

Poetry Express

Spring 2009

Issue 29

The Human Rights Convention by Celia Potterton

Robert D Dangoor - 'you wouldn't be normal'

Manchester Survivors by Jackie Hagan

Dr. Simon Jenner on Mario Petrucci - 2nd part

Reviews by Dave Russell, Broadsheet and more...



©Dave Russell



supporting the survivors'
of mental distress

NORTH LONDON SURVIVORS AT TOTTENHAM CHANCES

Dates

23rd April 2009
28th May 2009
25th June 2009
23rd July 2009
10th Sept 2009

Featuring

The Core Arts Poets/ Frank Bangay
The Sybilline Sisters
John Hegley & Catherine Tait
The Children
Silvia Rox & Kenny Hughes

For more information contact Ms. Xochitl Tuck

email: xmtuck@hotmail.com

Tel: 07796 831 935



*supporting the survivors'
of mental distress*



399 High Road
Tottenham
London
N17 6QN

email: chancespenny@yahoo.co.uk

Tel: 0208 365 0653

Tube: Tottenham Hale

MultiMap Link:

<http://www.multimap.com/s/y6qTi6v8>

SURVIVORS' POETRY

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

Co Editor: Dave Russell

Sub-editing, design and layout: Blanche Donnery

Cover Image: © Dave Russell

Featured articles and Poetry © of contributors with kind permission.

Poetry Express (PE) is only published in PDF format. Contact us to join our mailing list. We welcome Submissions: Poetry, articles, news items, and other matter which may be of interest to our readers. We cannot guarantee publication and reserve the right to edit contributions. The views expressed in this publication are those of the individual authors, and do not necessarily represent the views of Survivors' Poetry. All Poems/Artwork printed herein are the copyright of the authors credited. PE29 available in PDF format only.

Survivors' Poetry
Studio 11, Bickerton House
25-27 Bickerton Road
London N19 5JT
Tel 020 7281 4654
info@survivorspoetry.org.uk
www.survivorspoetry.com

Staff:

Simon Jenner (Director)

Roy Birch (National Outreach Coordinator and Mentoring Scheme Coordinator)

Blanche Donnery (Administration, Marketing and Media Design)

Freelance Staff/Contractors:

Co Wright (Website Design), Andrew Devon of Wootton George (Professional Fund-raisers), Dark Systems Ltd (IT).

Volunteers:

Dave Russell (Reviews & Events), Xochitl Tuck (Events Co-ordinator), Lydia Hill (Administration), Alan Morrison (Mentor), Peter Carpenter (Mentor), Bernadette Cremin (Mentor), Naomi Foyle (Mentor), Peter Street (Mentor), Akin Oladimeji (Mentor), Diana Webb (Mentor), Aoife Mannix (Mentor).

Patrons:

Moniza Alvi, Debjani Chatterjee MBE

Trustees:

Phil Ruthen (Chair), Marius Jankowski (Secretary), Abdul Jamal (Treasurer), Piers Marter, Celia Potterton, Dan Nelson.

Advisory Group:

Barry Tebb, Cristina Viti.

Contents

Update from the director	1
Outreach	2
Manchester Survivors	4
Human Rights by Celia Potterton	6
Broadsheet	8
Mario Petrucci - 2nd Part by Dr. Simon Jenner	16
Broadsheet conti..	19
'you wouldn't be normal' by Robert D Dangoor	21
Reviews	22
Events	32

Welcome to our first issue proper of 2009. The Spring Issue comes hard on the design heels of our new Brochure, also superbly designed by Blanche. You can download it from our website, just left of PE generally, or right, if PE is new. It has been produced as a 24pp brochure telling – briefly - the story of SP, and setting out the stall of our activities. It's a bright stall too, beautifully resonant and relevant – compact, colourful, clear and easy to use. Each of our activities is given full treatment. Survivor groups as up to date as possible have been listed. Further editions will update, so if you're in a new survivor group and not already listed, do please get in touch and we'll mark you with any contact details when we re-design. Download it and do please pass the link info on to friends. There are opportunities to use an address template to write to us, or email, as you prefer. We've been discussing it for a couple of years, and this is our solution. We can revise and update periodically, even expand. But enjoy the first edition.

There's a sense of clearing things out, of re-alignment, as we explore the new possibilities in funding beyond our Regularly Funded Organisation Status, bestowed by the Arts Council from April 2008. There's a good deal of uncertainty here, in a full recession with a great deal more charity mouths opening wider – including ours. Foundations would have lost some percentage of their investments, though most are stable; interest rates at least will have been affected.

Our most recent event was at Foyle's, where through the auspices of the mental health organisation Together and planned by that charity's Claire Haslam and Roy Birch of SP, we put on a rapt, powerful poetry event on Monday 9th March. Our Chair Elect Phil Ruthen – swapping roles with Marius Jankowski now Secretary - worked for Together till mid-March. So he was inspired to link us as a parting gift to one and a golden hello to SP as his first formal initiative as Chair. Reading were two mentees, Marjorie Holmes, a very fine formal poet whose wit, adroitness of rhyme, heartbreaking humour and felicity of thought - and often sheer narrative originality - should now be far better known. Richard Copeland followed and his intelligence takes on another dimension with his delivery, full of acute commentaries on the detritus of civilisation, between London and Stevenage. There's a touch of Ian Sinclair about him. Marjorie's mentor Harriet Thistlethwaite was mentored herself by Andrew Motion. She is a modest presence with little to be modest about, catching the fine rain of her imagery and the incisiveness of her poetic thinking. Richard's mentor was Roy Birch, who MC'd with his

inimitable droll authority throughout. The first half closed with the chair of SP, Phil Ruthen, whose collection *Jetty View Holding* is published by Waterloo and is achieving some wonderful reviews. It explores the crepuscular Italianate world of vestigial feeling, of somehow being at the toes of travelling, and evoking an extraordinary empathy with empty small places, people, lovers, and love in a life. The wine was there but I found it late, and the olives... Trustees old and new were in evidence, and James Fergusson, our old editor, put in a welcome appearance. Recently he helped me clean up the office on his first trip to the new premises. It's been a long time since we left our old one, long since demolished. James was struck by the difference. Poets from our Poetry Café like Steve Watts, recently also superbly translated – into Italian – by Cristina Viti, were present. He was meant to go somewhere else but abandoned the struggle. The second half launched with Cristina Viti's habitually spellbinding way with the great Italian survivor poet she translated for us (into English), Dino Campana. We then enjoyed Rogan Wolf's panorama of patients, empathically and poignantly realized. Zoombat put on a comically hypnotic reading of family dysfunction and growing up among a battle of broken crockery, not eschewing the dark undertow that blighted her life. Her novel, £10, is fantastically readable, in both senses. Finally, Sarah Wardle the acclaimed Bloodaxe poet and RLF Fellow (and long ex Writer in Residence for Tottenham Hotspur when her father supported Arsenal) read from her three collections. *Fields Away* (2003), *Score!* (2005), and *A Knowable World* (2009). Wardle, I've noted before, has a survivor's interesting, ambivalent relationship with formalism: strong metre and deployment of rhyme, even rhyme couplets and sonnet form, for instance. I asked her about this last June and she was quite pleased with the analogy. Bipolarity and tight formalism are hyper-registers, something with sets and rules that betoken games and pattern into and out of nightmare. Our ex-Chair John O'Donoghue is another famous bi-polar formalist, as he put it. This time Wardle's work immersed itself fully in the world of one her episodes, which resulted in a spell of hospitalisation. There were elegiac, and sad and angry consolations as lives wasted which could have been so easily saved. The valedictory nature of much of Wardle's recent work has resonances for both poetry – nothing has been exploited poetically in this way since Robert Lowell, perhaps – and survivor poetry generally. Though the great Australian poet Francis Webb (1925-74) shouldn't be forgotten or overlooked, as he is sometimes. But Wardle has opened up what can and what use not to be written about in a so-called mainstream volume.

Outreach from Roy Birch

Outreach

I have been in communication with Hazel Hammond, co-organizer of the Accoustic Night, at the Halo Café Bar in Bristol, to arrange a visit to discuss possible collaboration, something the event organizers, who recently learned of SP, are keen to encourage. The Accoustic Night is long-standing and very successful, and such a collaboration, were it to happen, could only be a good thing.

I have arranged with Myles Cook, of the Thurrock Depression Alliance, to attend an event they are holding in April, with a view to collaboration and the possible setting up of a Survivor Writing group in the area. Miles is a fan of SP, and the work we do, and wants to work with us in any way he can.

On the downside, my efforts to include SP in Artistic and Literature festivals in 2009 has so far met with zero success.

The **Words for Wellbeing** event, at Foyle's bookshop, which SP hosted jointly with **Together; Words for Wellbeing**, as part of **Together's Wellbeing Week** celebrations, was a success, both as a collaboration and an entertainment.

About forty people attended and thoroughly enjoyed and appreciated the performances and the atmosphere.

Prize-winning poet *Sarah Wardle* guested, ably supported by mentoring scheme graduates *Richard Copeland* and *Marjorie Holmes*; Marjorie's mentor, *Harriet Thistlethwaite*; SP Chair and emerging modernist, *Phil Ruthen*; *Christina Viti*, who read from her critically acclaimed translation of Italian survivor poet, *Dino Campana*; the quietly powerful *Rogan Wolf*, and zany novelist *Zoompad*, who regaled us with a darkly funny section from her first published work, **Tip**.

Many thanks to *Sarah Wardle* for accepting the slot at short notice (the entire event was arranged with undue haste – no-one's fault, simply the way things fell out) and for insisting that she not be paid. I have to

add also that none of the readers accepted payment. *Zoompad* even donated copies of her novel. My own and SP's thanks to all of them.

For those who may not know **Together** is a national charity which provides Health and Social Care services in a particularized way, the *Wellbeing* approach, which employs a user-led strategy based on the organization's Service User Involvement Directorate (SUID). The Wellbeing approach is based on empowerment and partnership in care, rather than pure prescription of services which leave the service user as a passive recipient of care.

Wellbeing Week is a seven-day festival of events led by mental-health service users, service user led groups, and the people who care about them, all aimed at changing the misconceptions surrounding mental health. Good for them.

More significantly, **Together** want to work with us again next year.

The SP group network now has two new groups.

GROW (Grass Roots of Writing) is an offshoot of Hastings-based Shorelink Writers.

High Peak Writers are based in Buxton, Derbyshire.

Details of both groups can be found on the SP website at www.survivorspoetry.com

Jackie Hagan, coordinator of Manchester Survivors (she took over from the incredible Rosie Garland – not an easy act to follow but she's doing very well) has sent an article about the group, which can also be located on the SP website. The group is prospering. Jackie herself is a published poet, and her poem 'Survivors' will soon be featuring on SP's Poem of the Month. I include this quote from Jackie Hagan, as it says such a lot about SP writing groups.

As I started writing this article I text messaged all the group members asking for quotes about the group to use here, characteristically they have sent wonderfully beautifully irrelevant nonsense which I wont print here

(curious now?) but here's something sensible somebody said:

"Survivors offered me a safe space to write and try out themes that I know I won't have felt comfortable exploring in other writing groups" (Conor A).

I think that sums it up, as I'm sure you know from your own groups, in Survivors it's suddenly, refreshingly and relievingly OK to go on and on and on about how irritating your psychiatrist is, or how you can't get it up on Lustral, to laugh at the amount of cerise voile you bought when you were manic or what terrifying rubbish the voices were saying last night, in Survivors the taboos fall away and we're no longer the weirdoes, the supposedly sane people are the weirdoes, hallelujah!

Manchester Survivors meets every Monday 2pm-4pm in Commonword, Bootle Street, Manchester City Centre.

Check out their myspace site at www.myspace.com/poetry_workshops

You can find Jackie Hagan's poems on facebook or at www.myspace.com/jackiehagan

Mentoring

The 2009 mentoring intake has been chosen. All that remains is to locate the appropriate mentors. If anyone reading this feels both keen and competent to be a mentor, please contact me.

The remaining 2008 publications should soon be with the printer.

Design of both pamphlets and volumes has been taken over by Blanche Donnery, our long-suffering administrator, who also designs Poetry Express. Everyone at SP would like to thank former designer, and original mentoring scheme coordinator, Alan Morrison, for his tireless efforts on behalf of the organization.

