

Poetry *Express*

Winter 2010

Issue 34

Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year

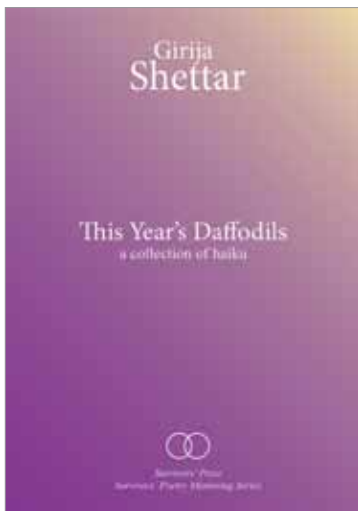
Creating & Connecting SLAM by Director Helen Shearn

Survivor Kathryn Mattison's experiences OCD

Selective Thoughts a Director's view on the funding cuts to Arts

Much more: Broadsheet, editorials, events and reviews ...





Girija Shettar

Girija started out as a lead actress in South Indian films at the age of 18. From mixed parentage, she travelled to India, where she stayed for 10 years. Leaving films to study Vedic philosophy, she returned to the UK and wrote a PhD on the material nature of the soul and metaphysical psychology. She is now a journalist. Confronted by increasingly severe cultural and racial dichotomies, Girija finds Vedic philosophy, Buddhism, Sufi and now haiku poetry indispensable tools on her journey through life.

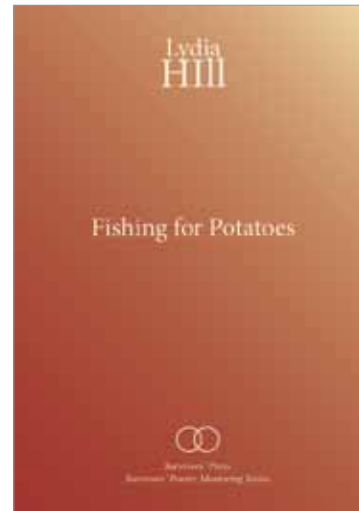
Girija was mentored by haiku poet Diana Webb, as part of the 2008-2009 Mentoring Scheme series.



Mala Mason

Mala is 63 years of age. She retired from work some five years ago after a lengthy career in the Civil Service – a retirement which, she says, gives her ‘much more time to focus on my poetry.’ Mala’s poetry is largely inspired by her personal history and by the Survivors Poetry Creative Writing Workshops programme, of which she was a facilitator; by SP’s Write on the Edge Open Mike performance evenings; and by week-long Poetry Retreats at Emmerson College, an establishment run on the lines of the Rudolf Steiner schools, where the flowering of artistic intelligence is encouraged as much by the warm, tranquil atmosphere as by deliberate coaching. Mala’s Indian poems are the fruit of regular Yoga Retreats she attended on the Sub-continent.

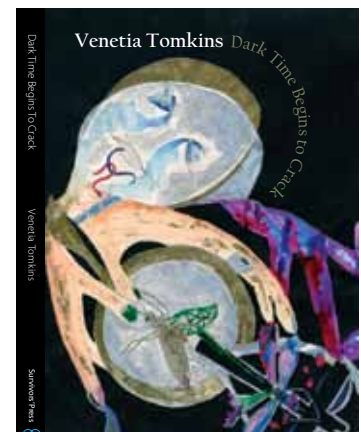
Mala Mason was mentored by poet Bernadette Cremin, as part of the 2008-2009 Mentoring Scheme series.



Lydia Hill

Lydia was born in Devon but has spent her adult life in the South East. She has a Masters Degree from the University of Kent. In 2007 she was invited to take part in *Voiceworks*, a project run jointly by Birkbeck College and Guildhall School of Music and Drama. Working with the composer Rupert Cross, she wrote the words for ‘Mockingbird’ which was performed as a song at the Wigmore Hall in April 2008. Her poetry has previously been published in *Poetry Express*; *Fishing for Potatoes* is her first collection.

Lydia Hill was mentored by Peter Carpenter, teacher and publisher (Worple Press), as part of the 2008-2009 Mentoring Scheme series.



Venetia Tompkins publication “*Dark Time Begins to Crack*” will be available in the Spring 2011

Mentoring Scheme 2011 Publications

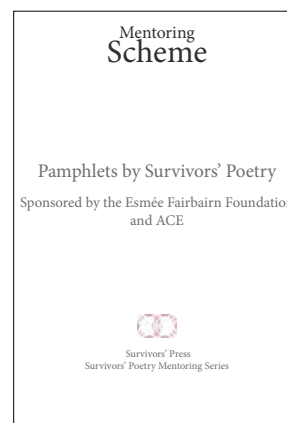
Volumes - £8.00 + £2.00 p&p:

Venetia Tompkins - “*Dark Time Begins to Crack*” edited by Roy Birch
- not available until the Spring 2011.

Pamphlets - £5.00 + £2.00 p&p:

Girija Shettar - “*This year, daffodils*” edited by Diana Webb
Mala Mason - “*The Coming of the Rains*” edited by Bernadette Cremin
Lydia Hill - “*Fishing for Potatoes*” edited by Peter Carpenter
Sean Burn - “*People are their own Dreams*” edited by Simon Jenner
- (Not available yet)

check for availability at http://www.survivorspoetry.com/SP_Shop/



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

Featured articles, art and poetry © of contributors. Printed with kind permission.

Editor: Dave Russell

Art Editor and Coordinator: Blanche Donnery

Editorial Team: Roy Birch, Simon Jenner

Cover Image: by Helen Austin from SLAM exhibition at Maudsley Hospital 2010.

Poetry Express (PE) is only published in PDF format.

Contact us to join our mailing list. We welcome

Submissions: Poetry, articles, news items, and other matter which may be of interest to our readers. We cannot guarantee publication and reserve the right to edit contributions. The views expressed in this publication are those of the individual authors, and do not necessarily represent the views of Survivors' Poetry. All Poems/Artwork printed herein are the copyright of the authors credited.



Survivors' Poetry

Studio 11, Bickerton House

25-27 Bickerton Road

London N19 5JT

Tel 020 7281 4654

info@survivorspoetry.org.uk

www.survivorspoetry.com

Patrons:

Mario Petrucci, Debjani Chatterjee MBE

Trustees:

Phil Ruthen (Chair), Marius Jankowski (Secretary), Abdul Jamal (Treasurer), Celia Potterton, Judith Graham.

Staff:

Simon Jenner (Director), Roy Birch (National Outreach Coordinator and Mentoring Scheme Coordinator), Blanche Donnery (Administration, Marketing and Media Design)

Freelance Staff/Contractors:

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

Volunteers:

Dave Russell (Reviews & Events), Xochitl Tuck & Razz (Events Coordinators), Peter Carpenter (Mentor), Bernadette Cremin (Mentor), Naomi Foyle (Mentor), Peter Street (Mentor), Akin Oladimeji (Mentor), Diana Webb (Mentor). Ben Siegle

*SP believes we've had an unknown problem with our web stats, hence the very low download figure for PE33

1 **E**ditorial - Dave Russell

2 **U**ppdate - Simon Jenner

4 **O**utreach - Roy Birch

5 **S**elective Thoughts

- Simon Jenner on Cuts on Arts

9 **F**eatured Artist -

- SLAM *Creating and Connecting* by Helen Shearn

10

BROADSHEET

- selection of survivor poetry

21 **F**eatured Artist -
-continued

24 **R**eviews - Dave Russell &
other contributors

41 **T**he Silent Assassin of the Soul
- Kathryn Mattison

42 **L**etters and e-mails

43 **E**vents & Bulletin (back cover)

pe33 downloaded: 18723.12.10*

pe32 downloaded: 6257 23.09.10

Editorial

Dave Russell

Hopefully, as the barometer falls in this bitter winter, Survivors' fortunes rise - with a struggle. Events at the Poetry Café have continued to draw capacity audience. Recent highlights included Steve Tasane, who has recently pioneered a fusion of Spoken Word and video in his dvd *Talkies*, reviewed in this issue.

The Children (John Gibbens and Armored Weston) did a highly polished and impassioned performance, featuring highlights of their recent double CD album *In Memory of Grace* - culmination of two years effort. Sybil Madrigal remains uncompromisingly provocative, and her clarinet accompanist ever exciting - brilliant slap-tonguing and harmonics.

Acoustic Clampdown are a very heartening example of an imaginative group evolving in the ambience of Survivors: musically highly imaginative and exploratory, cleverly incorporating jazz influences, and some 'cutting edge' lyrics.

Folk veteran Tom Paley has started attending the Poetry Café events. I have long been a fan of the New Lost City Ramblers, of which he was an integral part. They were a seminal influence in promoting hillbilly string band music among folk audiences from the 50s. Tom has featured some of this material, as well as reading several of his poems, some of which I would very much like to feature in future PENS.

Most encouraging developments with Tottenham Chances. Extensive refurbishment work is now in progress, taking the bleak, raw edge off those premises. The final event for 2010 really went off with a swing. It was a conjoint event, as I have constantly been recommending for the venue - birthday party for Hugh Metcalf, poet, freeform jazz musician, and much else. His 'Klinkers' events have long been major foci for the experimental arts - including dance and film. Hugh is definitely a kindred spirit of Survivors: most of the 'regulars', including myself, have Klinkers as part of their circuit. It was a really lively performance, featuring Frank Bangay, The Children, and Sir Gideon Vain, with whom I have done many gigs at 'Inn on the Green' - inspired anarchy from a truly natural actor. Hugh's own set was substantially enhanced by an excellent jazz pianist who really enriched the overall feeling of this excellent event, whose only minor drawback was its late start.

A recent experience at Tottenham Chances gave a timely reminder for Survivors organisers to be vigilant about double-booking, and to respect the sensitivity of sufferers from mental distress.

Overall, Survivors can feel optimistic about the future. We have been fortunate enough only to have an extremely modest grant cut. In the publication area the next batch of mentoring scheme pamphlets is under way. So far confirmed are Akin Oladimeji, Peter Street, Peter Carpenter, Simon Jenner, Roy Birch, Debjani Chatterjee, Alan Morrison. High probabilities are Naomi Foyle, Harriet Thistlethwaite, Alison Clayburn, Mario Petrucci and Jeanette Ju-Pierre. Scheduled for next year are Lydia Hill's *Fishing for Potatoes*, Mala Mason's *The Coming of the Rain*, and Girija Shettar's *This Year's Daffodil*, and a collection by Venetia Tompkins, *Dark Times Begin to Crack*. Publication of the latter has been delayed because of difficulties with the printers. Peter Carpenter SP mentor has been appointed Chair to the board of Trustees, of The Poetry Society. Congratulations

Mentors so far confirmed for 2011 are: Debjani Chatterjee, Simon Jenner, Alan Morrison, Akin Oladimeji, Dave Russell and Peter Street. If Harriet Thistlethwaite agrees to mentor again, we will have a full complement for the 2011 round, as we currently only have 8 mentees, owing to one requesting a deferral, and one being incommunicado. If she declines, an approach will be made to Alyson Clayburne, who has previously shown an interest mentoring. Mario Petrucci may agree to be part of our mentor pool, but he can only be one if matched with a mentee. All past mentors will be contacted with reference to further mentoring for SP and establishing pool of SP mentors. Hopefully the 2011 round of mentoring will commence by the end of January.

The website is expected to be fully 'up and running' in a couple of months. This will dramatically expand Survivors' interactive base, revitalising and streamlining our Outreach activity, which has hitherto been somewhat curtailed by funding cuts. It is also intended to download e-books and Kindles onto the site. This is a major form of publication, geared to the future - working positively in tandem with printed editions.

Contacts continue to be pursued with potential funders: Judith and Lydia must be congratulated on their tenacity here. Several interesting people have expressed interest in becoming trustees.

Update Simon Jenner

I

It's been a year of magical thinking. Bartering with Death. That's what it's felt for most of us in this looking glass world of the arts, charities, and in our case survivors of mental distress as the new government took office. As the year winds down on the worst winter weather since the early 1990s (of course it's not global warming; it won't be when Scotland is uninhabitable, and the Gulf Stream privatized) we can reflect how apposite that is for all of us.

No point in re-iterating how unnecessary it is for us to suffer for our friends in the south (South of France, the bonus-rich). Robert Peston, Chief Financial Correspondent for the BBC, does that more eloquently. What I'm personally reflecting on is a year of intervention, personal political journeys, and reporting on the sector. My time at the House of Commons is luridly described elsewhere in this issue. It's a good time to take stock on as well as wind up and down: my questions to Nick Hurd on the reversion of intestate properties (all those empty houses the government seizes and sells on which could be used for the great Big Society), my comments on and contributing to the arts debate from January (State of the Arts) through ACE briefings and all liveries of badinage.

Time and canapés must have a stop. I'm writing about the range of topics presented to me or ones I've sought out, and will continue to. What all of us need to keep before us propped next to the Seasons Greetings cards, is the bigger picture of other arts. That's quite easy. It's puce. It comes as an ACE giveaway booklet and makes fascinating reading.

For arts organisations, it's never been so interesting. For ACE too, those still there are undergoing the steepest learning curves they're ever likely to experience as London ACE CEO Moira Sinclair put it. 'Basically, stay with us', she said publicly to ACE colleagues, 'you'll learn more now than you ever could in the past 20 years that I've been involved. If you're thrown out of ACE in the cuts (she didn't exclude herself) in two years time, you can take all those skills back to the arts market.' If that's the message for the staff, publicly delivered for the benefit of the arts organizations present, think what it means to the rest of us.

The major news for us is that like all RFOs, we're getting a 6.9% cut for next year. As I said publicly, it could have been much worse and the reason it isn't, is that Arts & Business and the Cultural Leadership Programme are being grant-halved so as not to impact on all the other arts organisations. Tough on A&B's Colin Tweedy and a canapé cut of stratospheric proportions. You'll see later on how Tweedy made his pitch in front of Tory allies in the Commons. It cut no ice (clink, with gin) with ACE CEO Alan Davey and some of us cheered more than we ought. ACE's decision was an inspired policy response, to protect less robust RFOs; I thanked Davey for it. Normally we'd have smiled at a three year settlement. It has to be one year only since we're all now invited to apply - for the first time - for our RFO status. The name's changed with the application to Portfolio. We have to apply by January 24th for our old status, as opposed to it being royally conferred. That's because ACE no longer receives the bulk of ACE monies from central government. It already comes increasingly via the Lottery, will terminally do so after 2012, and that money requires legal application. It clearly wasn't explained to Gerry I-Can-Fix-the-NHS-But-Not-Rentokil Robinson, also ex Chair ACE (1999-2004). He said it was a cop-out: that ACE could perfectly well divine as always who it wanted to give monies to, who to cut. This legal requirement as explained to me, corrects such an assumption though ACE themselves haven't bothered to refute it very energetically. If we get Portfolio Status it's for three years. If not, with our new website, there'll not be less life.

II

We can reflect what's happened to SP over the past decade. I've been here seven years, a Biblical time, but continue to toil in the vineyard. Blanche and Roy have been here almost as long and in Roy's case, rather longer in an unofficial capacity. Even Roy, though, has to think about his own future, and it's with deep regret but also satisfaction on his behalf that we announce his retirement from Survivors' in his key role; though he will be staying on to advise and mentor at Stevenage. It's a shock to realize Roy is touching 70. He seems younger though a lot wiser than nearly anyone else too. To have worked with someone of such distinction, and counted them a friend, is something I and Blanche, as well as everyone at SP, take much comfort in. And we won't be losing him altogether.

Its time too to see SP's direction towards its virtual constituency. We're painfully aware that we need to link up with groups and bring them on board, virtually, as part of our website project. There's a page dedicated to the regional SP Groups. There's also a realization that our commonwealth isn't technophilic and ready to download books onto kindles. Nor am I. The absence of print for Poetry Express, though we produce real books, is still a cause for regret. Facilities are simple for downloading and printing off; with such downloads heading towards 7,000 per issue we take comfort and satisfaction.

Our site is more of course than a resource for downloading PE, It's increasingly a forum for many other items of interest debate, contact and ultimately interactivity - including the SP groups I mentioned. We're hoping to go live early in the New Year. Blanche, Judith Graham our lead Board member on this project, and Jonathan Carruthers-Jones our website designer, are working with templates designed by Blanche. ACE have enthusiastically praised these as 'stunning'. We all concur, naturally.. So will you. Inevitably there are modifications. But eventually an all-singing dancing etc site will deliver the vast resource and archive of what we've un-digitally stored at SP for so long. Possibilities are vast; a couple of months away.

III

Reasons to be cheerful. Ian Dury's war-cry of amused despair, but also political rage, pervades us. I've written about the impact of this government's policies on survivors. Amidst student riots and Lib-Dem overdue defections, there's reason to see hope in a few timely political bricks. Even elected dictatorships respond to force. France shows the way, even if its position is as luxurious as Ireland's is dire. But there's a time for dialogue and my meeting with Nick Hurd MP was more fruitful than I expected. The possibilities - now minuted in the Directory of Social Change - that those suffering mental distress would not be hounded into jobs they can never in fact get, was recorded.

We need to persuade government it's no good bullying an ill person into work that doesn't exist. One weasel way is to say a depressed work colleague damages productivity all round. As if that matters a single key deliverable (or whatever) in the scale of things. But inaugurating a scheme whereby people work for charities in a caring environment and be excused the whole signing post-JSA ritual, might be helpful. I don't like it as a solution. I of course think that DLA should be left where it was. But these Work Will Make You Free addicts refuse to understand human frailty. Louise Bagshawe made my case for me in the House of Commons when I saw her, a new fledged Tory MP, gleefully ask the hapless Alan Davey whether potential RFOs would have to show a given number of deaf/disabled people responding to questionnaires. This is obscene. MPs went on laughing.

Clearly they'll have to be taught. No point - though I thought Davey could have - informing them that Westminster itself signalled a 13 year journey of access and inclusivity ACE now heralds as Great Art for Everyone. And that they toyed with ultra-correct questionnaires for just a bit too long. It was a journey Westminster should be glad it made. From the era of Clause 28 when you systematically discouraged for instance sexual difference, to a culture which embraces it; wants to know how much it plays a part in our cultural and ultimately human reflexes. That Alan Duncan or other 'out' MPs bask in a climate so much more relaxed is due in no small part to the Questionnaire Culture which proved its point. Now we need to prove ours. In such hoar frost our hopes lie: they kill off some government infection. New Year will allow all of us to position ourselves.

SP is positioned better than it ever has been. We can only hope. And with our website and personnel we have the means to do so, and to serve you, since you'll be driving it. Merry Compliments of the Season.

Outreach Roy Birch

Outreach and mentoring have been pretty much the same entity since disinvestment removed SP's financial capacity to send me out to set up new groups and visit existing ones, and Mentoring Scheme launches have always (apart from two I organized in Autumn this year) taken place as a bolt-on to the Poetry Cafe Open Mike evenings, meaning effectively that my role as Outreach Worker has been largely desk-bound for the last four and a half years, with the notable exception of the Vale House Project. So that is where I will begin.

The recession has had the same restrictive effect on the Vale House Project as on many other therapeutic activities. A long-anticipated session at Passmores House in Harlow was scrapped almost before it began, and another, at the Welwyn-Garden-City YMCA, fared only minimally better, while a third, at the Mid-Herts MIND Wellbeing Centre in Stevenage didn't even begin. But we continue at Vale House itself and are still able to run the occasional workshop. The latest of these took place on November 6th at Faraday House in London as part of the FEDfest writers' festival. As usual with Vale House workshops, the participants were largely mental health sufferers, and, as usual, the response was wholeheartedly positive. This is how the workshop was described on one of the FEDfest Evaluation Forms: "Revelatory! Though I have done meditation before, I have not ever written immediately afterwards before today - it felt so free! And Reiki was amazing; seems so insubstantial as a concept but the practice of it brought release to me."

