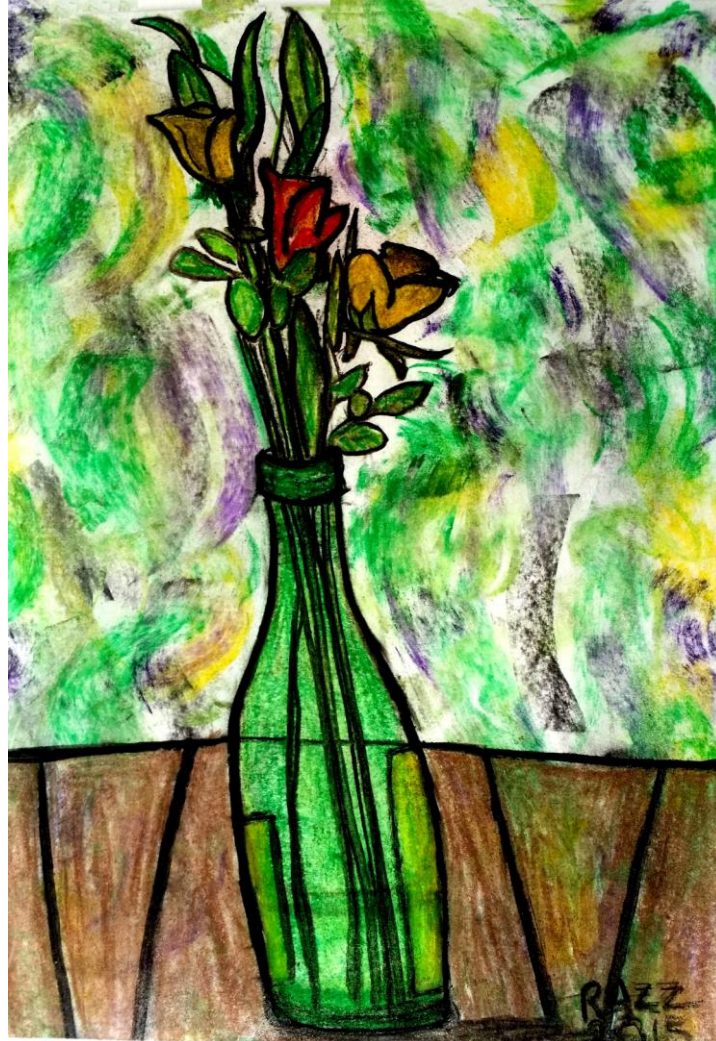


# Poetry Express Newsletter #51

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**Still Life by Featured Artist Razz**



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# Editorial

What a difference three months make! As we speed towards the end of our particular Mentoring cycle, several nostrums have become clear.

One is: it's easier to centralise things in the short term if you're set up in short form, which is how SP flourishes at the moment. We're reduced to one relatively permanent member of staff, and that's contingent on annual funding; but with **Phil Ruthen** as Strategic Consultant it has felt like co-directing and, in effect, is.

Many mentees have come to us in a rush from the end of January. It's dizzying, and some of these, though late to the programme, have brought some highly accomplished and very brave work with them. Two are academics, one is a single mother, another a cabaret artist; there are others aged from 20 up; all are Survivors, all have something very powerful to say.

Our current crop of longer-term mentees are having or have had their work designed for e-book and volume format publishing in the past couple of weeks. We're ready to roll with these.

Secondly, the film and media initiative, always pushed to the end of mentoring since it's difficult to triangulate film-makers and mentees even in London, has assumed a far more concrete outcome. This is in the not-so-concrete form of our film-maker **Hugh Ellacott** returning after work on environmental impact on the HS2 project, to which he's still attached. Indeed this still affects him: only last week, as of writing, he had to cancel one meeting for that reason (Roman settlement discovered in trench etc.). But we're now locked into some very significant filmic developments.

Thirdly, we're applying for a new programme inspired by ACE which would roll out in September for three years at bare-bones survival costs. Elevate, one of those catchphrase based on directives or a project that does what it says in fact in this case. This will extend the life of the mentoring and filming since it's predicated on the 33 inner and outer boroughs of London and some initial ones outside London altogether. Each area gives witness to life as a survivor *in that borough* including witness of the care system and, in a separate take, a poem from that area, often voiced as well as written by the poet who gives witness to the healthcare experiences.

This will, I hope, begin to localise and also give voice to someone in your area whom you can see is experiencing the same neighbourhood with its travails and up and downs as you are, and it's even likely you'll know the person. I hope we can extend this region by region, though we're starting with London.

Some of you will have noticed that our website isn't currently updating. We do hope to resolve this.

The current funding cycle ends in June. It doesn't mean we will, since I hope to be at the end of a computer and will receive emails. But certainly good thoughts will be welcome just now as we make our bid: edging nervously, like the uncertain weather, into the spring.

**Simon Jenner**

# Events

2016 certainly got off to a flying start with a truly capacity audience at the Poetry Cafe on January 14<sup>th</sup>. The featured acts were **Stephen Watts** and **John Arthur**. Stephen read his epic *Old Women of my Childhoods* – a panorama of time-travel and generation spanning, where he could attuned to all his forebears. This attunement can be painful – “And in the later years/Those when the afterbirths of childhood/Had been thrown aside and not wrapped round /To heal memory or poultice political wound” Profound vision indeed, coming from “the one that is predicated on all the sanities of madness.” He followed this with *Brick Lane*, an incredibly detailed and sensitive portrayal of the environs in which he is so deeply rooted. He conveyed, poetically, a marvellous sense of history.

Some of that spirit was also conveyed by **Sally Smith** and **Mala Mason**.

**Jazzman John** was on good form with his laconic wit. **Su Patterson** made a heartfelt dedication to the memory of David Bowie, based on his song *Wild is the Wind*. Other performers included **David Kessel**, **David White**, **Eton Roys**, **Paul Waite** and **Tony Laing**.

**Dave Russell**

## Survivors’ ‘March Hare’ Poetry Night – March 24<sup>th</sup>



Another wonderful night at Tottenham Chances! Spring was definitely in the air – with a flowing meadow of poets, performers and musicians. As I had to leave a little early, I missed **Jasper**, several 'Open Mic' survivors and the **Baffled Angels** with their new band member **Huma Sibtain**, who plays the castanets with such grace and Andalusian energy.

Highlights of the night, although everyone who takes the stage at Survivors' is a highlight, were **Andrew & Ima** with a truly Pagan performance – *Garlands of spring in their hair*. Fairy wings, percussion, flights of fancy, on top of the huge speakers and nakedness. This was the first time Andrew has read his melodic, Pagan poetry naked. Reception given by the audience in a way only one can see at a Survivors' gig – truly accepting and non-judgemental. Regular contributors to Survivors' evenings, including **Mala Mason**, **Habiba Hrida** and our very own **MC Razz Poet** graced the stage with beautiful tender poetry.

The **Sea Enemies** spread their musical vibes across T Chances. **Unique Technique** performed for the very last time *Girlfriend is a Magician*. He is retiring this song. Nonetheless, it will live on in the memories of all of us. **Madeline Smith** was also featured. Halfway through her set, there appeared to be technical issues with her guitar. She completed her set with an a cappella version of one of her songs. What was so lovely, was how the audience joined in, with banjo (Lawrence Renée) table tapping by Razz Poet and a few other people . . . Giving Madeline a rhythm to sing too.

Such gems as these are the reason why I love Survivors', and why it is a night that will always hold a special place for me: the feelings of belonging, of celebration. Because everyone that steps through Survivor's poetry door is welcomed with warmth and creative love. Long may it reign!

## **Tara Fleur 'Woman of Bones'** (Photos by Lawrence Renée)



# SUICIDE by Hamza

All the insects of the dark old graveyard had a meeting every night. They discussed their doings during the day, and the taste of every dead body they savoured. Every day, when any corpse was brought into the graveyard, was a very happy occasion for them: a bellyful of food put them in a pleasant mood. In their routine, not a single day passed without at least one dead body being brought into the graveyard.

It was dark and horrible place, but they enjoyed it a lot and it was truly memorable for them. They were natives of that plot, and were born amidst these dark herbs where they passed their whole lives. The graveyard was very dark; no human ever tried to stay there for a night. They were even afraid of their own shadows in this gloomy and horrible darkness. There was no sign of life here except the signs of lives now ended, lost in the gloom. There was chit-chat among all the insects at the night. It was a dark night and all the insects were gathered under the central big tree which seemed very horrible from a long distance. The blowing breeze was making the shadows more terrifying and the twigs of the trees were assuming ever more awful shapes.

The insects were chuckling joyously; life was pleasurable for them, they were getting more food than normal.

“How are you dear?” one insect asked.

“Life is very pleasant here; we are getting more food daily,” another one replied.

“Human flesh is always tasty, and we are fortunate to be insects and have the opportunity to relish this delicacy,” said the first one.

“Thank God humans don’t eat each other, or we would go hungry.”

“Sure: then we would starve through lack of food.”

They were the happiest creatures of the world, jubilant about their lives. There were thousands like them who shared their feelings every night, telling about the bellyfuls of food which they got all day long. There was not a single day when they had to go hungry. These were the happiest moments of their lives; they had grown up after chewing the human flesh and cleaning the bones, which later mingled in the clay. They had tasted the flesh of every kind of person, young and old, white and black. But they had no concern about colour or age; they were just habituated to picking the flesh from the bones. Every kind of flesh was delicious for them. They were such experts that, before entering the grave, they could determine whether the dead one was a man, a woman or a baby. The most favourite food for them was the dead bodies of small babies, because their flesh was fresh and soft. It was digestible, and so delicious that many times they grabbed at each other to get their share. They were only afraid of the bodies of the old men because there was much less flesh on those and generally they were full of bones. It caused them indigestion. Tasty flesh always intoxicated them, and they did not leave any dead body until its bones disappeared. Nightfall came, ahead and all they gathered under the big tree, which made the graveyard darker by spreading its twigs all around like an octopus, and looking as if it wanted to provide a shelter for all the creatures of the graveyard who wanted to converse in this dark night. The insects seemed afraid because the number of dead bodies was increasing, and they were unable to eat

all those who daily took shelter in the dark pit. They even they divided themselves into groups so that they might finish the flesh on a daily basis, but there was always more flesh left over. They ate more than they required but the supply of flesh was inexhaustible

“The number of bodies is increasing day by day,” said one insect.

“Yes; I have never eaten so much before,” another replied.

“It has never happened before . . . now the Angel of Death becomes crueller.”

“Yes but after eating bellyful flesh, we are unable to finish it,” the other one replied.

“But I am worried about the situation: if all the humans of the cities are finished, then what will we have to eat?”

“Surely we will starve; may God have mercy on us.” They prayed humbly to God to decrease the death rate of humans so that the insects kept on getting their food in a proper and regular way. A lot of killings was a red signal, meaning great harm for them. Life was becoming difficult for them and the number of dead bodies increased with every passing day. They were afraid of what was happening in this city where the Angel of Death angel was ruling and every day there was a rush of bodies in the graveyard. They were also afraid of this rush because many of them were killed under the heavy feet of the live humans who brought them in. Therefore whenever they saw a rush of living people, they tried to hide anywhere they could.

A few months later, strange things happened: the dead bodies were coloured with blood and full of holes. The insects had to find a way to enter the coffin, because they could be drowned in the blood of the dead bodies when they stepped into the coffins. It was a hard task for them to eat the flesh now. The most astonishing thing for them was that they also found strange things in the flesh. Due to its delicious taste, the flesh was vanishing day by day.

The dead bodies were full of iron springs, barring, nails and many more strange things. The flesh was no longer purified and the insects had to eat it extremely carefully. Then gradually, the flesh was becoming tasteless.

“What is happening in the city?”

“Don’t know, brother. Now the humans come daily to the graveyard and ever more dead bodies are piling up day by day.”

“And have you feel that the flesh has become tasteless?”

“Even it is not clean, the flesh is full of iron. I do not understand how these humans eat the iron.”

“I am astonished too, and have you seen – these bodies are drenched with blood! Yesterday I nearly drowned in the blood of a dead body: there was much blood gathered in its coffin.”

“God knows better. What is happening here? I don’t like these drenched dead bodies. I like the dried one because in the blood-drenched dead bodies there is no more taste.”

“Sometimes the flesh is even burnt – so much blackness and smoke . . . God forbid! What are these humans doing with their dead?”

“Yes, I have heard that many of our friends died because of eating this poisonous flesh. I don’t know how poison entered in the dead bodies.”

“Nor do I – it is astonishing that human blood has proved poisonous.”

They were afraid of the situation and unable to understand who was sharing their flesh. Now with most of those buried in the graves, half of their bodies was missing, which was astonishing for the insects: they knew the entire graveyard; there was no one there who might eat their share, as they all used to eat altogether. Everything was shared there; and no one ate alone. Their worries increased as the days passed. They wanted to catch the thief who was eating their share of the flesh. The brutality and cruelty continued, but the insects could not understand it. One day, some other insects from outside of the graveyard happened to meet them; they also told the same stories. Those had also eaten a half body of a human as well as a few pieces of human flesh which they found on a roadside. It was a deadly day for them and most of their friends were dead because of drowning in human blood, which was flowing on the road after a massacre killing. All the insects were astonished to hear these stories. They could not believe that now the humans had started to eat each other. If humans ate humans, then what would be left for the insects? Their hearts began to burn with hatred for humans. They never believed that humans turned so cruel that they were becoming the habitual of one another’s flesh.

“Have you heard the stories? What is happening on the earth?”

“Yes, I am astonished to know that the humans are eating each other.”

“They are very cruel, how they eat each other by piercing the each other’s bodies with iron.”

“It is annoying that they are adapting the habits like us to fill their bellies. First, they seemed me gigantic and heavy but now they seemed equal to me.”

“Perhaps, they have forgotten that they are humans.”

“If they are so much brutal then in future we will go on starvation.”

The worries of the insects kept on increasing and there was no change in the routine. The dead bodies kept on increasing drenched in their own blood. It was irritating day for all the insects of the graveyard when they saw a half body of a small baby. The smooth body of the baby was smashed into pieces and it was full of iron. They did not believe that how such a small baby can swallow so much iron. All the insects of the graveyard were astonished and they groaned, lamented and sobbed on this little baby whose flesh was their favourite. They were assured that the humans had done something with this small body. They condemned the humans who had now started to eat their small babies. It was a Doomsday for them, most of the insects decided to migrate from the graveyard while few of them committed a suicide by jumping into the drenched coffin of the small baby.