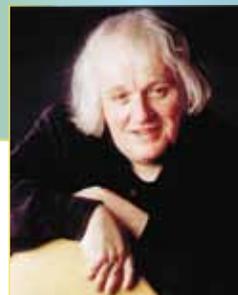
Alan has resigned his SP design portfolio in order to concentrate on designing books for Brighton-based publisher, Waterloo Press.

The Vale House Project

The Vale House Project has entered a new phase. A request has been received for the project to be delivered at Passmores House in Harlow, which has just opened as what will undoubtedly be one of the very best residential drug recovery units in Britain. Funding is being sought to make this happen.

There is a growing public and professional interest in the project in the Stevenage area, and there have been requests for it to be delivered as a workshop. The workshop is now at the planning stage. Further workshops are a possibility.

I wish I had more to tell, but Outreach is still significantly short of the levels of funding required to make possible a return to the former 'out and about' approach which makes reaching out so exciting and fruitful. If the current round of funding applications reaches maturity I should have a different story to tell later in the year.



artist

The editors of *Poetry Express* wish to apologise for not including Kevin Coyne's short story *Christ* which we were unable to publish in our last Winter Edition issue 28. Survivors' Poetry hopes we will be granted permission to publish Kevin's work in future editions of *Poetry Express* and on our website.

Manchester Survivors

S U R V I V O R S

We don't see in black and white,
we dream in technicoloured cabarets of multicoloured shopping trolleys.

We know how savage hope is,
the incongruity of some chairs
and the magic mothers weave.

Need to leave the 9-5 for those it's for
and dress to the hilt
in beauty, disgust and cosmic dust.

We know that cup's wearing lippy cos it's getting ready for a night on the town with Pat
its best mate who's a whiskey drinking saucer.

We know how funny peas are (and that they're Geordies),
that curtains are eyelids,
and that people are people no matter what they're doing.

We know that apostrophes mean
fuck all,
we're easily enthralled and appalled.
Know there's a thousand billion sides to every story,
to every word,
to every intake of breath.

Know the reality and unreality of death.
We know how multi-coloured blue is,
How full bodied grey is,
and the very differing personalities of the letters of the alphabet.

We don't so much question, as know this answer's one of many.

know that words are just building blocks,
simple-minded shapes in primary school colours: toys.
That language is a framework
like holding water together.

See how strong the world tastes in our mouths?

We've always existed.

In our time been burnt as witches,
called empaths, shamans, gurus, stupid flighty bitches
deranged, frivolous, or hilariously - oblivious,

pernickety, irrational, over-sensitive, ridiculous,
perplexing, dyslexic, too intense and always wrong
and made to feel like we never belong,

been exploited, beaten, and electroshocked,
been kept in the attic, been mocked, forgotten,

Had our powers twisted by insistent psychiatrists
Or stolen by tablets, and tablets, and tablets,

Been patronised to shit, dismissed as fools
And had our wings shorn early, by the hell of school,

Bent and twisted out of shape we've flown inward and wilted or soared

and if none of that,
then ignored

see how strong the world tastes in our mouths?

It's no wonder we really do talk to the moon

Jackie Hagan

Tin Foil Hats and Butterfly Wings by Jackie Hagan

For the last 6 years, on Monday afternoons, I have taken myself down to a basement in the city, where self proclaimed 'Manchester's greatest living poet' Steve regularly shows us the fleshy progress of his slowly reducing hairy belly, Clare serenades us with renditions of songs long gone, everyone catches up on each others housing benefit battles/poetry achievements/love lives and everyone drinks a hell of a lot of tea (and at the moment we're having a Pringles phase).

I joined the group in 2003 having had no previous encounters with poetry (other than the obligatory Wilfred Owen/Shakespeare/Keats rammed down ones throat at school). I was staying at a crisis centre at the time during an acute phase of mania during which I shop lifted a poetry book because it was purple, and I was having a bit of a do with the colour purple at the time. Due to said purple poetry book a nurse at the centre suggested I join a poetry group where I encountered the amazing Rosie Garland aka lesbian vampire queen and international performer Rosie Lugosi (also ex lead singer of goth rock band The March Violets) who was running the group at that time. I went off purple and got onto poetry instead.

Looking back it was a good switch. I started performing poetry (isn't mania a fab way of combating stage fright) and went on to perform all over the UK and a tour of Ireland. I won the poetry kits 'best emerging poet' award in 2004 (after which I swiftly retreated into a hermit hole of depression and stopped emerging), took over the running of the group in 2005, had a play produced at Manchester's Contact Theatre ("Help!" set in a psychiatrist's waiting room) had my first collection published by Citizen 32 and in June 2009 I'm dead excited to have my second collection (possibly to be called 'Round the Bend') published by the fabulous flapjack press (www.flapjackpress.co.uk). OK, so enough showing off, but none of this would have happened if I hadn't trotted along to my first survivors workshop, and over the years the workshops have been a stable constant in my life, a place where I don't have to try to be ordinary and calm, where I can write as badly or well as I feel like and where if I really really need to wear a tinfoil hat or butterfly wings that day, no one will mind, in fact they'll be thrilled. It's also a place where I feel like I genuinely belong, we really care about each other and each others lives and we have a mutual understanding of the trials and tribulations of being mad in a world where being mad isn't always appreciated by those you have to interact with.

The group has been running for around 20 years now, and in that time we've got up to all sorts, a lot of famous and not so famous facilitators have come our way including Stella Duffy (who made us talk about pretend frogs), Jackie Kay, the sadly passed on Julia Darling, and being lucky little so and so's that we are we often have the marvellous Gerry Potter (aka transvestite socialist poet Chloe Poems) and Manchester's premier queer vegan poet and homo-goth Dominic Berry. We've also had money from many various sources including a donation from the Servite sisters (nuns). We have put on sober performance events in libraries and boozy performance events in pubs, jazz clubs and bars. We've produced 2 anthologies, "Not in the Attic" in 2002 and "Running Away from Bus Stops" in 2004. While I'm listing the things we've done, I'd like to quickly thank the wonderful people who have helped us along the way (in case the_y read this) including The Pankhurst Centre, Commonword, The Green Room Theatre and Manchester Central Library.

As I started writing this article I text messaged all the group members asking for quotes about the group to use here, characteristically they have sent wonderfully beautifully irrelevant nonsense which I wont print here (curious now?) but here's something sensible somebody said:

"Survivors offered me a safe space to write and try out themes that I know I won't have felt comfortable exploring in other writing groups" (Conor A).

I think that sums it up, as I'm sure you know from your own groups, in Survivors it's suddenly, refreshingly and relievingly OK to go on and on and on about how irritating your psychiatrist is, or how you can't get it up on Lustral, to laugh at the amount of cerise voile you bought when you were manic or what terrifying rubbish the voices were saying last night, in Survivors the taboos fall away and we're no longer the weirdoes, the supposedly sane people are the weirdoes, hallelujah! **Manchester Survivors meets every Monday 2pm-4pm in Commonword, Bootle Street, Manchester City Centre. Check out their myspace site at www.myspace.com/poetry_workshops**

You can find Jackie Hagan's poems on facebook or at www.myspace.com/jackiehagan

Human Rights by celia potterton

**“The new movement began today, the now philosophy is to follow the way
Take a look at the statutes we are living under, Big Brother n’est-ce-pas
Then consider the rape of the personality that dipping out of so-called sanity brings
The dust, the dirt, the future and its doom
Don’t you think that the helpless, the underclass are pointlessly persecuted by the powers that be
Then consider the plight of the homeless man
Kicked and beaten by the police for sleeping on the underground
Take a look on TV and see the media manipulation
The police powers that have overgrown us all
And gently acknowledge the influence of big brother’s conspiracy”**

Jesse Ferguson, the poet who died on 9th June 1997, wrote this poem earlier that same year. He was my son.

On Saturday 28th February I was honoured and privileged to be one of those attending The Convention on Modern Liberty. Survivors’ Poetry sent me in there to see what was occurring. I want to encapsulate the spirit and power and unity that I felt on that day.

It was a day of inspiration and courage when over 1000 individuals from many societies and many political parties and many arms of this great country’s heritage got together in one intense 8 hour think tank, where great minds thought together, not always in harmony, but worked out the disagreements and conflicts putting political, emotional and intellectual cards on the table in a seemingly random display that suddenly became a pattern, that suddenly gave hope to people labouring under the various current insistent human rights issues that flood and overwhelm us today. You did not know who was sitting next to you. But all were there to hear more about the threat to basic British freedoms. One might scoff at the British Empire but Lord Bingham proudly summed up the tradition of British democracy in his speech. In a simple sentence he said, yes we have the technology to destroy the world but we are wise enough not to do this; yes, we have the technology (or will have soon) to spy on every British citizen but hopefully we have the sense not to do this. Just because we can, it does not mean that we have to.

I think we all left the Convention with a feeling of hope in our hearts, a feeling that Britain might be pulled back from the abyss that is looming in front of us, the spectre of an overpowerful state that would know every detail of every citizens’ life, although as Helena Kennedy QC pointed out, we are subjects not citizens. It is John Locke’s Leviathan but with more power than even he could have envisaged. That would have the technological power to know every detail of every person’s life. This was the real fear, the real horrific monster that had been initiated, as Shami Chakrabarti, Director of Liberty, so vividly described when she kicked the Convention off in her powerful footnote speech expressing disgust at the extent of British government collusion in torture “the road to Guantanamo Bay” and “Hell No” just kind of sticks in your mind. It was a powerful opening to be followed by even more powerful support (and also a chance for the government programmers in the shape of Sir David Varney) to have their say. It was an open forum but with a closed agenda. What are we going to do about an over-mighty state in which the basic conditions that have characterised the country of Britain are being eroded (a word that was heard on many distinguished lips)? Our precious freedoms in a country which has no written constitution; the right to a fair trial; that a citizen is innocent until proved guilty; and above all the right to privacy, freedom and free speech. Now we are guilty until proved innocent, not what habeas corpus was all about. Any way back from the abyss?

Helena Kennedy QC and Dominic Grieve MP were there on the opening panel getting things going at a swift and rapacious pace, the quip being the danger of holding office in the Home Office where clearly there was something in the water that made the holders drunk with power. Later in the Press Room Helena made Dominic Grieve speak in detail of the Conservative agenda on human rights. It was clear that the terrorist threat had been over used

by our current government to curtail our liberties. But that is only half the story. The most sinister incursion to our privacy (ECHR Article 8) is the proposed all powerful government database that would be the ID card. You might think you are getting a mere piece of paper with your personal details on it as Christina Zaba was kind enough to explain, but you are not. She drew back the veil on the true nature of David Blunkett's ID card. This ID card would be linked to a database which would have the ability to monitor every detail about any individual's life. There was concern that although participation would appear to be on a voluntary basis you would not get your passport renewed if you didn't comply. A journalist who had lived in the Soviet Union was clear that not being able to travel is what delineates a total police state. The citizens of the communist Soviet Union do not have the right to travel. No-one wants this in Britain but it is as Shami described as if our liberties are being poached to death whilst we sleep. She compared us to frogs who would run from a boiling pan but failed to note the danger of one that merely simmered. In many senses this is true. The younger people do not even remember the treasure of British free democracy.

At each session, at each moment came the question "what can we do to stop the government using technology to control the subjects of Britain?" "What can we do to stop the government lulling the younger citizens who cannot remember what it was like not to be overlooked and monitored all the time?" Dominic Grieve MP, Conservative politician was prepared to stick his neck out in chorus with the noble David Davis MP to assure us that the Conservative agenda would be strong on human rights and that it would say "no" to ID.

The most seriously alarming session of the day was being confronted with the government policy concerning database management and the introduction of ID cards chaired by Guy Herbert and supported by his team, Simon Davies, Sam Talbot-Rice, Tony Bunyan and the very committed Christina Zaba. I felt locked into their arguments and one noble dissenter and supporter urged us all to evade the law in order to outlaw identity cards. He too stood up later to the final panel in urging insurrection. Obviously this did not sit very well with most of us conscientious but concerned citizens. But it was an electrifying debate. We were lucky to be there and experience its intensity.

Inearly went home feeling satiated with freedom and rights before the last keynote speeches. I am glad I did not. I would have missed Philip Pullman's speech about Britain sleepwalking into slavery. I got to see the final panel comprised of the Human Rights lawyer who works for the Guardian, Afua Hirsch, who courageously showed her commitment to clarity with regard to human rights.

Brian Eno advocated freedom for the imagination and artists to flourish in our diminished artistic and emotional world. It was a good mix. NotID's Phil Booth stood firm in his pledge against the government intrusion and asked us to pledge to say No to ID.

