steel teeth
fell feends seazed, squeezed them
"We bleed!" they squeeled, "legs, knees,
heels
we need releese!
Pleese!"

deep sleep
seemed dreemed

eyes see
weeds, seeds, bees, trees, leeves
"They're reel!"
sweet breeze
sheep bleet
wrens tweet
Eden retreeved
bells peel, sentence repeeled
free?
"Yes!"

Super Natural

Because this poem deals with strong feelings and strange experiences, I decided on a disciplined format, in order to keep me from waffling! I also thought the formality would make the content more convincing to the reader. But I also wanted the poem's form to reflect something of the vague and immaterial nature of the content, so I made the first and last lines of each stanza not part of the rigid couplet scheme.

N.B. David, my husband found a couple of mistakes in the poem.

Repreeved

This was written for my on-line writing group, when the task set was to write a "univocalic" poem, i.e. one that uses only one vowel throughout. But there was nothing in the rules to say you couldn't be creative with English spelling . . .

Covid's Metamorphoses

I

Put not your trust in Princes, sociopaths,
and populists! Yup: R is on the up.
We mutter in our coffee cups
or scream “just do the math”
but there's the rub: they modelled,
did their sums;
convened their focus groups
(which feast on spin, and tonics for the
troops,
and marching bands, and martial pipes and
drums).
“Mere numbers are for crunching!
Common sense
– the good old British type –
will see us through”, they blustered
(but events proved otherwise). Such hubris,
humbug, hype,
hypocrisy, and cant! Their “fingers crossed”!
Their calculated cynicism glossed!

II

Down Brixton Hill the rain is falling fierce
and fearsome past the prison gates:
a sudden spate
to wash away the layers of grime, the smears
of soot and diesel fumes. No music spills
from the Electric. Empty stand the chairs
in Windrush Square;
forlorn, the shuttered shopfronts. Covid kills
communities discreetly, by degrees,
with segregation, racism and stealth;
a zoonotic freeze
on breath and health.
We tread a bleak and dread-filled path
Between the shadow and its aftermath.

III

Obscured beneath the moral permafrost
of mankind's ceaseless, cruel,
destructive search for *Lebensraum*,

which fuels environmental holocaust,
a vision forms, in some cool limpid pool
of keener consciousness:
how more might be achieved with less.
We mined, drilled (fracked!)
for carbon molecules;
as Ahab scoured the oceans of the world,
as Icarus caressed the Aegean skies,
we hurtled, wings outstretched,
and sails unfurled;
chased down electric avenues. All lies!
Together, we rewild the biosphere
and weather these coronavirus years.

John Adlam

**Hello - sure. I added some text
and links.**

>>START<<

Grace

“the experience of being delivered
from experience”, Martin Luther
a figure awaiting her own sculptress
to deliver her from stone retreat
knows a dream – sun marbled skin
uncovered
ease of limbs free to be observed
simply present,
still, in every moment
truth ringing through her pose

Anthony Hurford

coasted rolls turned rollercoasted
all those moles hammer broken

every day's hall distortion carni-
valed incarnation
waltzered crowds press you on
every ride undodgemable
try them all find your fit
unique you think – become a myth
coasted rolls turn roller coasted
life's freak show tracks
force these tricks
take your place, bearded lady,
clown
got the horror?
ghost train to another town

A Hurford, 18th February 2019

as time slips i sip the hours
suntime nonsense flower
dreamer amidst woody bowers
weekend woman springing out
feeling her breathy path on breeze
toward a sun stance
hip swung nonchalance
among happiness in bluebells

i, not quite, of the bluebells
increasingly away with the flowers
giddy, sing-song, gone wrong
gossamer rhyme blossom
coming alive

not so much singer as song
not so much goer as gone

waiter upon bees
turning to be

cowslip, daff^f_{SEP}

meadow sweet
buttercup

flowering at last
a rose
as if

A Hurford, 1st April 2019

AMM ALL-STARS*

Acro but alone all-stars
Marking territory in all corners of
the drum
Mount roof tops to dance like
BHM**

Aloof to the world
Lovers Town their citadel
Living the
-stic
-nym
-polis
Sake of pure doing
Topmost in the sediments of the
fatberg
And civic xenochrony duty in
isolation
R number up or down
Sitrep from the front line says, Pah!

*AMM stands for Association of Musical Marxists. AMM ALL-Stars are a musical unit who criticise the commodification of improvisation. To hear, tune in to [Late Lunch with Out To Lunch](#) on Resonance 104 FM (analogue or digital) on Wednesday at 2-3pm and [The OTL Show](#) on Soho Radio (digital only) on Friday 8-9am.

**BHM is a member of the [Psychedelic Bolsheviks](#), a collection of workers from Sheffield who invite you to "Tune In, Queer Up, Organise."

<<END>>

Temper, Temper/ Song of Rage

Temper, Temper out of control
I feel like I'm going to explode
Rage, Rage out of the cage
You cannot break me, you can't make me

You locked me up in your darkest room
With spiders and ghosts
Panic and gloom
You trapped me in your House of Shame
To keep me afraid, but I got brave...

My Heart, My Soul, My Body is my own
My Voice, My Choice, going to make a lot
of noise
Got to Fight, for my Life
Because I know I'm in the right

And if anger is wrong, how come I feel so
strong?

Temper, Temper, break all the rules
I hate you all and that is the truth
Mad Cat, I spit and scratch
You cannot tame me, you can't restrain me

I tried so hard to please you every day
You hypocrites with your brutal ways
My head is bleeding from your twisted
games
Your cruel names to keep me ashamed but

My Heart, My Soul, My Body is my own
My Voice, My Choice, going to make a lot
of noise
Got to Fight, for my Life
Because I know I'm in the right

And if violence is wrong, how come I feel
so strong?

But violence is wrong, got to find new
ways to be strong.

I tried so hard to please you every day...
got to find new ways to be strong!

You hypocrites with your brutal ways...
got to find new ways to be strong!

To be Strong! TO BE STRONG!

Véronique Acoustique