## **Hamza**



*Exuberant Figures by Razz*

## Art and Razz

Art has always fascinated me, ever since I was a child, but it's only been in the last couple of years that I've pursued it, since joining a Recovery service and meeting **Michelle Eva May** there who facilitates the art class and whose own art broke me open to reveal a world of intensity & feeling that changed the way I viewed the world and helped deepen my perception of it!

I've always loved the Surrealists and the Expressionists and the Stuckist artists who grew out of the Medway, championed by the likes of **Billy Childish**.

In 1996, fed up with the naff cards in the shops at Christmas, I made one of my own, a collage and I've done them ever since. In 2010, **Eve McDonald**, who runs a gallery for outsider art in Old Street, included some of my work in an exhibition – & to my amazement people outside the realms of my friends actually liked them!!!

Some of my collage work has been political, some of it just surreal. I like subtlety, putting in something that doesn't fit, that turns reality on its head. I may take a current topic, something that has affected me in some big way, be it war, government policy or nature taking back the planet. Sometimes, something that's just visually pleasing.



With art, I find that even mundane objects have a surreal quality. A pair of shoes, some hats, a vase of flowers.

The link to madness, to heightened perception is spiritual for me. We've all been so deadened! Being able to put shape & form to it; the calm & agitation that springs from doing it and seeing it come into being, excites me!

I work mostly with charcoal & acrylics and I find working in a group situation and the sense of community & belonging it brings very nourishing. We all need to connect to survive! It's not a cure, but it's evidence of the journey. All we leave behind are milestones. Signposts & milestones.

Enjoy the journey. Destination unknown!

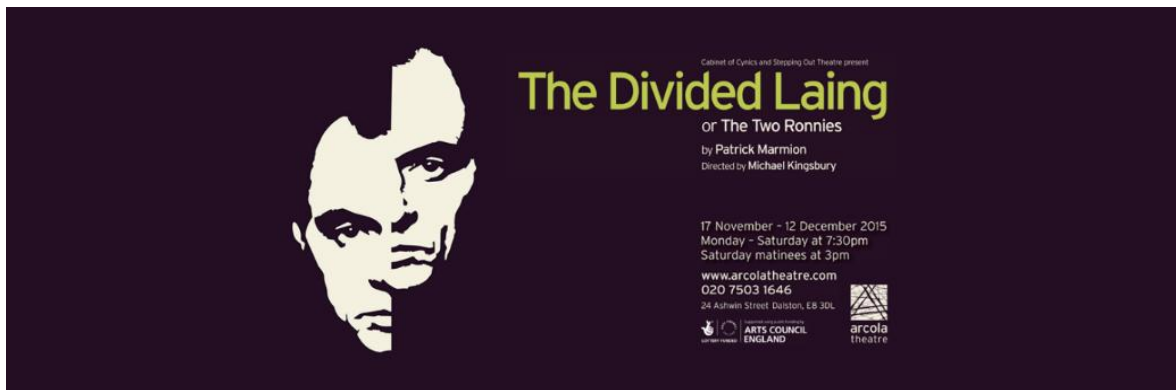
## **Razz**



# Critical Review by Tara Fleur 'Woman of Bones'

## RD Laing Play The Divided Laing or Two Ronnies

Written by Patrick Marmion  
Directed by Michael Kingsbury



The play opened at the Arcola Theatre with a chorused dialogue by the main characters, setting the scene at Kingsley Hall, RD Laing's therapeutic (medication free) psychiatric community funded and supported by The Philadelphia Association.

*'He (RD Laing) developed a passion for Jean-Paul Sartre, Albert Camus and existential philosophers, reshaping the thoughts of man, before electing to specialise in psychiatry – That necromancy of the mind'* I loved the concept of psychiatry as a beastly necromancer killing off the psyche with its draconian mood and harsh order.

Many of the main characters in this play felt two-dimensional – typical and stereotypical psychiatric patients, lacking much of the depth of the real patients (and staff) who all lived together, at Kingsley Hall.

**Mary Barnes**, played by **Laura-Kate Gordon**, One of RD Laing's most important patients (in terms of regression therapy success) appeared in the play to be very caricatured and hollow – dressed as a cartoon creative, neurotic patient. A brief moment of interest – her being a subject of intense regressive therapy, with a push to make her character funny, soon depleted my interest,. This didn't work for me.

There was a moment of amusement, with us (the audience) not being quite sure, if we were witnessing the partaking of Mary's regressively pasted shit sandwiches (only eaten by Laing) was relatively giggle worthy.

The constant offers of tea were also suitably dissociated from the reality of the household falling apart (psychologically) from the inside out and vice versa. I would have liked more humour

about Mary's regression. Less about her ability to be nice and make tea. Overall I couldn't connect with her at all, not even on a comedic level.

**Joe Berk** (Another of Laing's patients), played by **James Russell**, fell flat in my opinion. He being somewhat of an outsider in the house (a philosopher of sorts and a real believer in the concept of communal psychiatric living without drugs or rules, just a lot of love and acceptance) never quite fulfilled (for me) in this play, the sarcasm, hostility and resistance to his hero (Laing) not even on a comedic level did he shine either. **David Cooper** (RD Laing's divided self and LSD partner) played by **Oscar Pearce** was the most interesting characterisation in the play. After David & RD Laing (Ronnie) swilled a bottle of pure acid (which later in the play we discover was in fact holy water, Mary filled the LSD bottle with it. Suggesting perhaps that both David and Ronnie were indeed psychotic rather than high)



We enter a scene where David Cooper & RD Laing are in the midst of a (supposed) LSD trip. A sexual dive into the future:

**David:** *'From here I looked up and parted her labia, ducked under her huge lolloping clitoris and passed into a vast clearing that was like inside and outside all at once. Another dimension of all in all. And we looked down at the peoples below- comrades of all we surveyed. We saw everything as it truly is, in its emancipated form, released from the tyranny of commodity fetishism. Then she turns to me and says 'Do you want to see the future'*

**Ronnie:** *And? What did you see?*

**David:** *You're going to peg it on a tennis court in France man. 1989'*

**Ronnie:** *'What about our legacy?'*

**David:** *'He looked us up on a computer (Zac the future caretaker of Kingsley Hall, now a Bangladeshi Centre)*

**Ronnie:** *'How can you look things up on a computer'*

**David:** *Fuck knows – he called it googling. It's replaced libraries.*

**Ronnie:** *Jesus. It sounds like Orwell. What is it, like a totalitarian state?*

**David:** *Ja man, totally fucking totalitarian.*

David, I thought, could have been madder. Less political in his (misplaced) drug induced hallucinations, more far out so to speak. I did love this metaphysical, sexual connection with the Goddess he met. The way he dived his whole being into her vagina, arriving into the future via her womb. We all know a woman holds the universe between her thighs. But I digress.

Laing I thought was impeccably played by Alan Cox. Touching if only momentarily here and there, on the psychic aspects of his theories. There were moments of brilliance in his acting, teetering

on RD Laing's possible madness. His obsessions, his dominant ego . . . His delusion? That James Bond was one of his personal friends and was indeed due to come to Kingsley Hall for lunch, was mildly entertaining.

In the second half of the play we were transported into a 2015 psychiatric system. With its interesting twists of ego, and ego play. Laing becoming part of the institution. The Third Ronnie who sold out to psychiatry, as it is now. Rigid and toxic. This scene opened topically disjointed. Enhanced by flashing lights and a nurse appearing with a gigantic syringe injecting Laing with a sedating cocktail of drugs was fairly generic. But the supersize syringe portrayed in the play lacked subtlety. More Hammer House than acutely funny.

The shift of time and realities was fun. But again this play soon fell into a stereo typical medical, psychiatric affair. Emphasis on sections, sedative cocktails and psychological debate was dull. It would have been a far more engaging scene, if the script explored (as Laing did) the sense of absurdity, institutionalised thinking (even within community care) and toxicity that psychiatry offers still to this day.

Probably the most interesting and dynamic effect in this play was the blowing up of the phrenology head amongst flashing lights! Dramatic sound track till BOOM it exploded! The reply to which by RD Laing was '*My head is broken*' I thought this summed up well, what mental health feels like when one feels so fragmented, a little glue (as Mary always has and had here just languishing in her pocket, emotionally perhaps?) saves the day.

We trolled through other scenes in the play with the demise of Kingsley Hall. Narrative's included: The consequences held by the local pub owner who couldn't quite show empathy with visits from David at his establishment. Laing tries to bribe him with the suggestion that James Bond was coming to Kingsley Hall for lunch. I didn't quite get this obsession with Bond. This Bond narrative ran through the play. Epic scenes of balcony resistance as Ronnie appears Caesar-like confronting crowds of skinheads outside Kingsley hall who were actively seeking it closure. The pseudo-death of David following his downing a bottle of LSD (Holy Water). The anxiety of Ronnie's colleague **Aaron Esterson** played by **Kevin McMonagle** packing and unpacking his suitcases wanting to leave Kingsley hall for the comfort of a valid psychiatric facility.

There were scenes of RD Laing's flash-backing into his youth, with a brutal mother and an absent, unknown father.

A little about RD Laing's many failed relationships with women and his children and his imaginary partner appearing pregnant in her support of Laing, and the downfall of Kingsley Hall with its explosive theories.

I at times felt frustrated with the (in my opinion) cliché script in this play. I decided to watch the audience around me. I can't read people's minds but by expressions and fidgety levels, I

think many felt this play was perhaps a little less interesting in overall direction as expected by the pre-show advertising. It is a pity that such powerful subject matter was treated with so many lapses of depth (comedic direction could have dug much deeper into the whole concept of delusion).

The play closed with Ronnie standing on a table. Jesus like. Offering a bizarre religious closing speech:

*“Blessed are . . . the losers, misfits, psychotics, schizophrenics and people who cannot make sense of what is in front of them. And blessed are you when you are reviled and persecuted for doing what we did here or when you are told that your experience is essentially meaningless, counts for nothing and requires long term medical intervention. Rejoice and be glad, for ours is the Kingdom of Heaven.”*

Then Bond does indeed arrive at Kingsley Hall in the play. Dressed in a black outfit with balaclava. **Ronnie** ‘Good day Bond. We’ve been expecting you’ . . . *The end*

I guess I was disappointed that the whole play did not represent RD Laing’s theories on madness as another dimension to be celebrated, a healing process (whether prescribed in theatrical humour or tragedy) not something that needs to be avoided or negated at all costs. That’s how I felt. Perhaps being a psychiatric nurse for many years and later in my life a psychiatric patient. I expected more from a play about Laing and Kingsley Hall, one of the more interesting models of care in our psychiatric history.

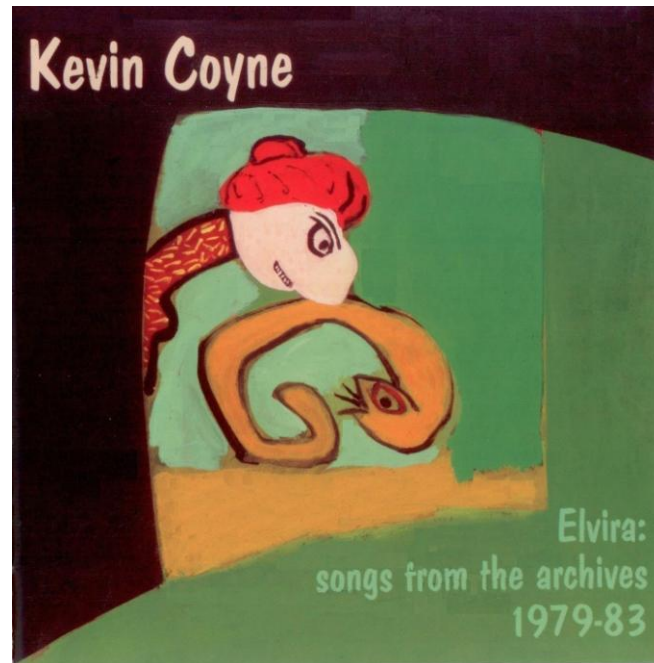
I wasn’t sure if I was watching one great big delusion and that Laing, Mary and Kingsley hall were all fragments of a schizophrenic dream. That I liked. But overall I was bored. And I can say with my hand on my heart. I rarely feel bored. If I were to give the director and the scriptwriter a little feedback. I’d say “do it again, but with less socio-psych-politics and a lot more comedy madness please!”

***Tara Fleur ‘Woman of Bones’***

## **Some Lesser Known Kevin Coyne Classics by Frank Bangay**

Kevin Coyne was never as well known as he should have been. However alongside his better known albums like *Marjory Razorblade*, *Matching Head and Feet*, and *Millionaires and Teddybears* for example, there are a number of lesser known Kevin Coyne classics that are waiting to be heard. There is not enough space here to mention all of them. But I will bring a few of them to your attention.

## Elvera, Songs From The Archives



*Elvera* is a collection of songs recorded in October 1979 and released in the mid 1990s. It is about the life of Elvera Barney a society hostess. In the 1930s she murdered her violent boyfriend. She escaped the hangman through her rich connections. Kevin has said how this reflects the class-ridden hypocrisy in British society. However he saw Elvera as a victim. Rejected by friends and living a nightmare life, in a narrow minded male dominated world. Her life was tragically short, she died in isolation.

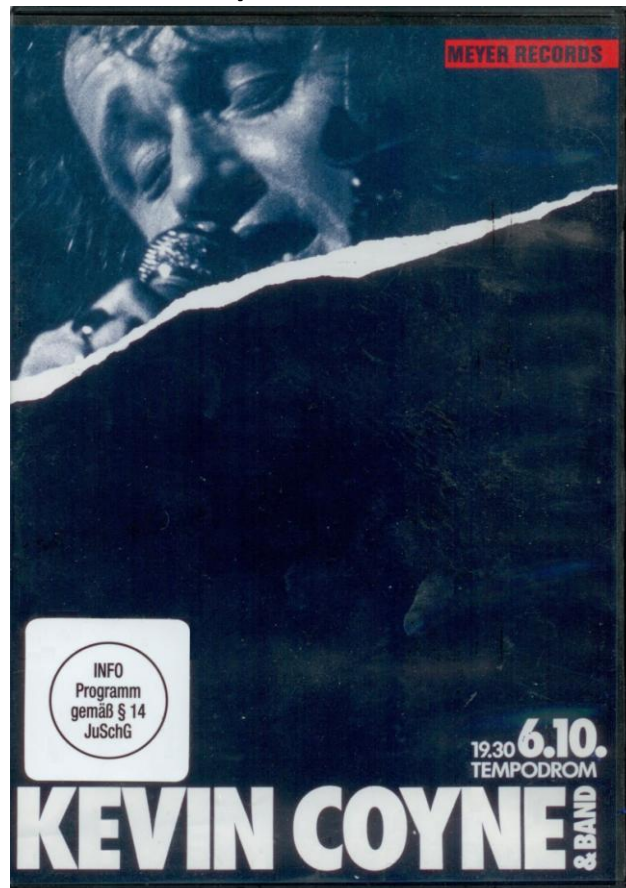
In these songs Kevin takes us through Elvera's life from childhood to her death. They are stark and acoustic, just Kevin accompanying himself on guitar, except one song where Bob Ward plays guitar. *A Leopard Never Changes Her Spots* also speaks of Britain's class-ridden hypocrisy. In *Stand Up For England* Kevin sings about domestic abuse. The horrors that go on behind the mask of wealth and respectability. Listening to this song it would seem that Elvera was something of a rebel, who tried to speak out about the cruelty and abuse that she saw going on around her. "I ask questions I get no answers". In another song *The Long Arm Of The Law* Kevin sings about the dark side of celebrity life. The loneliness, hostility and rejection that someone faces when they have been shamed by society. The songs on this record have much relevance in these times.