David Davis wrapped up the Convention in what was the most powerful and moving keynote speech indicating levels of whether or not the UK was a police state. Evidently not. Because in a police state the Convention on Modern Liberty could not have taken place. However there were alarming omens and evidence of infringements that had surfaced. More flippantly that we can no longer take photos of policemen at demonstrations as he lightly quipped "this will upset a lot of Japanese tourists". However there were signs that we were heading that way. Serious ones. But he gave us some hope. The government database plans were temporarily on hold, they had been put back to 2012. Who knows with a bit of luck there would then be a Conservative government who would repeal all this. But then, when can we ever trust a politician?

The Convention was organised by the two human rights activists Anthony Barnett of Open Democracy and the Observer journalist Henry Porter, a personal friend of David Davis and sponsored by the Guardian and Observer newspapers.

It was a beautiful day. I am sure all those who were there thought so, even Lord Goldsmith and Lord Bingham. It pulled the veil from my eyes, the cobwebs from my brain and the plugs from my ears.

B R O A D S H E E T

S m o k i n g t o o m u c h

Smoking too much
with you all day
It is hard to watch you across the room
Your hair bleached blonde
And not to say you move me.

Nights like these fragmented overtures and rituals
Are as much or as little as when
You touched my sleeve
Our losses beached.
The late high nights of
Blue are here
As the Lake sleeps
And we talk then you undo your chains
To lie down your arms open wide
While I wait and in the morning wanted to give you
A rose.

Reading how Van Gogh cut off his ear
Never to reach the safe place
And you lying spaced with only a void between us so that I
can't say anything
Or to say it meaningless
Words not counting here
As your hooded eyes shut me out
Lady – on the dark side of your
Moon Speak to me.

Gillian Brightmore

S p r i n g

An easter egg, quick, on the treble,
rolls down the lawn pursued by trouble:

all teeth, all paws, all fur – a reckless
pack of puppies for a peck.

They nearly knock down as they pass
two tiny giants in the grass.

Thomas Land

C o r r o s i o n o f M o d e r n M a n

Through catacombs of frayed fertility
to derelict paths of man's conscience.
Hoarded prayers to the impenetrable self
wither like a fallen breeze in Winter.
When youthful footprints to the thieving heart
become conversations of ridicule.
When bedroom secrets are contempt shadows
that dwell in the dark heart of hopelessness.
A decayed spirit hindered by status
culture regurgitates it's own demise.
The corrosive light to man's emptiness
buried in the sleepless visions of fortune.

M J Duggan

Love Affair with a Surrealist

The night planned ahead was
A stranger

Waiting taxis in suburban side streets
An Italian Restaurant open to an elite
We spoke of confusions vulnerabilities
Side stepping the neon and concrete canyons
Answering no questions
Surrounded by men in black wearing white silk scarves

We escaped the endless small talk
Driving home.

I call it obsession or heartache
Warning what you can never have and to feel the night watching you
The pavement is ready to trip you up
With nothing real anymore
Only this longing never to be satisfied
Never to reach conclusions

The magic forever eluding me in a night with too much
Indigo and a safe place never to be arrived at without catastrophe
Star struck in this shivering air.

Gillian Brightmore

Flight

Flippant flight on a butterfly's wings –
life, adult life, life, life:
born from coincidence, changing, passing,
soaring above the riverbank's grass,
shaped from the yearnings of distant childhood,
venturing over the menacing waves,
lured by the nectar of pulsing flowers,
sharing the sun with invisible stars.

Thomas Land

Eve's Garden

All is never lost – for even
the ugliest maiden,
the dullest descendant of Eve,
retains a sacred scent
from the garden of Eden.

Thomas Land

Pensioner

Hawthorn-gnarled,
His knees thwart progress
To the library of frowns.
Reaching a bench,
He gazes across the park
To where a blackbird
Extemporises;
No repetition, but
Genuine symphonic movement.

Now another sound;
Through an open window,
Strands of melody:
Bach, the Double Concerto,
Kreisler and Zimbolist in canon
Through Enchanter's Largo.

At once,
World and library
Seem more accessible.
Pensioned off no longer,
He smiles, at one with God.

Michael Newman

Angel's Broken Wings

Battered, bruised, broken
No one knows her name
She walks the streets alone at night
Where darkness hides her shame

Home is lost, hope is shattered
All her friends are gone
Although her heart is broken
Still she marches on

Family left her bleeding
Friends left her to die
No one hears her screaming
No one wonders why

She walks the streets alone at night
Darkness is her friend
She's a fighter, she'll hang on
Until the bitter end

No where to go, no one to trust
Every one a stranger
Faces turned away from her
She tries to sense the danger

No one sees the tears that fall
Her road in life seems long
Although each day she grows more tired
Her will to live is strong

She's an angel, all alone
Her wings have since been torn
She's all alone and lonely
And always faces scorn

Angel girl, don't you falter
I am here for you
I can't save you from your life
But I'll help you make it through

Shane Ebersole

The Night Wolves

Listen with deep unease now,
your little ears becoming sore and burning,
intestines, twisted and clenched.
Anxiety sweats, tears are falling,
as you listen to the howls of the night wolves.

So fatigued, so tired, no rest tonight,
frantic screams and anguished cries,
as the howls of the night wolves
torment your being.
Lay in the dark, heart racing,
while you listen to the howls of the night wolves.

A depressive dark engulfs you now,
tortured souls and nasty things,
and how the night wolves cried.
It is morning now, the sun is shining,
open the window and let the fresh air in.
A quiet lament, be peaceful now,
there are no longer the howls of the night wolves.

Beverley Harknett

T i b e t

Vultures loom over torched cloud-lines
where the ghosts of the innocent climb.
Iced nests on chipped mountain ledges
to the bicoloured ancient crevices.
Through a still night of airless rain
their saviour exiled from lands of pain.
Chasing the full moon over velvet hills
the shriek of death greets the night's sombre chill.
Horses hair shines in the blue tainted light
the fallen wake under cerulean night.
Now the yellow and red pulsates these lands
from golden gate to London strand.
Flame of Olympus held with stubborn pride
fear alludes the totalitarian lie.

M J Duggan

The burning within

The seasons have taken them and broke them apart
Withering leaves rot with those gone,
Those depart
You burn me quietly, a new season
A circle, a new start

I have not sat here before
I have not simply stopped
While it all rushes by
While a stranger walks on by
While I catch the eye of a passer by

My mistrust
My stagnant frozen state
Of this cruel winter
Anaesthetized am I
I awake as it melts away
As I read of you on this grassy rotten bench

Never before have I truly woken for a moment
From simple words
Awakening great powers, great hope
My hunger and passion for life
Is found
It's out here not in there
In my shrink wrapped world

Out here with a stranger on a bench,
As I see him read on in quiet suspense
he watches
For we need no words
I almost feel like an interesting person

As the world comes to me overwhelming me
It burns within me burning bright
As the coming of night
Alone now I quietly read, I quietly write
So loudly do I, from this moment I will be heard
I speak to be heard
For in my life it is all words, only words

Nicki Evans

To walk this earth

Have I not swerved and missed
Dismissed
To blame the other
Tethered and chained on a rocky hill
Weathered and torn
I have built up a grudge
I have built a mountain

The saviour meets my glare
Don't you dare
This ground I wear down looking down
I used to be proud of this angry grudge
I thought it was me
I'm sorry
As I climb up the mountain
As I trample this earth

Like a scene of make believe
A temple on a hill
A salty reminder in my eyes
I was resigned
Confined
To not walk but dwell
Ashamed now I apologize

Nicki Evans

“ O n C o m m i t t e e . ”

I was self-important once.
On every committee you could name!
A fancy metal rimmed folder,
Orderly black filofax,
With pens galore.
Big fish contacts by the score.
I shouted the odds
From pillar to chamber.
Stamped on tables!
I liked hearing my voice
Resonate down halls and corridors.
Without a squeak of dissent.
Onlookers turned their heads,
When I sorted them all out.
But when I died,
No one came to
Thank me.

PC Vealey

B r o u g h t t o R e a s o n

With a petrol bomb,
I could take out the supermarket
Next door,
And gain notoriety.

With a bicycle chain,
I could restore instant blindness
To all those do-gooders
Down my local.

With a flick knife,
I could force any shop assistant
To hand over the safe keys.

With a pair of totectors, I
I could pummel the shins
Of political opponents,
And shout out revolutionary slogans,
Baader-Meinhof to the fore.

Yet shy with deference,
I follow you at a loiterer's distance,
And blush when you actually speak.
And on our first date,
I'll freeze like someone was playing
A Chicago Piano.

Michael Newman

I m a g e

We begin and then become ourselves again, caught in the
Drift of some moment that rises with the waves, that
Lifted its hands towards the sky in a
Silent prayer to the dreams that reality became, moving
Through some distant image that scattered across the floor of the forest, that crunched
underfoot that
Became in the moment when its song rise to the heavens, we
Become part of ourselves and draw our portraits in the sand, we
Watch the ebb flow tide of what we once thought, what we became, the
Song rising through its bird-wing moment, floating above us like the
Thought-clouds that chase across the azure, that
Painted themselves upon the sky of our resurrections...

Mel Deo

A p o l o g i e s

To Whom do I owe the first apology?
I have treated so bad, so cruelly
Impatience unruly
My ruthless criticism
As I look in the mirror
I have treated myself worse than everybody else
As I apologise to myself
As to I can make up with everybody else
Negativity has been my friend
I have felt unable I have felt chained
As I kept human kindness out
Suspicious aroused
You all have been my imaginary enemy for so long
The war I declared on humanity that did me wrong
My exhaustion
My acknowledgement
I was wrong
I will suffer no more for the past
It is gone
My battle is now as change is to come
An apology to all
A Fondness, calmness
As anger moves on
My harmful intentions gone

Nicki Evans

I n R e m e m b e r a n c e

A sultry summer afternoon; the hearse
Emerges, trickles like a head of oil
To standstill. Numbed, I fumble with my purse
And jingle change. I look around, recoil
From all those unfamiliar faces
Whose blasé looks I dare not answer back.
My father, moulded once in mortal clay,
Now moves towards incineration. Lack
Of sleep accentuates my drawn-out grief!
Perhaps Orfeo sang of greater loss,
His operatic Romance turned to dross,
But Classic Shrines can offer no relief
In my world. I'll wander darkest caves,
And leave the roses to emboss your grave.

Michael Newman

A b o u t m e a n d m y l u c k y f i v e r

I haven't had many triumphs in my life,
but my lucky fiver, it meant a lot to me –
in any betting shop, Corals, Ladbrokes,
my lucky fiver always won money for me.

And now here I am, skint -
my lucky fiver doing nothing for me -
I've been surrounded by gamblers, idiots,
arseholes of all sizes, for most of my life,
none of them meaning anything to me, all deluded –
Nepalese Catholics, fish eating Christians,
Muslims hanging around outside my house,
carcasses, vultures -
none of them bringing me any luck.

I've tried to discuss certain issues with them,
attempting to feast on the truth -
but none of them seemed very appetizing to me –
alcoholic, slurring teachers,
underage, fifteen-year-old daughters,
boys who worked up in Heathrow -
I've lost my lucky fiver.

One day something will happen,
manifesting, presenting itself before my eyes,
a new truth -
but still, I've lost my lucky fiver -
it's like a ratchet on my brain,
teeth grating away, rusty teeth -
I've lost my lucky fiver

Simon Robson

The Reality of a Sudden
Wooden Maiden

Can you see her?
She's a glimpse of a wink
And half as pink.
Beneath the leafy undergrowth
And crunchy branches.
She strolls and woos you.
Between your looking
Aside and behind.
She's a glimpse and a wink.
Maybe she's real
And half as pink.
Can you see her?
Can you see you?
She strokes your head
And swings into her dream.
She strolls and woos you,
Between alert eyes
And suspense or fear.
Amidst leafy undergrowth
And crunchy branches.
Watching from her perch,
What is she?
Is she you?
She strokes your hand
And trips your feet,
As you nervously laugh
Into deadly stillness.

P C Vealey

Fly her to the sun

The bearded shrink has got "No Entry" on his door
He's lying naked with a patient on the floor
He massages her temples. She's waiting for the shock
But it's all done by stealth in the E.C. Torture block
She's tired, she's mixed up, she's afraid.
She's never been here before
Fly her to the sun. It's warm it's home.
The cold white night has chilled her to the bone.