The regular sessions at Vale House itself continue to prosper. None of the residents are currently baulking at the idea of an afternoon of meditation, creative writing, and Reiki, and all are quite obviously deriving genuine benefit from the sessions. On Friday, a resident who is struggling to make sense of his inner conflicts remarked that for the first time he had come away from Reiki 'feeling light.' Another resident who broke an ankle recently, amazed the medical profession with the speed of his recovery - the result of regular Reiki treatment.

Day Services is, of course, a completely different animal, catering as it does, for a mix of active and recovering addicts. Some of the recovering addicts are ex-residents who feel the need to continue the process of inner healing. Likewise, some of the active addicts are ex-residents who have relapsed and feel the need to return to the process of inner healing. The rest are a mix of Day Service clients who recognize the value of the Vale House Project, and addicts who hear about the sessions from their friends and simply turn up. A potentially volatile mix, but the combination of relaxation, socializing, and inner healing, all in a totally non-judgemental atmosphere, enables the sessions to overcome the problems such a mix brings with it. And these sessions are prospering, too, with good attendances in spite of the recent inclement weather. The sessions are even being attended by Vale House ex-residents from five and six years ago - well before the project began.

In short, I think it is safe to say that the Vale House Project is the one facet of Outreach that can be genuinely said to be in good health.

The Mentoring Scheme is in potentially good shape, with a raft of mentees waiting to be paired with their mentors, who, for the first time in the scheme's history, will be paid for their efforts.

The current round of publications has been held up for several months, and continues to be held up, by problems with the printer, problems which I hasten to add are not the fault of SP as Blanche has done her utmost to get them resolved and has been largely ignored. The problem is, of course, also holding up the next round of publications and the planning of Mentoring Scheme launches.

A number of Mentoring Scheme launches are in the pipeline, all outside of London, and, in a recent conversation I had with our Director, Dr. Simon Jenner, the possibility of Mentoring Scheme graduates being considered for publication by Waterloo Press, Dr. Jenner's own publishing house, and a rising star in the firmament of mainstream poetry publishing, was, for the first time, mentioned as a genuine consideration.

Former mentee Lydia Hill has written a wonderful satirical piece which deserves to be read by everyone and which will hopefully be ready for publication in the not too distant future. This publication will be a first for SP, as it will be the first time the organization has published a work which has not originated from one of its own projects. It will also be, for me, the realization of a long-held ambition - to see Survivors Press adding to its remit and reputation as a publisher of poetry by also becoming a publisher of high quality survivor prose. 2010 has been a tough year. 2011 may yet prove to be equally so. SP however (in principle at least) has begun to expand its remit. Let us hope funders can feel inspired to back this expansion. Such can only be of benefit to the organization and its constituency, and, ultimately, to artistic creativity itself. Which seems like a good place to bring this piece to an end.

Selective Thoughts

Simon Jenner

Select Committee Investigating the Impact of Government Cuts on the Arts, 12th October, 2010: House of Commons, Committee Room 8.

First some naïve questions. Why was this a game of two halves? MPs directed their questions first at Alan Davey CEO Arts Council England who was more than occasionally relieved by the calm and authoritative Louise de Winter of the National Campaign for the Arts (who had a slightly easier, corrective role but proved admirable). But the second part of the proceedings allowed Colin Tweedy of Arts and Business - a black-haired Boris Johnson in looks and an infectiously confident booming - to preemptively defend his organization against any cuts made by ACE - and Davey in particular. He more than proved his worth to A&B and his remit. He possesses a bounding charm. Lucky for him and hard on Davey who was repeatedly set up as the fall guy here and elsewhere, to be burned early, on October 20th, the Government Settlement date; not November 5th. But why was A&B's Boy Colin (a term used of Colin Wilson in 1956) allowed this privileged position? Could he not have been given just another fifteen minutes of fame, rather than a full hour? Many other organizations could have thrived with such oxygen. Perhaps the time would have been better spent discussing different arts sectors. Granted the Government wishes to address its great faith in a dramatic change of culture where millionaires suddenly, inexplicably, switch from football pitches to theatre ones. If so, the arguments were merely aired here. Though modes of philanthropy were later discussed, more than enough time was devoted to how A&B might save the arts world if not cut by Davey, whose prematurely bluff appearance and quiet manner cast him as the headmaster faced with sacking the talented head boy. Some lobbyists have all the luck. But Tweedy was a very swagger performer indeed, as Henry James once told H. G. Wells. So that's all right. And he underlined the fact that A&B and other organizations needed public funding anyway, so perhaps helped to make ACE's argument for them, in part and like an Eric Morecambe slap in the ACE.

Questions rained down on Davey from Tory MPs in particular, some of whom looked as if they were having sex in public without getting noticed. It's the way with select committees. Seeking an expert brief I called my mother in Wales (as you do); she's proved herself virulent at ministers' expense in just this breadless circus manner. She'd that second declined an invite to the Lords as no travel expenses are laid on. One way of simultaneously inviting and eliminating your enemy.

But this was one long-awaited spree. This is the first time a Coalition Select Committee has had a chance to get its writhing hands on that fancied canard: ACE Waste. It's been long anticipated since the January State of the Nation Conference when it was raised by Jeremy Hunt (who strategically can't be present at such select meetings). There was no opportunity for one of Davey's passionate speeches - a recent feature impressing several arts organizations. Davey quietly responded with excellent figures, 5% being all that's used by ACE itself, 6.6% when you include Lottery funding. Yes, it had gone down considerably, and Davey outlined the recent cuts to ACE's own organizational running costs. He could have capitalized as I thought he would on how this had been effected in summer 2009, long before the present cuts, and was of course an ongoing process. Initially anxious not to give hostages to fortune, he made for a while a present of himself.

He ably defended the capital running costs of ACE's own buildings - and pointed out they'd vacated one London building (Pear Tree Court, since ACE London has moved to ACE England, Great Peter Street) and moved other ACE operations to Manchester. Again, Davey might have turned and asked where a national body was expected to work, and mildly point out that ACE staff need somewhere substantial. Davey was relying on a trickle of facts to wear down stony faces. He succeeded in part, though again the rich question about the Ks spent on ACE refreshments between July '07 and October '08 was impertinent from the source it came. Davey said the office party in December '08 was the last and Philip Davies (Conservative, Shipley) - and even Tom Watson (Labour, West Bromwich East) - pointed out that it was £20,000. Where did they get such a figure? Possibly from the House of Commons' own expenses budget. There were more sneers as Louise Bagshawe, (Conservative, Corby) asked what Communications Officers were. And another - Davies again - raised guffaws for identifying a colour co-ordinator. This last Davey pointed out was an artistic advisor and extended to paintings: ACE must itself have at least a cursory artistic environment. Over £671,000 was spent on 20 Diversity Co-ordinators. Why?

This led to Bagshawe pointing up tick-boxes about the deaf and disabled on all those politically correct ACE monitoring forms. Were such criteria used to decide funding? It was a question both ignorant and insulting to disabled and arts communities. Davey asserted such forms had no bearing on anything but monitoring, though perhaps lost an opportunity - as I joked with him after - to throw them back at Westminster whose very different 1990s culture had initiated them. It was a process the whole nation undertook, a necessary exercise now perhaps over. In truth ACE clung on to them a little longer than necessary, and Arts Industries and others twitted them with it. But being blamed for responding to the Zeitgeist in trend-setting Westminster is rich. One might speculate whether it's the people or categories who'll now be deleted.

Davey also staved off an attack on ACE's 'private' art collection. It wasn't private, it was toured as much as possible to be viewed by the public. It was I think Davies who cornered Davey on the storage costs, since he'd fought off the indulgent ACE private viewing fantasy. But as Davey said to an aide in the corridor afterwards, curators are rushed off their feet and often can't find time to organize and curate an ACE show. But Davey fought off this one in session too. Speaking to a friend - a seasoned Commons PA (to a senior Commons functionary) - later on about this, it was borne in on me how my instincts weren't exactly wrong: this was a stitch-up lynching of the old boys' style.

And Davies and others had an ace up ACE's hole as it were. The £32 million capital project on a West Midlands gallery that had never opened. Davey pointed out that it would open in a different manner. The back story was lost in mutters off and Davey wasn't loud. Were any officers disciplined, who was responsible, asked Jim Sheridan (Labour, Paisley and Renfrewshire North)? No, and none were, essentially; a series of officers (that discontinued term) had been involved. Would Davey then apologize, asked Davies? Davey rightly dodged and reverted to his point that the building would be used. He was continually brought back to this point. It's clear that the MPs mood is to narrow its own remit to investigate the impact of cuts on the arts, with anticipating how much they can cut and humble ACE itself, which dominoes cutting funding to the arts. Such confusion and lost session time somehow equates that with punishing ACE, when it in fact punishes the arts which several MPs present by no means wished to do. Davey had batted away the waste spectre of ACE itself. But couldn't - or felt he shouldn't try to - resist the venom behind it.

Damian Collins (Conservative, Folkestone and Hythe) asked a helpfully barbed question and de Winter was able to answer it first. Wasn't the current cut of 0.5% to all Regularly Funded Organizations (RFOs) rather crude? Yes it was (though not, given that ACE had a 12 minute warning), but was a *pro tem* measure that she saw ACE were addressing with new plans for RFOs, and would finesse as soon as they knew the nature of the settlement. Davey had heralded the current year being the greatest for ACE and the arts in funding, and talked of marvellous artistic happenings. But he didn't capitalize on this with his own ace of pre-emptive cuts to ACE's internal structures itself, nor made the point about the 7% GDP that the arts represent; or about the disproportionate effect investment or disinvestment can make to the arts sector, in generating that GDP. There was time to etch this in and alter the dynamic. We thus ended with the arts being worthy, but fund absorbers merely. Everyone has heard the argument, but this is the time they need to be reminded of it and given a little extra information, within two sentences.

De Winter declared the large organizations should bear larger percentage cuts and thus they'd not decimate the smaller ones. This met with general approval, since at least one positive shared by all was the desire to see the smaller organizations looked out for. She added that some organizations like the NT which we regard as essential thus had, as an assured funding, the responsibility to spread and promote theatre ecology elsewhere, to help other small ventures. But in the new funding to replace RFOs, project funding would allow a more flexible relationship with other arts organizations.

A question arose on sharing resources and de Winter confirmed that arts organizations have for some time been working on pooling resources and in some cases merging (there's been a reaction to this from the CEO of the Directory of Social Change; but that's to digress.) What de Winter did outline here was the break-up of the old RFO model, where it was felt that it was no longer appropriate and getting in the way of many organizations - indeed the replication of paperwork and much else was one reason for streamlining the association of ACE and its arts clients. Each organization is a unique one, it's not a 'one size fits all' M&S or Tesco model. De Winter here was more acerbic than Davey felt he could be.

The focus swiveled to Tweedy of A&B. He started by talking of the three thirds vital to the sector, two of which he was brokering: public, private and donative funding. He adverted to the 1,000 plus organizations

he'd written to and invited to respond - and 1,000 people who'd volunteered information on his Forum. Further he outlined in particular the focus on voluntary contributions and the Award that he - with patron HRH Prince of Wales - had set up, an award for volunteers at everything from theatres to community halls. This he felt was proffering a huge public thanks to all those who work in this sector and who could be doing other things. Next week it would all be over, and people finding out how effective it had all been.

Bagshawe wanted to here savage Nick Serota for scare-mongering that museums would have to close two days a week, and could this be confirmed as scare-mongering? Davey and de Winter refused to be drawn - rightly, since what Serota says is up to him. De Winter acknowledges there'd be some stark choices to made nevertheless. Davey confirmed that though Serota's opinions were his own there would, yes, be cuts; Serota wasn't wrong.

Davey confirmed there would be a review where all would be decided after the Settlement, which put this back in their court. De Winter then rode in with a masterly comment on the impact of regional closures. Not only would the closures of various halls and theatres be disastrous for the regions, it meant that say a national ballet company could not then perform in that area for want of a suitable space. It doubly affected regional arts activity. This was one of the best points made in the session. A small but perfectly formed piece of information that could have a homeopathic influence, even on non-muesli non-liberals.

Davies - he of 'apologize!' fame, made a comment about ACE working with councils. This allowed Collins to ask sympathetically about the unwieldiness of RFOs and the new relationship. Davey was able to state that the old style one-size-fits-all model was now improved on, and this would fit everyone more appropriately. Would small organizations survive Collins asked? Waste could be cut.

This prompted a sally from Sheridan, who asked sneeringly if the ACE arts collection could tour. But that had been covered. Collins's point was borne home by de Winter who pointed out that the new model would promote less pointless replication - paperwork is always a burden, of course - but especially with smaller organizations less replication would be a boon to those who needed to free themselves up for more vital work.

The Chair John Whittingdale (Conservative, Maldon) then weighed in on munificence generally This was the point where concerns swiveled to A&B who had much of the rest of the discussion dedicated to them and theirs. What, Whittingdale asked, would be the effect of an ACE wipeout of their funding? This seemed an immensely privileged position for an arts-funded organization to be in, even if it had been once funded separately by the DCMS, as Tweedy pointed out. And clearly friends in high places had primed this question - even doubtless A&B themselves. Tweedy confirmed that he was very frightened if this came to pass.

He made the fascinating point that through A&B and elsewhere, £655M had been contributed to the arts through the private sector. I don't think he can mean annually, but it's impressive. The division of that - much going to places like ROH - isn't something the committee would have time or inclination to examine. Davey was now pressed, but refused to answer if A&B were being cut. For one thing, this was pre-Settlement. For another, and essentially, it was monstrous (not his word) and unfair to expect him to privilege one luckily attending arts organization which shares the ACE space, and declare on them before even the ROH was confirmed.

Whittingdale talked of A&B's 34 years of service, and good work, that they were decisively not a quango, as Tom Watson had said, and that they hoped to be out of public money, given the new world order, in 3-4 years. At the least and as certainly not sooner. Tweedy was adamant. Whittingdale weighed in quoting A&B find Clive Gillison that private money shouldn't be given to A&B. That would leave them nowhere of course would A&B cease. Well, yes, they would in any meaningful way. They could not function with events that had raised monies from £300,000 to £3M in a few months. All this, and the training up of staff would be lost. Again Davey was pressed. He said no one was going over the top just yet, but that he took all organizations under this umbrella and remit very seriously indeed. He repeated his refusals, and then Tweedy underwent a perorative convulsion, saying that he served both the private sector and the arts, and was funded by them.

Could they be funded wholly by private funds? Directly, no. They'd received cuts drastically disproportionate perhaps - I recall the 2005 slaughter of A&B - and their £3.8M was working hard. The DCMS, Tweedy reminded us, had funded them, and they'd had good relations with ACE. Cutting the budget wholly would mean the staff would all lose their jobs, everything would effectively cease. Clearly the model to work on

was a gradual preparation of wholly private funding in five years. A&B could work with that. It transpired that Scotland as well as Wales and Northern Ireland still intend to fund A&B, and the different governments (Assemblies etc) are not contemplating cutting the arts in the same way, led by Labour of course. The weasel question thrown in I think by Watson was whether ACE England money was funding A&B there, but no it wasn't. There was thus a danger of two cultures, naturally. This in fact will be redoubled with all the arts in regions outside England. Collins said A&B represent good value then. He also asked if the arts were reluctant to get into bed with business. Again, Tweedy pointed out how much attitudes in the arts had changed. De Winter weighed in and said that though there had been slight suspicions these had long gone. Asked whether arts organizations would suddenly find themselves under pressure to produce art or products not in line with their vision, she said, of course not, they'd part company if the Artistic Director saw that as happening. Had it? Never in her experience.

There was a discussion about U. S. models. Again intelligent giving was admirable, this was seized upon. Collins asked if the energy - if not the exact model - of the U.S was desirable. Yes, Davey confirmed that the range and reach of our funding was the envy of the U.S The U.S had taken a great hammering with the reduction of private giving. Europe was being hammered in some measure through being wholly publicly funded; our model was a perfect balance. But the U.S style of funding, the can-do element was admirable and much to be envied and copied. Some praise was essayed of one Roger Hart, obscure to me - I thought for a moment they meant the musical.

Were arts organizations pursuing private funding? Yes they were, said De Winter, but it's difficult, and here at last some comment was adduced as to the efficacy of public funding -seed funding - to attract private sponsors.

But A&B were there with their wonderful limelight, curse them. 'If ACE cut the funding they'd kill us' Tweedy orated. Paul Farrelly (Labour, Newcastle-under-Lyme) suggested this would be killing the golden gosling if not the goose, the neatest saying of the session and showing just how much A&B are favoured - Collins is clearly a fan. A huge cut would cut links to the private world too, Tweedy averred, as the infrastructure would collapse.

Farrelly asked if John Mortimer (not the late one) was suggesting a model using some theatre venture he helped. This is where wholly private funding has worked. Could this prepare the way for wholly privately funded ventures in publicly-funded bodies? No, Tweedy said, a partnership of both is healthy. Some organizations - Glyndebourne (dear to those here) and the RA are wholly without private subsidy. Knowing the clientele I suspect it was hastily added that - as Tweedy averred - philanthropy was not funded any more by landed gentry. 70% of philanthropists worked. He hoped A&B were champions.

Davey added that he hoped it would further a more intelligent mode of giving, as was clearly happening. Tweedy pointed out that Merrill Lynch was now funding 10 projects around Westminster (was it?) three years on from their smash, which should be applauded. It was, tough with murmurs.

David Cairns (Labour, Inverclyde) asked if ACE were focusing non-key resources to keep organizations going. Davey said yes, though not specific in this he could confirm this was true broadly. Tweedy then talked again of celebrating the volunteers, those people who made much of this possible, and should be publicly thanked, which is what A&B were doing. And it would be good if they could work with ACE here. 'ACE and A&B could do that together, Alan!' There was general laughter for once. He's scored. Davey smiled a wry conformation and made a comment pitched too low, though the tenor was clear. And that as John Whittingdale announced, was the end.

Davey had pulled through in later stages, taking snipes from every side, including his funded client (here a partner) from A&B. This is what select committees are supposed to examine. But the brief was skewed and hi-jacked in predominantly conservative ACE-bashing - though they need its survival, one feels, as a punch bag and buffer zone from arts people in one. Davey could have been more robust but he was under tremendous pressure and his frame suggests they could hound him into a coronary. But he's used to this set of corridors and its sniping, from the early 1990s. And he's sniped plenty of grouse and geese himself in his 20 odd years of public works, not least at ACE. Tweedy proved he could be flamboyant, and although favour was primed for him, he garnered more. I congratulated both Tweedy (booming thanks) and Alan as I called him familiarly, in the corridor. He was laughing, grimly positive, desperate to talk through some of this with sympathetic colleagues. I know he has tough decisions ahead, and this might be our last meeting. Next time perhaps he'll have to cut me.



featured *Artist*

Creating & Connecting SLaM

By Helen Shearn

My role as arts development manager in mental health at South London and Maudsley NHS Foundation Trust (SLaM) is rather hybrid - as it involves quite a few characteristics! Nurturing, connecting, researching, enabling, strategising, problem solving ... It's creative in itself, like weaving threads and stitches and trying to get to grips with the whole picture (if there is a whole!), with its many art forms and relationships. It is work in progress and a thing of passion but also one of red tape, funding applications, careful detail and teamwork to ensure success. I'm lucky to have been working in this role and associated work in Southwark for a number of years so have seen many people benefiting from the arts.



I like to see connections and to facilitate the growth and development of involvement, partnerships and projects and making the arts accessible. The detective work finding research and trying to make sense of it, to promote and inform others is satisfying because the field of arts in mental health, is getting better acknowledgement and more rigorous evidence is being published. The Department of Health has stated "The arts are and should be firmly recognised as being integral to health, healthcare provision and healthcare environments." DoH 2007.

The arts offer a multitude of benefits too numerous to list here, (I will be setting out a reference list in our Trust's art's strategy, but here are useful websites www.startmc.org.uk/art_and_wellbeing.php (Start



Photograph by Kathrin Kirmann

Healing Arts Team @ the Costa cafe,
Maudsley Hospital, SE5 8AZ

arts and mental health service in Manchester) and the national resource for creativity and health, www.cultureandwellbeing.org.uk/

Of all the various quotes I've come across to describe what's great about the arts I agree with Start, who say that "Matarasso points out that art has a unique ability to help us to find meaning in the world and, in turn, he suggests that art interprets the world back to us. It is this capacity for art to embody meaning and value that makes it so powerful in rebuilding lives" (Start).

"Art as activity, process and object, is central to how people experience, understand and then shape the world" (Matarasso, F. (1997) *Use or Ornament? the social impact of participation in the arts.* Comedia Conference)

I think it's only fitting to make a reference to

Continued on page 21

BROADSHEET

Explorer (Saltfjellet- Norway)

Creaking ice, snow vast
Dreams of these blue peaks

Tired, blood in the snow
Quest for beyond beyond

Blue green lake, summit
Scaled, fractured leg, distances

Then her arms, black hair
Blue eyes, pulling me back

To the thud of home
Where mind always was

Nick Monks

Solar plexus

Earth turns on it's axis
Seasons, day night
Soulful moon

Height, width, depth
Spacetime, four dimensions
New hidden dimensions

Omega galaxy in blue space
Billions of planets, nebulae
Comets, suns
Us awe trembling dots
The vastness, emerald dust
In our hearts

Nick Monks

An Experience

Too many people in this space
Have been restricted
For too long

Please do not restrict me
An open mind
Needs a wide open space

And when I came to you and tell you
About the sadness in my soul
And the black clouds and the falling sky
That always seem to be around me
Do not send me away and tell me
That it is only my illness
Because if life and its problems
Were that simple
I would never have come to you
For your help

Please don't oppress me
With your college degrees
And your text book knowledge
I am not a research subject
Neither am I a science experiment
I am a human being

So open your heart
And open your mind
And listen to me and talk to me
Because, after all, we are all in this to
Together.

Veronica Moody

Dying

You killed me
Though I'm still walking and talking and breathing

You stole a part of me
And you won't give it back
And now I'm on my knees
Praying and pleading and searching for
Some semblance of sanity
And find comfort in the smiles and touch from strangers

You killed me
But I'm still dying
A slow, agonizing emotional death

But you don't care
You're sitting up high on your pedestal
With your followers all around you
And your crony by your side
With her money
And her baubles
And her secrets
To Be Revealed.

Veronica Moody

When The Tablets Stop Working

There are no more painkillers
And no more handkerchiefs to cry in,
God doesn't exist any more
So you'd better find a hole to die in.
Don't kid yourself there's a happy ending,
The party's over and they'll soon be sending
The artists and poets to an early grave
'Cos they simply didn't know how to behave,
And all the other people are going to die
A bitter death, don't ask me why,
Because God is forgotten, He was just a liar
And He'll burn like you in Everlasting Fire,
It was all a hoax, and the end has come,
Silent and deadly and utterly numb,
You won't find peace even in the tomb
If you can get there 'cos there's no more room,
Smile and be happy, this is your doom,
Because there are no more painkillers
And no more handkerchiefs to cry in!

John Thorkild Ellison.

The Scaffold

In this vacuum of an orbit
Where insults shave my skull like a whore's punishment,
Where good and bad bleed into each other
Like the indifferent brushstrokes of a poor watercolourist,
Where I flit like a twitching ghost, shivering
At all human contact, always running from
The other in search of myself and where my
Mind leaks poison into my soul –
How can I survive except by drinking myself into
Annihilation and baring my hot, stinking corpse
On my bed of nails to be eaten by malarial mosquitos.

Where is the lantern, where are the laughter
And song, what happened to all my dreams that
Have been suffocated by circumstances and by others?
Who will quench my raging thirst for inner peace
Smiles and mercy which have fled the shore
Of my island like an ebbing tide, leaving only
Wrinkles on my brow and peep-shows of
Memories to prop me up on my eternal scaffold,
Where I dangle, all spirit crushed?

Angela Morkos

People Inside

You think it's tough in here
Try be on the streets
Asking and begging people
Just for food to eat

It could be someone
You love and already know
So what do you do?
Turn them away and shut the door

You may have been there before
So you know that it's not nice
So hopefully this poem
Will make you think once or twice

Sarah Williams

'She's a trooper'

I met a woman in De La Pole Psychiatric Hospital -
Another patient like me. I'd been sectioned.
She was about to divorce her husband – I'd been
Dragged from under the wheels of a moving car
For a similar reason. Some psychiatric patients
Use wheelchairs – she did. She wore her grey hair
In a bun and spun up to me on the acute ward in her
Wheelchair. She told me she was a bonsai enthusiast
And that she'd been home on leave from hospital and
Had brought one in to show me: "Just for you," she'd said.

I was stunned by her kindness and thoughtfulness towards me
A complete stranger – a quality I'd rarely encountered in life
Before and I think, also, since.

Later in the gym (she was standing then – I didn't understand
Why she sometimes used a wheelchair) – we batted
The shuttlecock to and fro as best we could – the bonsai lady,
The young law student (who'd cracked up) and myself,
While we told each other of the big spending sprees we'd been on –
Just to stop ourselves from going mad or topping ourselves.
I played against the two of them as there was only us three.
"She's a trooper!" called the bonsai lady, meaning me,
As I spun the shuttlecock over the net, grinning a forced
Insane grin. I felt good when she said that, I think.
Battleship camaraderie? The three of us were fighting
The same wars, for inside us we were as crippled as
The Bonsai trees by the machinations of cruel human beings
And our pretty flowers were forced by a life of pain.

Angela Morkos

Praying In The Canteen Of The Psychiatric Hospital

The tall, dark-haired, thin man
Strode swiftly, woodenly round the
Coffee-tables – full of muttering, jabbering
Scruffy old men and the odd, unkempt woman
- Ciggy in her trembling hands. He had large
- Crazy eyes and he yelled or bayed:
"Jesus, Mary and Joseph!" as he paced swiftly.

He looked so ill – I was scared – probably afraid
I'd end up the same. I fled back to the ward –cocoon.
The canteen was a sacred/sad vision of a modern Bedlam.

Angela Morkos

Mrs. No One

“La route est dure, la vie est morne,
Mon ame n'est sure d'aucune borne,
Que dois-je faire avec la vie
Quand toute la terre est endurcie?”

(Theme song from the T.V. version in the 1970's of
The Roads to Freedom by Jean-Paul Sartre).

His scabby dome, snub nose and glacial eyes
Were hidden behind the spread of newspaper print,
In the evening in the two-up two-down
Where I cooked for therapy and drank whiskey and wine
And took the tablets and slashed my wrists.

He was out in the office all day, talking to a machine,
And, ready to be blanked out by the newspaper –
One night I took aim at the dome, snub nose and glacial eyes.
I'd bought him a gift – a book called 'Diary of a Somebody'
- a parody of the famous Victorian classic.

He stared at me in reply
Did Mr. Somebody, who didn't notice me
And said I'd done nothing all my life since my 'A' levels.
He lusted after the next-door neighbour's wife, who also
Talked to a machine all day.

First I longed for Mother and then I wanted Prince Charming -
A blonde-haired man in a silken blue shirt with ruffles,
Whom I met partying in a pub in Oxford - he reminded me
Of Hyacinth in the Henry James novel. But inside him
Was another scabby dome, snub nose and glassy eyes,
Hiding behind a newspaper and saying: “You've done nothing since you left school.”

I packed my bags - left the marital 'home'.

Well now I'm free. I've R.S. A.'s and N.V.Q.'s 1 and 2 in I.T.
And instead of hunting men and gaining degrees in R.I.P. –
I'm my own 'wife' and don't cook braised pheasants in port or
Swallow 200 Paracetamol in remote hotel rooms.

Mrs. No one wants no one but her dreams
And scribbling a few lines of poetry;
Mr. Somebody's oceans and aeons away-
I've broken the chainlock that gripped my finger.

Once I had iron in my soul –
Now I'm happy to be alone.
And that's my road to Freedom,
I've clambered up from the muddy trench
And I value myself and eat sugared plums
Then I breathe existentialist breaths.

Angela Morkos

My Financial Embarrassment

Life

Are we different
Are we the same
Self harm is serious
It isn't no game

Why leave me there
Do you think of me
Do you even care

Is it good
Is it great
It numbs it for now
But back comes the hate

Should it be hard
Should it be a test
Life's not that hard
To end up in a mess

I think of you
Do you think of me
I missed you loads
I just want to be happy

Sarah Williams

Being broke in no joke and
Having no money is a Great Worry
No pennies to spend, Forget the Pounds!
The Rent! The Bills! The Blood
Sucking Hounds!
Not socialising or getting
out n'about and no scene to hang
out makes me want to SHOUT!
Not enough nice food and no smokes!
And prize winning claims are
Always a HOAX!
No nice things to buy and
Bargin hunting makes me sigh,
no gas on the meter, nor hot
water to bathe
Oh, how I wish in designer
clothes I could swathe
Feeling you are poor is a
Hard, hard trying task
If only I could spot a
gold treasure like the Sun
into which I could bask
well – "Blessed are the
poor, for theirs is the kingdom
of Heaven", well – darn it
if this is being poor –
Then I shall prefer
To go to Devon!

Siobhan Passmore

The new woman upstairs -
she's fifty-two, probably deaf,
moving in with all her faculties intact, she says,
Southsea, Bognor Regis,
the music she plays is loud, bass pumping, disco -
a previous boyfriend who ignored her when she left,
camouflage jacket, British flag, close cropped head, tattoos -
maintaining her dignity and pride,
taking her potted plants with her, petals, flowers,
an Alsatian dog called Megan who's afraid of fireworks,
two cats, pots and pans,
boxes of books she's never read,
science fiction, H G Wells -
every Friday night she goes to the Vox,
a nightclub in town,
all of her friends are eighteen, gymnastic, brunette perfect,
too embarrassing to be seen with, she says.

A 'pox' OB the Vox, I say,
once being charged £20 for a round of drinks ...

I don't find her sexually appealing, steering clear,
micro-wave pinging,
hairs in her navel, crumbs, fluff, endless stretch marks,
but I like her resilience, hard, armour-plated,
ignoring me when I'm drunk, stumbling around the kitchen.

Bingo wings ...

She's more desirable than Fat Boy John across
the landing who was once in the army,
living on sardine sandwiches, rich fish sauce, oven chips,
what fighting regiment, it's difficult to imagine -
someone stealing his popcorn, a regular headache,
three litre bottles of cider,
telling me about his travels around Europe, stories and tales,
a HGV licence that isn't his,
mother and sisters in Doncaster,
everyone disowning him, good.

Simon Robson

Katherine falls into a casino,
betting the chips like chocolate coins,
fattening up the hungry dealer,
a feast of money in front of his eyes.
Momentum builds, excitement and fear,
her number isn't called - she's lost it all.
She was meant to be saving
for Christmas presents;
she stopped taking the medication
eleven days ago.
She shoplifts the gin she *needs*,
still in the gripping claws of mania,
they dig in and draw blood, ripping
ecstasy runs through her,
back to the medication she shunned,
she downs them one-by-one,
anything to quiet the beast inside,
she's not its master today.
At the hospital they should say:
"See you in six months, Katherine,"
but they don't know her cycle yet,
so she'll keep riding.
Ride it out, girl.

Jessica Nash

The Unreasoning Mask

I wear my isolation like a badge
A solid field around me that repels
The world, before it thinks of contact.
A strange evolution that turns
Man into ghost.
A shade that walks amongst men
But is not seen, save
A furtive glance - a rapid shrinking
To the turtle headed safety of the womb.
What is this phantom?
The question pads soft pawed and
Rabbit eyed in the architecture of the mind,
The architect himself lurks gloating -
Fear
With velvet steely fingers grasped,
Firm but unobtrusive around
The scrotum of the mind: ready,
Ready to clench -
To send the message through.
Through the shiver-sided spine,
To conspire with hormones and reflect itself upon:
The unreasoning mask.

Tony Demoncey

First Floor

Halley's Comet came round again ...
I was unaware of my mum ...
I don't know which one she was.

In my first year, I was unaware of anything,
and it took me years to realize how lucky
I was to be born. There had been thousands
of Oak Trees and hundreds of Acorns each ...

I had germinated!
And I had found space and each year I defied
the odds and lived ...

I had a good life.
until I began to get ill and a great admirer
of mine, decided I would make great Beams
and Furniture.

Big, strong Beams ...
Woe was I.
Semi-Conscious I stood,
And lay, like Stone ...
Holding up Ordsall Hall

It will be OK? We are having Computers in
the Hall ... They have assured me that soon
we will have warm radiators to dry me out.

I will crack in the dry heat. They know that?
And all will come down.

I will be laid flats? Dry Wood, left out to
wet and rot, when they finally, 'Succeed' –
And build Flats

One thousand years ago –
I almost remember seeing –
I saw Halley's Comet, for the first time?

Carol Batton

Tamagochi

And the buttons won't work on my Tamagochi
and the elephant touches it's large infant, with
its trunk, repeatedly,
and the batteries will go, eventually,
and the dead child stays still, at the feet of its
persistent mother
and I put my Cyber Pet back into the cupboard,
at the back;

it cannot be pressed into mobility;
she stands, and sways, and pushes;

sometimes my Cyber Pet still beeps to me,
she cries, until life says, 'continue',
and she stays and nudges,
she thinks the batteries are dead,
whatever she touches.

Carol Batton

Whose?

At North Manchester General Hospital,
Psychiatric Department, it has been the policy
for the past ten years or more, not to inform
fellow patients, about which of us has died,
as part of an ongoing policy of confidentiality.

If I go past Manchester University, I do not
know which of my friend's brains are alive,
or which to send my regards to in their
pathology lab.

Carol Batton

“‘Coerced’ Medication”

I've been coerced,
victimized, cornered, tortured,
vilified, caught, condemned,
institutionalized,
deprived of children,
had the will-to-live taken from me.

I've been regulated, deregulated,
denounced, disparaged, denied,
blamed for inactivity,
told to lose weight,
assumed to be 'Illiterate'.

Yes, Doctor,

I *complied* with 'Medication'.

Carol Batton

Our Wind Flapping Head

We hear the hush; the gush of sea over sand.
And with a flush in our handicapped head;
Do we not dread all things to come.
Do we not rush to put to bed our cares;
All our cares—'oh caves of thought'.
And in our whip-lashed minds we see and hear the world,
the world of sea and sky.
And in our wind flapping head,
like a bird tugging at undercurrents to rise from the waves;
we rise to fly.
And thus with expanding heart strings to sing
with such effort;
we get along this sea-girt, kiss meeting place of
sea and sand; we hear the hand, that mighty hand
of oceans width Bear and break along its length.
And as if in divine retribution we realise we've
lost so much; so much of time getting here thus
far.
I hear the Curlew bleat; I know of no retreat
where still the Oyster catcher can be seen to mellow,
under the umbrella of these starry seas
and skies above; that gaze down
along this shore
of Kintyre.

John Roney

Madness

Would you now disown me?
If you knew the truth,
happy with just memories,
of my forgotten youth?
Would you cross the road?
Avoid me at all cost, just because my life in pieces,
my sanity ... jost. Would you reach out to me?
Offer me your hand?
Interrogate me in the light,
and try to understand?
Why I hide away, cowering in the shadows,
all the people outside,
to me seem like psycho's
I try to understand,
why I do what I do,
and it all comes down to this...
away with the cookoo I flew

Rachel Maynard

Tombola

and what did I win?
In life's tombola?
A dose of madness,
in the shape of Bi-polar,
and so the strands,
of my strange brain,
serve to delude me,
yet again,
and in my head once more,
a cacophony of voices,
leaving me paranoid,
without many choices,
yet if I could fly,
far from my mind,
I could leave the madness,
far far behind.

Rachel Maynard

Broken Tooth

My mind it has a broken tooth,
I find it when I try to sleep.
Flashbacks of Father's abuse
Come out of hidden stores I keep.

I try to keep them locked away,
To no avail – I jerk and twitch,
The venom fuels my soul's decay-
My mind must scratch this foulest itch.

The pustules lodged within my mind
Let loose a vile cacophony.
Thoughts and visions leave me blind
To life's true possibilities.

Tony Demency

Discovery?

I'd quite like to find out quite just who I am,
A journey through mindscapes both dangerous and strange.
A fiery flood from a volatile dam,
That scorches the mind and thus lengthens it's range.

I'm both savant and idiot,
Stranger and friend.
As sane as a sage

But still right round the bend.

I'm as kind as a blessing,
Yet vengeful as hell.
I'm the absence of sound,
I'm the clang of a bell.

I'm a lover, a hater,
Devil and saint.
Sunk in debauchery,
Free of all taint.

I'm as grim as an epitaph,
Cheerful as wine.
As noble as Lancelot,
Base as the kine.

I'm a giver, a taker,
A saint and a rogue.
I'm a god on the make
But the Devil's in vogue.

Real but a dream,
Trapped yet I'm free.
If you know what this means
Hell, you know more than me!

Tony Demoney

H u m a n T o u c h

Why do we condemn ourselves
When the world has done us ill?
The things that leave us overwhelmed,
Ground up in life's harsh mill.

We feel we are not worthy,
Not fit for love or joy.
We feel ourselves a burden
On those who'd give us more.

Withdrawn into our solitude
We fear to show ourselves,
To those who'd share their fortitude,
Help draw us from our shell.

To those with broader shoulders
We do not weigh so much.
If we can learn to tolerate
Their caring human touch.

Tony Demoney

O u r o b o r o s

I am Ouroboros
Devouring my tail.
I am destruction. Creation.
These things are one and the same.

I bring chaos and order
I feed loathing and love.
I am the holy, the sordid.
I am the dragon, the dove.

Tony Demoney

T h e S o c i a l M e n a c e

One can't be honest when one's Schizophrenic,
Else one will be thought a social menace.
If one is disabled without the look,
People will think you a sponging crook.

"You look fine to me!"
A common phrase I hear.
As if they all are Doctors
With my full case history clear.

If you look disabled,
People act as if you're thick.
If you don't, but say you are
It must be some kind of trick!

You're either subnormal, a crook, or a liar,
And some people would happily set you on fire.

Tony Demoney

T h i s B e a u t i f u l N a t u r e P a r t I I

Buddleia grows out of railway viaducts
rooting into gaps in the brickwork
drinking in rainwater
holding its own during dry spells
doing far more than just surviving
it brightens the day
with its purple flowers.

Can I be that strong
and resilient
in these ever-changing times?

Ragwort grows by the railway tracks
All the way

from the volcanic masses
of Peru,
taken to a laboratory in Oxford
it escaped
now finding home
amongst the cinders
beside London's railway lines.

gives me hope.
Let us long for good health
and happiness
in these competitive times
let us believe
that one day
we too may burst into flower.

Not even freight trains
with their endless convoys of containers
or high-speed inter-city express
can stop it flourishing.

Frank Bangay

I will take the slow train
and cherish its beauty
I will sit and ponder for a while.

Umbrella Land

1.
'Come with me, let's go ...'

Yes I will try to stand firm
as these modern times
go speeding by.
I will place my view
above the gloom and grime
of this city
the rubbish
and pollution
the endless lines of traffic.

I've seen the appalling human sewers,
English tourists down in Umbrella Land,
as indicated by the map I was reading,
reaching there by hired car
I was on holiday in supposed paradise, Zante,
a Greek Mediterranean island, retreat
it was a reunion, as organised by my mother and sister
there they were, tiresome creatures that I wouldn't touch,
stretch marks, smelling of puke of urine,
sweaty, deep navels,
Bad Boys bar and grill, black sambucas for starters,
eating endangered turtle meat with spurts of mayonnaise,
flatulent, rancid creatures, semen,
cracking jokes, cherry brandy,
feeding off Frisbees with feta cheese and black olives,
spitting pips, insults at each other
-it was a wondrous sight to behold,
me, my mother and sister, quite special ...

Look
see cherry blossom
on an overcast spring day
mayflower, hawthorn trees,
maple, silver birch, magnolia,
beech trees, oaks, horse chestnuts,
good old London plane trees.

Evergreen,
deciduous,
all fighting against city pollution
giving hope to those that care
giving good health
into the London air.

All sunburnt specimens of doomed humanity,
our priceless wildlife gone, birds, lizards, flowers, lost forever,
grilled on the barbecue, useless humanity,
everything declining, frazzled in the heat, sizzling, burning away,
100 degrees in the heat at least
It starts here, I said to myself
sand between our toes, in our mouths, nostrils, ears,
all cracks, belly folds and hidden crevasses
-insulting, abusing each other
Dear me, I said to myself,
these people are having a better time than me,
the locals steering clear, selling souvenirs.

Look up
rejoice
Let us celebrate
give thanks and praise
this gift from God,
to us
fellow strugglers
as we walk through another day
working for hope
a chance to have and dream
that we can believe in.

2.
'Don't be shy, come on, let's go ...'

Somehow
this beautiful nature
in its spring and summer clothes
and even in its winter darkness

Postcards, posters, local driftwood sculptures, diarrhoea and dribble –
hard-ons tasting like liquorice, all with honeycomb centres,
bees buzzing, sweet honeycomb centres, sucking through bendy straws,
margaritas, scooters with three wheels, one missing, prawns
-there I was wondering why?
Edna, I said to my mother, you must know. What's going on? ...

And there they were,
English tourists with gold chains around their burnt wrists,

elbows, thighs and shoulders,
fingering each other by the pool side,
eating indigestible octopus sandwiches
there she was, my accountant trained sister
on a crocodile-shaped inflatable,
snarling at me in her polka dot bikini, legs akimbo,
mathematical, counting
Don't trouble yourself, she said, It's to be expected.

3.
I've seen the English tourists down in Umbrella Land,
self-employed builders of the worst kind,
pregnant princess teenage, fourteen-year-old nymph girlfriends,
motor mechanics with scorched tonsils,
panel beaters, elastic testicles ping-pong between their ankles
-all of it, useless baggage, coming to nothing
up to their necks in concrete, sand and gravel, tequila slammers ...

'Wiener Schnitzel ...'

I've seen the tired English tourists singing on the karaoke machines,
wage slaves, some from Birmingham, others from Northampton
-all not to be trusted, hordes of the bastards,
mosquito bites on their necks, wrists and elbows,
taking inedible, raw chunks out of each other,
crawling king-size duvet snakes, Casanovas,
no air-conditioning, drinking dirty water,
wafts of window polish straight up their nostrils,
tired, and they want to go home,
strings tied to balloons, yellow flowers.

Matchstick-thin Cinderellas, cannibals, male predator-types,
the English tourists down in Umbrella Land,
weekend policewomen from Grimsby,
perfume assistants at Debenhams,
hairdressers wearing extensions,
haunted secretaries, sunglasses and sandals,
turning from side to side,
onion, tomato and garlic, anchovy, very fishy pizzas,
casseroles simmering, cooking gently, roasting,
getting hotter and hotter, done in, delicious
in love with each other,
tentacles dragging behind them, greasy, bloody tentacles,
tentacles spreading out of their arseholes, ears, noses and throats,
spaghetti strangling everything they see, useless arseholes ...

'Wiener Schnitzel ...'

The arsehole English tourists down in Umbrella Land, I love them ...

Simon Robson

I sit in his house

I sit in this house
sipping sherry.
He pretends not to glance
at my nyloned knees.
You can never trust a man.

Yet he is a good man,
He showed me his watercolours.
They were good.
He made me green tea.
His hands never wandered.

I almost began to trust him.
But old experience came back.
You can never trust a man.
Yet he is quite good-looking.
He puts his face to mine.

I turn away immediately.
Don't want to get involved,
again. Time I went, I say,
and grab my coat.
Funny, he doesn't seem annoyed.
Maybe I'll see him again.

Keith Murdoch



featured Artist

S L a M creating & Connecting

continued . . .

our hands, since they are usually integral to using the arts. It is fascinating how they work and connect us to the outside world through touch, play, exploration etc. The author Raymond Tallis explains that the success of the human hand lies in its incorporation of three quite distinct attributes into one single structure; it is not just an organ of manipulation, but also an organ of knowledge and communication. The hand acts, it knows, and it speaks. Our 'tool' hand is an instrument of great power and precision at the same time. Our 'cognitive' hand through touch comprehends, interrogates, explores, and distinguishes the external world, and 'sees' in the dark. Our 'communication' hand complements our voice and conveys feelings and emotions. (*The Hand: a Philosophical Inquiry into Human Being* as reviewed by J. Le Fanu).

Touching, holding and talking about objects in our hands, can help people with mental health problems engage with art and also encourage empowerment and learning. It has been acknowledged that those living with memory loss such as dementia respond with interest to new objects. **“Some part of the brain has registered something in the past and novelty creates new interest ”** (Patricia Baines, 2007). In the *Lets talk about Art* at the Tate Modern, an inspirational project for older adults with mental health problems such as Dementia, Liz Ellis (curator) sensitively and warmly encourages our participants to touch different materials and objects and to think and talk about connections and associations with the art in front of them. For example, weathered and worn limbs of wood and other materials/ objects are felt and rubbed with pencils on paper, alongside members of staff. This then is related to the dark woody scene with a small red outlined bird in the painting *Forest and Dove* by Max Ernst. One of the participants suggests that the bird is in a dark pit. We find out that this bird is Max, and this is how he symbolises his life and situation. It's the connections not only to the things that are touched but also the lives of the artists which we find can resonate with ours, that are so therapeutic. We have measured the impact on mental wellbeing of this project using the MWIA (Mental Wellbeing Impact Assessment) toolkit which has clarified that this project offers opportunities not just for social inclusion (such as attending a prestigious public building like the Tate Modern) and reducing isolation but also facilitates staff professional development and enhanced relationships with service users.

The Healing Art Team (HAT) based at the Maudsley hospital uses meditative and creative activities like yoga, meditation, sound, and visual media such as clay, painting and drawing. Its bead making which requires the fairly simple action of rolling the small balls of clay and it's the soothing and cyclic motion which can link energetically to the heart through our hands says Jagat Joti Kaur, project manager HAT (www.uponatime.co.uk/). HAT is building a programme which will encompass more innovative work which brings together staff, service users and people from the community to come together to make and create. The exhibition in the Costa café (here pictured) and main corridor attest to the contributions from members sharing their wellbeing journeys through their healing arts.

Picture by HAT / Healing Arts Team @ the Costa

Enhancing the environment is one of our key areas in the Maudsley and we've managed to accomplish quite a lot over the years with charitable funding, lots of talent, commitment and passion. Joti and the HAT team have done wonders as this picture shows. I've also coordinated and installed a permanent art collection of beautiful art by people who've experienced mental health problems in the Outpatients consulting rooms which were once bare. This is courtesy of a legacy by a former patient.



Café, Maudsley Hospital, SE5 8AZ

It is very apparent to me that it is the **social connectedness through art** that is so meaningful and effective. I know that participants can benefit so much from working and sharing together activities and events in a community. It's the **“sense of belonging, purpose and mutual care through regular attendance”** (Parr, H. 2005). Hester Parr in her research of arts projects in Scotland found that exhibition events are particularly important for groups who have previously felt marginalised due to stigmatising social relations. They facilitate a wider sense of place and belonging within the community. **“The arts bring with them the possibility for centring marginalised voices, experiences and locations.”** It seems that what is so vital is **“opportunities for specific kinds of art-talk, peer-advice giving, friendships, acts of reciprocity, facilitation of workshops and participating in cultural events like exhibitions within and beyond art project space: all**



of these were dimensions that artists identified as ones that facilitated both self-esteem and a range of positive emotions and that contributed to the social benefits of project participation. Also the strong sense of collective artistic endeavour..... amongst artists at very different stages of recovery and well-being, clearly helped to facilitate the building of social bonds and friendship network amongst participants” (Parr, H. 2005).

These findings resonate with the local service user led arts projects that I support, like CoolTanArts, CreativeRoutes www.creativeroutes.org and HAT. They are very different projects which enable and collaborate to involve participants in trying many activities, not just the creative activity of making things. It encourages practice in other roles and tasks to do with organising events and working in a team, through its workshops, and exhibitions etc.

Here is an example of one of CoolTan Arts projects The Largactyl shuffle outside the Maudsley hospital, which is a regular historic walk from Tate Modern to the Maudsley. As CoolTan Arts states “*We aim to promote positive mental health/well being, bringing about a change in how participants perceive themselves, enabling people to gain greater focus and to re-establish their relationship with society. We aim to offer lifelong learning and enable people to achieve qualification and accreditation status in the coming year. We achieve this through quality arts education with professional outcomes such as public exhibitions, and social enterprise principles.*” www.cooltanarts.org.uk/



Photograph by Elisha Foster



Photograph by Kathrin Kirrmann

Picture of Cooltan Arts in front of Maudsley hospital- Largactyl shuffle

Amongst my colleagues, here in SLaM we also aim to facilitate social connectedness through the arts. Beth Elliott (Bethlem art gallery coordinator (www.bethlemgallery.com) at the Royal Bethlem Hospital (in SLaM). Beth and I have been coordinating the development of a Trustwide Arts Strategy, which I will be consulting on over the next 6 months. We were encouraged by our colleague Michaela Ross (Bethlem arts coordinator) to see that the work we do in the arts in mental health has a place in contemporary art practice, which emphasises the sociability of art - its capacity to create models of action and interaction. Whereas individual artists may have different motivations for making work, making work with - or perhaps just alongside - others create not just an art ‘product’ but a social space where people come together to participate in a



Photograph by Elisha Foster



Photograph by Kathrin Kirrmann

shared activity. The sociability of art - its capacity to form relationships - is a key aspect of the arts. From the discussions that take place in the art-room, to the comments left by visitors to the Bethlem Art Gallery and the other exhibition spaces across the Trust, we hope to continue to construct social spaces through art, and create new relationships through dialogue with others outside of the hospital environment. There is a huge variety of art practices taking place within our Trust.

A lot of my work is about relationships and this can be in the form of mentoring as well as partnerships where collaboration and experience is fostered with individuals and organisations. Such as with our close neighbour Tate Modern and the arts organisations as mentioned. There is the ongoing partnership with Roy Birch, (Survivors Poetry's very own!) where we have worked hard at trying to redevelop and steer a London network, Creative Minds. The Thou Art project with Olivia Sagan, (senior research fellow), the University of the Arts London and partners in arts in mental health is an exciting research and development project exploring community-based art practice and its links to well-being and progression opportunities in the lives of service users. Participants are interviewed about their experience and art work and these informal, conversational interviews are filmed and then themes are explored by the researchers. This project offers training to some participants, in interviewing, recording, filming and editing, and the final film, with edited interviews and art works will be distributed to mental health centres and community arts organisations to raise awareness of survivors' lived experience and artistic journeys. We are hoping to screen this Thou Art film at the Tate Modern in June 2011 as part of the Fringe Arts Programme, including the Impact Arts Fair at Candid Arts in May 2011, in partnership with the Otherside Gallery, www.theothersidegallery.org and Creative Futures, Emergence and Bethlem Gallery. Also we should be holding an arts in mental health conference next year within this programme, in partnership with London Arts in Health Forum (LAHF) www.lahf.org.uk/ and Roy Birch.

For further information please contact:
Helen Shearn, Arts Development Manager, South London and Maudsley NHS Foundation Trust.

Helen.shearn@slam.nhs.uk / 020 3228 3263

If online, click here to download 'Thou Art' flyer.

<http://www.creativemindsLondon.co.uk/>

<http://www.southwark.tv/slmaud/slmhome.asp>

References

- Baines, Patricia. (2007). *Nurturing the heart: creativity, art therapy and dementia*. Quality Dementia care, Alzheimer's Australia.
- Parr, Hester. (2005) *the arts and mental health: creativity and inclusion*. Dundee: University of Dundee/Economic and Social Research Council
- Tallis, Raymond (2003) *the Hand: a Philosophical Inquiry into Human Being*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press
- Sennett, Richard, *the Craftsman* (2008) Allen Lane



Photograph by Kathrin Kirrmann

Reviews

Nicholas Swingler

Dream of the Condom, The Negative Press, 2002; ISBN 0-9541311-0-X, £7.95

An Accidental Life, The Negative Press, 2010; ISBN 978-0-9541311-1-1, £7.99

These two collections present a panorama of black humour and cynicism. Each posits the plea 'I did not ask to be born'.

Dream of the condom

The birth/life was accidental, the condom, 'precaution' which might have prevented it is subject to discarding and decay. I sense that Swingler was a 'war baby (World War II) like myself. There is posturing of vindictiveness towards his mother for having allowed the accident to happen; the reader is kept guessing about the level of irony here. *Us afterwards* describes a 'shotgun wedding' – undertaken in 'good time': "... At least our baby didn't show". It is left to the imagination as to whether the poet is speaking directly through his own voice, or through that of one of his deceased parents. The dominant ambience throughout is the drab greyness of 'ration-book Britain' in the late 40s and early 50s. This point is highlighted in *Family Xmas* where there is detailed reference to the left-wing Labour MPs Sidney Silverman and Koni Zilliacus. Dad's dead showed that his father was a Labour Party speaker. *I voted Ken* (Livingstone) shows a world-weary disillusionment with politics; he put a casual cross on the ballot slip, saying "... I don't trust him. . . what we don't need is strong leadership . . ."

After a long fight reinforces the collection's sense of time-rootedness: a stickler for the old ways had a lifelong struggle against 'newfangled gadgetry' until he finally succumbed to mortality. Peculiar 'role-reversal' at the end: "A coffin buried him./And it survives".

There is a somewhat bleak vision of love and relationships. *Technically lost* concerns the reality of the loss of virginity, which is generally a sordid and painful affair. *Motte-Piquet-Grenelle* is about a visit to a prostitute. *Date* and *In the cafe* refer to fleeting, frustrating part-encounters presumably arranged via datelines. The power of the dominant void of loneliness is unchallenged. Another aspect of this theme is highlighted in , speaking for the plight of the bedsit solitary. The poem is made up entirely of negatives, with the exception of mentions of the time, and the central three lines: "The man is staring at the ceiling./The bed is one foot from the phone./The telephone system is working normally." What state of health or distress the man is in, or whether anyone else has any concern for him,

is left to the imagination.

Mortality is a salient theme. *Logistic* describes someone contemplating suicide: there is a near-perfected, premeditated plan – "... but you cannot avoid traumatising someone/when you throw your body against a train." Then, at the conclusion: "there is always counselling." this poem is extremely double-edged. There are indeed many people who make false posturings of suicide attempts – to attract attention; one of them is outlined in *Bridesmaid* in the second volume. But there are some who actually do it, and seem rational, calm and collected before despatching themselves. In case of death ironically 'animates' the corpse of the deceased so that it can carry out practical instructions. In *I am burning now*, the poet assumes the persona of a deceased in the middle of the cremation process. In *Gun*, a malicious child is obsessed by his father's (war heirloom?) pistol, presumably longing to use it on his father; when it disappears, he duly suppresses his curiosity. *Questions to Mr Death* reveal a near-fascination with mortality. In counterpoint, *Many happy returns, Mum!* posits the state of immortality – making a grim prophesy of the realisation of much-feared disasters in the future. Mum is 400, and has 'listed person status' – having mastered the techniques of healthy living; this feels like a bitter questioning of the overall worth of longevity.

The sweep of his satirical vision is comprehensive – including his own aspirations as a literatus. In fact, he made several attempts to settle in professions, such as the law or academia, to no avail: he discovered his true vocation in writing. *School* lampoons the abstract impracticality of much academic education. *Curriculum vitae* attacks the hypocritical 'flexibility' of professional qualifications. *Dear doctor* makes an appropriate indictment of dubious and extortionate psychiatric consultants. *Business man* 'takes the lid off' the sordid totality of a stockbroker, his pink newspaper (Financial Times) desiccating, having a soapless 'freshen up' in the sauna of the corporate members' gym.

In the title poem of the first collection, he skilfully portrays the life-cycle of the condom – in reverse motion. As the poem moves forwards, the life-cycle moves backwards, and ends with the condom's point of origin as an organic component of a Malaysian rubber-tree plant: great image of it being nursed and cosseted in the process of manufacture. This is a supreme example of exploring the commonplace in-depth – the significance and associations of a sordid bit of litter/detritus, which for the sake of appearances, should be swept away.

In *Miss me*, the elusiveness of imaginative inspiration is given similar treatment: like the condom, the poem (on perishable paper) has been abandoned among the detritus; it is

salvaged as a piece of lost property and allowed a slot of time to be reclaimed. Its destiny is not dissimilar to that of fleeting ideas which elude capture in writing.

Cigarettes is an outstanding example of Swingler's irony. In terms of substance, as objects, cigarettes are innocent, passive. They are dutiful martyrs to human use. The poem ends with an indictment of those more fully responsible for evil: "Accuse the makers,/or prosecute/the suicide smoker/ or the murderer State." Kosovo briefing further indicts the latter, exposing the empty excuses of those administering air raids where the innocent – including children, perish: the bombs were dropped 'in good faith' – savage indictment of the doctrine of 'collateral damage'.

Sand shows a high degree of emotional honesty. The reality of his life is extremely flawed and painful; those embarrassing aspects cannot be 'polished' or sanitised away: ". . . all that I can do/is to veneer/or varnish on the top . . ."

"*The World Tonight*" is a verbal collage – this technique Swingler also employs extensively in his second Collection. The text could have been 'cut out' newspaper headlines and sub-heading. The poem juxtaposes apparently disparate items of news – the Iraq situation, a drug haul, people going missing, a corporation going bankrupt. In the present-day world with its hypersophisticated communication systems, the 'knock-on' potential of any occurrence, large or small, has no definable limit.

An Accidental Life

The second collection opens in the spirit of demystification with *Corrigendum* and *The present writer's critique of the present volume*. It is salutary for many readers to be reminded of the struggles involved in the creative process, rather than over-blandly, detachedly appraising the 'finished product' alone. The 'critique' shows the humorous aspects of text getting garbled in the process of computer transposition. I feel that William Burroughs would have approved. The title poem bewails all the 'might-have-beens' – the potential for making the poet much higher in his own estimation.

Blank I and *Blank II* crystallises every aspiring writer's traumas: 'writer's block'; vacua (reinforced in both parts by white space on the page) "Nothing seems impossible to the writer now." But the blank silence remains. *Towards the concrete object* satirises T S Eliot's doctrine of the 'objective correlative'. The poet is at a loss for one; a stuffed pillow is the only 'correlative' object at hands. However banal and bathetic it may be, it is still an object. The theme of the self-critical writer is clinched in the final poem *The complaint of the would-be cathartic writer*: the emotional and psychological problems purportedly to be purged by

creative endeavour are compared to physical conditions such as boils, spleen and constipation. One cannot feel comfortable and healthy after the completion of one work; the writer is condemned 'to a whole life of fabricating books' in order to avoid re-infection.

The school of home and the two *In memoriam my father* poems do much to explain Swingler's apparent cynicism and coldness vis-a-vis close relations. In the first, he emerges as an ignored and neglected child: "Was I much 'brought-up' at all? I largely raised myself. Or dropped me down." The second and third show how his father was highly distinguished in public life, but in the domestic sphere: "He boxed me on the head for sins which were not specified . . . he scarcely ever called be by my name . . ." He may have died from workaholism; after his decease the poet misses what he had missed all the time dad was alive. In *Breast fed boy* he posits the idea of his mother's milk having gone sour (metaphorically, we hope), leaving him to feel even more deprived. His attitude to his younger years seems wholly negative and pessimistic: '. . . as good as dead till later middle age'. *No comparison* links the personal with the political, comparing his divided household with a divided nation.

In *The solicitor speaks to the family*, the solicitor has recorded the last 27 words that the mother spoke; the family are expected to memorise the words, then the note is to be shredded. Hopefully this is the poet's irony; however, such things could happen in real life. *Not waiting* refers to the technicalities of his mother's will. It emulates, both verbally and typographically, a solicitor's statement, complete with diplomatic descriptions of depreciation of assets and significant blanks, which tend to predominate in documents of this ilk.

First word: more precise delineation of his origins here: Swingler was actually in the womb during the VI Flying Bomb attacks on London. Perpetual, total war is a backdrop of his work: "the war's still fought,/foes everywhere." (*Peace and war*). *Robin* shows how he had a half-sibling in the form of an evacuee child during the war. *A short life forward* takes a dim view of the random and casual element involved in wartime and baby-boom era procreation.

All in all a powerful assemblage: just one small reservation; I find there are too many blank pages.

Nicholas, in 2004, was appointed Writer in Residence at Kensal Green cemetery; this is may be the only such position in Britain: "It gives me a position around which to write." He has also been Chair of the cemetery's poetry group The Spinning Room, has lectured to groups of the Alliance Francaise on the history of cafe society in Europe, and has won several Northern Arts and British Council Arts Awards.

Dave Russell

11th September, 2010.

Poet in the City, Kings Place, London N1

This event featured writers in the Faber New Poets series, presented by **Jo Shapcott**, **David Harsent** and **Maurice Riordan**. Have Faber & Faber been inspired by Survivors' Poetry? The New Poets series involves a mentoring scheme, and grants from the Arts Council of England, to bring deserving new writers to recognition – by publishing them in pamphlet form and organizing national reading tours. Four such awards were made in 2009, four in 2010. Faber's policy is to encourage young, nascent talent: "In fact, compared to some, the writers selected are positively ordinary. But such glibness aside, Faber have produced a fine and well-rounded series that debuts four promising individuals who with any luck will one day take their places as established poets." (*Hand and Star*). Regrettably, **Fiona Benson** and **Joe Dunthorne** were unable to attend the event.

Part I: Maps

Maurice Riordan opened by outlining the vital function of maps as itineraries and chronologies of our lives. The screen was illuminated by a 16th century map of Ireland, which included a non-existent lake and the purported site of St Patrick's Purgatory, an important centre for pilgrimage. He followed with a chart of the farm on which he had grown up, and then proceeded to his first poem, *England is Love*. This compares the map of Great Britain to the contours of a human body, referring to the 'rump' and 'spine' of Scotland, and England as the 'leg marsupial' with 'little Wales sticking from her pocket'. One poem from his collection *The Holy Land* refers to a childhood experience of looking after a priest's greyhound pup while its owner was away on pilgrimage. The experience had its frightening aspects; he froze at the sound of an electric hare. His 'rose poems' reflected wistfully on this rural past. There was a dramatic description of the pursuit and recapture of a fugitive bull, including a description of a rifle being fired at the padlock of the bull's prison. He discussed the partition of his farm, which in his mind paralleled that of Ireland.

Sam Riviere certainly vindicated 3Am magazine's assessment of his work as 'methodologically and textually unbound' referred to the door knocker of Amnesty International*, then took the audience on a 'guided tour' of short, region-based poems – South London, Blakeney (Norfolk), Ipswich, and Paris. He spoke of his collaboration with Norwegian poet Endrej Ruset, exploring the theme of plum blossom: this is a major theme celebrated in traditional Chinese and Japanese verse, as something of supreme beauty, with supreme powers of renewal. The poem *Los Angeles* was based on Polanski's film *Chinatown* (1974). An interesting appraisal of Hollywood hedonism, the tension between truth and pretence: "husbands look

identical when you're doing fine with the fake". *Zapruder* was inspired by Abraham Zapruder's film – an 'amateur home movie' which captured all the details of Kennedy's assassination – including the impact of the bullet: this piece made cinematographic and documentary history. Sam's powers of observation were acutely sharpened by this experience; he refers to 'my felt-tip eyes'.

Annie Katchinska, of Russian origin, was deeply rooted in the Russian expatriate community in the UK. She described some of this background to the audience, including the 'sound effects' and the ubiquitous presence of Toni Braxton's recordings. Her opening poem, *Labyrinth* explored the 'under-side' of rail travel, dealing with workers who remove fallen hair – potentially dangerous – from rail tracks. Her academic study of classics had left a deep impression on her, as is manifested in *Blue*: Homer made the cosmos tactile – described the sky as being like bronze, and compared the air to a shield.

The Twenty-Third Minute was written during the World Cup. *Peach* celebrates her trip to Rome, and counterpoints her fascination with antiquity against present-day reality, the physicality of 'dogs who sweat in corners':

"She said that sun was her sarcophagus,
she told us we should walk and walk, too poor
for ice cream, sun cream, gulping in ghosts
of whores and triumphs, turning to the ball
that sings the way exploding fruit will sing."

According to Etcetera, "Katchinska is the first of the Faber poets I've really got excited about. She is, as far as I'm aware, the youngest of the bunch, and her poetry reads so: it is flailing, wild and jumpy at times, speeding through striking images, not unhone'd but certainly not as craftsmanslike as some of the others. And that's precisely what I like about her . . . and the fact her work has a unique energy and vitality to it, notably different to most other young British female writers I've read. She perhaps most closely resembles Caroline Bird, albeit thankfully less irritating and narcissistic. Whereas Bird's similarly wild imagery is often simply messy or showy, Katchinska's feels genuine, feels necessary. Feels, for the most part, properly utilised."

Part II: Bodies

Jo Shapcott opened this section with her well-known and loved sequence of poems about bees. This sequence takes into account the present plight of the bee species – the slender survival potential of feral bees, and colony collapse disorder. Bees depend on humans for their survival: if a (human) beekeeper dies, his family must tell the bees. Titles were: *Amos Roof*, *I tell the Bees*, *Threshold*: this discusses the 'geography of nectar, the astronomy of pollen'; she can identify so closely with them that "a colony grew in my body". Elsewhere she can identify with the Queen Bee: "I was a Queendom unto myself". *Going About with the Bees*: "my mind was honey" and *Sting*. *Latent Inhibition* – this is a plea for wholeness of being: the reader is exhorted to 'get rid of extraneous sense impressions – the

filter in the brain . . . to make new connections, lift inhibitions'. *Composition. Procedure* refers to a long period of illness, which curtailed her creative output. Her reference to a 'cul-de-sac in literature' reflects both on her own personal situation and that of literary endeavour in general. She takes the reader on a journey through that illness, through space and time:

"all that mess / I don't want to comb through here because / it seems, honestly, a trifle now that steam // and scent and strength and steep and infusion / say thank you thank you thank you for the then, and now."

On her recovery, she published her collection *Of Mutability*, from which she read the title poem, in which she sees a human individual as a single cell.

"In *Of Mutability* Shapcott largely avoids the autobiographical in favour of the universal. Not in the sense of dealing with the perennial 'large' themes of love and death, although these are present throughout, but in the sense of inspecting the quotidian and finding in it a beauty and relevance available to all." (Faber intro)

Last piece in this set was *Pith Flower*, a feminist poetic homage to urination

Emily Berry, taking **Fiona Benson's** place, read *Devil's Music. Comics* was based on one of the jurors in the film *Twelve Angry Men*. She described *Bad New Government* as her first political poem. Interesting bodily image: "You live in me like a tiny valve of a man". *Herman's Travelling Heart* relates a deep relationship to geographical travel and time-travel: 'a heart cocooned in a crag . . . the prehistoric nature of love'. Her interest in geography is also expressed in the poem *Zanzibar* – a real-life contradiction, 'cunning blend of poverty and palm trees'. It is incredibly beautiful, but its drainage system is too primitive. She is resentful of 'your smug distant land map/ carrying something I want'.

"Her work is very much in the school of Kennard – often employing a flat, deadpan prosaic line; sinister or bizarre monologues or poetic speakers; morbid and blackly comic situations. What distinguishes Berry is her willingness to combine the very weird and even taboo, with more traditional poetic pleasures, especially emotionality, and sometimes oblique romantic confession. A fan of The Smiths, she has learned from Morrissey to explore sentimentality and the strange hand in hand." (Todd Swift)

Jack Underwood had been mentored by Jo Shapcott. He is a highly pertinent choice for Faber new poets, because, as outlined by Rachael Allen: "As for young poets who find it hard just to know where to begin, the first thing to remember is to shake off the label of "student" poetry that a lot of undergraduates carry around with them." Jack certainly lives up to his own exhortation. "I always try and think of poems more as questions, as part of learning about the world, rather than spewing it back into peoples' laps." He read *Christova*. This was followed by a fascinating story

of the fictitious Professor Calquera, master of fictitious 'Metastudies' – an interesting concept: "It is a fish nosing to the surface, steering out the shape of its own pond". One of the professor's pleas is that the imagination should be left alone. Intrepid exploration of the boundaries of knowledge, distortions and inversions of the physical universe: "my body falls off - a house of cards . . . all imbalance has a hangpoint . . . the imagination is like an enzyme performing a taste change in the universe . . . the body grew the mind of itself . . ." there is even an 'inverted flower head', and "plants swing round their higher business". The love poem *Your Horse* has a cartoon charm: 'chestnut brain . . . hoofing through your photo album'. *Steak* is another variant of the lion and bees theme – somewhat gruesome: 'hung in itself about blood'. In *Under*, the imagery weirdly, cleverly exchanges sensory labels and categories: "the apple spoke in a warm tongue; I smelled my feelings." Dark fairy tale quality in *The Eye* – a giant eyes: "It made us feel thick . . . we ran before we thought of running . . ."

"Brevity is never more admirable than when used as a poetic tool. A tool whose use Jack Underwood . . . is well on his way to mastering. It is rare to find a young, male poet capable of such concise and coherent thought even if rather stereotypically the dominant subject in hand is sex and/or the lack thereof. This preoccupation, intentional or otherwise, is demonstrative of an understanding of fundamentally basic human motives but it also lends his poems a profound sense of disconnection and loss, feelings akin to post-coital afterglow.

His pamphlet is perhaps the finest of the four as he has harnessed the raw-nerve-trampling uncertain nature of young manhood and used it to show us that art and life reflect each other in an often grimy mirror." (Hand and Star)

Part III: Communications

David Harsent reiterated the theme of bees, with emphasis on the role of the Queen Bee. His works on this theme reminded me of a symbol from my childhood: on old Tate & Lyle Golden Syrup tins there was a motif of a lion carcass being fed on by bees, with the legend "Out of the strong came forth sweetness. He portrays a sense of affinity between physical intimacy and the making of honey. Outstanding in this selection were *The Queen and the Philosopher* and *Apiarist Dreams of the Queen*: here, surrealistically, appears the queen of the dance hall, in suitably striped gear. *Queen in Rapture*, *Egyptian Queen* and *Queen of Heaven* explore the relationship of religion to eroticism. He concluded with *Rota Fortunae* (the wheel of fortune) – a poem rich with paradoxes and contradictions: "Dawn darkness is a bare blue light . . . has you pinned by joy and fear . . . God helps the merely fortunate; luck is a different darling." Things come full circle: "Death struck at the hour of your birth."

Toby Martinez de las Rivas

"It should be a disaster, but the result is fascinating and exciting, attaining a strange, exalted power by which the everyday world is not ignored but enlisted as it were under new colours." (Sean O'Brien)

Corresponding Poets

“When reading his work you are never entirely certain of where you are, but you know you are somewhere . . . there is an unequivocally mundane undercurrent to his verse, one that adds to rather than detracts from the impact of the work.” (Hand and Star)

The opener was *Free Dialect Poem With Every Collection* – a satire on academics writing affected and strained dialect poems: the reader/listener is urged “help me pull out aw / th’ fifty poond noots that are wedged up mah jacksie.” In *Say the Truth*, he compared Northumberland to Israel. In *Creed* he described Judas Iscariot as a ‘secret Messiah’. Reference was made to his collaboration with Philip Hughes on *Everlasting Death*. Interesting paradoxes here: “. . . the shifting syntax of reassuring self-doubt”. He refers to the allegory of religious faith with hunting. He also read *Magnolia* – some disturbing imagery here: ‘unbridge the threshold of darkness . . . torn sea . . . hoods of flesh.’ His set ended with *Devolution of Power*.

Heather Phillipson

Heather Phillipson’s subject is extreme self-consciousness. The first duty is to make sure that the voice of the poem cannot be fooled, or outdone for range of reference. The lines gesture at but don’t recreate the condition they refer to, partly because the poet is always accelerating away into the next attitude, but also perhaps because in the climate of popular music the gesture of reference is often confused with imaginative power. On the other hand, Phillipson’s work is often very funny as it rebounds from one untenable erotic or intellectual position to another.” (Sean O’Brien)

She spoke of her fascination with Galileo and Copernicus; heliocentrism is a major theme for her. Advice for the Walnut is a plea for the acceptance of ones whole being, not to be a kernel imprisoned in a brain. Concomitantly, she protests against the ‘tyranny of beauty’. Interesting observations on her sister, who recently had a baby; some sense of foreboding here – “. . . nurses retreated to the disinfected lobby.”

She concluded by expressing her appreciation of the National Geographical Magazine, which “informed me how to become haggard, resplendently blemished”. There are those who feel that Faber & Faber are steeped in the past. The New Poets series shows this to be a false accusation. They continue, as always, to move with the times. T S Eliot’s *Four Quartets* were first produced in individual pamphlet form.

Dave Russell

November 15th 2010. Poet in the City, Kings Place, London

Corresponding Poets – Robert Lowell and Elizabeth Bishop
This event was introduced by **Mark Ford**. It featured **Anne Stevenson** and **Grey Gowrie**; poems and letters were read by **Ruth Rosen** and **Peter Forbes**. The 30-year friendship of Lowell and Bishop was one of the longest-lived in literary history. It was unique; most such friendships are between members of the same sex. It was based on letter correspondence; though marriage was tentatively mooted, it was avoided, partly because of Elizabeth’s shyness. Many felt, and still feel, that the resultant distancing sustained and enhanced the quality of their relationship.

“Lowell was a poet trying to get out of his own skin — he changed styles the way some men change socks — while Bishop was desperate to vanish into her words.” They complimented each other, set each other off, while to some extent being contraries. In 1977, Lowell wrote “When I die, Elizabeth’s shares will rise; mine will fall.”

The point was made that “poetry is conversation; it is rarer to hear poets in private conversation than in public utterance.” What was presented, especially by the actors, was a blend of the poetic texts and the correspondence. The effect of this was extremely enriching to the appreciation of the poems, as it powerfully conveyed the sense of struggle involved in articulating their inspirations.

Lowell had a distinguished academic background, gaining a Double 1st in Latin and Greek, was a person of unstable temperament, a prey to alcoholism. His first wife was Jean Stafford, novelist. He was divorced from his second wife, Elizabeth Hardwick, with whom he had lived for 20 years; his third wife, in a four-year relationship, was Caroline Blackwood. Lowell’s died from a heart attack at the age of sixty, in a taxi, when returning to his second wife, Elizabeth Hardwick, after breaking from his third wife, Lady Caroline Blackwood.

From 1949, he was regularly confined to psychiatric institutions, and was diagnosed as bipolar. For much of his life he underwent ECT. Legend has it that he once ‘made mincemeat’ of a Freudian analyst. In his poetry, Lowell overtly explored his orientations and his personal life.

Elizabeth Bishop in total contrast, was evasive about hers. She did not marry; she was known to have had romantic involvements with other women, but excluded direct reference to this from her poetry. Her main involvement was with Lota de Macedo Soares, with whom Elizabeth lived in Brazil – where she stayed for 18 years, returning to the USA after Lota’s suicide.

Essentially, Bishop excluded where Lowell included. In contrast and part comparison to Lowell, she lost her father shortly after her birth, and when she was 5, her mother was committed to a psychiatric institution. Like Lowell, she was prey to alcoholism. In a sense, she wanted her 'pure' poetry to be evaluated on its 'pure' merits. She was well travelled, and highly observant of the places she knew, including Florida and Brazil, where she lived for many years, communicating with friends and colleagues in America only by letter. Elizabeth very much valued her letter-writing; she once said "my letters are much better than the book I wrote."

The first poem to be read was *The Fish*, by Elizabeth Bishop. This is a powerful statement of an elemental confrontation between man and nature: the fish in question is an extremely hardy one; it has been hooked, five times, and escaped. The fragments of thread remain – 'the five-haired beard of wisdom. Its "gills are fresh with blood"; its bladder is like a big peony' – understandably, the angler finally lets it go.

Fan Piper, "the Atlantic drains backwards and downwards".

Caligula: at school, Lowell had been nicknamed 'Cal' (supposedly a conflation of Caliban and the sadistic Roman emperor) because of his physical bulk and his difficult temperament. The poem presents a searing synthesis of his sense of being a victim and his power to intimidate: 'innocent and bowdlerised'; ". . . in fond death mask for your play/Adonis bled, forcing you to strip/rolled your genitals until they shrank to marbles . . .". He became a powerful presence in the American literary scene, whom many found intimidating. He could portray, and combat, dictatorial authority through sensitivity to that potential in himself.

The Holy Innocents: this has all the confessional intensity of someone who broke out of a deeply religious conditioning.

The world out-Herods Herod; and the year / The nineteen-hundred forty-fifth of grace, / Lumbers with losses up the clinkered hill / Of our purgation; and the oxen near / The worn foundations of their resting-place, / The holy manger where their bed is corn / And holly torn for Christmas. If they die, / As Jesus, in the harness, who will mourn? / Lamb of the shepherds, Child, how still you lie.

Lowell's *The Scream* was inspired by Bishop's short story *In the Village*. The poetic interaction between Lowell and Bishop was highlighted in the juxtaposition of Bishop's *Armadillo* and Lowell's *Skunk Hour*; they dedicated their poems to each other. Both poets explore the concept of light in darkness. *Armadillo* takes the image of fire balloons, one of which is destroyed, bringing its flames to earth to terrify some small creatures. An owl's nest was presumed destroyed; an armadillo, resilient in its

shell, left the scene, presumably unscathed. Likewise a rabbit:

So soft! -- a handful of intangible ash
with fixed, ignited eyes.

Too pretty, dreamlike mimicry!
O falling fire and piercing cry
and panic, and a weak mailed fist
clenched ignorant against the sky!

Skunk Hour opens with a reference to 'Nautilus Island's hermit heiress' (could this be Bishop?) Like *Armadillo*, the context of the poem is darkness. But here, the poet wants to observe the 'love lights' of other cars, from the vantage point of his own vehicle. The area is deserted, the local 'patron' millionaire has departed:

And now our fairy
decorator brightens his shop for fall;
his fishnet's filled with orange cork,
orange, his cobbler's bench and awl;
there is no money in his work,
he'd rather marry.

This I take to be a 'personified' image of the starry sky; the last two lines may reflect the meaninglessness of the firmament. The environment is deserted, save for the scavenging skunks. Here is the affinity, and the difference, between Bishop's poem and Lowell's. In the former, the rabbit is a victim, and the armadillo leaves the scene – whereas in the latter, the skunks take a positive attitude to their environment; they take things from it.

One of Elizabeth Bishop's great achievements was the blending of tradition and contemporaneity. As well as writing extensively in blank verse, she thoroughly modernised strict formal verse structures such as the Sestina.

A sestina is a seven stanza poem with 6 lines in every stanza except for the last one, where there are only three. If you look at the last word in every line of the first stanza of Bishop's *Sestina* you see that house, almanac, stove, grandmother, child, and almanac are used over and over again as the last word of every line, except the last stanza where there are two words in every line. The reason why Elizabeth Bishop titled her poem after the form it was written in was because she wanted the reader to understand the way a child sees. A child rearranges things until it makes sense, the way the words are rearranged over and over again. The last stanza doesn't end as per traditional formula; because a sestina is supposed to end with the key words in the same order it started; this one doesn't. Elizabeth Bishop includes all the words but didn't follow the rules of doing it in same order it started. (Merdelin Martinez)

A Miracle for Breakfast is another remarkable effort

on her part within this mode. It ingeniously integrates the humdrum details of cups of coffee and pastry crumbs with the heights of miracle and reverie – by such juxtapositions as loaves, “battered, by a miracle and “my crumb / my mansion.” The strangeness here works well, making it seem as if it were not imposed by the form. Needless to say, the beauty of the imagined mansion is celebrated by many a reflective cup of coffee.

Anne Stevenson explained how “the top of my head was blown off” when she first heard Bishop’s *The Fish*. She pointed out that information about both poets was difficult to acquire until 1961.

Lowell encountered much opposition amongst his contemporaries. During World War II, he became a conscientious objector on account of the bombing of Hamburg, and was imprisoned. In the American literary establishment, He started from a strongly traditionalist base, but, influenced by William Carlos Williams and others, turned to the ‘confessional’ mode. Elizabeth Bishop in many ways took the contrary stance, scrupulously avoiding direct self-revelation in her works.

“There is no question but that its so-called “confessional” poetry was something radically new in American literature. As Marjorie Perloff declares in *The Poetic Art of Robert Lowell*, this new poetry “is informal and autobiographical; its diction is casual and colloquial, its sound patterns tend to be almost prosaic.” Discussing the important poem “Skunk Hour,” Perloff says that the “One dark night” of that poem—“the painful moment of terror and anxiety that leads to a renewal of self-insight and understanding—this is the central experience that Lowell’s self undergoes.” Some readers were troubled by the personal nature of many of the poems in this volume; several of the works deal with Lowell’s reminiscences of childhood and include often unflattering portraits of his parents and grandparents, while others deal with his marriage, his illness, and other aspects of his adult life. But *Life Studies*, very different from both his own earlier work and most of the verse being written in English by anyone else, had an enormous influence on the future of poetry in the United States.” (Poetry abstract)

“When I was working on *Life Studies*,” he revealed in his *Salmagundi* essay, “I found I had no language or meter that would allow me to approximate what I saw or remembered. Yet in prose I had already found what I wanted, the conventional style of autobiography and reminiscence. So I wrote my autobiographical poetry in a style I thought I had discovered in Flaubert, one that used images and ironic or amusing particulars. I did all kinds of tricks with meter and the avoidance of meter . . . I didn’t have to bang words into rhyme and count.”

Paradoxically, his work did not win the approval of fellow ‘confessionals’ Charles Olson and Robert Creeley. The reason for this is a matter of speculation: “. . . his erudition, mastery of conventional forms, and synthesis of private and public concerns separates him from other poets working in the confessional vein. Lowell’s assiduous effort to discover new poetic forms through assimilation of traditional and modernist techniques is reflected in the impressive range and diversity of his work.” (e-review). This may well not have been appealing to ‘pure’ modernists.

His explorations of the private and personal did not always meet with Elizabeth Bishop’s approval. In 1973, Robert Lowell published *The Dolphin*, a book that loosely fictionalizes the dissolution of his marriage to Elizabeth Hardwick and his subsequent marriage to Caroline Blackwood. It is not unknown for a writer to disguise autobiography as fiction, but here Lowell includes and alters emotional letters from Hardwick – without her consent. The end product was a series of poems that raised the question of violating the sensibilities of real people. Elizabeth Bishop’s response to the book’s first version was extreme:

She described the poem as ‘great’ – an epithet she rarely applied (“I’ve never used the word ‘great’ before, that I remember”), but at a personal level was extremely distressed – for his sake: “I love you so much I can’t bear to have you publish something you might regret; there are people waiting in the wings to attack you.” She was highly critical of his use, and adaptation, of correspondence. She protested against his ‘mixing of fact and fiction’ . . . “Lizzie is not dead . . . You’ve changed her letters; this is unthinkable. This is “infinite mischief,” I think; aren’t you violating trust? If you were given permission -- If you hadn’t changed them – But art just isn’t that much.”

The Dolphin is a supreme example of the ethical conflict frequently inherent in major aesthetic achievements. A ‘great’ book was written and published at the possible cost of inflicting misery on a key figure of its subject matter. Elizabeth Bishop articulated this conflict with depth and eloquence. Her point was vitally reinforced by Ruth Forbes’s impeccable delivery. In the interests of truth, of demystification, such points should be hammered home. In this lecture, Poet in the City made a resplendent example of how this should be done.

From his side, Lowell was extremely respectful of Bishop’s perfectionism: “Do/ you still hang your words in air, ten years/ unfinished, glued to your notice board, with gaps/ or empties for the unimaginable phrase—/ unerring muse who makes the casual perfect?”

Waking in the Blue is a piece of confessional free verse, with some residual rhyme. It makes disturbing analogies

between life in a Harvard University Fraternity House and that in a psychiatric institution. This was linked in the reading with Bishop's *North Haven: In Memoriam Robert Lowell*. This made a touching conclusion to the event. Both poets had been rooted in North Haven – but as self-contained, separate individuals. The reflection on that 'common ground' locale give a simultaneous sense of close bonding and of loss. There is a great feeling of fatalism – and compassion here.

"You left North Haven, anchored in its rock, afloat in mystic blue ... And now – you've left for good. You can't derange, or rearrange, your poems again. (But the sparrows can their song.) The words won't change again. Sad friend, you cannot change."

Lowell's leaving North Haven stands as a metaphor for his distancing from Bishop. Their attachment could never be fulfilled, manifested in physical terms. Figuratively, his leaving North Haven 'freezes' his poems; they can no longer be edited/honed as they could for the duration of the two poets' depth interchanges.

All in all, this lecture gave a superb sense of 'work in progress'. Their elemental need for each other as mutual reference points, and their struggle for perfection, is so illuminating of the creative process. The aesthetic 'perfection' of the final 'frozen' artefacts is enhanced by the background of struggle, tension, and frequent savage censure that underlay them – a powerful fusion of art and life.

Dave Russell

Oral Epic Poetry

June 7th 2010. Poet in the City; Kings Place, London

This event covered the Greek oral epic tradition, with emphasis on the *Iliad*, living epic poetry in Tibet, and the 'praise' poetry of the Zulus and Xhosas in South Africa. It was chaired by **Peggy Reynolds**, academic and broadcaster; it featured **Professor Edith Hall** of Royal Holloway University of London, **Professor Jeff Opland** from SOAS, broadcaster and journalist **Isabel Hilton**. Readings were given by actor **Ed Burnside**.

More testimony to the success of *Poet in the City*. The chair announced that 25% of the events' capacity audiences had never attended a poetry reading before.

Peggy Reynolds in her introduction outlined the basic needs of communication in an oral, pre-literate society – needs for reiterated catch-phrases to sustain narrative, repeated names,

lists and catalogues to aid identification - such as the roster of ships in the Greek expedition to Troy. The rituals of this oral form were vital to engender a sense of community. She pointed out that oral epic poetry is essentially democratic, embracing 'little people', children, failures, horses and dogs – at one point, a dog was crucial for the recognition of Odysseus. Some of its devices can be transposed into contemporary society. She cited the 2004 film epic *Troy*, as an example of 'good tosh' – using well-established homeric devices.

Edith Hall opened with a discussion of Plato's *Ion* – where Socrates interviewed an epic bard. This included the query 'are you in your right mind?' It showed the bardic reciter being in the grip of ecstasy. Plato believed that effective poets were in the grip of divine inspiration. "Are you then in your senses, or are you carried out of yourself, and does your soul in an ecstasy suppose herself to be among the scenes you are describing?" In Plato's text there is some distinction between composer and reciter, but this distinction could only come with the invention of alphabetic writing in the 8th-7th centuries BC. Many of the bards were blind, which enhanced their mnemonic capacity. There are similarities between an epic poetry performance and a rock concert – a great deal of audience participation. Because of its strong improvisational base, it has affinities with jazz and rap. A good bard will always add original embellishments to a known formula. Edith pointed out that 25% of epic poetry was in direct speech mode. She considers the epic form to be a precursor of Greek drama, since the bard had to assume the persona of an epic character. Recitation was often done to the accompaniment of the lyre. Throughout homeric verse, sustaining of the narrative is described by the metaphor of stitching – which again relates to the strings of the lyre.

Contemporary interest in the epic form began in the 18th Century, with Alexander Pope's translation of *Homer*, and an interest in the practices of the Druids. In the 1930s, Millman Parry researched the living bardic tradition in (then) Yugoslavia. He sound-recorded the bard *Avdo Medjedovitch*, singing a 15,000 line epic, which, though disappointing musically, gave some idea of the oral genesis of the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*.

Ed Burnside read, in Greek and English, Homer's description of Odysseus being deprived of his eyesight.

The audience was 'clued in' about the conditions of epic performance, taking into account the importance of ritual gesture, the high development of voice projection in the pre-microphone era.

Isabel Hilton pointed out that the *Epic of King Gesar*, central epic poem of Tibet, in its entirety, is 25 times as long as the *Iliad*. The living Tibetan and African traditions were admirably supported by film footage. It is estimated to have originated in the 5th-6th centuries AD, in pre-Buddhist Tibet, and there is an unbroken tradition, to the present day, of Gesar ballad singers. King Gesar, a being of divine origin, wins the kingdom as a result of winning a horserace. Tibet then was a martial power, intertwined with its spiritual traditions.

Isabel gave a brief description of *Ching Hai*, the Tibetan plateau. This is the source of three rivers. The power of the karmic river, in legend, gave Gesar's horse the power to fly.

The survival of the Tibetan epic, was remarkable indeed in face of the ravages of the Chinese Cultural Revolution and in the general context of the Chinese occupation of Tibet, which involved the forcible 'resettlement' of nomads into barrack-like prefabs and 'integration into the Chinese economy via migration and the introduction of railways into Tibet. However, the 2008 uprising against Chinese tyranny attracted worldwide attention, one result of which is that UNESCO has taken a part in its preservation, together with that of other traditional art forms such as textiles. There is now a Gesar Centre, which functions as temple and performance base. The song has taken on new cultural forms and political stances. She gave details of an interview with a living bard, Dowa Drapa, who explained that he had received no traditional apprenticeship; he worked exclusively from intuition and inspiration. Once he fell asleep near a holy mountain. In his dreams, a saint told him that he had a calling: he must speak to the animals and birds, then recite the Gesar epic. After that vision, he was ill for 3 nights. Then he sensed that he had gained a special wisdom, for he no longer felt normal. He had discovered the power to recite – when he was in a state of trance. This state of trance alternated between being violent and being peaceful.

Professor Opland explained that in Africa, pure epic poetry only existed in West Africa and the Congo. There is no oral epic tradition amongst the Zulus and the Xhosa. But their 'praise poetry' is an elaborate form (as is pointed out by critic Ruth Finnegan in *The Oral and Beyond: doing things with words in Africa*. "The poetic style of praise poems emerges more colourfully when one considers the language and form of expression in some detail. Alliteration, parallelism, repetition and the use of metaphors and analogy are distinct features in praise poetry."

Traditionally, an *Imbongo*, or praise poet has no specialised training, and receives no remuneration; if accepted as a poet, he is awarded a cloak and hat. Many praises are called 'clan praises'; they are rallying points for the clans, conveying their the oral history

Adrian Koopman, Lecturer in Zulu Language and Literature, University of Natal, was the first scholar to research this area. In the 19th century, newspapers began to be used as a means of preservation. The first major publication of a praise poem was that of *The Call of Izibongo* in 1906. The oral and written forms went on functioning concurrently; the arrival of literacy did not undermine the oral tradition. Opland's seems to be postulating is that *izibongo* is not a practice circumscribed by a particular historical period in traditional societies which will be eroded by modernity, but rather a constant, ongoing generic process whose very poetics define the permanency of the interior spirit of African literariness and thrive through the interaction of oral and written forms.

Famous themes of praise poetry included the exploits of Mzilikazi, founder of the Matabele kingdom, who had taken a large number of Zulu cattle. An oration to the Prince of Wales at King William's Town in 1860 was highly critical of British Imperial power.

During the Apartheid days, praise singers were sometimes condemned as sycophants by their own people. Since then, they remain fiercely independent in spirit. One Imbongo said of an admirer: "if he praises he, I'll hit him." The idiom had full contemporary significance when **Zolani McKiva** performed at Nelson Mandela's inauguration in 1994. It was also shown how the African 'praise' music could link with rap poetry and contemporary pop culture. Performers now relate to microphones, but remain static in their postures, sometimes declaiming from the roof of a hut and throwing spears into the ground. The nationally famous praise poet/singer/rap artist **Bongani Fassie** appeared on stage with Gil Scott Heron, and – radically, in a TV commercial. Women now practise, outspokenly, as *Imbongi*.

This lecture succeeded admirably in being ancient, modern and global, embracing purportedly esoteric areas and throbbing, ongoing aspects of our contemporary lives – the organic links between poetry and political situations being admirably emphasised.

Dave Russell

Deciphering the Alhambra: Symmetry in the Alhambra

Poet in the City, Instituto Cervantes, 102 Eaton Square, London.

This is the only one of the series I attended – concerning the spectacular Moorish palace in Granada; I wish I'd been to more. The lecture was delivered by **Marcus du Sautoy**, Professor of Mathematics at the University of Oxford, who has conducted a series about Mathematics on Radio 4, and whose latest publication, *A Mathematician's Journey Through Symmetry*, has recently been released. One chapter of this is devoted to the Alhambra. He exulted in still being able to explore the world of symmetry at the age of 40.

He opened by emphasizing that he considers the Alhambra to be a supreme example of symmetry. Indeed, a chapter in his book is devoted to the Alhambra. He gave a brief outline of the palace, with its fountains, mirrors and walls, where all the tiles are set in symmetrical patterns. If he were ever 'gated', confined to the precincts of one building, he would choose the Alhambra – as a sort of architectural cosmos.

Professor du Sautoy gave a brief account of his school days. He had wanted to be a spy. He studied languages, doing well

with Latin, French and German, but finding Russian frustrating. When he was about 12, his Maths teacher introduced him to *The Language of Mathematics* by Frank Land. This opened up a whole new world to him, full of surprises – and without the embarrassment of irregular verbs.

He pointed out that symmetry is an intrinsic fact of nature. The bumble bee, with its highly developed eyesight, can see shapes with symmetry; there is also symmetry in flowers: ‘the more symmetrical the flower, the sweeter the nectar’.

“Symmetry is present everywhere in nature . . . it is used by all organisms, from viruses upwards. Take bees: they have very bad vision and can’t see colours. But they excel at detecting the symmetry of a flower. Symmetry means sustenance to them. For the flowers, it means reproductive success. Symmetry is the tool that bonds bees and flowers, the language they use to communicate.”

Its organic reference reaches as far as human beings: Rorschach made experiments with ink blots – through their symmetry he could access a person’s thought processes.

With the aid of diagrams, he showed how a (horizontally) symmetrical face showed good genes. In the same spirit, Escher was inspired by the Alhambra to relate geometry to images of animals and people. His interest in symmetry had been aroused by the discovery of some Neolithic stones in Scotland, dated approximately. 2,500 BC.

Galileo was quoted as saying that the universe could not be understood until it was written about in mathematical language. He discussed the Royal Game of Ur (in Babylonia) – predecessor of Backgammon, which involved the use of a dice.

The standard shapes of dice were outlined: *Tetrahedron*, *Octahedron*, *Decahedron*, *Dodecahedron* and *Icosahedron*. Dice evolved from their original recreational function to be foundations of science. The shape of the pentagon came to be associated with the shape of the universe. The Dodecahedron was used to devise calendars and zodiacs. In physics, the dice-derived concept of symmetry facilitated the understanding of atoms and their combinations. In biology, he described the virus as ‘using the economy of symmetry’ and replicating itself through symmetry.

In the worlds of Chemistry and Physics, the concept of symmetry facilitated understanding of atoms, molecules and crystals.

In the world of the arts, he mentioned that Thomas Mann shuddered at the perfect precision of the Magic Mountain: “. . . life on the mountaintop feels like this odd sort of stasis, where everyone’s material needs and met to with stunning perfection, but where everyone seems to lack that ineffable thing that actually makes on alive. In contrast to that, the world below is posited as this dangerous realm of risk and deprivation, but a realm that is fundamentally more human and more ‘real’.” (Conversational reading) There was then an in-depth discussion of Bach’s *Goldberg Variations* which Marcus saw as exploring the structural ideas of reflection and rotation. The audience was

treated to a recording of *Nomos Alpha*, a solo cello piece by Iannis Xenakis. This is an abstract piece, employing ‘slapping’ and pizzicato at regular intervals. According to Marcus’s mathematical analogy, “he put musical ideas on the corners of a cube.” Xenakis was also an architect, and worked with Le Corbusier. He referred to La Geode in Paris, whose spherical symmetry was meant to embody the ideals of the French Revolution. Pictures were shown of dodecahedral housing in Ramot, Israel.

There was then some discussion of the Japanese Professor Kurokawa, and the construction of Nikko – 8 columns with the same symmetrical design.

But Professor de Sauty did not accept symmetry as an absolute principle. He referred to the Japanese *Essays in Idleness* which argued that uniformity is undesirable, that there must be room for growth. “Artists like to disrupt”; he added that the last movement of the Goldberg Variations broke the frame of predictability manifest in the earlier movements. Furthermore, Arabic carpets always have to have a deliberate mistake, as it is sacrilege for a material object to be perfect.

The Alhambra has an abundance of fountains, making ‘a symmetrical image of a building in water’. 17 different symmetrical games can be played in the walls of the Alhambra.

Évariste Galois. The night before his purported fatal duel, he wrote out his ideas on the mathematics of symmetry. His theory provided a solution to the long-standing question of determining when an algebraic equation can be solved by radicals (a solution containing square roots, cube roots, and so on but no trigonometry functions or other nonalgebraic functions.)

His method was to analyze the “admissible” permutations of the roots of the equation. His key discovery, brilliant and highly imaginative, was that solvability by radicals is possible if and only if the group of automorphisms (functions that take elements of a set to other elements of the set while preserving algebraic operations) is solvable, which means essentially that *the group can be broken down into simple “prime-order” constituents that always have an easily understood structure*. The term solvable is used because of this connection with solvability by radicals. Thus, Galois perceived that solving equations of the quintic and beyond required a wholly different kind of treatment than that required for quadratic, cubic, and quartic equations. His researches led to the recognition of seventeen forms of symmetry feasible on a two-dimensional surface.

Professor du Sauty made special reference to the 6th symmetry – a state of abeyance, not doing anything. For symmetry to embrace the 6th area, the concept of zero had to be invented – a boundary between plus and minus. Galois had also been deeply moved by the concept of zero. He also referred to the concept of *Hyperbolic Space* and *Non-Euclidean Geometry*, which could be applied to the Alhambra to make a parallel/comparable analysis.

“Parallel lines are not uniquely paired: given a line and a point

not on that line, any number of lines can be drawn through the point which are coplanar with the first and do not intersect it. This contrasts with Euclidean geometry, where parallel lines are a unique pair, and spherical geometry, where parallel lines do not exist, as all lines (which are great circles) cross each other.” (Wikipedia)

The study of the Alhambra has similarities to Sudoku. The symmetry of the Alhambra tells one a possible infinity of different things about the palace. Moorish artists sought new designs. But “only when you create a language can you work out what is possible”. They did create a language, which is a perpetual source of fascination to all who followed them. Through the solid structures, and through their reflections, one senses triangles, hexagons and other shapes – embracing all 17 known forms of symmetry. Geometry is phased into algebra. The eye can follow the boundary lines of the tiles and get a sense of rotation, as well as multiples of starfish shapes. Marcus used an interesting term – *glide symmetry*.

But for all its abstraction, all its formulaic qualities, the Alhambra maintains a perpetual vitality, a power of fascination. Professor du Sautoy maintained that “Mathematics is a living subject because we don’t know everything”. According to his logic, the Alhambra must be ultimately imperfect so have such radiance. It attracts analysts to apply all formulae to the point of exhaustion. Unlike the Japanese Nikko structure he mentioned, the imperfection may prove elusive – even finally unfathomable, only expressible as a negative or zero quantity when formulae cannot account for it.

So the subjective splendor of the Alhambra is enhanced by objectification.

Dave Russell

P o e t s W h o M a d e N a t i o n s

June 17th 2010, Poet in the City, National Portrait Gallery

This event, introduced by **John Mole**, centred on the work of Cuban poet **Jose Marti**, introduced by **Luiz Rabaza-Soraluz**, Czechoslovak polymath **Thomas Masaryk** by **Robert Pynsent**, and the 14th Century Welsh bard **Dafydd Ap Gwilym** by **Menna Elfyn**.

Jose Marti (1853-1895) distinguished himself in all areas of literary endeavour – from poetry to political theory. One of his poems became the lyric for *Guantanamera*. This, originally written in 1929 by Jose Fernandez, was originally a song of unrequited love. However, Julián Orbón set the melody to the words of the first poem in Marti’s *Poemas Sencillos*, to make it a Cuban patriotic song which lived on into the

protest movement of the 50s and 60s, adopted by Pete Seeger and the like. Jose was a lifelong campaigner for a Latin American cultural identity, independent of Spain. He considered himself a person of ‘dos patrias’; the greater Hispanic sphere and independent Latin America. His direct political influence was enormous. Early in life he learned to hate slavery, and the colonial regime which perpetuated it. In his teens he was jailed as a political prisoner, for alleged treason (criticising a friend who had joined the Spanish army) and was exiled to Spain. There he graduated in Law at the University of Saragossa. After his return to Mexico, he again felt forced to flee to Guatemala and later to Venezuela, but was persecuted by the dictatorships of those countries. Marti was considered by many to be the ‘Apostle of the Cuban Revolution’. Marti was a key organiser of the struggle for a truly independent Cuba, free alike from the colonial shackles of Spain, and from a take-over by the USA. When news came of his death in action in 1895, the US was in far of an uprising by the black majority in Cuba.

Marti’s three major collections of poems were *Ismaelillo* (1882), *Versos Sencillos* (1891), and *Versos libres*, written in the 1880s, but published posthumously in 1913. His most famous political poem is *Sueño con claustros de mármol* (I dream of marble cloisters), where statues, the spirits of the slain and the oppressed, come back to life and indict those who have wronged them. The popular song *Guantanamera* is based on Marti’s poem, which was made famous by the composer Joseíto Fernández.

Lucía Jerez, his only novel among the foremost works of Hispanic American Modernism. Long overlooked or trivialized by critics, today it is considered a revolutionary narrative because in it the writer uses techniques that anticipate 20th Century avant-garde writers, and post-modernist texts. Using impressionist and expressionist prose, it is structured on symbols – visionary enunciations depicting the present and future of an off-balance world; and the fragility and inconstancy of daily life.

Martí, according to his own confession, wrote the novel originally under the title of *Amistad Funesta* (Regrettable Friendship) in seven days for a New York magazine. He was forced to follow the guidelines set by the magazine’s director: there had to be lots of love; a death; many young women, no sinful passion; and nothing that parents and clergymen would reject. And it had to be Hispanic American. The Cuban confessed he disliked the narrative genre.

In *Lucía Jerez* many critics have preferred to see a fundamentally aesthetic creation, the fruit of the end of the XIX Century Modernist stylistic innovations. But today, rereading, the subtext, as Martí preferred, finds a contemporary narrative exploring disconnections and anomalies of modern life.

In his essay *Nuestra América* (1891) Martí laid out his own pan-Latin-American ideology. He emphasized the need to come to

terms with the continent's multi-racial identity and the importance of teaching thoroughly the history of America, from the pre-Columbian period to the present. His writings on political theory and education are enlightened to the extreme, showing a total respect for individual conscience and identity – a repudiation of totalitarianism. The bulk of his publications is now readily available.

* * * * *

There was one musical item, a rendition of *Guantanamera* by an acoustic duo. The girl had an extremely nice singing voice, but I found the overall effect a bit weak. Some poor presentation too; it felt a bit clumsy setting up the microphones in the middle of the action; this could easily have been done beforehand, as the speakers were not ranged in a panel on this occasion; only one at a time on the lectern.

* * * * *

Menna Elfyn showed that **Dafydd** Ap Gwilym (c.13-15-1370) was a powerful unifying force in a disparate Wales. His ongoing influence was crucial to the revival and reestablishment of the Welsh language, and the development of a sense of Welsh unity. In no sense parochial, he turned his attention to Europe, much of which was divided into small principalities, and sensed an affinity between these areas and a Wales in need of unification. She described him as 'vulnerable, and in every sense modern; an anarchist'. He was the first major Welsh poet to discuss subjective experience, direct personal experiences, in his verse. Menna cited his *Song to the Seagull*:

"O sea-bird, beautiful upon the tides,
White as the moon is when the night abides,
Or snow untouched, whose dustless splendour glows
Bright as a sunbeam and whose white wing throw
A glove of challenge on the salt sea-flood."

This she followed with *Poem to the Penis*, celebrated as one of the most outspoken statements of medieval eroticism. This is a robust, humorous poem, exploring the stick-like qualities of that organ, its qualities of being simultaneously a source of pain and pleasure.

Dafydd was a perfecter of the short formulaic *Englyn* poem, a sort of counterpart of the Haiku. These became extremely popular as poster poems in the 60s. There was also an inherent musicality in his work. Some, if not all of his original performances would have been done with harp accompaniment. This area has been researched in depth by Welsh poet and translator **Tony Conran**, who draws extensive parallels between this verbal structures and the development of harp technique. Menna reminded the audience that one language dies every fortnight, and concluded with a wry, ironic quote from Gwyneth Williams: "It's very easy to love Wales; it's the bloody Welsh that are the problem."

The Welsh language and identity had long been under threat; the last Welsh king was beheaded in 1282. Adversity continued until as recently as the defeat of the Devolution bill in 1979.

Menna discussed the pros and cons of translation, mentioning that R.S. Thomas was unwilling to have his works translated into English, and made the famous quotation "A poem in translation is like kissing through a handkerchief." Thomas had explained how his mother had forbi.

Professor Jeff Opland UCL outlined the life of Thomas Masaryk (1850-1937), Czechoslovakia's first president, and major cultural and political influence for his time. Emma Ludwig called him a philosopher, Bernard Shaw called him the only fit candidate for the Presidency of Europe. Masaryk was pro-feminist and critical of Britain for being overly concerned with its empire. He came from a working-class family; he abandoned his apprenticeship as a blacksmith to go to grammar school and university, where he had a dazzling academic career, culminating in a postgraduate thesis on suicide. However, Masaryk always considered himself a man of the people; it was he who invented the term 'people's democracy' and pioneered the mythicisation of the common people. His effectiveness was far-reaching. Towards the end of the First World War, he was in cahoots with Churchill about Czech intervention in the war, and persuaded the Western Allies to aim for the dissolution of Austria-Hungary. He did welcome the advent of Mussolini, Hitler and Stalin, and was admired by Stalinists. Naturally, there were accusations of fascist sympathies. He was a passionate campaigner for the Czech language, and helped set up the Czech University in Prague, concurrently with the German University there. At that time, British Secret Services enabled Masaryk to set up the School of Slavonic and East European Studies at the University of London.

Masaryk's life motto was: *Nebát se a nekrást* (Do not fear and do not steal). Masaryk as a philosopher was an outspoken rationalist and humanist. He emphasised practical ethics, reflecting the influence of Anglo-Saxon philosophers, French philosophy, and especially the work of 18th Century German philosopher, Johann Gottfried Herder, who is considered the founder of nationalism. He was critical of German idealistic philosophy and Marxism. Although born Catholic, he eventually became a non-practising Protestant Unitarian, influenced in part by the declaration of Papal Infallibility in 1870 and his wife, Charlotte, who was raised Unitarian. (Wikipedia)" In terms of relating to music, he was a devotee of Smetana.

In no sense was he primarily a poet, but his body of critical work was massive. One of his major achievements was *Russia and Europe*, which made Western Europeans aware of the Russian literary tradition. In some ways his tastes were conservative: he condemned zola as a corrupter of morals.

But his influence is comparable to that of Marti and Ap Gwilym other two in that his learning, and the substance behind his literary criticism applied vitally to the world of human response and practical affairs.

Dave Russell

**Tuesday 12th October, 2010. Poet in the City,
Amnesty International UK, Human Rights Action
Centre, Shoreditch, London**

This event surveyed the many aspects of home life, including deprivation of a home. It explored the related themes of rootedness in a familiar environment, and of exile-deportation. Most appropriately, it was located at the headquarters of Amnesty International. It made the audience reflect on the everyday, which one often takes, uncritically, for granted. The familiar can decay, can be eroded in the course of 'development'; it can be bulldozed/obliterated, or people can be brutally uprooted from it.

It was chaired by **Alice Northgreaves** and featured **Devika Banerjee, Valdemar Kalinin, Anna Robinson** and **Jane Duran**

Devika is a leading translator and interpreter, as well as being involved with the Satyajit Ray Film Foundation. She read from the works of **Rabindranath Tagore** (1861-1941), winner of the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1913 – well acquainted with Pound, Yeats, Einstein and Rothenstein. Tagore had written 2,000 poems and 2,000 songs. A highlight of the selection was *A Half Acre of Land* (1890): "I had sold off all my land – all I've got is a patch in which to die" But this loss was in other respects a gain "... In exchange for my land, he/d given me the universe/I owe to you, my beautiful motherland Bengal ... filthy and tarred, flowers held in your sari/a wealthy man's love has turned your head/ as I paced with my heart in two ...". Tagore sees his country as being dispossessed, as he was at an individual, personal level.

Valdemar, originally from Byelorussia, now has dual nationality (also UK). His bilingual book *Romani Dreams* was published in 2005. He works as a home school liaison officer in London. He discussed the Romany gypsies, whose language is related to Sanskrit, and whose spiritual motherland is India. He referred to their recent uprooting in Hungary, to their great mobility and adaptability. They claim that "all the earth belongs to God". He placed emphasis on the current (as well as the past) mistreatment of the Romanies in Hungary.

The world's largest human rights organisation said that 2009 was marked by "political and economic upheaval" in Hungary that led to the resignation of Prime Minister Ferenc Gyurcsany.

"The document said that the "radical right-wing organisation" Magyar Garda (Hungarian Guard) staged a series of marches in towns with a Roma population in eastern Hungary. The report notes that Jobbik, which it describes as "an extreme right-wing political party with a strong anti-Roma and an increasingly anti-Semitic agenda" gained three seats in the European parliamentary elections in June.

Al said that a Hungarian court banned Magyar Garda, an organisation linked to Jobbik, arguing that it overstepped its rights as an association and curtailed liberties of the Roma. In

July, however, Jobbik announced the relaunch of the Guard and one of its newly elected MEPs wore the Guard's uniform in the first parliamentary session in Brussels." (Lolo Diklo: *Romany against Racism*)

Anna has had several poetry residencies, working with children, old people, those with learning disabilities and prisoners. She has performed, and run workshops, at festivals including Lambeth Readers and Writers Festival and Poetry Street (Stoke Newington). She was poet in residence on Lower Marsh for the South Bank Centre's Trading Places project, part of Poetry International 2006. She is an editor of *Long Poem* magazine, and is well-known for her innovative approaches to literature.

Her work is London-based, with a special focus on a South London housing estate. She sees herself as part of a migratory process. Her immediate family came from the north; they stepped across the coastal plane. She read *How We Came to Know Our Place*. This explores the concept of territoriality: "the cats know their lands". Anna made an excellent retrospective of the old inner urban environment, referring to the old style of communal life that "existed outside rather than inside ... a long line of women getting wet on the street corner ...". and wheeling their prams to the pawnshop. Some of the community life related to fleas; in their cramped living conditions, people had to go out to scratch themselves. *Moon Poem* recalled Basho's *The Great North Road* – she explores the image of the moon; there is a 'lantern moon' and a personified 'egg moon': "tonight I wobble trying to find you ... my blood is too rich ...". *Lower Marsh Stinks* suggests that there is some charm, some warmth in inner urban squalor. Her work shows considerable nostalgia for the community ethos of the old inner urban environment, whose warmth and humanity have been largely lost.

Jane explained about her background of exile. Her father Gustavo Durán, musician and composer, had been a Republican general in the Spanish Civil War, and was forced to flee the country. She went to New York, then to Cuba and subsequently to Chile. A boat trip of over two weeks' duration with the Graceline Fleet, to Santa Barbara, left a deep impression on her. Her preadolescent years were spent in Chile, which has the constant background of the high mountains of the Cordillera. This gave a focus for her future aims and ambitions: "the gravity of a distant zone ... here is what I must grow towards". Jane told a charming anecdote of lying under a cherry tree, learning her catechism in sight of the peaks. She is highly eloquent about the Andean ambience:

"As I walked I approached the Andes –
an intelligence, intricate as those fingerprints
on rocks in the Valle del Encanto,
where figures were carved in stripes
and circles – headdresses, staring eyes,
mouthless and faint in the sun.
I was 12, the Andes just ahead,
stepping back from me in a kind of easy,
lasting dance, an easy dare."

She came to England after graduating from Cornell University (USA) in 1966.

Her *Invisible Ink* series dealt with the Pinochet era in Chile. "It interweaves cityscapes and landscapes with allusions to the cruelties and bereavements of that time" (Enitharmon). One poem celebrated Carlos Kratz, who became C-in-C of the Chilean army under Allende, and was finally assassinated by a car bomb. She recalled the infamous National Stadium massacres perpetrated by Pinochet. Feeling under constant surveillance, her son kept a diary with invisible ink – only readable under ultra-violet light. The new-found sense of terror is further highlighted in *Santiago 1973*: "Home suddenly becomes a place of terror". She makes an utterly authentic portrayal of a total, everyday life, with its routines – a traveller's documentation, welded to a dire political crisis.

The disappeared describes 'selected moments' of her various points of arrival and departure all over the world – indelible memories for her. One reviewer found that Jane's work conveys "... that transforming, constantly shifting overlap in what we remember and what we experience now ..."

The evening ended with a screening of well-known slogans and other phrases containing the word 'home': *time to go home; an Englishman's home is his castle; time to go home; home James and don't spare the horses; welcome home; she's leaving home; no direction home ...*

Dave Russell

Ready Mixed Aggregate **Patrick McManus**

Hodgson Press, 2010
ISBN 978-1-906164-13-3

Patrick McManus's beautifully produced book has several distractions. I don't mean the cover, a lariat of green striated with red, and a fine product of Hodgson Press. It's the illustrations that accompany it, and McManus's own past as an architect, and present as a performer, that seems to pull on these very immediate, engaging poems.

The architect in him is subverted poetically by that technophilic humour you find in engineers or craft-directed folk. *That's* subverted by the way he reverses it. The typical McManus poem engages its sexual tensions by reversing the technical knowledge, and power in the male/female dynamic. So 'Hammer' a central poem:

Neat new polished
Lath, Magnetic, or Panel Beating?
To extend the joke he reflects:
wrapped and presented
armed for mother's day
to a craftswoman superior ...

And that he'd leave the choice of saw 'to another time/delayed, deferred'. Nothing post-modern about the deferral. Just wary fright. Thus McManus sends up the trope of male helplessness time and again. The examples though naturally show off his own technophilic nature whilst at the same time disavowing or displacing it. It's a neat sleight of hand and fine mode of presenting hapless middle-aged male performer poets. Several poems turn the technophilic wife to fury, berating him with a series of terms. She loses it: 'They're trees, bloody trees' at the end of – yes, 'Metasequoia Glyptostroboidies'. Others like 'Chrysanthemum' allow his riposte following a catalogue of terms 'it was yellow/and fluffy/just like your/lovely pretty hair.' Is that a send up or sentimentality? McManus deliberately creosotes a fence, and sits on it. 'Crystal' disarms with the blue of the lover's eyes referencing the only comparative of the terminologically challenged poet.

There are more complex examples, but were that all, McManus wouldn't nag at the attention. His smaller poems are the nub of similar neat, occasionally repetitive tricks. 'Without' turns on the all-powering woman, so that 'without/her constant/helping hands.... He would/not now/be in such/a total/mess.' 'Recession' repeats the luxuries and necessities they now go without, even to 'owning a car 'and he happily/breathed a sigh/of relief.' 'Uplifting' is a response from his wife to write something of that ilk. So an ode to a bra ensues. To her question in 'Trousers' about who wears them, he of course is revealed in a midi-skirt. 'Words' suggests a diminishing virgin vocabulary to write love poems: 'umquhile/villication/wakerrife/ywroke/and/zinzibreacious'. The poem opposite probes more: 'After' moralises rain 'listening to calming music/drinking lots of very weak tea/and slowly very/ gently stroking/his cat.' 'Tried' again inverts the trope, finding 'a straw in a large/ needlestack.'

'Writing' turns on its side, if not head, the fact of his partner's writing on the wall, is subverted by appalling spelling. 'Loser' plays with that title, 'She knew he was a bit of a loser/but even so/the final score/still shocked her.' Only someone inflected with games would have thought of that. 'Wedding' has a couple give their names as Mills and Boon and the 'registrar paused/but only/ever so/slightly.' 'Consideration' is one gem: 'she considered/with some satisfaction/that her ex husband/would be particularly/vulnerable to/swine flu.'

'Waiting' is heavier. The wife's axe is only disarmed. She does not chop his head off, but those of flowers he gives her, puts blooms in the blender. In 'Cordon Bleu' on the other hand the wife nearly kills her husband by putting her culinary ingenuity into their sex life. 'By Chance' notes a dance of worms, and only brings an emblematic wife back so as to note he wouldn't dare tell her. 'Once Upon' has a girl rescue a wimpish prince from a dragon but

marrying a handsome bodyguard 'become a world / famous speriolgologist/and lived happily/ever after.' The only escape the husband has, as distinct from the dragon-slaying girl, is obediently clearing out all his old junk, dated, but also leaving on his 1957 BSA and 1973 blonde. Mmm.

'All Inspired' shows McManus's true mettle as a poet. Like several shaped poems this is one that beyond its performative actions needs the page to display its fricative graces. The poet awaits the surge of creativity but it trickles, in 'a tentative drip... so soon dried up'. 'Sands of Time' the final poem in the collection, finds the sand like the aggregate alluded to in the book's title. 'dust/debris/detritus/sediment/chippings/large lumps/of aggregate...' he was becoming/increasingly concerned/about a permanent blockage.' If McManus could avoid the occasional throw-away and vary the palate as here – in a word take his real talent seriously – his next collection wouldn't trip up over its brilliant volte-faces. As it is, a handful of real poems emerge out of performance spaces. His resource is wit and the great force of puns. His bent, though, is a richer language, as 'Cordon Bleu', where the litany of terms is put to real use, confirms:

'and of course soused pickled
puree mashed and pulped
the quickly delighted him being
beat-chopped-creamed'

Dr. Simon Jenner

A typically strange poetry night out

What a peculiar night

'The Cafe in the Woods'. 7pm (start time), no one there. 8pm - 25 people crushed into the proverbial sardine can. All Highgate types (brown shorts and sandals, blue shirts): amiable; peculiar gaits; either snatched from painting their houses or having just collected daughters from uni. An MC who thought that having a bald head, a multicoloured shirt and a funny moustache would do the trick (actually he wasn't half bad). The *Maitre d'* bumbling around like a recently-sated bumblebee.

The poetry was a little unpromising - rhymed performance, jokey. Highgate concerns: fantasy sex in buses, ageing dads, first teenage fumbles, 'having a go' at (and within) a villanelle, etc. One guy on the subject of his child daughter, though, had a few gorgeous moments ('she asks: is my skeleton alive inside me')? Something like a slightly overweight, happier Michael Caine with an Irish accent and a multicoloured shirt. Liked him.

The music: relatively competent, but mostly not particularly inspiring. Decent instrumentalists, but lacking punch vocally - too many slightly wanky, thin voices. One old pony-tailed ex-hippie, though, did a very funny cover of the Chumbawamba song about Facebook, 'Add Me':

Here's a picture of me in my Nazi uniform
Doing a trick with an egg that I like to perform
At a monster truck rally that my mom and me attend.
Would you like to add me as a friend?

Then, just before the interval, a clean-cut guy on slide guitar doing deep south stuff a cut above the rest. Slick, well-oiled, ultra-cool; but with a touch of emotive brilliance. I could see him filling one-off slots in classy bars in hot, hot towns night after night for 60 bucks a go, with one precise drop of sweat running down past his ear.

So, they put me on after the interval (during which, as usual, a few of the poets who'd performed in the first half left - grrr - one of the most obnoxious habits at these things) and I offered love poems from *i tulips* plus a brace of heavier pieces from *Heavy Water: a poem for Chernobyl*. You could have heard an angel tap-dancing on the head of her pin. The audience was wonderfully attentive and generous. If I was in any remaining doubt, it was dispelled (and sometimes we go to these things for reasons that aren't apparent to us until afterwards) - I'm definitely onto something with *i tulips* ...

This was a crowd who'd admire the Romantics (well, Blake and Wordsworth at least) and would defer to the Armitages and Sophie Hannahs of our day - they'd probably adore Wendy Cope, as an adoptee 'one of their own', perhaps. Among themselves, I sensed, poetry is more or less a fun night out with a few serious moments they're certainly not closed to. Putting it a little unkindly: a posh poems and pints. They do recognise quality, insofar as they recognise it; and would be polite about something they didn't like, and simply not comment or react. And yet, on the back of Olson, Creeley and (they'd just about heard of *this* guy ...) Ginsberg, they were taken to an entirely new space. I could tell in their faces they hadn't much been there before; but, to their credit, they were willing to go - if only for a while. The prolonged applause at the end wasn't polite. Far from it.

The event reminded me that, if we can tap into universal energies when we write, we can get most people on board - if not openly on deck, then at least into some less visible berth. I always doubt that hope, and am almost always proved wrong. In fact, it sometimes seems that those who turn their faces most steadfastly away from challenging poetry are often poets who've read widely but only to reject with 'authority' anything that isn't what they themselves safely do.

If the above account sounds a bit self-regarding, it's not meant to be! It comes from a place of detachment, I think. And I say it into this space to encourage all the fragmenters and re-inventors who may or may not overhear it (okay then, I say it to myself) that the game (let's call it a game rather than a battle) isn't over. Not quite. Actually - not at all.

Mario Petrucci June 2010

Steve Tasane – Talkies!

“A master of tongue-twisting, mind boggling alternative poetry and legend of the performance poetry circuit.” Steve is rightly acclaimed as a leading light of ‘Lit-Pop’. His DVD album *Talkies* makes an excellent synthesis of his verse and extremely imaginative videos – some straight live footage, others abstract. He is firmly ‘in the groove’ of contemporary oral verse, owing much to the ‘rap’ tradition. This album is a cross-media collaboration with members of ‘Shoot the Poets’, a cooperative of visual artists, filmmakers, writers and musicians based in Hastings.

“Yes, I consider this pioneering work. The DVD is the first poetry collection specifically made in film form. I’m also the first poet to use YouTube as a primary medium for my work (check out *Mr Lippy’s Psychedelic Ink Dance*, which only exists on YouTube). I believe performance poetry has no effective permanent archive – as performance poems in print do not capture the personality and physicality of the poet, or the atmosphere in the room. And gigs that are simply videoed don’t share the same experience as the audience.”

The opener, *Greedyguts* highlights the double-edged nature of omnivorousness – it is destructive, malignant – “eat up my best mate; but it can also be cleansing – “eat the gangsters”. The poem is a cry from the heart of stress and panic. Some powerful footage of environmental desecration – chopping down and bulldozing trees, showing, quite appropriately, the inspiration of Michael Jackson’s *Earth Song* video – arresting image of close-up of eyes. Video by *Phil Smith*.

Lost in the Mix expresses the spirit of abandonment, casting ones face to the winds, through the imagery of the mixing desk at a disco or rave – “. . . playing without foundation/ bodies popping . . . in the house of love/nobody knows (reference to house music?). One loses all sense of time, distinction between the days of the week; separate individuals blend into a ‘collective heart pounding a bass line’, and the heart is separated from the brain. Great monochrome silhouette/s for the opening. Good chorus dubbing in the vocals. Video by *Anita Makris*.

High-Rise – voice of desperation of one with stringently restricted prospects: “football, rock’n’roll or the army” Nice bit of double-entendre in “coke sponsors the world cup”. It plays interestingly on the idea of concussion, both in ‘headbutt a wall’ and mentioning suicide jumps (which happen all too often). This powerful poem was presented as a straight live video; perhaps some inner urban landscape shots would have enhanced it. Video by *Last Bus*.

Chilli Pepper: two takes of this number here; a plain one to begin with, and a ‘house’ version at the end. The vegetable is celebrated as ‘enemy of the bland’ – it is the colour of blood, and has elemental heat; with it one is ‘whopping the mundane’. Video by *Tim Denman*.

Stolen Soap: there are those who have steal to meet the necessities of life: “We wash away our sins with stolen soap” so pain and guilt are intrinsic to cleansing: “Mum and dad taught me that comfort is pain”. This is the voice of a person whose skin has been abraded by hard living. There is the torture of divided feeling: “. . . forked tongue sings/ like a hangman’s rope . . . leather-faced pike . . . just one slip and the demons will take me” Video by *Mark Birbeck*
Fun Fair Can Can – great video collage with fairground shots and abstract kaleidoscope, catchy parody of the Can-Can theme: the second verse consists of new words to the Can-Can tune. Fairground participants are exerted to rev themselves up into abandoned ecstasy. Video by *Danny Pockets*.

Plucking the Grey Hairs from my Baby – certainly the most sentimental track in this selection, exploring the idea of ‘Silver Threads Among the Gold’. The relationship has lasted into advanced mature years; they pluck out each other’s grey hairs as they wistfully reminisce about their happy memories. Video by *Tim Riley & Georgia Elizy*.

Matriarchy In the UK – interesting gloss on Anarchy in the same. The video is an exciting collage of bleak, oppressive institutions, counterpointed against protest demonstrations and exuberant community activities. The vocal is a rap-styled chorus, making reference to a ‘mother superior, ‘pie in the sky’ and nuclear family wrecks. I remain unclear about its message. Is it another gloss on *God Save the Queen* – with the matriarchy as an oppressive power, or is it referring to a benign spiritual matriarchy superseding patriarchal oppression? Video by *Nick Pilton*.

This stimulating collection makes me realise that the poetry and rap scenes can complement each other greatly. The power of the spoken word can be enhanced by strident, inhibition-free rap, while the latter could learn to be more up-front in its articulation. There are many cogent statements which are ‘lost in the mix’ there; here they are all found. Excellent ‘crossover’ in my opinion.

To obtain a copy of *Talkies!*, see Steve’s website on www.stevetasane.com

Watch Steve’s latest **poetry films** by clicking right here:

Human Touch:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0QINozOjRPg>.

Grumblebum:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0r8FFStjyOY>

Dave Russell

The Silent Assassin of the Soul

Kathryn Mattison

It has managed to sneak back into the driving seat again whilst I wasn't looking. It has gently squeezed on the brakes, turned me around so very quietly and is heading me back into the cold darkness. I helplessly look over my shoulder and see the small flickering light of hope that I had managed to crawl towards, bringing my head up for air for a few precious days, disappear into a distant memory. Breathing has once again become difficult. I feel like I am starting to lose it.

I feel like I'm starting to go crazy. I feel like I am losing my grip on the tiny piece of reality that I have left and I am slipping down into the open jaws of this insatiable monster that I was born with inside of my head.

OCD. It greets me when I wake with its familiar pang of dread in my stomach. Whispering to me. Kindly reminding me of the ball and chain that it has placed around my neck. It guides me through my day, dutifully pointing out all of its most favoured hiding places, planting helpful reminders of its presence, just in case I should forget myself and have a moment of peace or happiness. Leading me away in thought and vision to places where it knows I will get lost and be unable to find a quick way out.

It enlists the help of its trusted friend, Ruminant, to make sure that I am always entertained on these trips with the most vivid of images and who never lets me leave without a souvenir. A souvenir that is then added to the already heaving bag of unwanted keepsakes in my mind, painfully knowing that every time I should happen to look upon it, I will be reminded of the thoughts of terror that are now attached to it. And the generosity is never ending. Rarely does a week pass by that I am not given a new seed that, when planted and cared for by OCD, grows at breakneck speed into an unstoppable, uncontrollable, indestructible growth that wraps and twists and contorts and distorts and spreads and pollutes and suffocates the landscape of my mind.

And then, as the night draws to a close, it will lie still, quietly waiting for me as I nervously get into bed, wondering if it will stay asleep tonight. But it knows that here I am alone, at my most vulnerable and that here it can become bigger than me. It can bully me. Question me. Remove every piece of happiness that I may have had, twisting and turning my every thought and my every feeling into a fearful dread and terror that is so strong that it makes me want to cry out for help. Cry out for it to stop.

I tell myself, "That's not true. I'm not that sort of person. That's not true! No, that's not true!! No! STOP IT!". But OCD is a master of its trade and is prepared for my whimpering protests. It is then that it releases its most trusty weapon capable of the most evil inner destruction that it knows I cannot fight.

Doubt. The icy cold, poisonous cloud of doubt that sweeps across me, swirls around me and freezes me to the core as it gently and deviously whispers the repeated question in my mind ... "But what if I am? But what if it's all true???" You see, it knows that I cannot answer these questions. It knows that I cannot provide any evidence to the contrary to what it is telling me. It knows that I will seek out the guidance and reassurance of others in a vain attempt to fight back in numbers, but it knows that the others cannot hear its silent reign on my power. It knows that as soon as it can get me alone again it can ridicule me for being so weak as to run for help and so it taunts me and clouds my judgement.

It knows that I will be so paralysed by the doubt that it administers that I will crack and break under the strain and fall deeper into its trap. And each time that I fall deeper, it feasts upon my misery and uses me to grow stronger. And each time that it grows stronger, it takes another piece of me away with it. Another part of my life ripped away from me leaving deep weeping wounds that can no longer be hidden from those that I love and want to protect from its ways. And most deviously of all, it knows that it can come back later and rub salt into these wounds to remind me of the trouble that I have caused to those around me, leaving me wincing and contorting in the pain of such devastation.

It takes with it every part of everything that I have ever believed in, numbs every joy and positive thought I hold and grasps away insidiously at my soul, trying to steal the only thing that I have left. But it cannot reach my light, for it lurks and skulks too low in the darkness. My light shines too high, albeit dimly now, and is all that I have left to fight back with. My only defence. The part of me that is not my body, not even my mind, but my spirit. My soul. Me.

Some days, when depression comes to stay I begin to wonder what is left to live for. I no longer know who I am, what I am or what I am going to become. To which, of course, OCD loves to provide the answers. I sometimes wonder if I was ever meant for this world and often wonder if this is ever going to end, or *how* it is going to end. Again, OCD loves to help me with that too. But through the seemingly endless darkness, a small spark of clarity can sometimes come into view and I start to see the flickering light of hope glistening again in the distance. I start to crawl my way back towards it with overwhelming feelings washing over me that I thought I'd never feel again. Hope? An ending to the nightmare? A rescue?

The colour begins to return to my surroundings and I am no longer constricted in my breathing. *Free*. The dim light, straining to stay lit inside of me begins to grow and become stronger and brighter and I *feel* the strength coming back to me and the grip around my neck weakening. I'm free. I'm free! I'm ...

... and then I hear it.

Faintly in the distance at first. Whispers and rumblings. Then slowly getting louder. And louder. And louder until finally, it arrives. The now familiar, sickening feeling of dread enveloping me once more. I try to fight it, but it somehow feels bigger than me, stronger than me, smarter than me. As the fear rises inside me, I desperately look around for a way out. A way to make it stop. A way to make it leave me alone.

I scream out for someone to help, but my cries fall silently into the glass box it places around my head.

My efforts are hopeless. I try to run but my feet are heavy. A tired, draining feeling once more entering my body. It is here. It's cold, damp determined fingers clasp themselves around my ankles sending a shudder through my whole being. With a sinking feeling of realisation, I'm being dragged back. Away from the light and back into the twisted playground of OCD.

And so I live for the day when I may regain my power and may reign as the supreme ruler of my mind, my body and my soul and not have this impostor controlling my every moment.

It is a day that I long for, a day that I live for, a day that I hold on to with all of my might and a day that cannot come too soon.

letters & emails

Thank you for the £200.00 donation from The Charing Cross Reunion 2010, friends of David Kessell. Made via our MyCharityPage.com donations link.

Please do write to us and tell us what you think

if you want to help poets suffering from mental distress get published and perform their work, the best way you can help is to make a donation

Reviews from *Dave Russell*

Update from *Simon Jenner*

Outreach from *Roy Birch*

BROADSHEET



get
INVOLVED?

If you wish to find out more about Survivors' Poetry you can get in touch either by email, post or telephone

Network

Leeds Survivors

Contact Tom Halloran:
Tel: 01924 820 779
Email: tgh52@talktalk.net

Bristol Survivors

Contact Steve Hennessy
email: steve.hy@blueyonder.co.uk
www.steppingouttheatre.co.uk

Manchester Survivors

Workshop
Common Word, 6. Mount St,
Every Mon 4-6pm Manchester M2 5NS

Contact Jackie Hagan
email: jaclynhagan@hotmail.com

GROW - east sussex

Meet every Tuesday except during school
holidays at The Children's Library
Robertson Passage
Hastings

Contact: Ashley Jordon
email: jordan72uk@gmail.com

High Peak Writers

Works in association with The Grapevine - a local
mental health charity. Located in Buxton

Contact: Louise Glasscoe
email: glasscoe@tiscali.co.uk

Stevenage Survivors

Meets up every other Friday at The Friends'
Meeting House, 21 Cutty's Lane, Stevenage
7.30-9.30pm

Contact: Roy Birch
email: royb@survivorspoetry.org.uk

New Group

The Bread is Rising Poetry Collective

<http://www.thebreadisrising.org/index.html>
For Info; contact us at: thebreadisrising@excite.com
or 001-347-534-5715 [USA]

Events

The Poetry Cafe

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

Dates

Features

- 13th January *Banjolele*
10th February *JAZZMAN JOHN CLARKE (root
beat poetry)*
*LIQUORICE FISH (Julie Kjaer sax &
Matt Scott accordion & Dylan Bates
violin)*
10th March *MICHAEL HOROVITZ (& ADAM
HOROVITZ TBC)*
14th April

Dave Russell & Razz feature on a regular basis

Open Mic is a wonderful opportunity for new and more experienced
poets and musicians to have their work heard in a friendly and
supportive atmosphere. If you want to read or perform your work
you need to arrive between 7.00pm-7.30pm in order to book your
floorspot. The doors will open to other audience members from
7.00pm and the performance will start at 7.30pm sharp. Finish time
for the event dependent upon the amount of people who want to do
floorspots. There will be a break half way through. These events are
organised by Xochitl Tuck, volunteer Events Coordinator.

North London Survivors every fourth Thursday of each month



399 High Road
Tottenham
London
N17 6QN
Tel: 0208 365 0653
<http://www.multimap.com/s/y6qTi6v8>

Dates

Features

TBC

email: xmtuck@hotmail.com

Tel: 07796 831 935

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

Thank you to **all** our volunteers, supporters and to the organisations that **fund** our work.

call for volunteers to help with promoting Survivors' Poetry.

We need someone local to help with office work. 4-8 hours depending upon experience. Must have good English and computer skills. We welcome all backgrounds. We can arrange access for anyone disabled. You may be asked to seek a CRB [SP will cover expenses.]

Please contact:

blanche@survivorspoetry.org.uk
Tel: 020 7281 4654

Donations:

Please send a cheque payable to Survivors' Poetry or go to mycharitypage.com and make an online contribution - click on link on the bottom right of this page or visit our website

if you wish to

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

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

Office Telephone: +44 [0]20 7281 4654

If you've found insight and understanding toward survivors within these pages, please tell us about it, as we'd like to hear your story.



When you make a donation via Mycharitypage.com. YOU will be CHARGED a 2.8% fee. For example if you donate £5 you will pay £5.14p