The issue of women going to prison after killing their violent husbands became topical in the 1990s. Many campaigners believing that women who kill their husbands after experiencing long- term domestic abuse shouldn't be sentenced.

Elvera was originally intended to be a play but Kevin couldn't find a woman singer to play Elvera. I wonder who Kevin had in mind for the part. On YouTube there is a version of the song Elvera sung by a band called **Gogo's Box**.

The archive songs were recorded in 1983 but were never released. This was a time when Kevin's mental health was in very poor shape. Some of the songs like *Rambling German Blues* can be a bit unsettling. However other songs like *Born In 1944* show Kevin's blues story telling. These songs paint a picture of what Kevin was going through at the time. They were tough times, but Kevin eventually got through them and found happier times.

### The Last Wall/ The Unknown Famous



The first half of this DVD is a Kevin Coyne concert from October 1982. It was performed in the Tempodrom, (a big circus tent by the Berlin Wall, the stage backdrop in the tent being of the Berlin Wall itself. The film starts before the show with Kevin playing an acoustic version of *Children's Crusade*. We then see Kevin and his band, (Steve Bull *keyboards*, Dave Wilson *drums*, Steve Lamb *bass*, Pete Kirtley *guitar*) arrive on stage for a sound check. Then the show starts. Kevin takes us through an inspired performance. I find the renditions of *Sunday Morning Sunrise*, *Children's Crusade* and the then new song *Nothing Seems To Matter* to be particularly powerful. After the last song *A Loving Hand*, Kevin rips the backdrop fabric and leaves through the gap. We then see Kevin and the band

out in the Berlin night. The audience can be heard calling out for an encore; Kevin and the band return to play *Old Fashioned Love Song*. Then we see the crowd going out into the rain, and a shot of Kevin in his dressing room. Over this we hear an instrumental version of *Children's Crusade* played by someone called **Wolfgang Widder**.

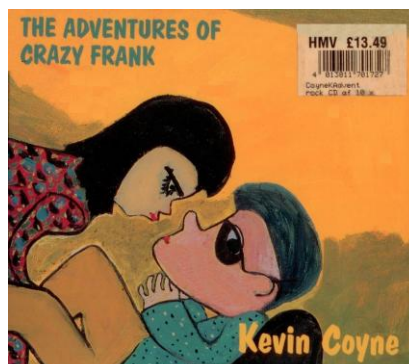


Kevin's early 80s recordings deserve an article of their own. But this DVD gives insight into his stage performances of the time. This was a difficult time for Kevin. His marriage was falling apart, his music was being ignored in Brittan, his heavy drinking was getting out of control, and as mentioned earlier his mental health was in poor shape. However I saw Kevin on stage a number of times in the early 1980s. He gave some inspired and emotional performances.

## The Unknown Famous

This film was made during 1997. It features a happier Kevin Coyne who had moved to Germany and given up drinking. Here he talks about his life his music and his artwork. The film also features Kevin at a gig in Paris performing the Big Joe and Mary Williams blues spiritual *I Want My Crown*. This features guitar accompaniment from **Fridel Pohrer**, A musician that Kevin often worked with during this period.

## The Adventures of Crazy Frank





This record from 1995 is the story of music hall comedian Frank Randle. He was an influence on Kevin. This could be seen in Kevin's onstage humour. He described Frank Randle as a drunk driven mad by drink, an experience Kevin could relate to. He also saw Frank Randle as a brilliantly funny knockabout comedian. Along with fellow comedian Rob Wilton he was an influence on that popular 1970s television comedy Dad's Army. During the Second World War both men were in the home guards. Rob Wilton because of his age, Frank Randle because he failed his medical. As such both men made comedy about life in the army – something that lifted people's spirits during those troubled times.



Frank Randle was born in Wigan in 1901. He was born out of wedlock, something that was a big taboo in those days. This experience fired his comedy, but it also got him into a lot of trouble with the censors. However he refused to compromise. It is said that his appearances in court became almost as frequent as his appearances on stage. He was intent on breaking through the taboos and inhibitions of his generation; some people considered him to be mad.



Anyway back to the record: In the opening track *Born Crazy* Kevin sings “Everybody talks to me like I’m completely mad, they whisper in corners he’s out of control, the devils captured him and eaten up his soul.” We start on Frank Randle’s troubled life journey. In the raw blues of *The Devil Calling* we find him alone in his hotel room getting drunk as the devil bosses the show along. In *I Stood Up* he has a spiritual vision and sees angels. There are rays of sunlight coming through dark clouds. In *Playing The Fool* we find him clowning around on a drunken Saturday night, while his life is falling apart. Kevin sings “Not much left of me now, just powder and paint”. *Heart Of Hearts* finds Frank Randle desperately clinging to a love that he is frightened of losing. In the following track *Perversions* he wonders if he could blame his drunkenness on to his father and mother, or is it just perversions. As we near the end of the record *Time For Tears* finds Frank Randle in hospital. “Time for tears in a world where all is smiles”. Then *Blast Of Glory* finds him ignoring doctors’ orders to take care as he aims to go out on a blast of glory. *Never Ending* brings Frank Randle’s story to an end. At the end of the song he turns into an angel and flies away.



On this record Kevin is accompanied by the previously mentioned **Fridel Pohrer** spelt here as **Fredich Pohrer**, guitarist **Keili Keilhofer**, drummer **Werner Steinhauser** and keyboard player **Henry Beck**. On its release this record was greatly overlooked in England. I don’t remember seeing any reviews of the record.

Frank Randle made his last film *It’s A Grand Life* in 1953. The film featured a young Diana Dors and Trinidad born piano player Winifred Atwell. However by the 1950s music hall comedy was becoming unpopular. In 1955 Frank Randle became bankrupt; then, after years of alcohol abuse, he was hospitalised and died in 1957. Many comedians that have made us laugh over the years have lived troubled lives. This record tells a sad story, but also a story with hope. As Kevin says in the sleeve notes: “Frank Randle is a man who believes there is a heaven somewhere and expects to find it.”

(Check out <http://kevincoynepagetk/> At this site there is an excellent online book about Kevin called *Warts and All*)

## **Frank Bangay, November 2015**

There is some of Frank Randle's work on YouTube, and some DVDs of his films are available on the internet. There is also some of Rob Wilton's work on you tube.

For Kevin Coyne visit [www.kevincoyne.de](http://www.kevincoyne.de)

For Turpentine records visit [www.kevincoyne.co.uk](http://www.kevincoyne.co.uk)

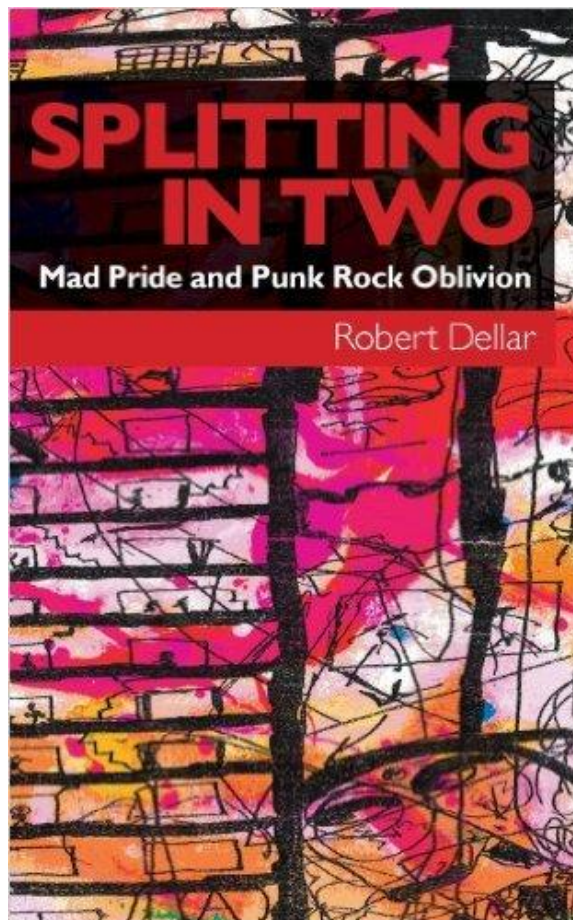
For Pascal's fans website visit [Kevincoynepage.free.fr](http://Kevincoynepage.free.fr)

There is also a Kevin Coyne Facebook page keeping his memory alive.

## **Splitting in Two – Mad Pride and Punk Rock Oblivion**

**Robert Dellar – Review by Dave Russell**

**Unkant Publishers 2014 ISBN 978-0-9926509-0-2 £9.99**



**Robert Dellar** is justly renowned as a pioneer of Southwark Mind (the most dynamic branch of that organisation), and a founder of the Mad Pride Movement. He was a leading light in the development of Advocacy for Mental Health Patients, particularly with the Hackney Patients' Council. The User Council, which developed from several of the groups he initiated, proved successful in dealing with the authorities, including preventing the closure of the Peckham Pop-In Centre. He is sympathetic to the 'high-ranking bureaucrats, they had to deal with. They, for their part were ". . . ring-fenced by the government to support – directly or otherwise – corporate interests. Substantial funds allocated to Mental Health were siphoned off to pharmaceuticals companies 'via an increase in the psychiatric drugs budget'.

He has always been a stalwart opponent of Community Treatment Orders, and the forcible administration of psychiatric drugs: "The pharmaceutical industry, second only to the arms industry, is the most powerful, secretive and corrupt business sector in the world. It systematically falsifies the research it conducts into its own drugs, and routinely lobbies the medical profession to invent new 'illnesses' to be treated by newly-developed medications.

There is excellent documentation of the conflict between the SANE 'mental health charity' and such groups as Survivors Speak Out.

With all the appalling adversity in his background, Robert Dellar worked his way through the university system. There now seems to be a substantial culture of people who combine the experience of university and the psychiatric ward. The title has a plausible ideological base:

"Splitting in Two can refer to the dialectical model of philosophical and political analysis first elucidated by Hegel and then developed by Marx. Loosely, dialectics consists of separating elements of received ideas, situations and facts into opposing and contradictory parts, contrasting them, and allowing the ensuing contradictions to stimulate higher, better approaches and methods of thought. This is how human progress is made. As human beings, we are unable to advance from what faces us without such a process."

"Overall, *Splitting in Two* is a phrase firmly rooted in the Punk tradition . . ." Among its many salient points, this work is a veritable encyclopaedia of punk bands, astutely plotting their self-destruct tendencies.

Robert is totally up-front about his method, and his self-evaluation: "As with any undertaking involving memory, what follows is selective and at times inaccurate. I've censored my writing out of a wish not to upset anyone who wasn't asking for it, to avoid dwelling on things which are too awkward, and to protect myself from consequences." The impact of this work on me is one of uncensored accuracy. He later astutely relates his nascent creativity to a context of prejudice: "I was increasingly pathologised by those with greater power at the time."

At Sussex University, he fell in with people with Mental Distress problems rather than 'playing safe' with trendy radicals who might have led him to a safe career in rock journalism (cf Julie Burchill?). He experienced great chaos and distress there, but nevertheless graduated.

Shortly after graduation, he gained his first experience of squatting – gaining legitimate access to an unoccupied Victorian building. There are some candid insights into the 'career structure' which Robert negotiated, such as when he got the job of Advocacy Coordinator at Hackney and City Mind. He refers to his interview: "Maybe I said the right things, but I think it more likely that

it was my stoned, comforting demeanour got me the job, endearing the panel to me.” He was a leading light in the development of advocacy in relation to the Mental; Health system, particularly with the Hackney Patients’ Council. There is extensive coverage of the Homerton district in Hackney, described as a ‘psychiatric ghetto’ which had a shocking record of huge social housing waiting lists, combined with masses of vacant, dilapidated houses.

Robert is justly critical of the funding structure of welfare provision: “Befriending schemes are notoriously difficult to get funding for because their focus is to keep people comparatively well and out of hospital. Most mental health services only seem to attract funding if they deal with people at the most acute stages of their distress . . .”

Through all the haze of addiction and hangovers, *Splitting in Two* sustains an utterly clear-headed, analytical perspective on the politics of the psychiatric system, the health service, local and national government – a credit to any university department of Politics and Economics. Robert provides an excellent background to the development of the ‘anti-psychiatry’ movement. He is rightly critical of “. . . treating mental distress as an ‘illness’ with unproven yet taken-as-fact genetic and biochemical causes, and generally overlooking the demonstrable social determinants of experiences and behaviours labelled as madness. He points out that many psychiatric medications are profoundly dubious, as well as being enormously profitable for the pharmaceutical industry. He honestly states his own mental health problems, and occasions when he found it extremely difficult to function.

This work has a global perspective. The Advocacy projects had contact with a wide variety of ethnic groups and nationalities, generally forced to become refugees from their original countries.

There was a growth in Artistic and Literary endeavour linked to Mental Health issues. In the visual arts area, a Hackney painter, Paul Monks, acquired a to-be-demolished psychiatric ward and turned it into a studio, where there was a spectacular exhibition by Survivor artists. This laid the foundations for the Core Arts Centre, which flourishes to this day.

Robert was involved in the production of a huge number of fanzines, and the now long-standing *Southwark Mind Newsletter* – ever a rallying point for radical protest. He then branched into the book area with his own imprint, Spare Change Books. These texts, especially the visionary *Seaton Point*, are now widely considered as authoritative. The project was catalysed by his desire to promote the semi-autobiographical novel *The Primal Screamer* by Nick Blinks. It had received many rejections; Robert recognised its supreme quality and felt that he must promote it.

In the course of his astonishingly varied career, Robert met a few celebrities. He makes some amusing observations on the real (non-public) character of Ronnie Corbett. History was made in 1996, when, for nine days, Hackney Anarchy Week turned the area into an ‘anarchist theme park’. The year 2000 saw the memorable Mad Pride Open Air Free Festival in Clissold Park, Stoke Newington. This ignored safety precautions, paid performers only their expenses, and as a result cost around 10% of the average for such a gathering.