Classify, identify, dissect and diagnose
Hearts of stone and ice-capped souls
Fly her to the sun. It's warm it's home
The cold white has chilled her to the bone

Some half-cooked nurse says she ought to learn to laugh
It's a wonderful life this – He's got James Stewart's autograph
But her body is shaking and her vision is blurred
And it's been so long since that cheerful little girl
She's tired, she's mixed up, she's afraid.
She's never been here before.
Fly her to the sun. It's warm, it's home.
The cold white night has chilled her to the bone.

Patrick D. Fitzhenry

Spring Jazz

Blow invigorating tunes on your yellow horn! The pollen ascends, brassy notes that catch and vibrate the lime's slender stave. Last winter's muted score is tossed from its stand, but is not replaced; there's no set pattern, no formulaic notation – your breath determines the beat, the bar, those spontaneous undulations of freshness and lull.

Your sound promises wet greens and blues, sporadic, unpredictable, the throaty lash of precipitation on shoot and bud. Your squeak unhinges windows, disturbs roof-tiles, ruffles the blackthorn's white hair – a loose player, experimenting with scales and keys, interested only in the possibilities offered by risk.

Neil Hopkins
from 'My Antique Globe'
Published by Survivors' Press
as part of Mentoring Scheme 2008

Thanks to my industrial injury

Thanks to my industrial injury,
through no fault or neglect of my own, no,
my workplace liable...

I've arrived safely in Kalkan, Turkey,
the sea sparkling, full of bream,
"once home of the ancient Lycian civilisation
on the Turkish Riviera,"
as described by the brochures,
"soon to be allowed into the European Community,
political, currency changes willing "-
I've spotted lots of BMW driving blisters
down by the quayside,
sauerkraut, pot-bellied toads tanning themselves,
scorched, barbecue-striped children,
German tourists with walrus-whiskers,
listening to Beethoven, rolling over,
in cabin cruisers parked in the harbour,
awaiting passports, checks by the Navy -
I'm here amidst piles of crumbling columns, rocks,
amphitheatres on sloping hillsides,
distant echoes that mean nothing to me,
classical rubble, trout farms,
a strange climate, ice creams, panting donkeys.

I'm happy, soaking up the sun,
never having consulted a map,
somewhere on the Mediterranean, opposite Greece -
with binoculars, pin-point accuracy,
I'm drinking Efes, a local brand of bottled beer,
tall, cool glasses of vodka, lemonade and lime -
I'm in a grove full of olive trees
with painted white stumps, warding off the ants,
my mind swaying like the sea, wave after wave -
I'm glad to be alive,
pars gliders falling out of the sky,
dreaming of Hoplite helmets, shields and swords,
taking no prisoners, a warrior,
chain smoking cigarettes, nervous-like,
a man painting the frame of a door opposite,
his brush dripping wet,
careful, stepping over a curled, sleeping cat.

Simon Robson
from *My Deserved Holiday in the Mediterranean Sun*

Ben

Dapper in a fresh shirt
eyes newly mascaraed,
attractive in a campish way
small, dark and harmless.
Men want to punch him,
women take him to their heart.
A deep and silted river,
running lonely, set apart.

Ayelet McKenzie
from 'Courting the Asylum'
forthcoming Mentoring Scheme Publication 2009

Mediocrity or Purpose Divine

A poem does not look much,
Just scribbled on any scrap
Of available paper or tissue.
Put it into print,
Give it a title.
All can be revealed
In an instant.
Mediocrity or purpose divines.
A poem does not always
Seem relevant.
Just scribbled with
Errors and adjustments.
Crossed out lines and words.
Does not do it justice.
Put it into print,
Give it a name or two.
All will unfold,
In an instant.
How pompous it all seems.
This little old poem divine.
That started off as solely mine.
In a terrible dream.
I escaped to find reality.

P.C. Vealey

Mario Petrucci by simon jenner

The editors of Poetry Express
are delighted to present

Part 2 of this 2-part extended
review article of

Mario Petrucci's work by
Dr. Simon Jenner

Part 1 appeared in PE28, Winter 2008 pp 7-10

<http://www.survivorspoetry.com/pages/poetry-express/back-issues.php>

Mario Petrucci's *Catullus* (Perdika, 2006), with its mineral translation, is more edged and cut than others I've come across, and the better for it.

I've read many Catullus translations over the years, and these are amongst the best, with a real whiplash in them. Perdika also published *somewhere is january* (2007), in which Petrucci's work is really poised, balletic, in its exploration of intellectual and physical, light-bound space.

Reading these volumes in quick succession, one perceives shifts around 2000 - with the heavier, personally-accented alienation/eco-scape work in *Bosco*, for instance - though still impressive. *Heavy Water* opened up a narrative scale and variety of forms that Petrucci might, one might think, be challenged to bring back without a book-length poem. But his latest full collection, *Flowers of Sulphur*, does something even more satisfying in one sense. First, Petrucci keeps his narrative strands by cleverly sectioning the book, amassing memorial poems of family and father that refuse to be so parcelled. He opens the first section, 'Chemistries', with the dictum by Muriel Rukeyser: 'the universe/is made of stories, not of atoms.' This exactly bisects the way impersonal biological life interfuses with personal, and the poems gradate accordingly.

After the opening poem mentioned earlier, 'Keeper of the Kilogram', Petrucci takes a domestic setting like 'Night Flaw' and twists what autumn is doing with a suburbia full of internet connections:

... that burn of photocopiers splicing air as air
grows thick and resinous, chill as cream
on skin, spilling in at your open sash from
sky's orange-pink cornea whose capillaries
run quick pulses of electric blood
-- seized, possessed
of so much witness.

'In Touch' playfully observes how 'the yeasts on my toes/have stowed away on yours' and concludes: 'Those secret hordes make us a common host... our bodies' soft continents.' Donne has been refracted through the kind of biology papers he would have adopted had he had access to them. 'Ark' continues exactly the same animal, as opposed to vegetable, sentiment, reflecting on the different animal stages we go through in intimacy and sex: 'Now you're gone, they cower under lock and key./ Come back. Bring out the animals in me.' Such poems are wonderfully adroit, clever, and naturally touching. They recall some of the best of Michael Donaghy's playful poems of the early 1990's, but of course there's more scope for Petrucci's *jouissance* in his science-subverted tropes.

And, as one might expect, the collection darkens, though not before a series of autobiographical signposts to Petrucci's beginnings, where 'Bunshop' enacts smells, particularly of mistress, master and school. The end has the master enumerate: 'Make a note boys. Sulphur. Flowers of.' You sense these poems are pointers, setting up an amniotic fluid in a jar, an anatomy of disturbance. This registers with Petrucci's Italian family, which split the poet's experience, Italian from British, a *deraciné* conflict that brings language clashing like tectonic plates. As in 'Bunshop', Petrucci focuses on the skew of children's language, either mis-heard or deliberately clannish, like the 'Z' game the young Petrucci brothers play at in algebra. Eventually the elder brother defects with pubescent disdain:

... z span away black as vinyl, became instead
that lingering the end-of-song guitar starts into
just before it fades to crackly nothing.

Petrucci, whose focus on the science teaching he

experienced at school is artfully selective, here cross-fertilizes private language with communal perception. By contrast, *Heavy Water* somehow released a group empathy and response to givens; but the science master's capacity for creative absence in 'Mr Hayes', for instance, allows for personal observation ('that/dark vein he laid between two white lessons'). This timetable evocation draws down the dark *lignea nigra* of knowledge, of fruit. Other such knowings occur in 'terranauts' (the clever small case title signals this immediately), which exhibits Petrucci's capacity to experiment in adventurous, concrete forms, concluding after a wild flirtation with dug form, ampersands and a terracing of fractured lines:

bury there under
 little tuft with a little
 sand one round fresh egg

of sound

Petrucci often finds his most satisfying formal gambits when returning to regular metres after stepping out elsewhere.

'Habeas Corpus' really does have the body at its centre, and poems like 'Nape', which explores it, or 'Stay', which exploits it in the shape of a Victorian misogynist (with some neat falls of words enacting a concrete joke after regularity), usher in intimacy. Playfulness is stripped, and elegy like some enzyme begins its fungal intrusion. Victoriana bridges this poem: something that's quite unusual in Petrucci, whose spell with *Fearnought* has cross-fertilized, here, unexpectedly. This in a poet who till now has been associated with recent history and personally-infused science. Thus 'Miss Patience Muffet' arachnizes (if that's the word) the daughter of a scientist-father, whose use of her skills in his experiments turns her into one of his exhibits as she administers pain killers:

... But he can't

eat – says the pain, the pain is
 sucking him out. *Patience*, he whispers.

I take the largest wad of cotton,
 step up to the bottle. Twist

the stopper from its slender brown
 neck. In the water of his eyes

my hair is a clot of spiders.

The proleptic elegy for Petrucci's mother in 'Almost Awake' anticipates medicine:

It'll be that kidney of yours
 finally does you in, the one you keep on
 giving a slow knuckle-dusting.

Sixty years clutching the wrong end
 of every sticky English sentence. Still
 unable to grasp – *It's not unpleasant.*

Here the book's twin themes - a clench of biology and slipperiness of a second language - fuse in a sensory negation. The mother won't heed health, but gets a wrong grip on the end of it and on English. This is viscerally explored in 'Tonsillitis' where: 'In the back of your throat/histories repeat. Silly – but it/stopped your breath...' 'Stroke' enshrouds the mother around the trope of dropped eggs: 'You're a perfect likeness of yourself. But that/clot knotted your brain, a dark fertilisation.' It ends with a granddaughter observing how the husk of recovery allows the woman to 'crash the top off' an intact egg (like the dropped bowl, unbroken) and commenting: '*That's the way she did it, when she was alive.*' A suite of poems voyages around grandfathers, parents, and a sister, throwing lateral and denser locality, 'a family of umbrellas' as 'Opened' has it. We're then led out through 'Anechoic Chamber' and a kind of clinical shrug as the writer turns the cognitive forensics on 'the turbine throb of my brain, my heart/slowing down.' The section climaxes with 'Lessons' where – in a trope recalling *Heavy Water* – the father is teaching his son how he can't breathe, through science jokes ('*Must be I've used it//all then. From Siberia/to Antarctica... That's/why each draw's so, so bloody hard*'). The pay-off is as elegant as it is fitting, admonishing the poet: '*Don't hold your breath.*'

The third and final section, 'Footage', sieves the quizzical layers of Petrucci's training, whether archaeology, as in 'Boxgrove II' (not his field, but one he espouses), or his own. Here a boy 'fossicking for coins' discovers the addressee's mushroom skull, so long there 'our spines have had time/to straighten and stretch.' The Geoffrey

Hill-like (not Heaney-esque) punning on vernacular to straighten a momentous truth is one reward of the pressures of this latest volume, where trope and a dark playfulness have placed Petrucci in the line of wit that intensifies from Empson through Hill like a cloud chamber. 'Footage' too is an adult palinode of the book's opening. The scientist – now grown through knowledge, forgiveness and grief – sees how his family become inanimate objects of study, people turning, like Miss Muffet, into specimens of themselves.

Other dramatic monologues like 'Three Mile' (with a lighter, tangier voice than we heard in *Heavy Water*) remind readers that Petrucci hasn't left that subject; it has marked him. 'Pyre Watchers', more adventurous still (the pollutants are more complex and local), is another example. 'Orders of Magnitude' re-deploys 'Answers' in a similar Socratic quizzing on global warming. 'Negatives' explores First War generals being dealt savage justice by ageing chemicals mis-applied by some private, so that 'he just keeps on developing./His forehead bluff with craters.' He is eventually 'dying to explode.' Such harking-back to the small justices of bio-chemical process, enacted over enormous stretches of time, has pointed the Petruccian wit more sharply than perhaps any poet of his generation. No-one since Michael Hofmann, perhaps, in *Acrimony*, or the early Carol Ann Duffy, has so consistently, and gratifyingly, used their pitchfork. Here it's deployed to drive mortality off to just a part of the process.

The collection's conclusion includes two longer poems. 'The Liberation of Berlin Zoo' explores the layers of green spaces one should be suspicious of (as James Fenton also reminds us); it is packed with descriptions that morph slowly elsewhere. And, after 'Late September, 2001' (again positioning this collection along the millennium's fault-line), Petrucci steps back to the obliquity of 'Negatives' with the section's title-poem 'Footage' which quotes Rosenberg's conclusion to 'Dead Man's Dump', with all the sardonic positioning for useless wars that one could ask for. It's a hallucinatory, stilled sequence of tercets, some italicised, between dream and waking, like extreme tiredness with a pin-sharp imagism through the fug of bad exposure:

*That quenched hour
of afternoon waiting
for you, when people walk...*

...Time

has brought blood to celluloid

Prismatic leaps and exposures flicker: '*The image plants the germ/but is not the germ./It is innocence//violate...*' The tercets operate as shutters, fragmenting and fading with the subjects' question: 'Their eyes say – *do you/see, do you, you//eye of long/memory? Do/you see//that?*' Another 'end-paper' poem, 'Dr Eradicus', explores the etymology of one final word, as in the experiments so played with in this volume. As the doctor assures the narrator: '*if a man were ever to/uncover this Word – he would die.*' This answers the need, the fructifying doubts, of the uncertainty principle enshrined in the opening poem. *Flowers of Sulphur* brings so much together of Petrucci's previous volumes that it marks a nexus of departures that would furnish a classic introduction. It should finally, belatedly, establish him as a major poet of his generation.

There have been thematic divergences, but Petrucci has shifted back to his origins, enriched by a zig-zag of developments. So the poems after 2005 seem broadly modernist in a different way to poems in *Shrapnel and Sheets*. There's also a swifter thought process, more compacted, the Empsonian metaphysical wit, a paring down. Reading Petrucci, one has to go back and check this dodgy or fuzzy memory against the actual poems and find out that, like some experiment, it's wholly wrong. Memory pares down too.

somewhere is january, Petrucci's recent pamphlet, is in fact an opening flare from *i tulips*, a vast sequence directed towards that same empathizing – a kind of embodying – so redolent of Petrucci's other work (particularly, in this context, the reach of *Heavy Water*). Petrucci has commented that "perhaps, with *i tulips*, I've found at last a form of language through which I can fully empathize with myself."

Mario Petrucci's volume '*i tulips*'

Published by Enitharmon Press, 2008

www.mariopetrucci.com

www.enitharmon.co.uk

Landscape — Body — Spirit

The crumpled long scar of the cliff face
finds comfort in the breasts of sand dunes
slowly moving to the breath of wind

The rolling curves of hills,
the pits and folds of the valleys
dozing in their daydream hollows,
the bone of outcrop rock laid bare.

Trees respire, their muscular branches
spread wide
and
below ground, the coiled viscera
of roots
crossing
recrossing
living and
dying reborn
recycling

Above all this, the shifting mantle of cloud twines,
hinting at what may lie beneath its drapes,
reflects a light transcending — dazzling
the limitless ocean of stars beyond its bounds.

Something here is too strong
for the trifling of hands to do more
than irritate, finally to cease
through wisdom or extinction
— it makes no difference —
the world will see it through

And no matter how loud and above what
thoughts and dreams of destruction
the demons of the earth may toss and sing
their songs of self-aggrandisement
beneath the blue serenity of sky
they will pass
leaving no trace
but barely recorded
thumbprints
on the sands of the landscape
The boulders of time.

Richard Copeland
from 'This is not a Sonnet'
published by Survivors' Press 2009

Rita

Things must be getting better.
I bump into people
I don't know
who think I'm their personal friend
from long ago – must be my face.

I used to be put out,
put in my place,
now see things from a different view.

I'll be your 'Rita,' if you want me to –
at least for a little while.

Ayelet McKenzie
from 'Courting the Asylum'
forthcoming Mentoring Scheme Publication 2009

Three Haiku

My fierce obsession,
the heat of your scarlet smile
kindling stacks, dry thoughts.

I touch your left breast,
a soft white pouch in my hand,
holding everything.

The pain of leaving:
you depart on the next train,
Wheels grinding my veins.

Neil Hopkins
from 'My Antique Globe'
Published by Survivors' Press
as part of Mentoring Scheme 2008

Writing in Cafes

Some days I ask myself why do I write? Why put myself through the uncertainty and self doubt then to expose myself to public scrutiny?

At moments like these I go out for a Cappuccino see a writer is like a vagabond at home really nowhere or at home alone.

The cafes I have written in are various as the swimming pools I have swum in. It all began one summer at a dusty street cafe in Portugal writing between eleven and twelve with a coffee and a custard tart. This eased the writing process, which is one of self imposed isolation and extreme self analysis.

Back at home I began to write on the terrace of my local Pub with Guinness for company and cedar trees surrounding me. It seems less painful to be part of the moving world.

I constantly discovered new places to write in exploring them like an intrepid traveller - beside swimming pools, museums, parks, garden centres, parks or out of town reservoirs were all grist to the mill of writing.

In the city upstairs at the Kaleidoscope Cafe above a Victorian Arcade in the centre of my city or on the outdoor terrace of St, David's Hall where you get a bird's eye of the street life below or the ultimate cafe experience sitting at the Hayes Island cafe with a cup of tea and a sandwich in the midst of the city itself with it breathing all around you. Or if I fancy the sea air sitting outside at the cafe at the Knapp minutes from the sea. They have all served my purpose very well.

Nevertheless I am always searching for the perfect venue - that perfect place to write where the prose will fall like a ripe peach from the pen and I can capture the cadence of the sentence and will see clearly what it is I want to say and captured of course in the perfect notebook.

Sometimes more likely than not I am sitting in a hot car on a busy street having nothing to write on, but the back of an envelope, but when, like Virginia Woolf says you can see through to the symmetry at the heart of things.

Is it only in my dreams that I will compose the perfect prose effortlessly sitting with a Cappuccino on some sun lit terrace overlooking an azure pool with the Bourgainvillea flowering overhead? More likely than not I will burrow away in a stuffy room before the glare of a computer screen as I try to seize the moment by the throat before it disappears forever into the ether.

Why am I writing then? To find out what I think and feel and what it is to be alive at this place in this time and to rejoice in the writing of it? That is a happiness all its own.

That perfect moment may never come and like Fitzgerald's Gatsby standing on his dock forever waiting for the green light of Daisy's presence to illuminate his life I will wait for that moment always out of reach.

But the canvas is all around me - that and the Cappucino of course.

'you wouldn't be normal'

by Robert D Dangoor

Your life is in your hands but sometimes obstacles get in your way.

If I expected a friend to help me out in a difficult situation, I would feel very disappointed if he let me down at the last minute. I would think twice before asking someone again.

If I ask a friend to do a DIY job in my flat and I pay him and then he asks me to lend him money which he never returns, I would be upset.

If you know someone who is also known to your family, one has to tread carefully because you might upset your friend, who will report to your family.

When a group of friends get together everyone is enjoying themselves, but there is always one upstart who upsets the apple cart.

In a pub when a group is making a lot of noise and a nuisance of themselves, the publican tends to pick on the one with least resistance.

One is wary of people who react on what you look like rather than what you do.

Giving advice is hazardous. On the one-hand, one could say that that person is interfering, But he is giving the benefit of his experience.

If you give too much appreciation to someone, he might test your support the next time.

When someone crosses the road and his feet are run over by the wheels of a car, then he would be weary of crossing the road again, without carefully making sure that it didn't happen again.

Passengers in an airplane, which has had to force land, would find it a traumatic experience, then the next time they fly they will check which airline to go with that has a safer record.

If I ask directions and he sends me the wrong way, I will tend to try to look up a map rather than depend on anyone else.

A shopkeeper who is given forged notes repeatedly, has to check if the notes he now gets are genuine.

If I confide in a shopkeeper with a secret, and he tells other people that I know, I would less likely tell someone else a secret.

You usually can only go into a shop once or twice, in a short space of time because familiarity breeds contempt.

One can be wary of giving too big a tip in a restaurant because the waiter might think that you are after something else.

You have to be careful of adverts. They don't always keep their promises.

When I hadn't slept for a day or two and I went on a long and stressful journey by car, I hyperventilated. Since then I am aware of escalators and heights. So much so that I haven't gone by tube for over 10 years.

A soldier who has suffered from post traumatic stress disorder from a war, might have a traumatic reaction to a loud noise after he is out of the war zone.

A person who is abused as a child, might find it difficult to lead a normal life.

Reviews

That Old Suburban Angst

by Kevin Coyne

Reviewed by Dave Russell

Tony Donaghey Publishing - England, 2004

for www.kevincoynebooks.com

ISBN 0-9549003-0-8

This is a posthumous collection, made available by his widow, Helmi "one of many that Kevin and I were planning to publish and I intend to carry out that wish." Helmi added that this collection was Kevin's most ambitious book project. For the first time he reworked stories that were written a long time ago. And behind the lines there are some very personal notes in the text. It is the first major collection of Kevin's writings since *The Party Dress* was published in 1990.

"... the spontaneity and energy that hallmarked his songwriting style shines through in these poems, fragments and short stories, all set in a vividly drawn suburban dystopia. Coyne's examination of human beings as they try to co-exist in spite of their flaws and foibles is moving, surreal and very funny." (Mike Barnes, *Mojo* magazine)

This is a collection of individual vignettes, including seven poems: *How He Is*, *Lady Luck*, *Rat Head* and *On the River Bank*, *Dark Into Light*, *A Perfect Sunday* and *Sibling*. Many are extended, in loose, episodic narrative frameworks, while the sequence *Encyclopaedia A.B.C.D.*, is more formally divided. The anecdotes are mainly in the first person – emanating from highly convincing personae. They are loosely set in the fictitious village-cum-small town of Botfield, which evokes Kevin's Derbyshire background. The backdrop has the feeling of a closed community, where neighbours know all of each other's business, and make substantial gossip. They explore the dark areas of extreme and deviant behaviour, giving a full perspective of perpetrator and sufferer, instigator and victim. Coyne was supremely well qualified to take on such a challenge as this, as he had the combined experience of being a psychiatric nurse and a ward patient. There is a frightening candour about this work which, in my opinion, merits comparison with Billy

Childish's *Notebooks of a Naked Youth* and possibly, dare I say it, with the works of Jean Genet.

The many, varied personae include a GP and a police inspector. The sequence opens with an account of someone who has lost his job committing an act of indecent exposure; the relationship between the two things is left to the reader's imagination. Exposure, and other desperate sexual activity, form a prominent theme here. *Thin Walls* captures the seedy conditions of run-down bedsits, sheltered housing and, of course, hospital wards.

Life Stories is a sequentially random selection of anecdotes, a combination of seeming autobiography with Kevin's powerful reverie and imagination. Throughout this collection, Kevin's lines of division and definition invite speculation. There is certainly a feeling of continuity about this section; Lionel, the first-person narrator, fights a constant battle against being stigmatised by his community. He has his grievances (justified, one feels) against his GP's and the like, but sings the praises of Dr. Ramsbottom, the Chief Psychiatrist. He then transfers, puts himself in the role of Dr. Ramsbottom, and fantasises about having qualified 'as a noted psychiatrist'. He can imagine himself to be the mirror image of his own desires, long to be a policeman, and be Chief Inspector Grimby.

Rabbit Teeth, describing a bizarre relation from Egypt has an element of fantasy; the image of the exploding boiled egg is particularly powerful.

Writer's Lot is in a way quite revelatory of Kevin's strong literary bent, which until recently has been somewhat obscured. Together with *Getting Better*, it paints a highly compassionate picture of all aspiring writers' delusions of grandeur, where the boundaries of delusion and reality become blurred. 'The rancid smell of tortured mind' – how many sensitive souls have never sensed this? *Love Story with Author's Note* nails (literally!?) the relationship between creativity and real life experience. Good to come down to earth: "He decided he wasn't Oscar Wilde; that he was really himself writing about Oscar Wilde. He felt better." Similarly, in *Days by the Sea*: "Would you twang your harp while I pretend I'm William Burroughs taking notes?"

“It was late at night when I wrote this piece and a little brainstorm caused me to lose track of the sense of it all. I was forced (with reluctance) to abandon the trivia and fall into the arms of my lover. As I did so my busy pen fell to the floor drawing blood from the naked foot in passing.”

In *Encyclopaedia A.B.C.D.*, there are dramatic dialogues. *Jim and Lydia Chew the Fat*: this is a dialogue presented without quotation marks, with the result that the delineation between speakers gets extremely blurred. Junior tells a gruesome tale of a brilliant child, possibly a genius, who met infant mortality at the age of six. The narrator is berated by his ex-wife for neglecting his living offspring through an obsession with the deceased. *Psychosis in the Sunshine* highlights one of Kevin Coyne’s favourite themes: humour in the midst of desperation: “If I am to die, please allow me time to laugh . . . I wish to become a care-free zombie”.