He honestly declares his fascination for riots, and gives the background of the Arsenal riot of 1998, where the celebrations of the winning team’s crowd turned into a battle with the Police, as well as that based on a protest against the closure of the Samuel Pepys pub, a landmark of local

life, in a tide of gentrification. In 2002, the 'Reclaim Bedlam' demonstration was cancelled because there had been a murder near its location – perpetrated by someone without a mental history. There was a massive protest against the cancellation.

The coverage of his bereavement with the tragic death of writer, musician and campaigner Pete Shaughnessy is deeply moving. Shaughnessy had shown ultimate compassion and humanity in not taking a vindictive attitude towards his sister's murderer.

*Splitting In Two* comes to a lurid conclusion, with Robert's account of how he had been beaten into unconsciousness by the police, then taken to the Psychiatric Unit to have medications forced upon him. He retaliated by threatening the shrink with a knife, and 'giving him a taste of his own medicine' by injecting him with one of his own drugs.

Some astute historical perspective in the epilogue, *The Perfect Day* – a comparison with the Paris uprising of 1968: "the insurrection taking place at the time was itself the experience of freedom, and it was no guarantee of any future emancipation . . . nearly all glimpses of emancipation turn out to be momentary . . . This does not, however, mean that such glimpses are illusions." He points out the desirability of ' . . . looking for new situations where lessons learnt can be put to good use to create new, once again brief windows of freedom.'

I am extremely honoured at my being named as having been the first ever performer at a Mad Pride event; I participated in many of their events. It was also great to have assisted in the production of Frank Bangay's *Book Naked Songs and Rhythms of Hope*, whose publication Robert facilitated.

**Dave Russell**

## Letting Go by Teresa Joyce



Letting go should be oh so easy – why would we hold on to all those painful negative memories that were not of our own making? But nevertheless they constantly sit within us, somehow it's our legacy which we seem unable to let go of. We came into this world with a path we were to follow, a blueprint that was created as surely as any of the structures we see all around us. As we all know a blueprint has to be followed to the letter or the structure becomes unstable. As surely as the creation of the bricks and mortar that we see around us rising up towards the heavens. The Foundations were being put in place within us as we continued to grow-but are they? I guess the answer to that question has to be a yes. But the footings were never so shaky. We had no other choice than to place our complete trust within the hands of others to insure its safety. Clearly for me and others like me that trust was misplaced, we had no choice other than to continue to grow with no solid foundation whatsoever.

We struggle daily with frustration anger and trust issues. Expecting that cliff edge to be out in front of us because let's face it ground hog day can't be changed right? At which time life once more continues on without us. This outcome leaves us once more desperately searching for a reasoning which makes sense of our lives. We continue to chase our tails for acceptance which eludes us at every turn. Once more we feel abandoned by life as we continue on blindly trying without success to make any Forward movement. Tomorrow will be just another day with no real thought of our present day. We just can't find it within us to let go. We reflect back on all those times we feel that we had tried to let go but hadn't made even the slightest difference? We continue to converse with that voice within which is always reminding us, no matter what we do we will never arrive at a place that would enable us any forward movement.

We hang on to abandonment like a shield warding off anything that invades our understanding of our present lives. Abandonment is always the place that we arrive at so why fight it? We firmly believe that honesty is a luxury, and that we must never trust anyone because there is always a hidden agenda. Our self-worth that's an emotion sitting up there in front of us like a neon sign, we are always struggling to except that we have any at all. The conclusion is reached that forward movement is not attainable to us, and it goes without saying that no one else can tell us differently. We can't change that person looking back at us each day in the mirror right? If you are anything like me at that time you don't even want to look. If I ever took even the slightest glance the image was but a stranger to me. By constantly looking for the bad it inevitably happens time after time but that's no big surprise to us. Each day we seem to be that building which is empty derelict and falling down, no matter how we try we just can't make the necessary repairs. We know with complete certainty that starting refurbishment is not an option that's open to us. Quite simply at that moment and time it's a firm statement of our truth. It's as clear cut as black and white; so we may as well forget it right? There is no eraser in the world that can wipe away whom we consider ourselves to be. For such a long time it would be true to say that I wouldn't have even used that eraser if it were available to me. I firmly believed that my emotions and the pain that they created couldn't be altered; I guess that I was afraid to try because in complete honesty falling seemed such a long way down. I guess for me

during those years if I didn't try I couldn't fail, maybe at that time I even believed that there was safety within the negativity-but that was never the truth.

So why do we hold to a roller-coaster of emotions that clearly brings us such pain, it seems to be such a stupid thing to do within a sane mind. By implication I include myself within that statement, purely because I myself once sat firmly within a place where I did not feel of sane mind whatsoever. Whilst struggling with my own set of self judgment. If I were to colour in the picture of my own journey of letting go, finally arriving at a point where I found the strength to try everything became so obvious. I'm sure my journey wouldn't look in the least like your own, but that's really how it's supposed to be. Our journeys will always differ because we are two very separate people, but the very nature of the journey we each need to make is the same.

No matter which emotion we are striving to deal with when given time it is possible to turn it on its head. But there is a truth here in which we all need to accept; that no matter how long I sit here conversing with you I can't make those changes in your life. Ok, so why I am here? Quite simply to assert that it's you alone that are able to one put your foot firmly on the starting block; it cannot be any other way if the construction of our thought process is ever to be altered. It was not so long ago that I myself sat in front of a computer screen with the same look of dread on my face, whilst reading though the journeys others had already taken.

Letting go means that for a short time we completely lose our sense of security, it is without doubt one of the most uncomfortable times of our lives. But it's only by doing so that we are then able to dig in deep enough to look at the root cause squarely in the face. We then find ourselves sitting in the middle of a demolition site whilst trying desperately to out run the plastic explosive. But my advice to you would be to just sit there because at that precise time and moment you will learn to own yourself. When we look at abandonment we tend to look away from ourselves clearly because abandonment by others is so very painful. But are we not abandoning ourselves if we continue on within this enforced way of thinking? When all we really need is a completely new blueprint where we become the architect.

Within us all without exception sits that scared abandoned child and sadly that's how they will stay without movement from us. But we need to see that in essence our abandoned child should be our first consideration. Abuse eats us up like dry rot without any hope of receiving a certificate of safety until we go inside and start to rebuild.

Our way of thinking even our very way of being was indoctrinated upon us as children. But make no mistake it was never for us. We need to recognise this by channelling our energies away from the house that Jack built- if you pardon the pun, believe that even if we find ourselves sitting amongst a pile of rubble-not letting go is no longer an option. For myself I visualised a deep skip within me where I unceremonious dumped my past, but that's of no matter because you will find your own way. Don't set yourself any expectations because in doing so it almost seems to be fated by default. Give yourself the permission to be that snail; I'm sure we all know that story well.



There will be times where you feel the need to let go of the anger within-so just do so. Go find a big open space where you can rant at the world, it kind of feels good if I'm talking from experience. Metaphorically just let go of the past and throw it away you really don't need to hold on to it a moment longer. Cast away that derelict building whose walls will never face south enabling it to see the sun light. It's time for you to continue walking towards to the right side of the building. Let the walls fall down all around you that foundation was never meant to hold fast, whilst trusting that in time another will be built to take its place-because believe me it always does.

Letting go will never be easy because we feel as naked as a new born baby-but that's not such a bad place to start . . .

**Teresa Joyce**

## **Human Rights at Kingsley Hall**

Dear Friends,

We wish to thank the amazing speakers **Cristian Montenegro, Rodrigo Fredes, Paula Peters** and **Dave Skull** for their presentation at our Human Rights event at the Kingsley Hall last week. As days are colder and shorter we received many apologies, however we were very pleased with the few but good participants that came along in support of the event. Specially delighted to see several Mad Pride members (please see details for event on 20th Nov below the page). We were very pleased to hear the manifesto contained in the brand new Mental Health Manual of Human Rights presented by Rodrigo, which was recently presented in Europe, at the International Hearing Voices convention in Madrid. We look forward to see the English translated book soon. In the meantime the Spanish version is available to be purchased.

Please contact Rodrigo directly for more details on:

[locospornuestrosderechos@gmail.com](mailto:locospornuestrosderechos@gmail.com) Notes from the event are now available to be shared. Send us an email if you wish to have a copy.

F.E.E.L. is now 8 years old. This week, at our monthly meeting at LARC, we have discussed the work we have done in these past years, run entirely by complete volunteer initiative. Although externally, for some people, it might have not meant much, for ourselves it has been of amazing benefit. We have now decided to

have a sabbatical to take care of ourselves, possibly resuming the monthly meetings around February 2016. There probably won't be much action online either, as it's a much needed time for some media and social media detox, although we will do our best to support fellow campaigners events, when energy will allow us.

On a personal level, looking at the likeness of the figure 8 with the infinity symbol [∞], there is a feeling of completion of what F.E.E.L. has served for ourselves and the community. Our message is out there, repeated ad infinitum, not only by fellow survivors, but from a large range of professionals around the world. Most of these, which might have first hand experience of mental illness themselves, have their own stories, their own evidence to share that match our own. Some people might have seen us as extremist, but probably those don't know, nor understand what we are talking about.

I have not got around sharing my personal story as I wish it to see imprinted; yet I am proud of being free from the damaging psycho-drugs for over two years now. Nevertheless I am dependant on other meds that keep me alive and cannot incriminate Big Pharma from all angles. Nor I wish to encourage or push people to come off their meds; everyone needs to be free to make their own choices, responsible of the self and own life. Only suggestion is to stay informed!

My early (unedited!) blog posts still hold the strong feelings that have fuelled my involvement in F.E.E.L., which has been a great support in maintaining sanity in this crazy world. Thank you comrades!

Concluding we have sad news to share: unfortunately **Steve Morgan** has recently passed away, after struggling with Multiple Systems Atrophy. Attached you will find a photo reminding us of his great music talent. Rest in Peace Steve.

Might you all find strength and courage to go through difficulties and always remember that either good or bad things never last forever. Make the most of your favourite ones. More good ones at the bottom of the page.

Best wishes, Nat



*Sam and Saturn by Razz*



*Janis by Razz*



*Still Life and Figurine* by Razz



*Clown* by Razz

## Langsyne

I found myself in dire need  
Of help and self salvation  
An escape to the days of old  
Through doors of troubles past

I took with me, necessities:  
Hurt and Pain and Guilt  
They weighed me down so much  
I cast my baggage off until...

I'd found my childhood self  
Stored, a grim closet of a memory  
Tucked behind a back shelf corner  
And threw open all the windows  
To shed light on my former  
To awaken him from comatose

I cleaned the clutter of regrets  
Then dusted off forgotten joys  
And for a moment, he arose  
Enjoying life as it was

But soon, I left him be  
In search of the older one  
Except he was often moody  
Somewhere distantly far off

I've fathomed leagues  
And suffered dead ends  
In hopes of finding pieces  
To my missing adolescence  
I've searched waysides and beaches  
And under rocky precipices

I've crawled under bleachers  
And peeked over fences  
But my feet have gone nowhere

I've traced and retraced  
Even retracted my steps  
To the spot where I let myself go  
Asking him to come back  
If he was still willing  
Hoping he wouldn't say no

I've trekked and tarried  
Wandering thru the wilderness  
For forty days  
But my feet have gone nowhere

I've sojourned in the forest  
Contemplating my survival  
In my own company  
But my feet have gone nowhere

Both wind and water tested me  
Both tried to discourage me  
But I crossed the waters on faith alone  
I silenced the winds and they abated

I've vanished for months on end  
Travelling my highs and lows  
And when my search was satisfied  
— I finally headed home

And my feet have gone nowhere

## Ansel Oommen

## **BROKEN**

Some learn easy but I learn hard,  
Some people keep what I discard,  
To win I guess I had to lose,  
To be select I had to choose.

I had to mature and just accept,  
Sometimes the answer is “not yet”  
Some things in life you just can’t rush,  
My dreams is seems will sometimes  
crush.

I had to admit my life was a lie,  
To build the new, the old must die,  
To prove I really did want more,  
I had to firmly shut that door.

It seems I had to first destroy,  
To find what truly brought me joy,  
To feel the triumph life could bring,  
I had to lose most everything.

The lesson learned time and again,  
“If things don’t change they’ll stay the  
same”  
If I don't stand up for myself,  
Then I’m to blame, nobody else.

I learned the person I could be,  
Was found when I was ‘fixing’ me,  
The voice that tells me every day,  
“You’re a little broken . . . and that’s  
okay”

**Angela McCrimmon**

## **SURVIVE**

I won’t pretend that I don't care  
because I care beyond belief  
I won’t pretend that I’m okay  
because I’m lost amidst the grief,  
I won’t pretend it's easy because it's  
hard to be alive,  
I won't pretend it doesn't hurt . . .  
but you know what? . . . I’ll survive!

I won’t pretend that I am happy  
because I know that I feel sad,

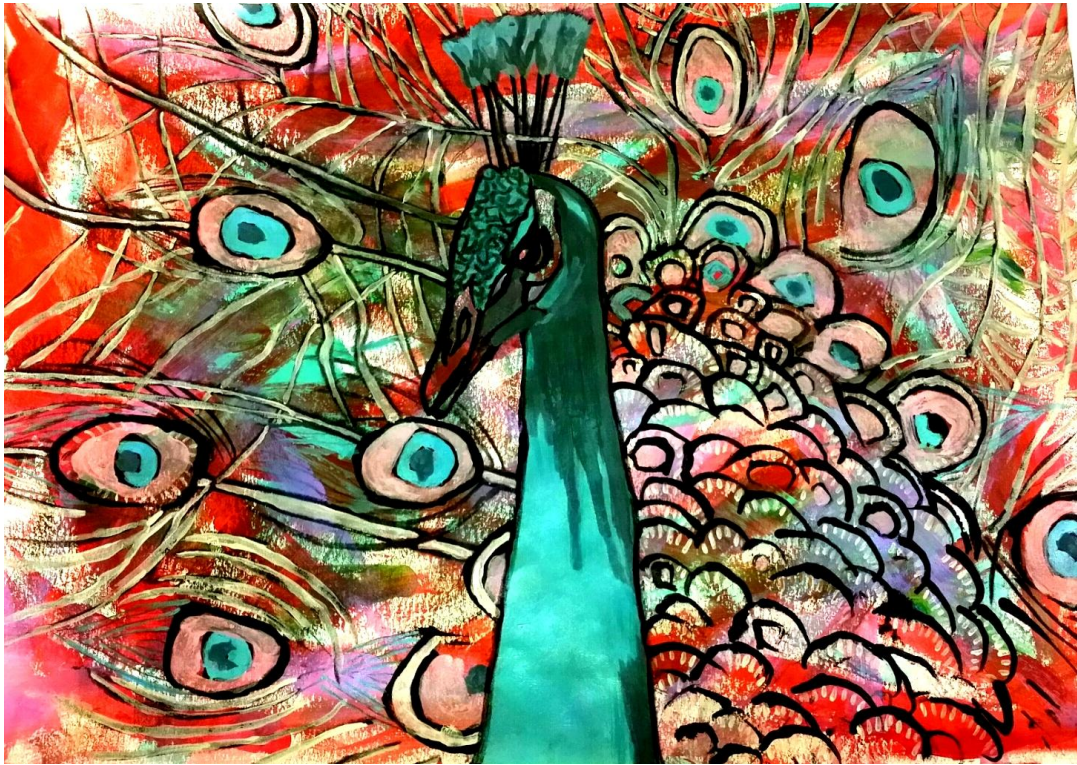
I won’t pretend that I’m ‘together’  
because I feel like I’ve gone mad,

I won’t pretend I’m motivated  
because I know I’ve lost my drive,  
I won’t pretend that I’m not bruised  
. . . but you know what? . . . I’ll  
survive!

I won’t pretend that I’m not angry  
because I know inside I am,

I won’t pretend I can't forgive  
because I know inside I can,  
I won’t pretend I respect you for my  
respect has all but died,

**Angela McCrimmon**



*Peacock by Razz*



*Chromatic Still Life by Razz*



*Hatted Figure by Razz*



*Wraiths by Razz*



## NO PASSING TRACE

Here lonely trees thrust limbs towards the sky  
and moorland winds lament their empty space,  
while clouds oppress the sun and multiply.

Here drifting snows persist and amplify  
the silence of the landscape they replace,  
while lonely trees thrust limbs towards the sky.

Here timeless pools of water coldly lie,  
imprisoned by the margins they embrace,  
while clouds oppress the sun and multiply.

Here, in the distance, haunted songbirds cry  
the mantra of this long abandoned place,  
while lonely trees thrust limbs towards the sky.

Here solitude awaits its turn to die  
and life itself conspires to lose the race,  
while clouds oppress the sun and multiply.

Here strangers pause to hear the soft Earth's  
sigh  
and footsteps fade to leave no passing trace.  
Here lonely trees thrust limbs towards the sky,  
while clouds oppress the sun and multiply.

**Brian G D'Arcy**

## REMEMBERING ANNE

*(Sojourn on Haworth Moor)*

Yes, thou art gone! and never more  
will feel the wild wind fresh against your face,  
nor see the skylark rise above the moor,  
nor treasured childhood memories retrace.

Yes, thou art gone! and never more  
will pause, and in that quiet interlude  
find respite from the clamour and the roar,  
and dream again your dreams in solitude.

Yes, thou art gone! and never more  
will race beneath descending winter skies,  
nor mourn discarded leaves that summer wore,  
nor hear the moorland's melancholic sighs.

Yes, thou art gone! and never more

will wander where bright waters catch the sun,  
nor see the beauty that you saw before.  
But here your spirit stays, though thou art gone.

*This poem is based on the opening line of  
'Remembrance' by Anne Bronte: "Yes, thou art  
gone! and never more".*

**Brian G D'Arcy**

## MASQUERADE

Mist accumulates,  
heralding the masquerade:  
ghost horses dancing.

**Brian G D'Arcy**

## 'OTHERNESS'

I've grown strange to me,  
strange as ghost horse memories  
of my 'otherness'.

**Brian G D'Arcy**

## THESE ARE YOUR ROOTS

Two parents, with their seven children pose,  
caught by camera and posterity.  
Gathered in family togetherness.  
Gazing from a time, long lost, before wars,  
and peace, wrought havoc on their sheltered  
lives.

Here, in that smaller monotonic world,  
They did not pose for glory or for fame.  
They did not pose to please the world beyond.  
They did not dream of things that could not be.

They simply chose to say 'today we are  
a family, and for generations  
yet to be – we were here – we are your roots.'

**Brian G D'Arcy**



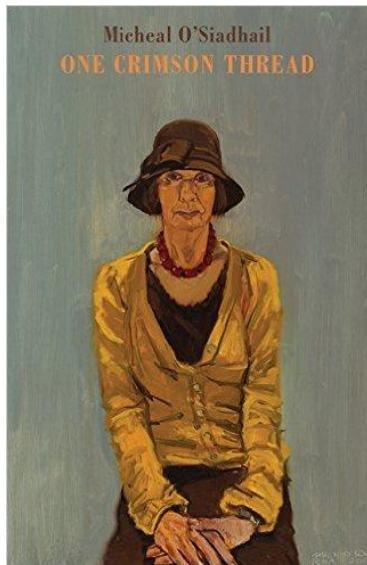
D'Arcy family photo circa 1910

**About the poet** : Brian G D'Arcy is an Anglo-Irish poet, born in Rossendale, England. His father William D'Arcy died in India during World War II and his mother Laurinea D'Arcy wrote an autobiography *Deep are the Roots*. Brian is a prize-winning poet for children and adults. *Ghost Horses Dancing* (Sixties Press) is his third poetry collection, but he has also co-authored and co-edited anthologies with other writers. He chairs the Healing Word support group in Sheffield and is a member of Mini Mushaira. Retirement from Sheffield Hallam University gave him more time for his interests, which include painting, music, horses and Irish folklore.

## One Crimson Thread

Micheal O'Siadhail Bloodaxe Books 2015

ISBN 978-1-78037-12-6 £12



This is a total life story – life temporal and eternal! It celebrates a bonding of exceptional durability (36 years) and fidelity, which transcends the mortal life span of one of its

partners. In it, Literature and life are fused: “Your story kept the start and end apart./The novel your life wrote I now re-read,/My heroine moves in love’s double light.” At one point, he describes their love as ‘a lightening poem bolted from the blue’. Before her condition became critical, Brid helped him to edit/proof his work; he must now do that alone. Throughout her earlier life, Brid always played down her sufferings and rejected Michael’s consolations. But now the terminal condition is stronger than her willpower; she now has the limited strength of ‘coping weakness’. This sequence also challenges the validity of some psychiatric medications: “those drugs contrived a double you”.

The vehicle of this work is the Sonnet, and should dispel any doubts about the validity of this form in contemporary life. The rigid structure seems to squeeze out and fine-tune the tenderest feelings, the most sensitive thoughts. It has a linear narrative thread, covering the two years plus from the onset of the terminal disability to post-decease reflections. Significantly, the care home where Brid is sent is a former nunnery, so there is a further sacerdotal dimension to her sojourn; the home has a chapel, where some of the hymns recall Michael’s childhood. The image of the crimson thread, metaphor for their lasting devotion, is a leitmotif of the poem. It is known, however, that with advancing age, the long-term memory is extremely active, and a sustained close relationship constantly elicits flashbacks to key times and incidents in the past. This situation has many complex manifestations when Michael takes Brid back home on weekend leave. There is an overall sense of circularity and continuity; “For worlds where weakness turns the axle’s nave,/Whose axis tracks compassion at your core.” Brid died on a date close to that of their wedding anniversary. There is a note of optimism, with the reappearance of many long-lost friends and acquaintances, when the news spreads of Brid’s terminal condition.

In the course of the poems progression, there are constant, and invigorating, recalls of their younger days, indelible memories which testify to the total durability of their love, and exercise a powerful rejuvenating effect to fuel the struggles of life, and counter the onset of ageing: "The more that you depend on me the more/You show me younger years I never knew." Sublime truths radiate through debility: "Our trust a world that's infinite and true,/That wills the world around its axle bars . . . What rose is wound up in the wounded bud/Or marveled sapphire hidden in the mud . . . Our love your love that stirs the sun and stars." Their relationship seems to have gone full circle, beginning with Brid as the carer, ending with Michael as the minder. Brid, throughout her life, always retained a degree of aloofness: "A borderline nobody overstepped,/A conscious self-surround of dignity." Some charming observations on undressing, obviously a delight in their younger days: I love 'Cloth's fold and fall come-hither's semaphore' and 'such impediments were passion's charms'.

Michael does not flinch from facing the irritating and sordid aspects of their routines, including jealousy and mutual resentment of co-dependence. This sonnet faces the physical burdens of caring; powerful expressions of contradictory feeling in 'dependence moans against the grain' and 'you cribbed in and me caged out'. Stress sometimes makes him go against his nature: "The you I want to help I only hound". Brid has some understandable feelings of having been betrayed and imprisoned by Michael's moving her into the home. Michael is highly sensitive to the delicate relationship between a professional carer role and a close personal relationship, as he has to straddle both functions: "My giving lover's learning to receive,/As caring women care beyond their role." The routine at the home is impeccably well-ordered, clean and tidy, but there is a certain coldness about it: "My routines mourn the messiness of two;/A sweeter mayhem in me mourns for you."

He admits to having to make a strenuous effort to adjust to his new-found solitary life. The second of stanza of 30 highlights contradictory feelings: "I learn to live in this new borderland/Between an innate peace and inner strife;/A woman who has shaped this one man's life,/A stranger I still try to understand." Brid in some senses is gone, in others is still there. Michael must learn both to hold on and to let go: Where old and newer me's in turn connive . . . Your love would both rebind and set me free./You understood the newer self I'd need" "I hold our two lives in my hands alone", but Brid "keeps on breathing memories in me." Parkinson's Disease and medications between them have made Brid paranoid and malicious. Michael must face this challenge benignly: "I must stand back to keep such moods at bay,/Then love you more in case you can't love me." Brid's malicious remark are 'things illness says'. But they still hurt; should he harden his heart? He is in a state of conflict: "My Hamlet heart is rocking to and fro. I veto pain so I'll survive for you."

A cosmic perspective periodically asserts itself: 'gravity undoes you step by step': "For worlds where weakness turns the axle's nave,/Whose axis tracks compassion at your core.". His vision drifts into the most-mortem area, as he imagines Brid in heaven. Their love transcends the mortal coil: "Though I'm your love's reluctant elegist,/and you have moved across that vague divide. How are you still so much a part of me . . . We all now merge in one community/Where love can stretch its span, at ease astride/A line between God's living and God's dead." "Our passion's raging flame, death's counterpart/*That neither waters quench nor flood can drown.*" Michael wonders how he should envisage Brid; there are various prompts from pictures and memories. A transcendental composite images emerges, merging with such as Isadora and Beatrice "As dancing paradise's disco floor/You're swaying lithely towards some dazzling light." What greater optimism can there be than in saying "This resurrection way beyond my prayers."

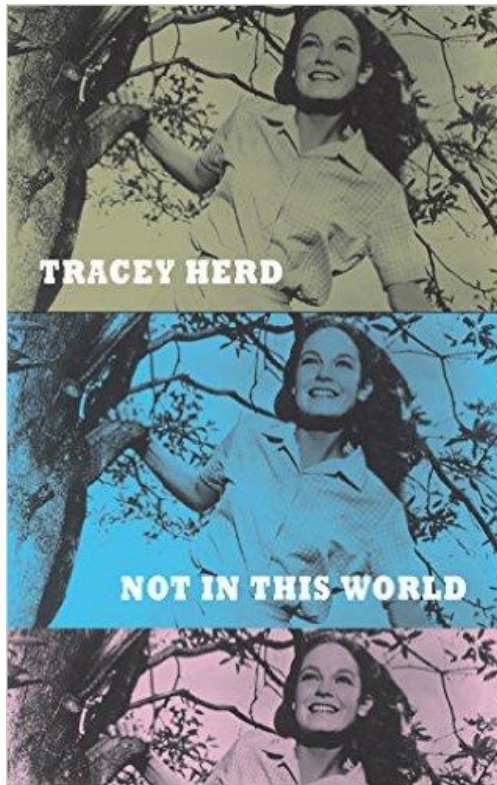
At the end of it all, Michael feels reassurance (in a subjective sense), but no certainty (in an objective sense): “I only know *I don't know how to know.*”

## David Russell

### Not In This World, Tracey Herd

Bloodaxe Books 2015

ISBN 978-1-85224-894-9 £9.95



This work is noteworthy for its relating cinema and other legends to mental illness problems. Significantly, the cover features actress Elizabeth Hartman, who was also a mental health sufferer. This is a totally sound approach on Tracey's part. Nowadays, enough is known about the real, and frequently traumatic lives of celebrities, that they can function as magnifiers of and guides to our own extremities – instead of being objects of blind adulation.

The collection opens with flashbacks to childhood, in the colourful rural landscape of the American Midwest, where she was ‘queen of my own universe’. But as well as idyllic scenes, there is the depressing spectacle of a ‘dead-end town’, with a bored, aimless adolescent contrasted to the vibrant charisma of James Dean. Tracey's Fortune-Teller seems to blend in perfectly with this run-down, desolate environment. She is aged, surrounded by squalor, and misquotes *MacBeth*.

*The Living Library* describes an abode of comparable seediness, where thriller novels are the main source of comfort and solace – so depressing that a real-life murderer's bullet might provide a welcome release. *The Case of the Inconvenient Corpse* (with perhaps the same location as the previous poem), describes a fatal injury inflicted on a woman once pretty, but now faded. The reader is left wondering whether this was suicide, or foul play. The sequel, *Nobody Home*, at a literal level, refers to a murderer; the reader is left wondering as to whether this was a real assassin, or a nightmare vision projected by the poet on someone she really hated. She partly personifies sheep as old ladies.

In *Vivien and Scarlett*, Tracey gets into the mind of Vivien Leigh as a tortured soul, constantly re-reading the script which had made her a universal legend – ‘one dazzling image/when her soul was in darkness, losing its way. Leigh is portrayed as a fusion of hope and bitterness; I am left to speculate on the significance of the ‘lost page’. Norma Shearer is a significant choice of star; she had less than perfect looks, with thick legs and misaligned eyes, but she rose to the greatest heights. I'm not sure I agree with Tracey's Comment “After all, you couldn't act”.

*Sea Birds* cleverly personifies the two elements of wind and sea; the sea has breath, the wind has claws. *Glass House* presents a nightmare image of exile and imprisonment, a glass ceiling showing an unreadable sky, and a hall of mirrors. She is isolated, while an unspecified partner is with someone else. *Hall of Mirrors* further explores the same theme: she is floating along the hall; her image was blank in his mirror. She died every day, and ached for her partner to bring her back to life. She is jealous; somewhere he has a 'silent twin'. *Eyes Wide Shut* is a statement of jealousy, centered around the traumas of a failed actress. Her partner's tryst has the feeling of a private screening of a movie spectacular. The jealousy theme proceeds to a dream scenario of a crime of passion in *The Diner*. In the dream she shoots herself with the bullet she had reserved for her partner. The dream blurs into reality; the dream bullet does not generate a sense of pain. She realises she should have confronted her partner about his infidelity, but failed to do so. She can say "We weren't even in the same dream". She ends up in a state of total indecision. *You Can't Take My World from Me* – the lament of someone ditched and deserted; a very barbed comment in "I've left you now with the script you'll follow"; there is a feeling that the one who deserted her will have indelible feelings of remorse.

*When a Lovely Flame Dies* suggests a plane crash. The wound is ironically/metaphorically healed by the wreckage being buried in snow; there is a deep note of cynicism: "only fools believe in an unearthly paradise". *At the Captain's Table* – an ageing, ravaged woman has a wistful flashback to when she was twenty, re-enacting a beautiful romantic-encounter-cum-screen-scenario; now she cannot even read the 'map' of the veins on her skin. *Vessel*

indicts the futility of revisiting the locations of idyllic memories of the past, which only unearths broken relics. *The Imaginary Death of a Star* – nightmare vision of the tragic demise of an ice-skating queen; there is a suggestion that she killed herself with the sharp edge of her skate. Some dark reflections on the state of mind of her admirer; he grinds a flower petal until it mingles with the frost; he feels, sadistically, like attacking a line of chorus girls.

*Archive* describes a visit to a crumbling library, which also has some feeling of a natural history museum: "Every paper-/stuffed box hoards invisible mysteries/of skin,/sloughed off from each interloper . . . the inclusions of plant and animal matter". There is a strong sense of the paper finally decomposing and returning to the soil of its origin. Great description of writers' chaos with 'Rorschach blots of artful disorder'.

*Joan Fontaine and Rebecca* is an intrepid attempt to 'take the lid off' the background of Alfred Hitchcock's screen version of Daphne du Maurier's *Rebecca*: "Hitchcock casually let slip that the cast and crew/hated you. Olivier had to time for you. That 'rings true' to me. Mrs Danvers presented the heroine (Joan) with Rebecca's old outfits, to taunt her about not being able to rival Rebecca's beauty. She then inveigles her to wear them one of Rebecca's ballgowns – become Rebecca reincarnate in the eyes of her new husband. He, however, is outraged; Mrs Danvers gets into a panic; the heroine keeps calm and survives. *Olivia de Havilland*, Joan Fontaine's sister, had the greatest longevity of anyone in the cast of *Gone With The Wind*. She also had exceptional courage in taking the role of a woman who nearly died in childbirth. In the film, she had an intense sisterly love for Scarlett O'Hara. A subtle comparison is made between the feeling of

sisterhood within the film and the real-life relationships between the two natural siblings: do they critically assess each other's film roles?

*Brigadoon* was a fantasy film, based in a mythical Scotland. Tracey relates the film to a millionaire who, fifty years after the event, made a massive donation to the National Trust for Scotland, which he never actually visited. He later committed suicide – perhaps through despair of the reality of Scotland living up to his dream, perhaps thinking his departure from the earth would carry him to his dreamland. Tracey thinks (rightly in my opinion) that he should have adjusted himself to the 'spoiled' realities of New York.

*Louise Brooks* was the legendary pioneer of the iconic image of the 'flapper'. Being a fiercely independent spirit, she was not altogether popular in Hollywood circles, but became highly respected in Europe. Her most famous screen role was in *Pandora's Box*. *Dreams of Lost Summers and Found Lines* – a recalling of, and lament for, a vanished childhood; there is a surreal synthesis of things irretrievably lost, but preserved intact in memory.

Tracy makes a section break at this point, with a quotation from Thornton Wilder: "There is a land of the living and a land of the dead and the bridge is love, the only survival, the only meaning."

*Leaving* – an idyllic rural landscape is the background for the departure of a loved one. *Reverie* gives a new slant to the Cinderella legend. She is all agog with expectation, having received an invitation to a ball; she makes reference to a living partner. When she actually gets to the ball, a new partner appears, who takes her up a spiral staircase and ravishes her –

in the process seemingly taking her out of reality into dreamscape: "I step out from the constrictions of memory,/its rigid seams, the red welts digging/ into my skin. I am raw and naked,/released." She has been deeply wounded in love, but recovers: "You have left my heart, thank God,/the bullet retrieved, a dull clatter on the floor,/another scar but no more blood." She considers the routines of normality to be 'life's masquerade'. When she has to leave the mansion, location of the ball. She will find herself; but she makes a final plea for human contact and affection.

*No Reason* is a reflection on letters from a deceased loved one – against the cinematographic black and white background of a snowy landscape. Both interior and exterior are drenched in extremely white light, the light of opals – believed in legend to have originated with lightning. She has written a poem for her partner's grave, but would not wish to desecrate the gravestone; she hopes to find his star in heaven, but realises that would be a meaningless longing, as she does not really believe in an afterlife. Nonetheless, she is sustained by the illusion of him whispering her name. *Cemetery in Snow* further explores this theme; she builds a 'mausoleum of snow' in honour of her beloved. There is a sense of warmth coming from another world; she begs her love to take her hand.

*Happy Birthday* – a barbed celebration of her deceased love's birthday: the birthday cake had the qualities of a curse; it was brought in by the Furies, who lit the candles with the hellish heat of their fiery breath. There is incredible pain in the conflict between her cynicism and her longing. The partner is utterly put down – '... a random selection of cells . . . my little bloody paperweight'. The vision of a blind corpse is

partly generated by drugs. *Solo* – a woman under extreme stress dreams of fabricating her own body “. . . she fashioned herself from flesh and vein”. She holds an empty gilt frame, perhaps because she thinks of herself as a meaningless work of art. True to the colour polarity film, she is both a black swan and a white one. She is preserved by ice, but will drown when the ice melts; the ice will reform to preserve her body. A statement of total despair: “She has a gravestone/in her head. She is/already dead . . . It will be as if/she had never lived:/ a girl with nothing/left to give.”

*The Afternoon Shift Are Leaving The Port Talbot Steelworks* – a charming vignette of industrial archaeology; a very nice touch with the cameraman being a bit out of focus, and catching ‘the shadow of a shadow’. The cameraman is in focus when he captures the horse race winner in *Momentum*. The horse theme continues with *Ruffian*, celebrating a horse of incredible power who perished after breaking a leg. A red rose fell into Ruffian’s grave, honouring and perfecting the body’s appearance. More on the equine theme in *Spring in the Valley of the Racehorse*, celebrating the energy of a colt in its prime, though one ‘broken in’ – ‘to keep/his mind within/the miraging posts of white,/evenly spaced along the track’.

Then a sequence of poems centered on the late Buddy Holly *Near Clear Lake, Idaho* – this was the location of Buddy Holly’s tragic plane crash “. . . where God made you disappear/from all earthly radar. But Tracey decides to overcome the sense of loss by evoking the eternal messages of the three stars’ songs. *Five Seconds* laments the impulsive decision to attempt the flight in those bitter weather conditions. Holly, Valens and The Big Bopper must have been

desperate to relieve the agony of an utterly grueling tour. *The Music Men* concentrates on the spotting of the wreckage, and speculates on song material lost with the deceased. There is a surreal analogy between Buddy Holly’s glasses and those of the cynical Dr T.J. Eckleburg in *The Great Gatsby*. *Not Fade Away* (Holly song title, of course) reiterates Tracey’s inner conflict: “You spoke often of being with the angels/but I can’t believe in the incorporeal.” But she still has a desperate need for the songs, and the memories of the singers, to live on. Again the monochrome theme: “It is like/being in a silent film, black and white’. Tracey proceeds to mourn the Hollywood stars Mae Marsh and Clara bow; in vain she yearns for contact/response from them, of course not to be: “The gates of what could have been/a low budget heaven are rusted shut . . . The script is scattered” – a Hollywood dream annihilated.

*The Unicorn Seat* – an idyllic rural location Tracey shared with Ella and Lucy. *Just One Request* seems to refer to a suicide. The partner will leave the world physically whole; there will be no dismembering dissection. A brilliant organic connection with “what’s the point/of tearing you open when the flower’s/roots are everywhere, their gnarled fingers/clutching at your heart.” There is hope in the midst of pessimism: “*There is a time for departure even when/there’s no certain place to go . . . I know that you wouldn’t care/and love you for it all the more.*”

A powerful requiem with *Calling Card*: a young woman, Marina Keegan, has been killed in a car crash. But there is an affirmation of her spirit: “Your words couldn’t protect you/but they never left you . . . Your words/are up there with the stars,/still travelling outwards/with the occasional earthbound sigh.” Tracey will always

remember Marina whenever she sees a yellow rose.

This collection has my unreserved acclaim.

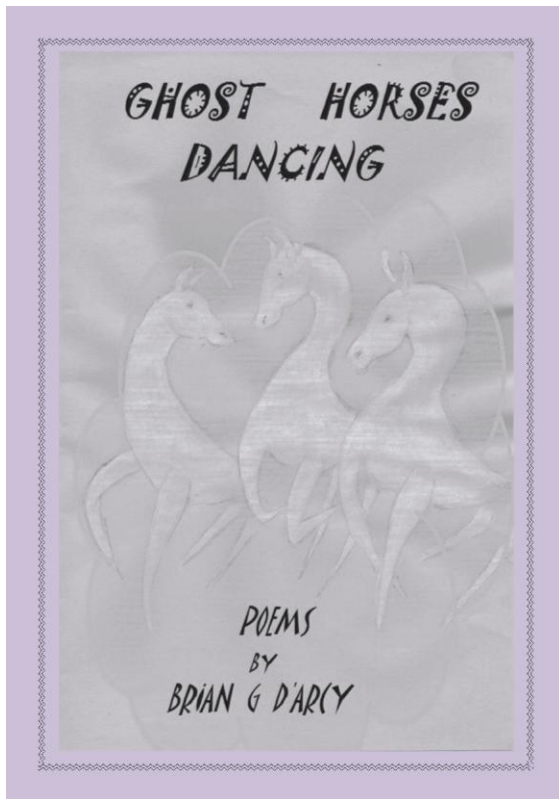
**David Russell**

## **Brian G D'Arcy,**

### ***Ghost Horses Dancing,***

**Sixties Press, 2015,**

**ISBN 978-1-905554-28-7, pp 62, price £7.95**



Brian G D'Arcy's *Ghost Horses Dancing* is full of surprises and sudden delights. D'Arcy's imagination is grounded in the real:

“The cobbles are still lying here,  
and there, within my reach, the wall  
of granite stones I bravely climbed  
in youth, so long ago.”  
(*Returning Home*)

So much that passes for poetry today is flat and unattractive, deriving from the L-A-N-G-U-A-G-E school of O'Hara, now the dominant force in almost all contemporary poetry, but D'Arcy writes intelligently and forcefully, with a diction full of eloquence and erudition. Poetry has to be resonant with our five senses and rooted in memory. At 82, D'Arcy invites us into a world of windswept moorland:

“There is a haunted silence here,  
born of unwearied solitude,  
indifferent to weathered years,  
enduring timeless centuries.”  
(*Sleeping Stones at Arbor Lowe*)

In a footnote D'Arcy tells us that this poem describes '40 recumbent limestone pieces [that] lie in a circle. Pre-2000 BC, their purpose is now forgotten.' There is a strange power here that he evokes, the reader is drawn into the world of pre-history, full of eerie memory. He is not unafraid to face the ironies of old age:

“Knowing that I look far older than I am  
and feeling far far older than I look.”  
(*In the Park*)

D'Arcy is unafraid of subjectivity and emotion, the two taboos of contemporary poetry, and writes of the spiritual:

“And, as that final pearl of silence falls,  
Salvation's rapture fills that sacred heart.”  
(*The Saviour*)

Writing of a daughter who has died, D'Arcy is not ashamed to reveal his pain, and this poem – a villanelle – is one of the best in the collection:

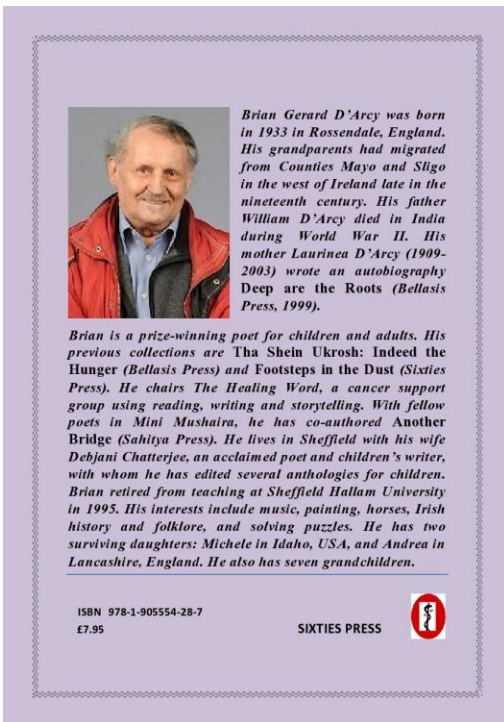
“When dark clouds rule the night  
and moonlight reigns,  
it lights the pathways where I slowly stray  
because I know your memory remains.”  
(*Because I Know, i.m. Lynne D'Arcy*)

However, my favourite poem in this excellent collection is about Anne Bronte:



“Yes, thou art gone! and never more  
will race beneath descending winter skies,  
nor mourn discarded leaves  
that summer wore,  
nor hear the moorland’s melancholic sighs.  
(*Remembering Anne*)

What I most love about this book is D’Arcy’s marvellous gift of memory, and what Lawrence called ‘the spirit of place’. These, conjoined with his Anglo-Irish roots, make Brian D’Arcy a most excellent poet.



**Brian Gerard D’Arcy** was born in 1933 in Rossendale, England. His grandparents had migrated from Counties Mayo and Sligo in the west of Ireland late in the nineteenth century. His father William D’Arcy died in India during World War II. His mother Laurinea D’Arcy (1909-2003) wrote an autobiography *Deep are the Roots* (Bellasis Press, 1999).

Brian is a prize-winning poet for children and adults. His previous collections are *Tha Shein Ukrosh: Indeed the Hunger* (Bellasis Press) and *Footsteps in the Dust* (Sixties Press). He chairs *The Healing Word*, a cancer support group using reading, writing and storytelling. With fellow poets in *Mini Mushaira*, he has co-authored *Another Bridge* (Sahitya Press). He lives in Sheffield with his wife *Debjani Chatterjee*, an acclaimed poet and children’s writer, with whom he has edited several anthologies for children. Brian retired from teaching at Sheffield Hallam University in 1995. His interests include music, painting, horses, Irish history and folklore, and solving puzzles. He has two surviving daughters: *Michèle* in Idaho, USA, and *Andrea* in Lancashire, England. He also has seven grandchildren.

ISBN 978-1-905554-28-7  
£7.95

SIXTIES PRESS

## Barry Tebb

**Barry Tebb** is a poet, author and publisher. He was born in Leeds, West Yorkshire in 1942. His poetry was first published by Alan Tarling’s ‘Poet and Printer Press’ in the sixties, along with Ted Hughes, Michael Longley and Iain Crichton Smith. His work was included in the Penguin anthology *Children of Albion: Poetry of the Underground in Britain*. In 2001, Redbeck Press brought out his *Selected Poems, The lights of Leeds*. His autobiography, *The Fiddler and His Bow* appeared in 2005. Tebb

is a passionate campaigner for better mental health services. His *Life and Death in Camden* and *Censored in Camden* attest to this. He has edited two major anthologies of poetry and prose, *Beyond Stigma* and *The Real Survivors Anthology*.

## Bernard Kops

Poetry & Peril:

PEACE WILL COME, ANNE FRANK INSISTS,  
YOU WILL SEE



Bernard Kops

By Thomas Ország-Land

BERNARD KOPS, the doyen of Anglo-Jewish letters, has responded to a global resurgence of violent anti-Semitism by issuing a new collection of verse called *Anne Frank’s Fragments from Nowhere*. This is his second major work exploring the legacy of the teenage diarist. Anne was murdered in Bergen-Belsen after hiding with her family for two exhausting years in a secret annex at the back of an Amsterdam building.

She returns in Bernard’s poetry to assure worried Jews everywhere:

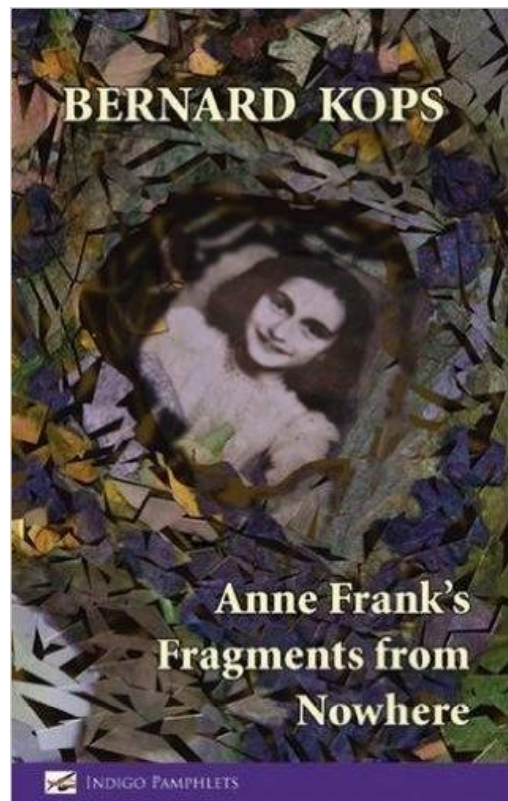
... *peace will come.*

*And the tired will lie down and sleep.  
 And the dreamers will awake  
 and embrace the beauty  
 of world, of existence, of love.  
 And peace will come,  
 and love and lovers will transcend  
 the wars of earth.  
 And they will plant their love.  
 And the tree of love will grow forever.  
 And you'll see. Peace will come. And peace  
 will come.  
 And people will come and go and live.  
 And live again and again.  
 And peace will come. You'll see!  
 You'll see. And peace will come!  
 And peace will come!  
 And peace must come.*

Bernard, a poet and playwright, at last basking in world fame at the age of 89, is slightly older than Anne would be if she had been allowed to live. He is a descendant of working-class Dutch immigrants to Britain, whose entire extended family back in Europe perished during the Holocaust. He is, like all Jews alive today, a survivor acutely aware of a looming, ubiquitous presence of racist intolerance.

Seven decades after the Holocaust and a year after the horrendous *Charlie Hebdo* massacre in Paris replicated worldwide, Jewish institutions in hundreds of population centres survive under armed guard. France, the home of Europe's biggest Jewish community and the third biggest in the world, has declared a permanent state of emergency. It deploys troops in combat fatigues and wielding automatic weapons to control the wrath of Islamist fanatics encouraging the racist rampage of the native far-right and far-left rabble.

A wide range of xenophobic hate crimes has substantially increased throughout the West. Jewish community leaders perceive a level of existential threat that they have not experienced since the wartime deportation trains transporting the Kops and the Frank families and millions of other civilian captives across Europe to industrially organized slaughter. Jewish emigration to Israel has now also reached record levels.



**Anne Frank's Fragments from Nowhere**

**by Bernard Kops**

**Indigo Dreams Publishing, Devon, 2015**

**36pp., £6.00+P&P,**

**ISBN: 978-1-909357-91-4**

The book confronts a crisis that may well intensify following the Great Powers' dubious new nuclear power development accord with the theocracy of Baghdad. Its

immediate effect will be to fuel the perilous conflagrations already engulfing the Middle East and extending to the European Union and Russia. For the compromise agreement has released an estimated \$150bn in direct and indirect investment in the terrorist states of Iran and its client Syria, and also in numerous terrorist states within states like Hezbollah and Hamas.

The first German feature film based on the teenager's Holocaust testimony, titled *Das Tagebuch der Anne Frank* (The Diary of Anne Frank), will be released at the 66th Berlin Film Festival during February this year. A Hollywood adaptation of the diary won three Oscars in 1959.

Bernard's collection addresses the future by insisting on recording the past. In the poem *For the Record*, he recalls:

*They came for him in Amsterdam, my  
grandfather David,  
and with minimum force removed him from  
his home.*

*He surrendered to the entire German army,  
and that was that.*

*It is of little consequence now;  
so many die alone in foreign lands.  
But for the record I must say  
they gave him a number, helped him  
aboard an eastbound train.*

*It was a little overcrowded,  
but then they had so many to dispatch...*

The poet grew up in deep poverty in the East End of London "as a committed witness for the lost community of Amsterdam," he recounts, "including my

family and Anne's. Her fate could so easily have been mine . . ."

He all but met her. He explains: "My first play, *The Hamlet of Stepney Green*" first performed at the Oxford Playhouse in 1957, "was translated into Dutch by Rosie Pool, an author who joined the Dutch Resistance during the war. She had escaped from the Nazi transit camp at Westbork," a collection point from which the Jews were being dispatched to mass murder, "and her first task was to smuggle herself back and organize others.

"There she met and tutored Anne. Rosie talked to me endlessly about Anne's character, personality, dreams and nightmares. All this has fed my imagination, and Anne became my close relative."

The experience eventually led to Bernard's play, the *Dreams of Anne Frank*, which opened in the Polka Theatre, London, in 1992. The play (Methuen Drama, England, 1997) has been touring the world ever since. The Hungarian version performed in 1998 at the Mahatma Gandhi School, Pécs, employed a cast of teenage Romany actors, perhaps a quarter million of whose people had been murdered during the Holocaust. The atmosphere was electric.

In Act One, Anne holds up a star on an empty stage as she turns to the audience. (The following text of her song is not included in the new collection.)

*Fate gave me a yellow star.  
A badge to tell them who I am.  
I'm Anne from Amsterdam.  
I'm Anne Frank and I'm a Jew.  
And I'm the same as you and you.  
Or you and you and you.  
But fate gave me a yellow star.*

*Yellow star.  
The star to put me in my place,  
To wear it as a badge of shame,  
But I'm Anne from Amsterdam.  
I'm proud of who I am.  
We have to hide away from light  
Because they come for us at night.  
And pack us off to God knows where,  
And all we have is where we are.  
But fate gave me a yellow star.  
Yellow star.*

Like Bernard, the real-life Anne had consciously prepared for a writing career, and she spectacularly succeeded. Her diary describing the fears as well as the tensions, loves, dreams and irritations of people hiding away from death in a terrorized city was published posthumously in 1947 as *Het Achterhuis* (The Annex). Subsequent editions were titled *The Diary of Anne Frank* and *Diary of a Young Girl*. The book has been sold in more than 30m copies.

A fierce controversy is now raging over an extension of its copyright protection that would normally expire 70 years after the death of its author. Another book of the same period controversially just reissued on entering the public domain is *Mein Kampf* (My Struggle) by Adolf Hitler, a screed campaigning for the annihilation of the Jewish people.

Bernard is one of the best known writers of our time. All his writing is steeped in poetry. He is extraordinarily creative, prolific, fearless and compassionate, the author of some nine collections of verse, more than 40 plays for stage and television, 11 novels and two autobiographies.

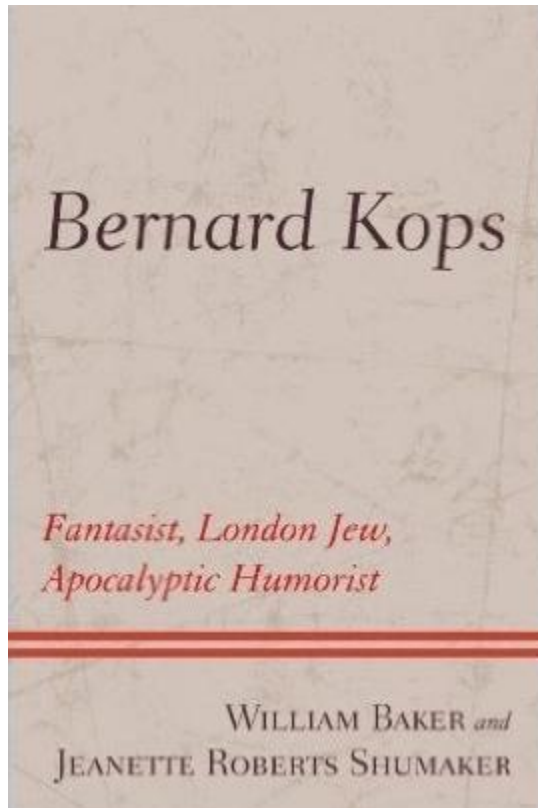
Many of his books are constantly in print and his plays in production. His range of

concerns is enormous, embracing Jewish identity, the many shades of love, family relationships, aging, fear, passion and mental illness. *The Hamlet of Stepney Green*, whose roots reach back to the tradition of Yiddish theatre, is widely recognized as an originator of Britain's revolutionary, new wave, "kitchen-sink" theatre.

A seminal, book-length critical analysis of his growing corpus (*Bernard Kops: Fantasist, London Jew, Apocalyptic Humorist*, Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 2014, 168pp.) has been issued by Professor William Baker of Northern Illinois University and Prof. Jeanette Roberts Shumaker at San Diego State University. The monograph describes him as an influential innovator of British drama, an important social critic and a careful chronicler of the Anglo-Jewish society as well as the London Bohemian subculture of the 1940s, 50s, and 60s, of which he was a part.

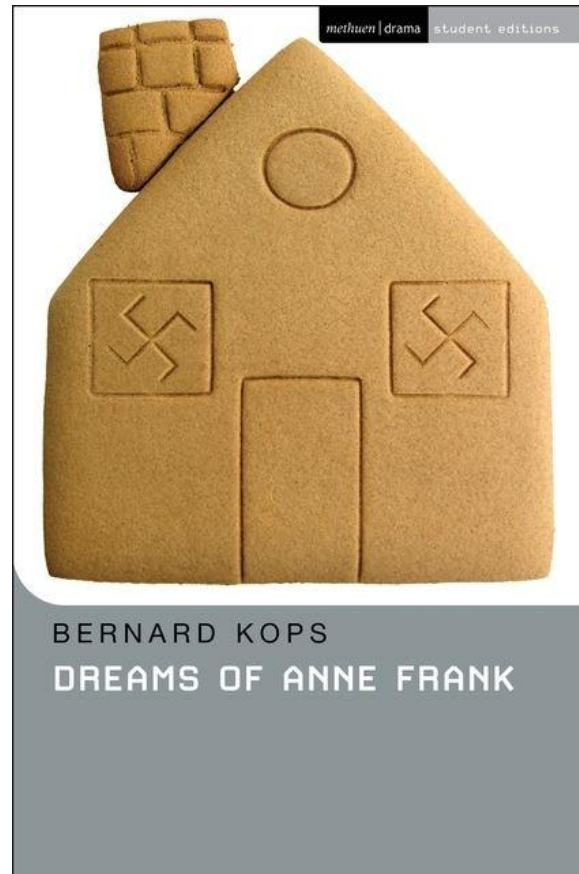


**Face by Razz**



He is also a stubborn optimist convinced that well chosen words are mightier even than fleets of nuclear warheads. With a comradely wink towards Anna, Bernard includes in the new collection one of his best loved, old poems, *Shalom Bomb*. Here is one timely passage:

*I want a one-man-band-bomb. My own bomb!*  
*My live long and die happy bomb.*  
*My die peacefully of old age bomb;*  
*in my own bed bomb.*  
*My Om Mane Padme Aum Bomb.*  
*My Tiddly Om Pom Bomb.*  
*My goodnight bomb, my sleeptight bomb,*  
*my see you in the morning bomb.*  
*I want my bomb. My own private bomb.*  
*My Shalom bomb.*



**THOMAS ORSZÁG-LAND** is a poet and award-winning foreign correspondent who writes from London and his native Budapest. His last book was *Survivors: Hungarian Jewish Poets of the Holocaust* (Smokestack/England, 2014). His work also appears in the new anthologies *Over Land, Over Sea: Poems for Those Seeking Refuge* (Five Leaves) and *Random Red Candles* grouping the best of *Candelabrum Poetry Magazine, 1970-2010* (Spinnaker), both in England in 2015.

# Truth the Leveller

by Joy Sheridan

## I

I was living on the streets for many a year  
Listen brother, listen sister,  
Did I know the word 'fear';

Fearful to lose, I was afraid to win –  
Torn between luxury  
And the garbage bin;  
Afraid of living, Afraid of dying,  
In a state of chaos,  
Surrounded by greed,  
Selfishness and lying.

## II

I was running, I was slow,  
I was hiding  
From what I didn't want to know –  
Beleaguered by bad men, women too;  
They called themselves my friends  
But that wasn't true.  
Circled by half-truths, insinuated lies  
Uttered by the devil's spies,  
Tortured with the bitter gall  
As they saw me stumble and fall.

## III

I was followed, I was tracked,  
Cornered – there was no escape;  
Kidnapped, drugged, brutally assaulted  
By sordid mortality's rape –  
My senses kicked by heel

To the gutter level;  
I keeled in St Catherine's wheel.  
Heaven knows no place  
In London West Eleven;  
Panicked and racked –  
Face swollen, eyes blacked.  
Listen people: there was more ahead;  
What follows must be said.

## IV

I was really wounded, really down,  
When they stuck me in a hotel  
In the sickest part of town;  
Run by bloodsuckers,  
Owned by a slime-encrusted vampire bat;  
He was the kind who'd stick on VAT  
For a syphilitic alley-cat.  
It was a ship of evil – a hatch  
Without battening or latch

## V

The punter went out of a first-storey  
casement;  
I heard the crash,  
Then he lay moaning in the basement.

I rushed out from my hotel room, saw two  
figures  
Fleeing through the gloom;  
They saw me as I saw them,  
Hurtling past, disaster bound.  
I said something; one replied,  
Fingering his bag –  
what was there to hide?

White chick came down the stair,

Wrapped in a towel, disarrayed hair;  
Outside I heard the moans –  
Be was crying, he was howling –  
He was dying!

## VI

Shakingly she stuttered some words;  
“They had guns” she said – this I heard.  
They burst into the room,  
We were on the floor –  
A fired shot; he was no more!

Just a gaping window and a cool night  
breeze –  
Then began the biggest freeze.

## VII

All quiet in that ship of dread;  
Truthful authority seemed to be dead –  
No coverage, no news, no newspaper  
spread.

Blank expressions on vacuous faces,  
Sealed lips – an incident which  
They hoped would leave no traces.  
Scars ran down the banisters,  
Saltpetre in the air;  
Blood in the breakfast tea,  
Fear of eyes which stare.

## VIII

I was sober on that night,  
Sober as a judge  
Recovering from an earlier fright –  
A villain who was after me,  
Who was not a vicar –

Nor would it have been afternoon tea.  
Bound by barriers of incomprehension  
It seems I was the only one alert  
Who could pay proper attention.  
Brothers and sisters –  
you are the jury now!  
Weigh up what you’ve heard –  
Considering you were not meant to hear –  
Witnesses to a case  
Which in the Courts will not appear.

## Joy Sheridan, 29<sup>th</sup> May 1983

*(An Mp3 of this cong can be heard on ‘Audioboom’)*

-----  
Oh, Methiopropamine,  
It keeps our nostrils clean,  
You put it in a line and snort it,  
Whoever would’ve thought it,  
It’s stronger than crack,  
Not addictive like smack,  
It’s cheaper than weed or speed,  
It’s very nice indeed,  
It plays around with time,  
It’s really quite sublime,  
We cannot understand it,  
Why on earth they banned it,  
Nobody ever died,  
From this once-was legal high.

## Tony Peter Laing

## Nature Reserve at Christmas

*(for Debjani)*

Today we felt  
the light warmed grasses  
shifting westward in the wind.  
Behind the leaf tunnel  
sunshine rests upon  
winter green meadows  
seeping through  
gaps in hedgerows

colouring my soul  
long-soaked in sadness,  
with sparkling  
shades of  
Yuletide joy.

My dog, Milly  
ran in the field  
like a greyhound should,  
then she loped back to me,  
all dog and “*clever lass!*”  
Tail rotating . . .  
astounding me.

### **Jo Reah**

*(31 December 2015)*

### **Goodbye, Summer**

*(for Karen)*

Joyful steps  
autumn passages  
dashing berries  
wellington boots  
damp paws  
circling tails  
pattering mud  
leaf showers.

Sheets of sunrays  
belt the sky,  
straight waterfalls  
melt through mint  
and green valleys  
to bright October meadows,  
shining on  
delicate grasses  
singing: “Goodbye, summer”  
in the sparkling breeze,  
snuggled together  
with tiny flowers  
protecting them  
for winter.

### **Jo Reah**

*(26 November 2015)*

### **About Jo Reah**

Jo Reah is a Sheffield-based poet whose work has appeared in magazines and anthologies. She has enjoyed voluntary work with young children and advocacy work with mentally distressed adults. She attends a weekly art therapy group and is a keen swimmer.

## **KASPAAR**

**Kent Atelier:** Sound Productions And Archive Recordings is an on-line only sound archive website on which you can choose just what you want to hear. We record programmes with and about interesting local people, organisations and events, which then remain on our site and can easily be accessed individually at any time. We are gradually adding to our range of content as the weeks go by, and are currently exploring the possibility of creating a continuous programme stream, akin to Radio 4. We are still a relatively young concern, but we already have listeners in many parts of the world. Roger has a life-long experience of professional recording, and collaborated in the establishment of a community radio station in Australia, which is still running after more than 20 years.

How did we start it up? It grew out of an experiment with video! But Roger has been interested in sound recording since his childhood, and has worked for many years as a professional sound engineer. He is also a life-long performing musician: he plays electric guitar in his own inimitable jazzy-swing style, and uses his electronic skills on the “innards” of his guitars to produce his own unique



sound. He has also been making recordings (not least of his playing) since he was very young, and has developed an amazing “ear” for sounds, music and voices.

Thanet (Ramsgate, Broadstairs and Margate area) is a very deprived part of the country, and we wanted to do something to enhance its reputation, find the best of what was going on locally, and encourage others to spread the word that it is more than the picture sketched by statistics and press reports.

So we started recording interviews with local people that we met and heard of, to demonstrate the wealth of talent hidden in these three small towns. For Jan-Clare it was a foray into unknown territory, but her interest in people and counselling training enabled her to ask the questions that helped people to open up and talk about their passions – usually they only needed to be gently prompted before their enthusiasms came tumbling out. Then Roger would set to work with his editing suite to hide the “ums” and “ers” and to do the other wonders he performs to turn an informal conversation into a “programme” that would hold the interest of the listener, building on his experience in producing training videos, and programmes for the community radio station in Australia, where he lived for ten years.

Initially we thought of our project as a community radio station, but we have found this often causes confusion with “live” radio stations such as the BBC. Since Roger has other recording commitments and we wanted to ensure that we were seen as a professional venture, we decided to use a Studio name incorporating, among other things, the community radio project. We started by

musing on our fundamental aim, which, it transpired, was to work with the spirit of sound. We then called upon the “friendly ghost” for inspiration, respelling his name and generating the acronym KASPAAR which incorporates the locality (Kent), the idea of a quality studio (Atelier), and the two main aspects of our work (sound productions and archive recordings).

We were then asked if we could provide a programme for a new streaming local community radio station – specifically on jazz. Another terrifying adventure for Jan-Clare! But Roger was convinced we could do it and, with a couple of months to prepare, we did. Jan-Clare found she loved doing the research for the programmes, choosing the theme for the week, selecting the music and background information, and writing the script. Then she found that she was very good at reading aloud (as the presenter), and people seem to enjoy the sound of her voice. Suddenly there were dozens of her Jazz-n-Stuff programmes up on our web-site. (She has since gone on to take major parts in local drama group productions!)

We are also very keen to demonstrate the vitality of older people, being no spring chickens ourselves with a combined life-span of 153 years! We are constantly discovering fascinating stories, skills and passions. We do not subscribe to the self-deprecating opinion “If I can do it, anybody can” – we believe it is important to acknowledge and celebrate individual talents, however quirky or mundane they seem. When people come to us and say “I’d like to make a programme about . . . .” we are really happy, so some of our programmes have been produced by other enthusiasts. There are so many topics we’d love to cover, but we can’t do

it alone, and we like to help others to discover a new skill – especially when it is one they did not think they had!

Sometimes people say “Oh, I couldn’t do that,” when asked to record their story, but it is truly no more difficult than telling it to a friend. And, of course, in the privacy of Roger’s studio, stumbles can be re-recorded, rest-breaks are almost mandatory. It is an illusion that most of the interviews we see on TV or hear on the radio have been word-perfect first time: most of them have been rehearsed and edited to make the interviewee (and sometimes the interviewer!) sound fluent and even erudite.

So who have we talked to? Our very first interview was with the owner of a bridal shop opening in the depths of the recession – what courage that must have taken! We have discovered what lay behind the façade of a fairground organ. We’ve learnt from several new and not-so-new writers, gone behind the curtain in a tiny theatre, focused on a new photographic club and a historical seaside photography archive, heard from family members of famous people, gone travelling in Tibet and to a folk festival. We’ve recorded items about a brewery, a cemetery and a wind farm, cat sanctuaries and computer services, river steamer and air ambulance, orchestral film music, skiffle and solo auto-harp, and many others ranging from clairvoyance to cardiac rehabilitation. This last is Roger’s proudest production. Jan-Clare’s particular thrill was interviewing the Dutch Swing College Band’s Musical Director at the Snape Maltings.

With the advent of modern ‘phones’ which are now nothing less than pocketable computers, it might be

assumed that all this could be done very easily. But to get good sound without background distractions when recording, particularly in the field, it is necessary to use quality equipment – and Roger has certainly never been a technophobe! We have professional microphones and mixing desk equipment in the studio, industry-standard software, and a pair of the most experienced ears in the business. We can even turn our little motor-home into a mobile studio, for we have the hand-held 4-track recorder that was part of Roger’s prize when he won an international competition for sound recordings, in the Creative Music section – only the second English person to do so.

We have welcomed the chance to support local organisations and people, as we aim to help lift our area out of its current doldrums by showing it as a place of vitality and professionalism. We are entirely self-funding at present but hope to generate interest among local businesses by providing an additional form of self-promotion via web-links to their own sites.

You can find us at [www.kaspaar.info](http://www.kaspaar.info), the Thanet Community Radio Facebook page [www.facebook.com/thanetcommunityradio](http://www.facebook.com/thanetcommunityradio), and via MixCloud [www.mixcloud.com/kaspaar](http://www.mixcloud.com/kaspaar).

Kent Atelier: Sound Productions And  
Archive Recordings.  
Quality programs on-line  
Roger Allen 01843 596628 07973 400606  
Jan-Clare Side 07711 805199

## **Walking with former friends**

To those friends

Who led me up paths  
Storms crashing so.

What did you do  
To unleash the tides  
That left me alone  
While the sea was high?

The river guided once,  
It was June. We went  
Down South, and I felt  
The world was home.

While we three walked then  
We glided down stream  
By hills and meadows, and then  
The sun and the moon.

Where is the proof of those friends  
When I was sick and lost?  
No more sunny meadows  
The only voice a ghost.

## **Planting Scots Pine (Pinus Silvestrus)**

**in May 2012**

Lifting heather by the roots, I haul  
Layers of thought I believed I'd long since shed.  
Planting trees through the frail shawl of rain,  
I slice the rain and peat, hand down to the gravelly  
soil.

One thought comes sharp as the crow's caw,  
Where have I been? I pull up to look around  
To see long light filter onto the monadh,  
This is a sensual awakening by the ground.

Ghostly thoughts, old friends and late news  
Rise up instead of new Scots pine.  
Like Christmas cards brought out too late for use  
I've kept them hidden by unearthly means.

**Anna Stenning**

**November**

The November light says  
Something about death: it creeps  
Through gaps. Grasping for throats  
Like a forgotten threat. The cat

Breaches space, weaving  
His nameless scent of musk  
On my face, ribbons that hold  
But don't bind. The smell aligns

But doesn't tie us. Like the half light,  
Of a remembered memory  
To one who is forgotten  
In the shadow of dreams.

Do you see, but not feel  
This deadly November light?  
The threat of its gaze  
On your sleeping face?

I'd give a thousand November days  
August ones even – for you to feel  
The cat's warmth against your belly  
See your things and feel loved.

Let the sermons end; no more remembrances  
But for you, a gentle dustman's child  
Watch this feeling  
Fade into the grey November light.

## **Anna Stenning**

**Anna Stenning** was born in Essex in 1978, and educated at a local comprehensive. She spent her early years on an island off the Essex coast. In her teens, she escaped by hiding and obsessing over art, poetry and rock music. She was the first in the Stenning history to receive a degree, and was awarded a 2.1 for Philosophy at King's College London. Finding herself alone in London, and after a less-than-impressive attempt to gain an apprenticeship as an accountant (having no real interest in business), Anna spent a period studying to

become as a chef in the southern Mediterranean, learning how to make paella and mastering various Valencian insults. Anna made several, more or less successful attempts to become an editorial assistant and writer for several years, including a brief stint working for an advertising agency.

Finding London life increasingly difficult on low funds Anna retreated to rural Essex where she began working for a newspaper and she found increasing meaning from work as a conservation volunteer. Hoping to follow her dream of becoming a writer and her growing sense of environmental awareness, Anna completed a Masters degree in 'Wild Writing: literature, science and the environment' at the University of Essex. During this time and afterwards she received encouragement and support from the nature writers Robert Macfarlane and Richard Mabey, and Anna was motivated to find a version of nature writing that could speak to broader audiences and address human nature in all its manifestations.

In 2010 she received funding to complete an 'ecocritical' PhD on poetry at the University of Worcester, and moved to a draughty but picturesque flat at the edge of the Malvern Hills, far away from her beloved Essex flatlands. During the PhD she travelled to New York to study Edward Thomas's field notebooks in the Berg Collection. She received her PhD in 2015, despite taking six months off due to a period of depression, a condition that has

affected her most of her life. In 2015 Anna received a grant to attend the Arvon 'Suitcase Stories' course at Totleigh Barton, which enabled her writing to progress. She currently teaches English literature and creative writing at the University of Worcester.



*Wise Man by Razz*



*Poet by Razz*

# POETRY

## and HEARING VOICES



### OPPORTUNITY TO DELIVER A HALF-HOUR TALK & ANSWER QUESTIONS

Mind in Camden is looking for a poet, who is also a voice-hearer, able to present their work in an engaging and entertaining and thoughtful way – to a meeting of HEARING VOICES GROUP facilitators in January 2017.

Find out more about Hearing Voices Groups here:

<http://www.intervoiceonline.org/>

We are looking not just for a poetry recital – in fact, not primarily for a poetry recital at all – but rather for a personal explanation of how the experience of hearing voices can form the basis and inspiration for a poem. The *London Hearing Voices Network* aims to validate and explore, rather than medicalise and stigmatise, the voice-hearing experience. Creativity is a natural and

universal pathway to discovering positive value in experiences which the medical establishment tends to regard as symptoms to be suppressed.

The *London Hearing Voices Network* receives no funding and we are therefore unable to offer a fee for this engagement. Reasonable travel expenses will be paid.

Your audience will consist of about 20 facilitators of Hearing Voices groups across London. Some will be voice-hearers themselves, some won't. Some will be mental health professionals. We meet together every few months to celebrate what we do, and to have in-depth discussions about the work of facilitating our groups.

Expressions of interest welcome. **Please contact John Wetherell**, Project Assistant, Mind in Camden Hearing Voices Team.  
**EMAIL** [jwetherell@mindincamden.org.uk](mailto:jwetherell@mindincamden.org.uk)  
**PHONE: 020 7241 8978**



**Razz**