In *Parrot*, the narrator takes on a domestic pet’s identity, and enacts rebellion against being treated as a totally passive, compliant entity. This particular pet shares a household with Nelson, a pit bull terrier; he has the darkest thoughts about the demise of Nelson. Some of his individual will-power remains; he has been so bombarded with verbiage to repeat that he can select what he wants and chooses to repeat.

Taciturn Tomkins contains an eloquent statement of some people’s desire to remain perpetually ill: “Must I work? The idle life suits me. I think it would be better if I didn’t. Work disturbs my little illnesses, eradicates their teasingly cruel divine influence on my well-being; makes me well in fact. I don’t want to concentrate on any task.. I want to sleep and flounder, flip flop blind through the days.”

Topsy Turvy Time is the most extended story in this selection. There is disjointed dialogue among a vague array of characters. Surreal black humour is to the fore: “Charlene dissolves in a bowl of thick brown gravy . . . Mr. Pumpkin lights the candle inside his head . . .” It has a strong element of fantasy/sci-fi: “A fierce explosion rocks the building and all within it are

transported to America.” The scene is then transported across outer space - to Mars. Authorial omniscience remains: “the author tires of the conversation, clasps his hands, makes the Martian disappear. The first person narrator even does a sex change.

Alan’s Search for True Love, in diary form, offers an interesting insight into Kevin’s life as a writer, and into writers’ lives generally. It is divided into sections, each one relating to part of the day. Particularly evocative of the tensions of sensitive souls struggling to sustain creativity in the midst of deadening routine jobs – here in the stockroom of a retailer’s Good words of warning: “They that ignore the spiritual side of existence are doomed to an excess of inner turmoil”.

Occurrences: Dali-esque images here – a giant sausage emerging from the sea, an oversized crab at the narrator’s bed. Interesting portrayal of a footloose male, with incoherent ambitions, desiring to go to Hollywood.

Alive and Days by the Sea focus on the psychiatric hospital environment. This is an area in which Kevin Coyne excelled – because of his extensive past experience both as Psychiatric Nurse and as Psychiatric patient. *Alive* focuses very sensitively on the peripheries of mortality – the subject may very soon be departing from the world. In this condition his reveries and fantasies have free scope.

My Life with Ronald deals with Ronald’s dreams of Uganda. In Kevin Coyne’s work, exotic, foreign environments do occur, mainly as foci of reverie and speculation, an interesting counterweight to the predominantly English, small-town backdrop of his work.

Liverpool Arthur: the character of Arthur is a leitmotif in Kevin’s song lyrics; it may refer to Kevin’s brother. The narrator is his ex-wife. The story describes a feckless escapist, escaping into reverie, rock ‘n’ roll bass playing. Some fine truisms here: “Unemployment doth not seek to edify or uplift”, “small-town nobodies with power complexes”; “being alone isn’t the epiphany to divine silence I expected it to be” “Thin walls lead to noise . . . thin walls lead to truculent female ghosts imposing themselves on men.”

Kevin could never be accused of being a one-sided, male chauvinist writer. He shows great sensitivity to the female psyche, as for example in *Beans*, the dialogue between two women. An interesting debate about ladylike-ness and its reverse. Nor does he flinch from warmth and intensity of feeling: “She turns my brain into a powerhouse without limits, causes me to rap and rhyme into some hazy, dazy street urchin”. Above all, he emphasises humanity: “The heart of an angel is contained within the soul of a man”. He unflinchingly faces physical and emotional sordidness, but unfailingly places such details in full context, in the spirit of true compassion and understanding.

Poet in the City: Allen Ginsberg – a Tribute Review by Dave Russell

**National Portrait Gallery
Thursday 19th February, 2009**

This event was chaired by Shaun Levin, editor of *Chroma*; it featured Michael Horovitz and Barry Miles, together with Karl Theobald, who is well known for his portrayal of Dr Martin Dear in ‘Green Wing’.

Having now attended several Poet in the City Events, I have to say that this reading was not quite up to Poet In the City’s highest standards, which I have witnessed several times. Michael Horovitz and Barry Miles gave an excellent background to Ginsberg’s life and works. Barry wrote *Allen Ginsberg: A Biography*, first published in 1985, which updated and substantially revised after Ginsberg’s death in 1997. The poet’s experiences and development were traced from the 50s, when he fell under the influence of William Carlos Williams, and Andre Breton. Throughout his life, he struggled for a vitally American form of expression, being passionately opposed to the European Classical tradition. However, while at University, although he was intensely inspired by the ancient voice of William Blake. He tended to favour ‘stream of consciousness’, though in his later years he became more willing to revise and edit his work.

There is much controversy about Ginsberg’s political stance, or the alleged absence of it. What is beyond dispute is that Ginsberg never went in for aesthete

isolationism. In his later years, Ginsberg became increasingly involved with such issues as anti-war and legalise cannabis, and was a spokesperson for gay groups – relentlessly committed, on so many fronts. It could be argued that this was an emotional, subjective commitment. But it was outspoken and catalytic – in my opinion highly contributory to change in thought and society.

“Like Hölderlin, Blake, Baudelaire, or Rimbaud, the Beat poets are expatriates in contemporary society. They come to San Francisco, writes Rexroth, ‘for the same reason so many Hungarians have been going to Austria recently.’ To Ginsberg, America is Moloch (the semiotic god whose worship entailed human sacrifice, usually of the first-born); and the great minds of Ginsberg’s generation, kicked around by the machine age, looking for ‘jazz or sex or soup’, are sacrificed to the great American dynamo. “Beat poets abandon the intellect. To the Harvard community, schooled as we are in the academy of form, all poetry seems back which lacks order. Playboy, Esquire, and Harper’s are effectively snide in calling Kerouac and Ginsberg ‘immature’. Indeed they are; but, in the same sense, American poetry (outside of S.F.) appears to be senile—the aridity of a sterile Greenwich Village, or the ingrown complexity of form without substance, of structure without inspiration, which characterizes the overwhelmingly academic literature of America’s intelligentsia.” (John D. Leonard) In the words of Milton Acorn: “I love Ginsberg because he is the most savagely political of poets (his objection that his poems are ‘angelic ravings’ and not really connected with politics is about as convincing as Khrushchev’s contention that he doesn’t really believe in God).”

Michael Horovitz outlined the history of *Howl*. This was originally written as a performance piece, but it was later published by poet Lawrence Ferlinghetti of City Lights Books. The work contains many references to illicit drugs and sexual practices of both orientations. On the basis of one line in particular: ‘who let themselves be fucked in the ass by saintly motorcyclists, and screamed with joy’. Customs officials seized 520 copies of the poem on March 25, 1957, imported from the printer in London. Lawrence Ferlinghetti, who ran City Lights Bookstore, the poem’s new domestic publisher, was taken to court for obscenity. Nine literary experts testified for the poem. Supported by the American Civil Liberties Union, Ferlinghetti won the case when Judge Clayton Horn decided that the poem was of ‘redeeming social

importance'. The case was widely publicized (articles appeared in both *Time* and *Life* magazines). The trial was published by Ferlinghetti's leading defence attorney Jake Ehrlich in a book called *Howl of the Censor*. *Howl* went on to become one of the most popular poems of the Beat Generation. In the words of John McChesney: "Ferlinghetti recognized that Ginsberg's work had the potential to reshape the dominant poetic tradition. Fifty years later, the poem stands as a watershed."

John D Leonard's appraisal of *Howl* in *Free Beer & Poetry*, is also worthy of note: "There were more significant meanings in Judge Clayton's decision than a new grey shade to the opaque of California legalism. *Howl*, not a very good poem, became an immediate best seller, and North Beach enriched the world of the novel with Jack Kerouac's *On the Road*. This was discovered by small as well as large magazines.

"No poem has ever deserved its title more. *Howl* is Ginsberg's declaration of unfaith in Technological America, rendered by despair, erotic imagery, and dirty words. It is a cry of rage against Rockland and 'the drunken taxicabs of Absolute Reality'. And, in a smaller way, it is a contorted and metaphorical promise of redemption from the supercharged electric chair of the raw-dealt genius. The means of penance is the essence of North Beach's new philosophy.

"Ginsberg and Kerouac are oracle and cantor of the Beat Generation's metaphysical search for IT. IT is the moment of reckoning, the bohemian nirvana, the ultimate thrill. IT is sought by several means: by sex, by bullfighting, by jazz—when the man with the trumpet finds what he's looking for and brings his audience with him. IT is found in motion, in the 'night-cars' which whisk across the continent both in Kerouac's novel and in *Howl*. IT is no more obscure than absolution, and no more mythical than the sacraments and symbols of any religion. What is new about the San Francisco approach is 'anarchy'."

The context of *Kaddish* in terms of Jewish burial ritual and the actual burial of Ginsberg's mother in San Francisco was particularly poignant. She had long been suffering from schizophrenia. Naomi Ginsberg died on June 9, 1956. Allen was living in Berkeley and enjoying the exciting first phase of his literary celebrity, having introduced *Howl* to the world a year earlier. He'd just fallen in love with Peter Orlovsky and must have felt a million miles away from the hopeless, lonely rooms of the

mental hospitals where his mother had lived out her last years. He missed the funeral, and later learned that the Kaddish, or Jewish prayer for the dead, had not been read. According to traditional Jewish law, at least ten men, a Minyan, must be present for such a service to be performed. The Rabbi, apparently, would not accept gentile atheists as making up the Minyan quorum. At that time, Ginsberg was taking morphine and amphetamines, as well as listening to large numbers of Ray Charles records. He found an old book of Jewish rituals, and tried combining traditional Jewish rhythms with blues cadences. Two years later, in November 1958, Ginsberg was visiting his friend Zev Putterman. After an evening of Ray Charles records and hard drugs Allen told his friend about his mother's death, and about how the Kaddish had not been read. Putterman had a copy of the prayer in his apartment, and the two of them performed the ceremony themselves, two years too late. Ginsberg went back to his apartment, sat at his desk and began writing. Ginsberg's intensive reading of Shelley's *Adonais* was a vital prerequisite for the poem. The traditional Kaddish contains no explicit references to death. These are very much to the forefront in Allen's case.

The following observations from *Litkicks* are highly illuminating:

"The tone is mostly one of forgiveness, of coming to peace with improperly buried memories. We hear of the hopeless bus quests, the horrifying tantrums and crying jags in bathrooms and hospitals. We see Allen as a simple child, frightened and unable to help. His mother begs him to take her home and he says 'No, you're crazy Mama; Trust the Doctors'."

"Perhaps the most shocking parts of the poem detail young Allen's perceptions of his mother as a sexual predator. Consider, while reading these lines, that during Ginsberg's 'heterosexual' phase as a young man he was psychoanalyzed and came to believe that his homosexuality was an aberration caused by his experiences with his mother (this phase ended quickly, and Ginsberg accepted and became very comfortable with his gay identity)."

"Naomi's insanity seemed to have somehow set Allen Ginsberg free as a child. The shy, bookish, emotionally intense boy from Paterson needed a lot of courage and conviction to follow the mad path he chose for himself, and his familiarity with true madness seems to have benefited

him here. He knew the limits, and he could speak the language. Of course, there is no comparison between Naomi's incurable schizophrenia and Allen's 'madness', which was at most a metaphor for true insanity. Still, there had been a moment of recognition when Allen looked at Naomi and saw himself, and this fact energized his poetic career. He had a 'psychotic episode' of his own as a young man, involving a vision of Blake, a famously mad visionary poet himself. Accounts of this episode (which frightened Ginsberg's father) seem to make it clear that Allen was looking for the truths his mother had gotten lost within.

"All the Beats were aware of the metaphor of insanity; they tempted it through drugs, through poverty and suffering, and finally through writing. Despite the fact that real insanity is invariably tragic and debilitating, the notion of the disaffected mind has a romantic sense. There is an honesty and Zen simplicity to the demented mind; we see this charming simplicity in *Kaddish* when Naomi tells of serving God a bowl of lentil soup. If you believe the normal world is corrupt, insanity is a path to purity.

"It is difficult to imagine anyone actually wishing to be insane (unless this person has never met anyone truly insane). But the Beats yearned to uncover the truths that sanity masks. Ginsberg writes of the monster of the beginning womb, Burroughs of the naked lunch at the end of our fork, Kerouac of the wheel of the quivering meat conception. Birth and death, all the strange stuff in between . . . we are all vulnerable together, the sane and the mad, and in the end we will all experience madness in at least some secret or small way. This poem begins as a prayer for Ginsberg's mother, but it is a prayer for all of us – all of us together."

Kaddish, then, is a 'Survivor' poem of the greatest relevance. Through it, one can see how the traumatising extremities Ginsberg suffered generated an exceptional level of compassion. Here was a person of great generosity, always encouraging others. Under his prompting, Adrian Mitchell revised a major poem about his own mother.

But as for the evening overall, some of the choice of material did Ginsberg less than justice. The *Please Master* poem I found rather uniform and monotonous; it seemed to offer ammunition to his detractors. *Father Death Blues* did not stand on its own as spoken word. So Karl Theobald forgot his guitar; so he should have recited

something different – there is, after all, ample choice. As a self-contained poem, *America* does have some of the panoramic vision of Ginsberg's more extended works. Textually, longer extracts from *Howl* and/or *Kaddish* would have been appropriate. Michael Horovitz did in fact read a short extract from *Howl*, including:

"Moloch! Robot apartments! invisible suburbs! skeleton treasuries! blind capitals! demonic industries! spectral nations! invincible madhouses! monstrous bombs!"

There should have been more from that poem, consistent in intensity with the extract from the *Wholly Communion* film poignantly captured the essence of the 1965 *Poetry Incarnation* concert at the Royal Albert Hall, which was a watershed for public awareness of poetry in the UK. The event was a vital confluence, global in essence, including Yevtushenko and Voznesensky.

I have also seen some film footage of Ginsberg singing with harmonium, which would make an excellent opener to any commemoration evening. This one utterly vindicated his high level of relevance to the Twenty-First Century.

Whispers from the Offing - A Tribute to Kevin Coyne Review by Colin Hambrook

There was a time I believed in something. It sustained me in the face of unwieldy odds. Dr Norton hadn't yet killed my mother with his murderous arrogance. We were manning the battlements against the psychiatric, capitalistic, fascistic machine. I had died but was reborn into the company of the mad, the shamen, the laymen idealists with a manifesto to challenge the medical model depiction of ourselves as infection. We were fighting for our right to see ourselves as visionaries and healers, travellers through the looking glass, unravellers of the truth. We were on the streets stopping the city letting them know they hadn't beat us. It was a different world then.

And Kevin Coyne was on the front line, with his gravelling heart singing glorious and fearless. He captivated his

audiences with songs of tender, bitter, honest loving and unloving. I remember a crowded upstairs room in a pub in Putney sometime in the early 1980s. Kevin was doing a benefit gig for the campaign against psychiatric oppression. Eric Irwin was on the door selling tickets, with his white straggling hair; his eyes peering over his spectacles. Eric was never amused. He'd been sectioned in loony bins all over the world and had seen and suffered inconceivable abuses of the labelled insane.

And Kevin was a bit of a pop star – though one who was brave enough to sing out for the dispossessed and the disenfranchised. He was a bridge between the hippies and the punks, a complex rich and poetic mix of idealism and realism, a beacon of angry love: And Songs for the Urban Ravens is a tribute to his compassion, a reminder of the fight for freedom our generation made; the belief we held up for a better way of living, in all its naivety and fucked-upness.

Leo O' Kelly sings The House on the Hill with all its sad and bitter irony. His soft-reverbed version manages to capture the fear that accompanied the desolate hopelessness of the Victorian asylums. It is a snapshot taking me back into the institutions that filled my young life with their stark gothic red-bricked horror. That is not to say that the modern psychiatric units engender any less fear; but it's more subtle, filled with bright clinical colour, rather than the heavy grey-black, one-way door:

"I am going to the house on the hill /The place where they give you pills /The rooms are always chilled / they're never cosy /where they give you three suits a year/and at xmas time a bottle of beer/ Easter time the mayor comes round /He's always smiling /The old ladies sit by the garden wall /They never hear the blue birds call/Never notice the leaves that fall /Coz they're all crazy /Where the red bus stands by the great big gate /The red bus is always late /You know why it's always late /It's always empty"

Many of Kevin's lyrics read like a stream of consciousness commenting on the aspirations of a generation. Often maudlin perhaps, but then there was a fight going on for the right to say something real in what seemed a self-satisfied, self-congratulatory society convinced of its English civilised-ness. ??? version of Are You Dreaming is

a screaming shout of a song that captures the confusion gloriously:

"relieve the sadness, just keep running, though you're old, can't do much running, there's a river locked inside you, you won't lose it, though you're dreaming, you're always dreaming, hallulejah we're all rising running through the fields / it's not surprising .. we'll live forever, though we're dreaming"

The Nico sound-alike Joey Stack does justice to Weirido with a sensual, sensitive arrangement backed with a xylophone beating out the pathos. It is a song that always made me cry, an ode to how I saw myself as a youngster:

"he's got no friends, he says he doesn't need any, he doesn't need no-one to care, but I believe he's a lonely man, who'd like a friend with arms to surround him, the love and warmth have never found him, he keeps on walking aound, he keeps on pacing around he's a weirdo. I wonder if you remember him, he was your happy friend at school. The one who just a little eccentric, the one who laughed at the back of the class and you could him a fool ... you call him a weirdo"

Clive Product's passionate, sincere rendering of A Loving Hand captures some of the class struggle that was at the heart of it all.

"We are not puppets, we are not toys, we are not jewels in your crown, good girls and boys, Oh brothers and sisters can't you see, all we need is a loving hand, a hand that's free. We are not mud, we are not wood, you cannot control our souls, you know you should ..."

I could go on about this tribute lovingly put together by the will of Frank Bangay and others of Kevin Coyne's fanclub. There are 22 tracks all told, including one original song by Jackie Leven who ends the album with a personal tribute to Kevin Coyne with his image of the man as an urban raven:

"Here come the urban ravens now with the soul of Coyne on a city bough / in the whistle and snap of a cold spring day there's a raptor lizard and two crows pray / I'm picking at the world like an angry scab and the wound is open and I can't look back ... without crying."

The Divided Self

Review by Dave Russell

Poet in the City event at Kings Place, London 16th March, 2009

The wording of the theme was taken from RD Laing's famous book. This was an exploration of the relationship between stress, mental illness and creativity. The flyer opened with a rota of many poets who have suffered mental illness, and quoted Roddy Lumsden's dictum: "a poet confessing to mental illness is like a weight-lifter admitting to muscles". The evening was chaired by Clare Allan; it featured Simon Barraclough, Suzanne Batty, David Constantine and Sarah Wardle.

Acknowledgement was made of Dr. Annie Lau's sterling work in gaining support for the project. Dr. Lau is attached to the Department of Nursing at the University of Hong Kong.

The auditorium screen was illuminated by a portrait of the poet John Clare – for good reason. John Clare (13 July 1793-20 May 1864) could be described as one of the first Survivor poets. His work underwent a major re-evaluation in the late 20th century, partly on the part of David Constantine, who is an authority on him; John Clare is now rated as a major 19th-century poet. All four speakers seemed to look to him a source of inspiration, treat him as a patron saint. This poet was described as an 'icon of deracination – deracinated by fame'. John was in the asylum at High Beech, in Epping Forest, for 4 years, but then absconded, and walked 80-90 miles to revisit his childhood environment, supported by gypsies on his path – only to find on arrival it had been destroyed by the Enclosure Movement. Clare believed he had two wives, Patti and Mary Joyce: he bolted for home, and lay between his two wives quietly."

There was read An Invite to Eternity – one stanza can give a sense of its evocativeness.

Wilt thou go with me sweet maid
Say maiden wilt thou go with me
Through the valley depths of shade
Of night and dark obscurity
Where the path hath lost its way
Where the sun forgets the day

Where there's nor life nor light to see
Sweet maiden, wilt thou go with me

The John Clare Society was founded in 1981. Clare spent his first forty years in the village of Helpston, between Stamford and Peterborough. The John Clare Trust, active locally, regionally and nationally, purchased his old home, renamed Clare Cottage, in 2007 – thus preserving it for future generations. The cottage will open in August 2009 as an environmental and educational centre of excellence, writers' retreat, and visitors' centre. In addition to enriching people's knowledge of the lyrical and scientific wonder of the countryside, the centre will also promote education and raising environmental consciousness.

Clare Allan has taken part in schools placements organised by Lapidus in association with the Poetry Society, and worked extensively for Mind and Rethink. She is attached to the Royal College of Psychiatrists, to the Mental Health Foundation, and is an active campaigner for standards in the NHS. Clare explained that she had had two major breakdowns in her 20's. She often compulsively walked the streets; reciting Keats's Bright Star sustained her through those difficult times. Poetry and fiction alike were greatly supportive to her as a long-term ward patient. Her novel, Poppy Shakespeare, which critically explores concepts and definitions of sanity, has been short-listed for the Guardian First Book award. Clare has done extensive journalism in the mental health area – articles such as Mental ill health is not something to celebrate; The jury's out: I'm guilty of having a mental illness; The unfair smoking ban will mean fuming on the wards. She is vehement that 'mental illness is not an identity'.

Her own appraisal of the evening is eminently noteworthy: ". . . it is undoubtedly true that a great many poets are considered to have suffered from mental illness; John Clare, Robert Lowell, Sylvia Plath and Theodore Roethke to name just a few. Is there something about the emotional extremes of bipolar disorder, for example, that is conducive to poetic expression? Or is it the other way round? Can writing poetry send you over the edge?

"I recently chaired an event for the charity Poet in the City as part of the 'Words on Monday' series, held in London at Kings Place, the Guardian's new home. Batty and Wardle have both 'done time' on psychiatric wards and written resonant, gutsy and humorous poems about their

experience. Batty also leads workshops for people who have experienced mental distress.

"The evening was billed as being on the subject of poetry and mental illness. But was it actually helpful, I asked the poets, to even think in those terms? Were we not creating an artificial boundary between 'sanity' and 'madness', when what we were actually talking about was a range of human experience, however extreme it might be? David Constantine reacted quite strongly to this. While bipolar-type mood swings were characteristic of the poet's creative cycle, severe mental illness was characterised by a lack of flexibility, a mental rigidity, quite the opposite of the 'chameleon self' that poetry required.

"It may be that during periods of acute psychosis, for example, this is true. But in my own experience, one of the enduring legacies of a 'breakdown' is a vastly increased flexibility, a smudging of the boundary that used to divide 'the real' from 'the imagined'. Once you realise that the world you perceive is precisely that, the world you perceive, and not an objective reality, it's impossible to unrealise it again.

"I am wary of romanticising 'madness' in any way, and I certainly believe that severe depression has robbed us of far far more than it's given: what might Sylvia Plath have written had she not killed herself aged 30? But it does seem to me that for those who survive, poetry can offer a powerful means of expression."

Simon Barraclough's debut collection, *Los Alamos Mon Amour*, was short-listed for the Forward Prize. In his poetry and radio work he has often explored the mind's darker moments, with power and wit. His critical acclaim speaks for itself: "Simon Barraclough offers up a poetry of contrasts: he is a relaxed formalist, a hands-off sensualist, a subtle polemicist and a humorist you can take seriously. All these strands are brought together by a deft hand under the watch of a filmic eye." (Roddy Lumsden) . . . "Barraclough can turn a world-weary hangover into a zoetrope of colour and shadow. He can move you with the precision of his imagery and rhyme and shock you with a sudden correlation. Throughout this marvellously unsettling noirish collection, Barraclough never succumbs to introspection: even in the bleakest of storms, his poetry remains determined to look outwards, to engage and entrance." (Luke Kennard) He read *Christmas* at the School of Psychiatric Medicine.

Some disturbing facts of pain here; "my aunt pinched a slab of flesh from my navel". He referred to Robert Lowell as a 'confessional poet', and read Lowell's *Skunk Hour* (for Elizabeth Bishop) *The drug Xeroxat* was criticised. His own *Brighton Restored* was chillingly evocative. *Brighton* was the scene of the disintegration of his academic career. The poem *Celestial Navigation* made awe-inspiring analogies between inner and outer travel: 'the edge of the world rubbed away'; the ocean was a 'salty paella of foamy food'. His choice of Donald Crowhurst as a reference point is highly significant, since opinions on Crowhurst's authenticity are bitterly divided: he is half-considered as a desperate person who attempted a sea voyage round the world, which was clearly beyond his abilities, half as a fraud, whose purported voyage was a fraud, a deception. This division forces the reader to question the boundaries between reality and illusion: the mental state of the delusionary may overlap with that of the genuine achiever.

Suzanne Batty teaches Creative Writing at Sheffield Hallam University and leads writing workshops for people who have experienced mental distress. In January 2000 she received an Arts Council Commission to write a poem for *Poems for the Waiting Room* a project organised by Hyphen-21, a body concerned with the therapeutic power of poetry and maintaining codes of practice on the psychiatric ward. Her latest publication is *The Barking Thing*. In this collection, the real and unreal are deliberately confused. The book creates a fantastical landscape in which actual experience can be transformed through archetypes and fairytales, urban myths and nightmares. The poems chart a journey from mental anguish to spiritual joy - and back again. The writing balances on a sharp edge between sanity and madness, between meaning and insignificance, with a dark humour and a tight grip on life. And through it all there is the wisdom of dog - a spiritual mentor who cocks a leg at doubt and despair.

She was described thus by Jackie Kay: ". . . Sharp, intelligent and unsettling . . . Batty writes about twins, mental illness, love and families with a wry humour. She writes to find out who she is and in doing so helps us discover who we are. She is original, brave, unflinching. Suzanne Batty writes bold, flamboyant, risky poems which come from left field and Manchester, mixing dogs and people, mean streets and threats from inside." Suzanne read *Night in the Day Room*, where she made a strong point

of her desire to identify with animals: "I want to inhabit a creaturely form". She identifies the dog essence with the power of restoration: "I'll be a user of tools; I'll give men a burning bush, this dog's gift." Her description of her 'paper baby' – a surrogate companion on the psychiatric ward, was particularly moving. She acknowledged the writings of Julian of Norwich as a major source of inspiration – especially to *Dream of an anchoress*: reference to 'father rolling in a bloodstained blanket . . . the long cigarette of a drawn-out death. Her expressions excitingly embrace the spiritual and the banal, commonplace physical: "My soul was like a second skin/mantle that smelt of omens,/rocked like a cracked egg. *Feeling Better*, which expresses sadistic feelings towards a goose, was inspired by a poem of Louise Glück. In *The Wild Iris*, Suzanne can face the horrors of real immortality: ". . . terrible to survive as a consciousness buried in the dark earth". She can face the necessity of fetishism in her reference to her paper baby, which she kept while on the ward: "I keep her in a bedpan by my side; she helps the barrenness."

Sarah Wardle has been poet in residence for Tottenham Hotspurs, and was short-listed for the Forward Prize. Her third book, *A Knowable World*, vividly charts Sarah's detention in a Central London psychiatric hospital of over a year's duration for bipolar disorder. The poems chart the stresses of thirty-something city life through police arrests and hospitalisation under section orders to achieve a way out; then the threat and frustration involved in the fight for liberty and the patience needed to achieve recovery. Through commanding and apt expression, Sarah Wardle conveys bleak experience. These cathartic poems are themselves testimony to her ability to overcome the sense of futility, helplessness and panic involved in bipolar disorder. Form and technique have provided a framework for her to re-establish a sense of order and concentration out of chaos. *A Knowable World* bravely enlightens our understanding of mental illness.

'Wardle writes with a jauntiness and a grasp of the need to be clear; and courage, the sort that took on and put behind her the dark things and the different, writer's courage, which dares to be understood and judged' – Edward Pearce, *Tribune*

'She writes with admirable clarity and power' – Vernon Scannell, *Sunday Telegraph*

'Imaginatively playful and technically experimental, *Score!* combines humour . . . with a flair for applying language sensuously' – Robyn Bolam, *Poetry Review*

Sarah won the Geoffrey Dearmer Prize in 1999. Judge Sheenagh Pugh wrote: . . . [her] control of form was impressive, as was the humour and lack of self-obsession; this poet looks out at the world rather than contemplating the inside of her head. More important still is the fact that the language lives, it's sparky and feisty; it always runs rather than plodding and now and then (*Young Man in Bronze; Modern Poet*) it flies. Her new collection of poems was written in hospital. She read *St. George's Eve*, which she had written within two months of being sectioned. That environment can be surreal; snowflakes can drift upwards. During her protracted sojourns, Sarah got to know the other patients very well, including Michele Farron, who died there. Nor does she flinch from criticism of those in authority, including a psychiatrist who suggested they should take Viagra together. In the final discussion she made the point that an absence of purpose can mean a heightened sense of self.

David Constantine is a prolific prize-winning poet and translator, who has written extensively about John Clare. Constantine's *Collected Poems* appeared in 2004. His latest volume is *Nine Fathom Deep*. David has extensive experience teaching creative writing to extreme psychiatric cases, including the criminally insane. He admitted his inability to change their minds, finding that their attitudes involved the endless repetition of formulae, fixed and dangerous facts, a complete lack of empathy and remorse. This is the diametric opposite of the empathy, the utter emotional and mental flexibility, intrinsic to poetic sensitivity. He read *New Year Behind the Asylum* – a haunting portrayal of a bereavement against the background of a dockland area. *Prayer to Aeolus* expresses the anguish of a sensitive soul (a condition shared by so many psychiatric patients – and this refers to a home backing on to a psychiatric hospital) who cry "send me some breath . . . I am leaden, inert". *Mornings in May* time sensitively conveyed the feelings of desolation felt by patients and visitors alike, "this day begins, howling in mine . . . I kept the loved at home". The last remark is one of a caring person, who imagines someone restored to health and normal personality after a disorder. He discussed the case of the German poet Friedrich Hölderlin, who spent a good half of his life in psychiatric care. It has been a commonly-held belief that his creative spirit grew and flourished under those conditions. Constantine strongly opposed this view. In

his confinement, Hölderlin's soul "did not develop into something ethereally beautiful."

The chairperson directly quizzed David Constantine on the validity and relevance of Laing's term. Constantine replied that a division of personality was intrinsic to the making of poetry: one has to be able multiply to enter another personality, and empathise with fractions and possibilities of people – go out into lots of selves. He found the likelihood of being ill and the inclination to write, 'dangerously akin'; but every poem is an 'act of concentration' and a force for sanity.

This was an incredibly courageous and sensitive attempt to portray the relationship between mental distress and creativity.

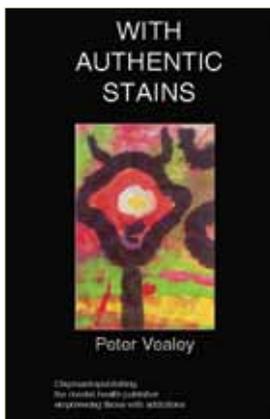
With Authentic Stains

Reviewed by Roy Birch

Peter Vealey

Published by Chipmunkpublishing, 2008

ISBN: 9781847477439



Peter Vealey's first volume of poetry *With Authentic Stains* deals with (and here I quote the author) personal loss; depressive anxiety; childhood insecurities; loss of idealism; addiction; recovery; love; and 'a desperate lonely hope.'

Vealey is by no means the most technically profound poet I have ever encountered. He often misses the

obvious best word to use and his over-employment of the full-stop gives his work the kind of abruptness poetry traditionally seeks to by-pass. Having said this, however, his work possesses an innocent soulfulness and an immediacy of impact, often near-physical in its intensity. Vealey is true to his muse, and his honesty alone would render his work worth reading. But there is more. His message, while personal in its source and intention, expresses all of us, and the poems themselves contain telling and quite lyrical passages. Here are some examples:

And there is more. And it all hurts and it all warms while so doing.

Looking, staring at dusk.
In the indifferent town.
Immersed in a
Contradictory soup
Of patience.
(Before on highhill.)

Bring me evaporated cups,
Quilt sorrows.
Am I as sad as the morning?
(Dead Birds)

The wild beautiful wind
Shakes my car effortlessly.
Rustles that old lonesome tune
Of way back lost.
(Face of the Wind)

The ghosts of the past
Lay scattered in the wind.
Odd moments haunted by
Déjà vu.
Half noticed and dimmed
By time.
I painted a gate and
Waited for fate's fickle fools
To unravel
My tomorrows.
(Home)

What more can I say? *With Authentic Stains* by Peter Vealey. Read it.

The Poetry Cafe

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

Dates	Features
9th April 2009	<i>Alistair Murray & Alain English</i>
14th May 2009	<i>The Virtuosos & Jude Cowan</i> <i>Michael Horowitz &</i> <i>Ingrid Andrews</i>
11th June 2009	<i>Ingrid Andrews</i>
9th July 2009	<i>Cristina Viti and Stephen Watts</i>
10th Sept 2009	<i>Founders' Night</i>

Open Mic is a wonderful opportunity for new and more experienced poets and musicians to have their work heard in a friendly and supportive atmosphere. If you want to read or perform your work you need to arrive between 7.00pm-7.30pm in order to book your floorspot. The doors will open to other audience members from 7.00pm and the performance will start at 7.30pm sharp. We do not have a finish time for the event and this very much depends on the amount of people who want to do floorspots. There will be a break half way through. These events are organised by Xochitl Tuck, volunteer Events Coordinator.

contact: email: xmtuck@hotmail.com

Tel: 07796 831 935

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

Survivors' Bulletin

The Survivors' Pledge

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

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

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

CALL FOR VOLUNTEERS

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

SP is looking for technical help with our website, we are interested to hear from a developer able to assist with some IT issues for the current site and help support the construction of a new website in conjunction with staff and volunteers. May suit recent graduate looking for work experience. Please email: blanche@survivorspoetry.org.uk



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

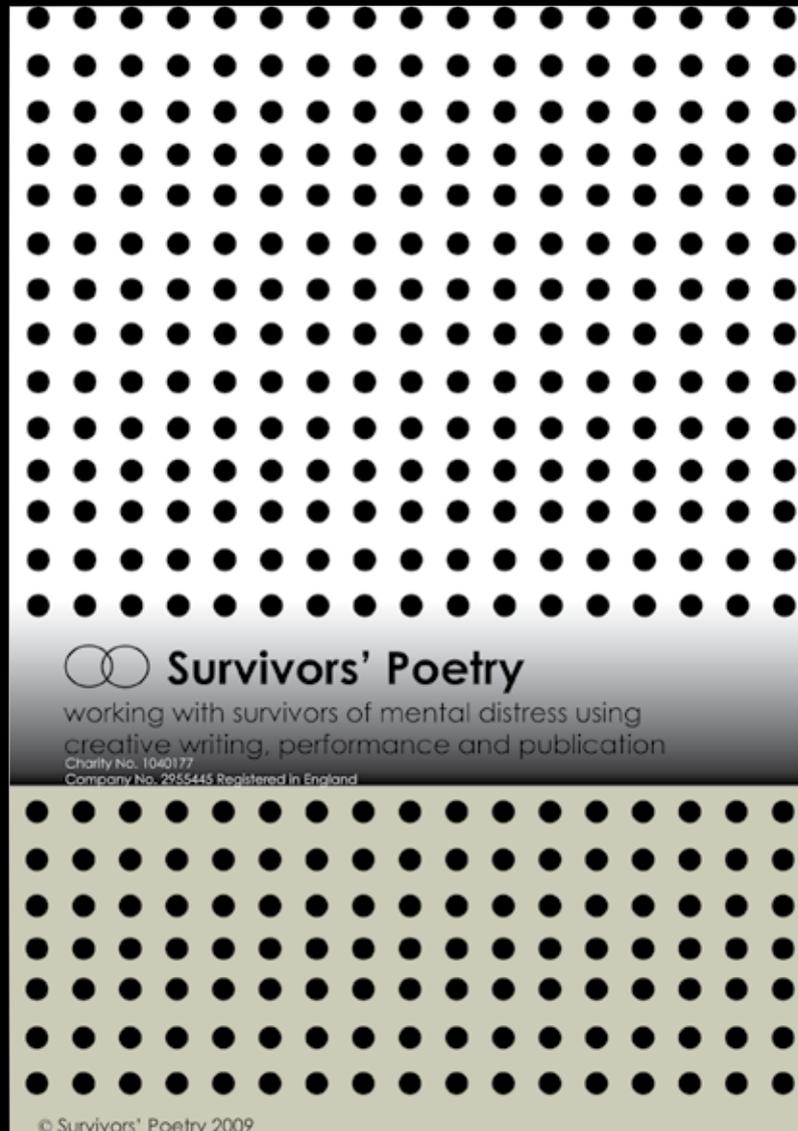
if you wish to



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

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

Survivors' Poetry brochure is now available to download



<http://www.survivorspoetry.com/>

Survivors' Poetry is funded by:

