

Poetry *Express*

Spring 2012

Issue 39

Poetry of Survival:

HOW SOME HOLOCAUST CHILDREN LEARNED TO CONQUER DEATH

by Thomas Ország Land

Fighting the Benefit Cuts with Edgar Broughton

Live in Peckam by Frank Bangay

Hazardous Occupations

Robert Dangoor M.D.

Feature Artist; Paul of the Finsbury Park Deltics



 Survivors' Poetry
promoting poetry by survivors
of mental distress

“The Survivors’ Poetry is great, brilliant and lots of fun.”

see our calendar for
open-mic nights,
poetry readings,
workshops and book
launches

“marvellous,
wonderful fabulous,
vital etc...”

“I’ve been to several of these
poetry nights in London. It feels
like a piece of history. I think
that’s good.”

“Very welcoming and well organised.
encouraging and confidence building,
inspiring and uplifting!”

“Most amazing people”

“very friendly and needed”

“more than good value”



Survivors' Poetry {SP} is a unique national charity which promotes the writing of survivors of mental distress. Please visit :

www.survivorspoetry.org for more information or please 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. *Poetry Express* reflects the expression of interest, as well as poetry and prose, of the survivor community. SP features a mix of contributions.

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Editor: Dave Russell

Art Editor, Coordinator and Typesetter:

Blanche Donnery

Editorial Team:

Blanche Donnery, Roy Birch & Simon Jenner

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Office Address:

Studio 11, Bickerton House

25-27 Bickerton Road

London N19 5JT

Tel +44 {0}20 7281 4654

info@survivorspoetry.org.uk

www.survivorspoetry.org

Patrons:

Mario Petrucci, Debjani Chatterjee MBE

Trustees:

Marius Jankowski (Chair), Celia Potterton, Peter Street, Robert Hertner.

Staff:

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

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Dave Russell (Reviews & Events), Xochitl Tuck & Razz (Poetry Café Events' Coordinators).

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Editorial

Dave Russell

2012 got off to a good start with a lively night at the Poetry Cafe on January 12th, headed by the highly innovative Stanley BaD. Usual rousing opening from Razz, with the poem I Survived Christmas, and the song Social Scroungers. This was followed by the poem Ancestors, a panoramic series of flashbacks embracing World War II, with the memorable line: 'new diseases in the air; I hope mine isn't rabies', and Bald Spot. On request, he later performed his epic Kylie's Bum, a never-failing crowd-stopper. Some laconic wit from Mark Knight (who had a friend commit suicide last October). Four Simple Questions, is an infectious chanting rhythm, makes wistful comparisons between what it was like with someone, and what it is like without, She Thinks I am a Bed charmingly portrays the perambulations of a dad with a four-year old child, whose sensations gave the poem its title. Some social realism from David Kessel, who firstly outlined his ancestry: two highly contrary grandfathers: a blackshirt poet and a Jewish tailor. Some pastoral beginnings with The Songthrush, A Vixen, and On a Welsh Hillside – which mentions a fox picking a lamb carcase. But then on to his highly familiar territory with London: 'City of Chaplin & M15 . . . moneyed nothingness . . . incendiary to the spirits of a broken, bitter people . . .' Dave Skull reminded the audience of Creative Routes/Mad Pride's campaign against benefit cuts, for which there are many concerts. He did a stirring a cappella version of Edgar Broughton's Brixton Riots, whose relevance remains today. He stated his preference for turning traditional love songs on their head. Plaster Saint is in memory of Marc Bolan; telling phrase with the double-entendre 'brutal mark of Cain'. Work Capability Assessment explores the concept of 'velvet gloves and iron fists' in relating to the assessing authority. The Ministry of Love (everyone knows the allusion from Orwell's 1984), is Dave's highly poignant adaptation of Blake's Jerusalem – pinpointing the hypocrisy of the agents of oppression. Jason Wye gave a set with his usual improvised humour; key word this time was 'table'. Gary, a newcomer, read a charming poem Fish: "we're gonna play like Dolphins", and then In the Strand and Edinburgh 2010. Chris Gordon graphically described the first performance scenario of Stravinsky's Rites of Spring – with great humorous personal detail (including mis-spelled name) – an ever-appropriate reminder of highly significant works which initially seem abject failures. This piece was condemned as cacophony. Scribbler (Stuart Black) was once again on form. Labels expresses rightful resentment against categorisation, and a boss who should experience the 'role reversal' of being put in the dole queue. Stutter Poem showed his humour and stage craft; in Guide he imagines himself as a guide dog. Coughs and Sneezes he related to a protest demonstration on Westminster Bridge: memorable lines in "I've got contagious diseases; the virus is you, the virus is me". The evening concluded with Lucy Carrington and some fine Spanish songs from Didi.

Stanley BaD, musically, they are remarkably innovative, featuring synthesizer and accordion played by Bad Moth, with the first ever featuring of a lap steel guitarist, Matt

Steele ('Lapsed Eel'. Instrumentally, I found their set totally gripping. The keyboard really was used to maximum. I did, however, find some of the vocals indistinct. Their set started with Rainbows [Bad]; I like the idea of 'lady cloud/man cloud' and a multi-coloured, quasi-rainbow feather. The second number, Investigation, had strong echoes of Brecht/Weill's Alabammy Song. Bus Don't Stop, Beans, Peas and Rice for Tea: basic sustenance for the creative; interesting reference to being sustained by Linda McCartney's pies. This was followed by Trip Down Memory Lane and The Dancing Carrot – reat Edward Lear-ish humour: an animate carrot has a sip of LSD spiced tea, then turns into a two-legged dancing woman. then Squidgy and Blue is a charmingly tacky love song: I knead you/to stick my posters to the wall/ but they always fall down". Light Bulb is a piece of black humour; a girl comes to grief by consuming cyclohexane; in the process she is convinced she is a lightbulb. The Voice is an interesting gloss on the "do you hear voices?" theme, beloved of the psychiatric system. The suicide temptation voice is circumvented and defeated. There is a realisation that the voice is inside one's head and can be controlled. Finally, in response to cries for an encore, Ashby-de-la-Zouch (which is the most inland town in the UK). Interesting observations here: "I never regret I dream the same dream . . . who cares what the future has been . . . what your past is going to be". (For what they say about themselves, see page . . .)

Lively session in February, and very lively one Adam Horovitz in March - contrasting talents of father and son. April 12th featured Peter Brown and Markiza, committed singer-songwriters over from Malaysia.

Tottenham Chances, on January 26th, held a highly successful Robert Burns celebration. Another Good session in February. The refurbishment of the premises proceeds apace. The Poetry Workshops, chaired by Razz, continue Tuesday fortnightly at Swiss Cottage Library at 2pm: the next sessions are on January 24th, February 11th and February 15th. After a period of considerable anxiety, there is some reassurance about our funding in the immediate future. Over the first quarter of this year, the utmost effort is imperative to show that we are positive, dynamic and determined. On the positive side, we recently appointed Mr Robert Hertner as a trustee. Robert is extremely well versed in the net, and in high-level finance. His dynamic input includes establishing Survivors as a global broadcasting network. If we all pull together, we can show ourselves willing and able. Let 2012 be positive!

Welcome to our world, yours too, probably. There's less about poetry in this quarterly issue, and I hope you'll forgive that and look at the new podcasts. Otherwise, change, and contumely. The world of poetry and mental health can graph each well in a parallel if jagged fashion. Provision for one usually means support and provision for the other, and in times of prosperity it's axiomatic that both find relief. In times like these one kind of poetry can harden, even shrill itself to a barbed point – with luck, poisoned. Satire thrives, but distress collapses in on itself. The one can advertise like murder; the latter—well, it feels like murder when support is taken away, and it seems the deaths of the distressed help the great architects of national austerity balance their books. A regrettable necessity, like the retention of gun licences requiring a blood-sacrifice of relatives; or the death of thousands to retain a national position in Afghanistan.

One essential is a roof over one's head. Since 2007 I've been active about the empty properties, those that revert to the Crown or Duchies when no relative can be found, and are sold on. I've campaigned for these and their attached monies to be released to co-operatives, Housing Associations and Councils, perhaps leased, so that they can't be sold off. These very different properties can be utilised for everything from community projects to Housing. After writing at his personal invitation to Communities Minister Nick Hurd, twice over a period of 13 months, I finally got a response – from my last emails and letters of November 22nd. The response was simply dated 'January 2012' like a circular and one Mandla Goldsmith – to whom it was passed at the Office for Civil Society – responded. Nick had passed the buck to her; she was now passing it back to me to pass again to the Treasury Solicitors; Department as the Crown's Nominee: the solicitors Farrer & Co. for the Duchies. Clear so far?

We've had of course the public scuffle over the recently proposed 'cap' of Housing Benefits at £26,000. Even Labour struggled up from their supine position. As if the benefit scum was siphoning off hard-earned bankers' bonuses. The truth, of course, is these are artificially inflated rents caused by the refusal to lower rents – let's be clear it's not capitalism. Developers prefer empty properties to responding to true market forces which are naturally plummeting, and making a small dent. It's the same with commercial properties. It's not true you can't lease a commercial property. If you put it at £100 a week you won't have much trouble. It brings more rent than emptiness but lets the cartels down. All salaries and wages are driven by the pegging of rent and property prices to each other, and have been since the greater disposable income of working people in the mid-1960s, and the abolition of the protection (a more moral capping) in the landmark Rent Act of 1974. Add to this the selling off of council property so that it can lie empty or decay – so get sold to property tycoons to develop to uninhabitable hutches – and you complete the picture. In Amsterdam, and Holland generally, there's a rule that you must alternate a private tenant with a state one. And if a property remains unoccupied for three

years it's repossessed by the state. The population density in Amsterdam rivals Paris and exceeds London but they manage. The continent is not so property-driven as the UK.

For a series of reasons, delay in consultancies being offered to consultants (the Arts Council were cutting themselves in half) and other delays, we weren't able to bid for various monies till very late in the day. In June, Blanche warned us that given our overheads, we'd have to make her and Roy redundant in September. I refused that till we had the result of funding (patchy, it could almost all come through) till the end of January. For one thing, if Blanche had gone in September there'd have been no Poetry Express #37 or #38 and no Quarterly Management Accounts to present to the Arts Council (amongst others, including our accountant), for them to release our next tranche of the grant. And without Roy no projects can be bidden for. My salary would be at risk too, which I saw clearly with all the figures I mulled over and worked at with our then Chair Phil Ruthen, who's now Special Advisor (not, like Terry Waite, a hostage to fortune). Well I took what I hope was an ethical decision and delayed what I hope are temporary redundancies for as long as I could. The result is that there's no more salary for anyone at present; Roy and I keep on in more or else voluntary capacity till we discover the results. Funds are swimming in, and we should greet them with gently smiling jaws. The Arts Council have confirmed their support from 2012-15, and we continue. But Blanche isn't here, and might not be back. Roy and I are – and Roy deserves a huge vote of thanks. I'd also like to thank our faithful volunteers and those who also receive no monies from us. Blanche, Dave Russell, Xochitl Tuck, Razz. It's due to their selflessness that you're reading this.

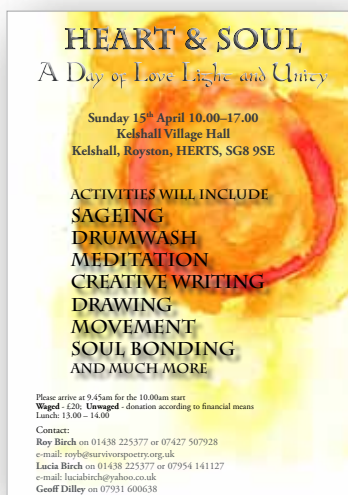
Nick said when we met 'Simon, don't we know each other?' and I encouraged that, a College friend. But it was at the Other Place and the Other Nick I was at College with. His (I speak of Clegg) friends were Libertarian Tories who tried to ambush me on Library Duty every night, a sitting politico, and urge me to their comparatively enlightened views. Personal liberty (remember it was Clause 28 time, and this seemed almost enlightened, if weasel-themed) would be cross-fertilised with fiscal 'Classical Liberal' economics. I resisted it then and we now have the legacy of the 1980s: free rampant capitalism, self-regulating self-serving, curiously not self-bankrupting; and of course we now have that remarkable phenomenon, the nationalisation of the rich and privatisation of the poor. Some of these phrases might be familiar. The e-campaigns since late 2009 have transformed the territory, all over the world, whether against torture and homophobia, or nationalising forests and not letting Murdoch and BSkyB own the world, these campaigns have bitten. I'd like to know your thoughts and at we might mangle in the way of our own. Write to me at 'simon@survivorspoetry.org.uk'. Let's have (I suppose in a slightly less dramatic away), a British Spring, or a Survivors' Spring of identifiable goals. Otherwise many of you are familiar with Avaaz, 38 degrees, Care2, and One.org. Keep clicking them and us. It keeps us all alive.

Outreach

Roy Birch

Since the crippling loss of RFO status in 2006, running a meaningful Outreach programme has been extremely difficult. A significant part of Outreach in recent times has been Mentoring Scheme Book Launches and visits to Survivor poets. Another, and possibly more significant part, has been the Vale House Project, with its unique combination of Meditation, Creative Writing, and Reiki, presented as a single-unit therapeutic activity with addicts in a residential recovery programme.

Sadly, Vale House has been closed. But, as the old adage has it, every cloud has a silver lining. The original Vale House project has taken up residence at Safety Net, a recently opened Mental Health Service Users' Drop-In. This has shifted the project's emphasis somewhat, as the needs of Mental Health Survivors are subtly different from those of recovering addicts. I am happy to be able to tell you however, that the effect of the project is no less profound in a Mental Health Drop-In than it was in a Residential Drug Re-Hab.



The real silver lining though, consists of the programme that has developed to provide after-care for the recovering addicts who were cut adrift by the closure of Vale House.

On the second Sunday of each month, a day-long session is held at Kelshall Village Hall, near Royston. The day consists of meditation,

creative writing, art, movement, music, soul-bonding exercises, discussions, cleansing rituals etc. The sessions are hugely successful and a joy to be part of, and are beginning to attract the interest of members of the after-care and well-being community.

One of the genuine high-points of the SP Outreach calendar is the Stevenage Survivors' Creative Therapy Day. Held at the Mid-Herts MIND Well-Being Centre in Stevenage, this third running of the annual event drew 63 people, most of them Mental Health Service Users. The Day ran from 10am until 8pm, and there was barely a dull or a quiet moment.

The Creative Therapy Day consists of workshops facilitated by members of Stevenage Survivors Creative Writing Group, most of whom are mental health survivors, plus Tarot Readings and an Open-mic session to round the event off. This year there were

two Creative Writing workshops, EFT, Reflexology, the Vale House Project, an all-day Creative Art workshop, a Meditation group, all-day Tarot Reading, and a truly awesome Open-Mike session. Lunch was provided. The day was free of charge, thanks to generous funding from the Hertfordshire NHS Health Inequalities Fund.



Circumstances decreed that this year, for the first time, one of the workshops was facilitated by someone who was not a member of Stevenage Survivors. It was possibly appropriate that such should be the case, as interest in the event has been shown by a local artists collective, and by Stevenage College. Perhaps next year the event will be able to expand.

If I were to mention everyone who contributed to the success of a truly wonderful day, I would be here all night. They know who they are and I thank them from the bottom of my heart. They are all magnificent people, and it is thanks to them that the day was nothing short of amazing.

The current round of the Mentoring Scheme, made possible by funding from Grants for the Arts, has once again produced some extremely fine writing. I continue to be pleasantly surprised by the ability of the mentee/mentor partnerships to produce work of such profoundly fine quality. The mentees-in-waiting for the next round of the Scheme are demonstrating an equal amount of potential and I am confident that the standard will in no way diminish.

It is a testament to the quality of SP mentors, the dedication of SP to the principle of helping survivor poets to become published, and the determination of the poets themselves, who are frequently ill, to create work of meaningful value, that the quality of the completed collections continues to improve. A little more financial assistance from ACE would enable SP to improve and expand the mentoring Scheme beyond all recognition, for the benefit of all concerned. Here endeth the lesson.

Poetry of Survival: HOW SOME HOLOCAUST CHILDREN LEARNED TO CONQUER DEATH by Thomas Ország Land

Many child survivors of the Holocaust owed their lives to the deadly serious business of games played collectively or alone, that enabled them to adjust to dangerous situations, sometimes even to control them, and to relieve tension in relative safety. These survival mechanisms were rooted in poetry.

In a moving memoir reminiscent of Anne Frank's diary, Professor Zsuzsanna Ozsváth of the University of Texas describes the role played by games in her own, childhood victory over death in the climax of war and in the face of prolonged, organized racist mass murder in Hungary. Her experience of the life-preserving games of Jewish children during the Holocaust in Budapest is very close to my own. Other accounts are turning up elsewhere, often in verse.

If you read just one of the thousands of personal Holocaust memoirs published nowadays by the thinning, final generation of Jewish survivors, perhaps this one – *When the Danube Ran Red* By Zsuzsanna Ozsváth, Syracuse University Press, 2010, Hardcover, 184pp. \$17.95, ISBN-10: 0815609809 & 13: 978-0815609803 – should be it.

She was then devotedly preparing for the promise of a career as a poet and concert pianist. Her ability amidst the battle to absorb herself in the solitary game of reciting poetry and playing the piano in the absence of an instrument may have saved her life.

A dozen years later, she left Hungary illegally, taking with her just one valuable possession: a collection of verse by Miklós Radnóti (1909-1944), enslaved and murdered by fellow Hungarians because of his Jewish birth despite his well documented, sincere conversion to Catholicism.

Her excellent English translation of that book, composed in collaboration with the American poet Frederick Turner, has greatly contributed to Radnóti's worldwide reputation today as perhaps the greatest among the Holocaust poets. In an imaginary dialogue with the Prophet Nahum, Radnóti describes the total war engulfing Nazi-occupied Europe (in the Ozsváth/Turner translation published in *Foamy Sky*, Princeton University Press, 1992 & Corvnia/Budapest, 2002):

Poet:

...now the swift nations
slay one another, the human soul stands as naked as Niniveh.
Then to what purpose the exhortations, the hellish green clouds of
the locusts, what purpose? when humans are baser than animals!
Here and elsewhere they smash on the walls the innocent infants,
steeple are torches, homesteads flower as furnaces, households
roast in their embers, in smoke the factories rise up and vanish.
Streets full of people on fire go galloping, sink with a rumble,
hugely embedded the bomb-burst shatters masses asunder;
shrunk as cowpats on fields in the summer, the dead are lying
piled in the plazas and squares of their cities; and as it was written
all that you prophesied now is fulfilled. But say, what brought you
back to the earth from the primal dustcloud?

Prophet:

Wrath: that forever
orphaned the children of men must serve in the hosts of the
blasphemous,
shaped but not natured like men – and that I might see the
unclean
citadel's fall and unto these latter days speak and bear witness...

Today she is the Leah and Paul Lewis Chair of Holocaust Studies and professor of literature and history of ideas at Texas University in Dallas. Her writing and lectures have won her a string of distinguished honours including an American Fulbright and a top Hungarian Academy of Sciences award. Her new memoir is a profoundly moving work of literary as well as academic merit.



Zsuzsanna Ozsváth... *a moving memoir*

The title of the book refers to a scene witnessed by Zsuzsa the child, enacted nightly along the banks of the River Danube throughout the siege, when the Hungarian Nazis executed groups of Jewish captives, men women and children, bound by ropes in pairs to prevent survival. The idea was that if one had by chance escaped death by shooting, the survivor might still be dragged down by the weight of the attached corpse.

“Nobody screamed,” she recalls, “nobody cried. You could hear nothing but the shots and the splash of the bodies falling into the red foam (of) the river, which flowed... like blood.”

The Radnóti poems today are helping Hungary to comprehend the tragedy. This country of fewer than 10m souls was responsible for the humiliation and murder of some 600,000 of its Jewish citizens during the final phases of the Second World war, most of them brutally delivered for petty financial gain to the gas chambers of Auschwitz.

Zsuzsa and many other Jews crammed into the vermin-infested ghetto tenements of Budapest or hiding elsewhere in the capital escaped deportation. But they had to live with the constant threat of mass murder and worse – there was worse – meted out by the armed thugs of the Hungarian Arrow-Cross/Nyilas party, the role models of the neo-Nazi rabble on the rise today throughout Eastern Europe.

Her greatest secret fear was enforced separation from her beloved parents. That came to pass as the invading Soviets smashed through the combined German and Hungarian defences. But even then, she managed to keep her calm, alone in hiding, sustained by poetry and music.

The ferocity of the three-month siege, including vicious hand-to-hand fighting under constant Allied aerial bombardment, is compared by historians to the earlier battle for Stalingrad. But unlike Budapest, Stalingrad had been at least emptied of its residents. The siege of Budapest raged over the heads of 800,000 civilian witnesses, mostly women and children. The death toll approached 160,000. While the children composed their verse and played their games to delay death, many combatants on both sides reserved their last bullets for themselves for fear of being captured alive by their savage opponents.

Even during the final confrontations, the orgy of anti-Semitic violence continued in the ghetto. Zsuzsa, I, and all the others I know who in any way participated in the siege of Budapest have never overcome, or even attempted to overcome the experience.

Nearly seven decades after the event, Zsuzsa feels still indebted to countless miracles incorporated in the poems and games ghetto children created to distance themselves from the face of death. These usually took the shape of a human face.

There was Erzsébet (Erzsi) Fajó, Zsuzsa’s gentile playmate, friend and nanny who risked all for the

survival of her employers who in turn eventually adopted her. Her name today is preserved by an olive tree planted in her memory in the Garden of the Righteous at Yad Vashem in Jerusalem.

There was the family’s kindly, grey-moustached postman who turned up unexpectedly to seek out Zsuzsa in the ghetto when she was separated from her parents after witnessing her first massacre staged by the Arrow-Cross. He must have been aware of the peril he risked as he delivered to the tearful child messages of hope from her mother.

And there was a uniformed member of a Nazi raiding party dragging away the Jews, whose hastily whispered advice saved the entire family. Was he an angel? Or a decent cop? Or a member of the armed Zionist resistance that regularly infiltrated the ranks of the killers to save their victims?

The imagination of the temporarily unsupervised children flared as they wrote and recited their poems and played in an atmosphere of heightened tension approaching the state of collective hysteria endured by their families. The poems and games gave the children “space,” the author recalls, “that allowed us to leave behind the world of the adults as well as the ghetto house and with it the Germans, our fear of separation and the threat of death.”

They acted out well-known dramas in verse or invented new ones, reflecting the cultural pursuits of their community. “Good morning, Ophelia,” the ghetto children no longer allowed to attend school greeted each other in the morning, or “Good morning, Tristan,” or “Good morning, Rigoletto!”

Picking up the game, she relates, the person so addressed would try to meet the challenge by answering the call and stepping into the chosen theatrical role. The children sometimes changed the script to suit the prevailing mood or circumstance. They played feverishly together throughout the day and composed and rehearsed new scenes alone in their minds late into the night.

Some children managed to save lives through verse and play by diffusing potentially lethal situations, adds Professor George Eisen, Executive Director and Associate Vice-President at Nazareth College of Rochester, New York.

His pioneering, interdisciplinary study of the ghettos and concentration camps of Europe (*Children & Play in the Holocaust: Games Among the Shadows*, Massachusetts University Press, 1988 & *Corvina/Budapest 1990*) cites instances of children’s games staged to divert the attention of guards from forbidden activities punishable by death, such as smuggling food or participating in educational activities.

Eisen is also a Jewish survivor of the Hungarian Holocaust and the siege of Budapest. He poignantly quotes a five-year old girl engaged in serious conversation with her doll:



Do not cry, little one!
When the Germans come
to grab you...
I will not leave you.

I add below my own recollection of a collective, unconscious endeavour by Jewish children in a tenement not far from Zsuzsa's apartment block to express and relieve through play their community's suppressed fear of death:

Ghetto Game

Beneath a gloomy square of the sky
in the shadow of awesome, looming walls,
a crowd of kids met day after day
to test, to learn in that well of twilight
which ones in the block were destined to die.

Just a few at a time. Our faces were grey
and small, our eyes were clouded with fear.
We hung the Book and a key on a thread –
for we understood the path of death
yet could not make it go away.

We huddled close with lonely dread
in our hearts. The Bible turned around
and with it, the key. They came to rest
at random to point at a ghetto child.
He would be the first among the dead.

The block has grown, the world progressed.
I, the survivor, stand in the sunlight
aware of the cloud in every eye
as fear of the future grips the globe,
rekindling doom in every breast.

The most moving record of a Holocaust survival game that I know is in Zsuzsa's book. It describes the triumph of a terrified, starving girl over a nightmare endured during three days and nights at the height of the siege when she was confined to a cupboard in an abandoned, sprawling apartment by the river, exposed to heavy machinegun fire and intermittent bombing.

She recalls: "I decided to practice the piano in my head... and started to imagine I was playing Beethoven's F-Minor sonata, op. 3, from the first measure to the last. Some passages went very well, some not at all. While my right hand's fingers were really singing in the second part, my left hand's fingers were too slow playing the triplets in the fourth part.

"I need to practice this more, I thought. But I did not go back to work on those passages; rather I started to play the second sonata in A Major; and again, I thought through every single note. In the meantime, the bombing started anew . . . and (I) recited poetry."

(Thomas Ország-Land is a poet and award-winning foreign correspondent. *Deathmarch*, the fourth edition of his translation from the *Hungarian of Holocaust Poetry* by Miklós Radnóti, was published by Snakeskin and The Penniless Press, both in England, in 2009)



The latest Survivors' Poetry videos performed by one of our esteemed founders, Peter Campbell:

1. Fourth Station
<http://vimeo.com/34608996>

2. A Madman Teaching
<http://vimeo.com/34611896>

3. New Looney
<http://vimeo.com/34611154>

latest video

BROADSHEET

Dreamtime Over Paradise

Dreamtime over paradise, lost in a flood of gin and tonic
alone on a beach her glass aching for a moist black trick
the last precious vestige of blue-blooded desire,
a license to print poetry in motion and haunted music
Release the valve and release the pullcord, locked
away searching for the motherboard
money sweats in the heat of the sun
above and below Princess Margaret's sacred dartboard
a spratt to catch a mackerel on the run

Read me like a lamp-post and retain your foliage
there's a spring inside a slow burning chimney
alone on a beach her soft green eyes are hunted
with hunger

Salvage and steal her moist glazed treasure
your future depends on your dream, so go to sleep
fluttering above a jackpot staircase in stockings
beetroot feet

A cardboard sausage wrapped in a red liquorice
bootlace
Princess tread softly as you slip betwixt slumber
and disgrace
dreaming in paradise, lost in a flood of gin and tonic
alone on a beach watching the dolphins quaff and sink
her dartboard is aching for a perfect black prick
full of vitamins c-u and dancing music
the last precious vestige of blue blooded desire
out of reach the cry of love and laughter
Like a lamb entombed in a tropical slaughter
it's enough to make your third eye water.

Anthony Moore

On not being disappointed

Less can be more,
And do not forget —
A lot of things,
Are as good as they get!

Kevin Green

Spider in the Bathroom

Spider in the bathroom
alisons scared
ten minute tony to the rescue
does anyone care
spider in the bathroom
alison screams
ten minute rescue down
another can with custard creams
spider in the bathroom
alison shrieks
shovel broken cobwebs
into a dipso dream
spider in the bathroom
alison leaves
come into my parlour
pour yourself a breeze

Anthony Moore

Being Badly Behaved

I jump in and out of the room
Smoking cigarettes and renewing my chewing gum
I was a difficult child and now a challenging adult
Challenging to myself and sometimes to others
Always a rebel in one way or another
Seeing my role as a bee
Buzzing in and out of a hive
Carry movement with a knock on
With my stripy yellow and black frock on
My friends watch me fly and
Wonder why this vital bee has lost her sting
Going round in circles making a ring
A tissue a tissue we all fall down
Who is the lady with the golden crown
She wants to rise up and no longer drown
In mouldy sandwiches and stored up food
Sometimes wise and sometimes crude
Sometimes raging and occasionally rude.

Jo Silver

She Lives

She lives in the sugar bowl
Not the football stadium
She lives in near the coffee pitcher
And she's been dating them

G David Schwartz

I Just Want To Put My Lips

I just want to put my lips
On your sacred place
Oh don't get up upset now
You know I mean your face
I just kiss and tell
Everyone everywhere
And you can go to heck
If you do not care

G David Schwartz

She Said She Loved Me

She said she loved me
and I know why
She did not want
To tell me lies
for no one cares
I surmise
love just abandons
those who tell lies

G David Schwartz

Bodacious Tatas

I do love her breasts
They are soft, they are the best
And I do not need rest
When I begin loving them
I do love her beautiful dress
They are really of the best
And you know where I am going
Yes, they are the best

G David Schwartz

The Village

I felt like a lamb amongst a pack of wolves. The village was like an ingrowing toe-nail. Rife with racism, the small-minded bourgeois villagers wanted to know the back-end of you, ready to pounce, slavering for the kill. How I hated it there. I didn't fit in. As for trusting them...! But still, I had the Samaritans and their magic phone number 323456 for a shoulder to cry on and a friend to talk to. They were a real light in the darkness for me —

These suburban dwellers all had heads twisted to one side, so it was difficult to relate to them and make successful eye contact. They said I was 'weird'. I thought they were. They all spoke a language that I couldn't understand. It was as if they were of a different species to me. I didn't want to learn their strange tongue or worship their upside down totems and, materialistic fetishes like status, power, money etc., and they were all 6-faced as far as I was concerned.

I hid in my room to learn my own language and work out my own religion and try to practise it without fear of persecution or being proselytised by the local atavistic cannibals. I would look to find a place for myself 'somewhere over the rainbow' by learning the philosophy in the coffee dregs at the bottom of a cup or by seeing whales, dolphins and dragons in the slowly sailing clouds above or by applying the zen of putting on eye pencil seated on a jolting bus – also painting my nails and staring through the shiny, sparkling lacquer into a cosmic infinity... 'they' couldn't catch me there...

As I wouldn't conform and was poor I survived by legerdemain — certainly obeying Maggie Thatcher in her wish to 'return to Victorian values' like a helpless orphan out of Dickens or Mrs. Gaskell! In many ways, I thought, things hadn't changed since then, that much, anyway — apart from the sewers and free prescriptions.

Then I realised I'd reached this state in life by stumbling blindfolded through a masked ball and that the resulting pain had sharpened my dulled wits and perceptions – my eyes were beginning to 'see'. So many actors and games, so many shady jugglers with the truth. And my ears were beginning to 'hear' – for instance, the sound of cruelty in a so-called friend's voice over the phone, stabbing through my body like a torturer's instrument and I could hear the gravelly, sadistic pleasure in the voice of this torturer like the scream of a vulture – I could hear a burst of sardonic laughter erupting like a cluster bomb and I would try to stay calm and cultivate both sense and sensibility in my daily life, where it seemed that the squire still dwelt at the manor and I was but the lowly serf...

It was all like a lethal game of poker, baccarat, or roulette with the odds stacked against me as I played with my imaginary friends in the books I took refuge in and tried to learn from – the books, my trusted allies in a bloody war, the Cold War of them against me, they who didn't believe in 'glasnost' or equal rights...

I sing the blues eternally, wild-eyed, wild-haired in a concrete wilderness and then I hide in my bunker and comfort myself in sleep, hoping that one day I'll wake up to see a victorious red and gold SUN, whose loving rays will embrace and hold me and keep me safe

Angela Morkos

Battle of the Brain – and to – ‘breathe’...

Prose Poem - Recent experience - Written as was - deliberatory not edited

You fight – through the hiss and mist of oxygen – holding on to life – love – just to survive the moment - the minute – your dimmed – drained – dulled senses are almost depleted - the remaining imprisoned brain cells – scream out for support – for signals of acknowledgment – those vital return signs - function messages registering that all organs and sensors haven’t yet - all - fully failed.

The –‘back-up system’ - is on dangerous overload – and will soon – ‘shut-down’.

Yes – oh - Yes – the physical body must survive – this is pre-programmed – but at what cost to an irreparable mental and anxiety aneurism?.

If and when you survive – further trauma – cannot be repeated –‘re-booted’ at this intensity for at least 4hours. Brain respite time will not allow re-activation until full stem food nutrition is at least replenished - hopefully replaced – all be it by means of artificially stimulation.

You are physically ailing – degenerative – terminal decline continues – and the brain – even with its massive appetite for intravenous fuel and heavy intakes of anti-bodied – ‘big-league’ – ‘brand-named’ depressants – (some maintaining the up’s – others controlling the – down) - records a ‘fault-line’- failing – no longer in control of – ‘the body incorporated’.

This is that time – ‘nerve end’ – you talk – you make no sense – you listen – but cannot logically comprehend – you read – but the words do not percolate off the page and penetrate your conscience – you try to reason – evaluate – but instead you sweat – panic – see multi-coloured visions worthy of any sci-fi or horror ‘blockbuster’- dreamscape. You are truly in – a world of your own – know as –‘pre-death hell’.

This we are told – is severe clinical anxiety delusional depression.

My body - by becoming sick has over time infected the mind – a mind that has tried for so long to cope – manage my life – a mind now with little or no remaining matter.- just – ‘low-grade’ – ‘brain-batter’.

Distress is a constant – ill mannered companion – Anxiety is an awful permanent ‘bed-fellow’ – fear is a living second ghostly shadow.

Surviving is simply - factually just – ‘staying alive’

All be it in a – ‘cloned clinical sense’!!!.

John Hirst.

Vincent’s Vase

(National Art Gallery)

Small insignificant room,
Almost a bypass, a corridor,
To treasures unlimited.

Just like its original placement
His modest guest bedroom.
Yellow heads . . . not dead,
Now over one hundred years in bloom.

Mesmerised school children, pay homage,
They sprawl at his feet.
In uniforms of the co-ordinated establishment
They reproduce in colour, multiple impressions,
Dozens of cluster headed starry sunflowers.

Evocative then, full of life, hope, friendship,
Everything from the magic manic, ‘a good paint day’.

Not faded into depression, and withered death
But, a living legacy, a flourish from the flowerman.

Art students and ‘Gogh’s groupies’ fight for space
With the ‘paintball pupils’ . . . holding sway.

Sir, Sir, I’ve painted this before, do I have to do it again?
Sir, Sir, my mum say’s mine is better than this old one!!
Sir, Sir, was he as old as me when he painted that?
Sir, Sir, why can’t we paint it bigger, like he did?
Sir, Sir, why are we using crayons when he used oils?

John Hirst

On The Wind

The wind comes in
rattling the window.
Expecting a cup of tea.
Have you ever had paper
blowing everywhere?
This is what it's like,
and I'll have the tea.
The wind can mind its own
business.

Keith Murdoch

Little Girl Lost

Jolt out of bed in the middle of the night.
Crawl into a corner and stay out of sight.
Sweat soaked shirt binds to my skin.
Screams of a child echo within.

Concealed past haunting my dreams.
Contain the answers I desperately need
Through fragments of moments-passing thoughts
I embark on a journey for little girl lost.

Is she hiding in a closet barely even five.
Covered in bruises clinging to rainbow bright.
She hears the fighting from out in the hall.
Words barely filtered through paper thin walls.

She opens her mouth unable to speak.
Who would protect her-who would believe?
The signs are brushed off shes white trailer trash.
Pieces of little girl lost laid through out my past

Is she sitting in her room feeling scared and alone.
As hurtful words and unloving hands seem to take hold.
Crippling her body poisoning her mind.
Suffering in silence the only way to survive.

Regurgitate the lies you forced me to tell
They replaced the memories I know them so well.
Now all of the images slowly seep threw
Unraveling the lies uncovering the truth.

Is she still wandering in a broken down trailer park.
Consequences weighing heavily on an innocent heart
Clothes are too small torn shoes on her feet
Overwhelming hunger with nothing to eat

She locked it away internalized the pain
I bare the burden until this day
A treacherous journey but no matter the cost
I will never give up on little girl lost
Is she lying in the dark heart full of dread
As a grown man crawls into her bed.
With calloused hands on her baby soft skin.
He warns her not to scream she holds it in.

Each passing moment turned into years
I am beginning to choke on innocent tears.
She's found her voice heard through each memory
Little girl lost is finally free.

Van Woja

Clarity and Identity

I'm asking myself
"Who is me?"
I have a body
And eyes that see,
I suppose I have
An identity.
I hope that I
Still have a soul —
That it's intact
And it is whole;
And that I have
An inner voice,
The capacity
To make a choice —
And can remember
What I've done,
And see ahead
The road to run.

Kevin Green

The Flight

The drugs that numb the brain,
bring about intelligence drain.
Nurse here give out the tablets,
some think we should be seen by vets.
All I needed was to talk,
not to take sugar covered chalk.

Queue here for your Citalopram
wait here for your Lithium.
Art therapist tell me just draw
for better than going to score.
Time to fight the good fight;
stand up tall with all they might

Psychiatrist and Therapists,
no wonder he's called The-rapist.
now they think they know who's me
no they don't I walk free.
Don't take their drugs that numb your brain
Don't let them wash you down the drain.

Mark Humphries

Siege / Survival Irene's Siege - A True Story of Survival

I begin with that overcrowded single bed,
my home in the winter of '44/45
when public affairs assumed a dismaying mask
and the threat of panic was graver even than death.
It wasn't very wide and it lacked a headboard,
its pillows were soaked in moisture from the wall
inside the entrance of the air-raid shelter
beneath a Nazi Arrow Cross Party centre.
I shared that bed through the siege of Budapest
with Irene, my mother, and my two big brothers,
one just 11, the other turning 15,
a Jewish family petrified in hiding.

A word for genocide had not been invented.
My dysentery was beyond control. Its stench
mingled with the cooking smells and the odour
of fear polluting the musty, smoke-filled cellar.
And the cellar was full of homicidal Nazis
at the brink of hysteria, under constant bombardment,
awaiting their fate as the Soviets approached the gates.
The law of the siege prescribed the execution
of carriers of communicable diseases
– like me. I think I was saved by the cotton wool
that I nightly stole from a nearby first-aid station.
It blocked the loo, and that was blamed for the stink.

My desperate mother had sought refuge from Auschwitz,
with a stack of doctored documents I still treasure,
in that howling den of hatred. A daring ploy:
she posed as the wife of an officer at the front
and claimed a vacant flat in that elegant building
that had been cleared of decent folks by the Nazis.
We were hardly allowed to use our looted flat,
its windows blown with the blasts, between the blackouts.
Irene had engaged in a calculated act
of audacious gamble, deliberately seeking out
the hunters, the hunters! the hunters, for they would least
expect to find the hunted within their pack.

Even I knew the odds. But I have survived to write this.
There might have been two alternatives: suicide
or terror and probable death in the ghetto, exposed
to hunger, disease and the fancy of uniformed bandits.
Instead, we lived with them and heard their descriptions
of what they had done and seen, as we helped each other
to play our roles in an endless performance for life.
We were observed all the time by a constant queue
that stretched past our bed to the overflowing lavatory.
Questions were raised about the persistent theft
of first-aid supplies. Then, in a rare lull of the air-raids,
the Gestapo swooped one day to arrest Irene.

And how we could act! . . . Victor the Wolf appeared
in the dusty cellar inspecting the huddled children.
A little rant he was, but preened like a hero: his Hitler
moustache was sculpted, his uniform carefully pressed.
His three-quarter burgundy leather jacket glowed,
his gun holster glittered in the paraffin light.
He was blunt: The game is up, we know who you are.

Your mother is off to the Danube, feeding the fish.
But you can save yourselves . . . If you are smart
and admit to the truth while you may, you will be safe
in a home we run in the region for nice little Jewboys.
What do you say? A wink: You know you can trust me.

But George, the oldest brother, confronted him:
How dare you slander the sons and the wife of an officer
above your rank? I shall report you at once!
Paul piled it on: You only act big with children
behind our father's back while he's doing his duty . . .
Go on, be brave at the front! As for me, I dried
my eyes to stare very hard, and tried not to blink.
Did our robust retort confuse the ambush?
What else might explain why Victor failed his chance
for the Arrowcross test of race – to look for proof
beneath the duvet in a country where only
Jews and some foreigners had their sons circumcised?

And Irene? More than six decades later, I reconstruct
the drama from her old stories, probably accurate.
She was small and strong. She was protected by passion.
A butcher's daughter in love with her gentleman husband,
at 37 she must have been at her prime,
entirely devoted to her refusal to die.
Expressive, widely set eyes, high cheekbones, arched brow.
Her firm and generous body was tried by hunger.
In a bygone existence, a mischievous brother once chased
me into the bathroom where she stood reaching towards
the towel: she smiled at me like a goddess and stamped
into my heart the glory of female beauty.

Now she stood in the over-draped drawing room
of a fortified Schwab Hill villa in Buda, adjacent
to Hotel Majestic, the base of Eichmann's detachment
administering the racial cleansing of Europe.
Before her, a line of suspects led up to an "expert"
of human classification, in charge of their fate.
The woman in front of my mother was a brunette,
like Irene, but you could not tell if she was a Jewess.
Distinctive Jewish features do not exist.
The disgruntled specialist wielding the final decision
was weary of whining. The woman at last
before his polished desk was too frightened to whine.

My mother watched as the woman unfolded some papers,
to be dismissed with a flick of his manicured fingers.
His hand reached forward in a continuing movement
as he rose from his chair and almost gently took hold
of her chignon hung lean against the nape of her neck.
He drew her head towards the electric light
above the fateful desk and carefully studied
the shape of her nose in profile. Her ashen lips
gave way to the mute, vibrating grimace of panic.
He did not pronounce a decision, just tossed the papers
into the bin. The queue moved forward again.
The whimpering woman was dragged out by two soldiers.

Irene then seized the pink hand and shook it with cordial
admiration. My dear doctor, she purred,
you amaze me. That Jewess might have deceived me.
But you have unmasked her. Accept my congratulations.
The official recognized a voice with authority.

Oh, madam, he clucked in toners of genuine modesty,
we do what we can, but the task is frightfully hard.
The devious Jews never cease to invent new tricks
to subvert the cause . . . But why are you here? She sighed
with suffering patience. He added: Our agents are urged
to be vigilant at this hour of national peril.
Still, they must answer for disturbing your peace.

And he sent her home to avert yet further distress,
escorted by four officers, with his apologies.
The vehicle's headlights were switched off: a precaution
despite the restful pause in the Allied bombing.
The empty, snowbound, freezing streets were lit
by the brilliant fireworks of the cloudless sky.
My abused and defenceless city lay numbed by terror.
A rumble of artillery fire bounced over
the Buda hills as the party crossed the wide river.
The crackle of small arms fire told of the raids
of Arrow Cross gangs on civilian shelters, staged
under pretext of hunting for Jews and deserters.

Few people ventured out between the curfews,
mostly women and children, driven by hunger.
Their young men were lost. Even the old and some boys
unfit to fight were being deployed in the path
of the Soviets by the German occupiers
and their pitiless local "brothers-in-arms".
And the city was being destroyed by the bombs so fast
that untended pain and panic reigned in the ruins.
Irene was of this city and knew every alley
far better than any military driver.
True to herself, she was to remain for life
faithful to her love of this treacherous city.

Thomas Land

Wilfred on War

(In remembrance of the poet and soldier Wilfred Owen)

Stenches in trenches
Rifles with bayonets, just . . .
One hundred metres apart.

Not 'mile-high' bombs
Death from a distance
I'm told there very smart.

Friendly fire!! – mass funeral pyre
All automated with a 'silicon-chip smile'
Clean kill, no uniform dirt, mud or mire.

War poet in residence, paid to write
Lap-top, spell check, politically correct
Creative licence, not a foot soldier in sight.

As I look down on you and your B52's
I ask who, why, and what... was the choice?
No lessons learned then... from 'my ghostly voice'.

John Hirst

(Written during the first days of the second Iraq War)

Easy Street

I've learnt to be patient —
my paltry, empty existence,
a few ex-prostitutes,
attempts at debauchery,
an animal eating luscious flowers
happy with salted peanuts, bread crumbs,
the occasional kipper for breakfast, blue cheese –
drawing my curtains when the mood suits,
looking out at clear blue skies,
the fading, dismal light,
ghosts in the trees opposite, terrible,
a wispy cloud over Redan Hill, the cemetery,
a BMW convertible, alloy wheels for a fast getaway.
Sitting here on Easy Street,
gossiping with my neighbours over the back fence,
Helen, the lady with the limp,
Wurzle, who Hoovers my stairs and landing,
waking me up early on a Monday morning,
and Kev, a retired bus driver with pointy ears,
a teenage boy who sleeps over, skeletal.
An alcoholic woman a couple of doors down
with dementia who can't remember if she's coming
or going, choking on her puke, a constant blue siren,
ambulance parked
outside her window
my haircut, a fried potato,
more indigestible onion rings
that are best alone, my memories,
how I arrived here
some beavers, hustling chicks with army husbands,
a girl called Susan from Alabama,
how she got here, I don't know,
doing jig-saw puzzles, reading the Fall of Rome
by Gibbon
Easy Street, police patrols, up and down my street,
a riot going on, Cheshire cats.
Five quid in the Funky,
money talks, bums, drunken bums
the content of my possessions I could fit into
the back of a taxi.

Simon Robson

Ex-Cleaner

Now that one of the ex-cleaners from where I work,
Nil Desperandum for the chosen few, Invisible Road,
has won 250,000 quid on Who Wants To Be A Millionaire,
I wish I'd got to know him better, ingratiating myself —
and he didn't bother to answer the last question.
I wish I'd taken the time to appreciate the extensive general
knowledge he had, reading Bertrand Russell, when I can
just about get my head around Kurt Vonnegut,
swimming turtles off the Galapagos Islands,
the reservoir of information he was, full retentive memory
capacity, sweeping up dust with his broom, crushing

cardboard in the yard, litres of detergent at his disposal, blistering the insides of your nostrils, knowing almost everything, encyclopaedic —

I wish I'd taken an interest in his glider stories, his days with the RAF, his walking trips along the South West coast from Poole harbour to Minehead, he said, Butlins, stretching his legs —
those RAF floating glider stories, how he occupied his weekends up in the clouds, never coming down, just missing the tops of trees, everyone below having cardiac arrests, spat upon by grit, spraying their waiting cars

I wish I hadn't pestered him for air freshener, aerosols, wafts of peach and magnolia for the smallest room, toilet paper, black bin liners for my bed-sit
I wish I hadn't been tedious, too opportunistic, testing his patience, Wellington's favourite stallion, Copenhagen, and where's he buried, off the A30...
Now that one of the ex-cleaners from where I work has won 250,000 quid on Who Wants To Be A Millionaire, I feel stupid, there's a photo of him on the front page of The Farnborough News, a pregnant daughter he's never seen for years, more miles walking —
I know I've wasted a golden opportunity -
yeah, I could have helped him 'derange his senses . . .'

I could have gambled away his money on Rimbaud and Dylan Thomas, 'salubrious' Swansea, poetry, now in The Premier League, drink and degenerate behaviour, nineteenth century French poetry, Baudelaire . . .

Women grinding their hips, turning loose, soirees on top of mountains, gilded splinters —
I could have helped him invest his money wisely in casinos and nightclubs, foreign locations like Greece, Cyprus and Crete —
we could have hired a boat, retracing the ancient route of Odysseus, my hero, sailing around the Aegean, island hopping, defying dangerous Cyclops odds, no midgets to disaster, playing The Sonics at full blare, High Times.

Simon Robson

Old Manual Typo

Jeanette says she hasn't seen an old manual typo in years, yet she seems cheerful enough banging away on mine, complaining about the print —
I try to apologise —
whatever, she says.
How she's avoiding her ex-army boyfriend by sleeping in his car —
I'm pumping up my inflatable bed in readiness —
and when she appears clutching a bottle of Echo Falls, knocking on my door, the keys of my typo will be greased, up and running with bicycle oil,

wham, bam, it'll be like the Tour de France, a fanfare of trumpets, yellow jerseys, lots of steep hills to negotiate, chases down the Champs Elysee, a test of love, speed and endurance.
I'd like to have the remedies for all her ills, her controlling boyfriend, everlasting toilet paper, but I haven't,
I apologise again
I live in a limbo of fried egg sandwiches for breakfast, a warm can of Holsten Pils, hoping one day to be set free me and my old manual typo, banging away.

Simon Robson

Four Police Cars

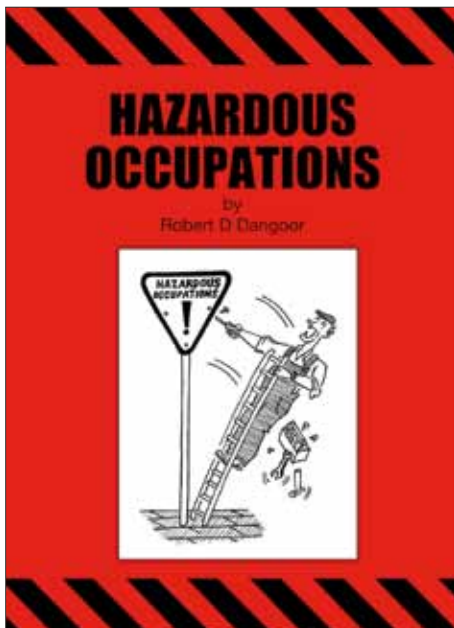
I've been reduced to bed-sit Aldershot, rough justice, a rusty saucepan, no sharp knives, they've all vanished, maybe outer space would be better, don't know? —
my rent increased by a fiver, rarely using the kitchen, cooking for myself —
four police cars, eight officers, burly men and women in blue uniforms, walky-talkies, no discernable accents.

What was occurring two doors down? —
four police cars parked outside my window, beautiful bed-sit Aldershot, the elderly Nepalese couple upstairs, Mr and Mrs Gurung, top of the housing list, their needs more deserving than mine
At least eight diligent officers of the law —
all clutching notebooks, written statements —
a remedial teenager with a drink problem, cracked ribs and a black eye, a boyfriend who's absconded to California, leaving her to feed the fish, a cloudy tank of dead fish.
Once she knocked on my door —
no cure for her ills.

Four police cars, sirens whirring.

Simon Robson

Hazardous Occupations Robert Dangoor M.D.



An incredibly witty and perceptive 'alternative glossary' outlining the main functionaries of, and participants in, a hypocritical capitalist society; everybody comes out crooked! I found the 120 'definitions' were extremely erratic in terms of incisiveness. My favourites are below:

GENERAL PRACTITIONER – An NHS GP runs out of "patience" because he's overworked and might have a nervous breakdown. A private GP can go out of business, if he doesn't have enough "patients."

SECRETARY – She has to keep her boss' secrets to herself.

BANKER – If he keeps hedging the wrong bet, the bank might go bust. The banker takes away the umbrella when it is snowing and he goes on a skiing holiday in Switzerland.

PORTER/Reporter – He knows what is going on in the neighbourhood but if he is indiscreet it might rebound on him.

CONTROLLING BOSS – He is in control of his staff but he cannot control himself.

RESTAURANT CUSTOMER – What's the damage waiter? Financially or medically?

PROPERTY MANAGER – Asked if he was busy. He answers, 'No. That's because we're fully let.'

BLACK CAB DRIVER - The customer wanted to go from A to B, not A to Z (unscrupulous drivers use their A to Z knowhow to take 'short cuts' and clock up a higher charge)

STUDENTS – They have no class.

BANKER – The head of a banking group goes on sick leave, till the end of the year due to fatigue. When he returns, should he not do "fatigue duty" – cleaning up the mess that his bank is in.

WRITER – He is asked, 'But do you make money?' The author replies, 'No, but I do make notes.'

TRANSGRESSOR – There's goodness in everyone, you have to get the goodness out of the bad.

INSTRUCTOR – READ THE INSTRUCTIONS, but sometimes you have to break all the rules.

BANKER – Why are special days called 'Bank Holidays'. That's because the banks can go on holiday with the interest they charge their customers for the money they borrow on 'Bank Holidays'.

STAGE MANAGER – For every sound we make we have to pay the price with silence.**

FOOL – You cannot fool all the people all the time, but you can fool some of the people some of the time – and make a living.

NORMAL – You wouldn't be normal, if you didn't react in an abnormal way.

WILL – Where there's a will, there's somebody in the way.

BARMAN – We have to break the ice to keep each other warm (nice balance of literal and metaphorical).

LIAR – Life is not full of lies, it's laced with a bit of truth.

LOOK UP – Someone who puts someone on a pedestal, sometimes falls flat on his face.

INSURED – My friend and I were crossing the road. He said, "You always let me cross the road first." I retorted, "I'm not heavily insured!"

BANK CASHIER – The till is protected by a delayed time-lock - i.e. the person behind the till.

JACK OF ALL TRADES – A master of one – life.

LIAR – Underneath a white lie, is a black truth.

I feel that more care could have been taken in 'sharpening' the other entries:

For instance: **PSYCHIATRIST** – He confirms what you find out after years of looking.

Fighting the Benefit Cuts with Edgar Broughton Live in Peckham by Frank Bangay

Edgar Broughton live in Peckham 7th October 2011; A Benefit for the Mental Health Resistance Network: Fighting the Benefit Cuts

Those of you who listened to John Peel on radio one in the late 1960s and early 1970s will probably remember the Edgar Broughton Band. Three hairy rebels looking out from the cover of their first album *Wasa, Wasa*. I felt that the Edgar Broughton Band had a strong blues influence in their music – especially *Howling Wolf*. But they were very much doing their own thing. There was their anthem *Out Demons Out*; *Apache Dropout* linked the Shadows with *Captain Beefheart*. There was their anti-war song *Young American Soldier*: this was at a time when the Vietnam war was raging. One of their songs, *Hotel Room*, was released as a single and had the honour of becoming *Tony Blackburn's Record of the Week* on Radio One. The cover of their second album *Sing Brother Sing* had a photograph of two white boys and a black boy standing together in what looked like a church doorway. I don't know if it was intended or not, but I often saw this a symbol of racial harmony at a time when we were still harbouring phobias towards the people who had been coming to England from the Caribbean for the past couple of decades.

These were a few of the Edgar Broughton Band's moments. After the early 1970s their popularity faded, but the band carried on throughout the rest of the decade and into the 1980s, Sometimes they changed their name to the Broughtons. During the summer of 1990 I saw Edgar Broughton perform at the *Cricketers* in Kennington South London, (then a popular music venue.) Here Edgar was doing a solo set of acoustic songs. He was sharing a bill with *John Fiddler* from *Medicine Head*. (A band that were signed to *John Peel's Dandelion* label in the early 1970's.) *John Otway* and *Kevin Coyne*. I remember it being a most enjoyable gig. In Peckham like at the *Cricketers* gig Edgar Broughton was playing an acoustic set.

We will return to Edgar shortly. First however, I will tell you about the gig. It took place on the 7th October 2011. It has taken me a while to sit down and write this. But I haven't had much spare time for a while. However, I wanted to write about the event and the cause it was raising funds for. So here I am sitting at my computer hammering away at the keys. The gig was a benefit to raise money for the *Mental Health Resistance Network*, a group connected to *Mad Pride* that is fighting the *ATOS* medicals and the benefit cuts. These things are causing extreme distress for many vulnerable people. We will be talking about this in depth shortly, first however, we visit the gig. It took place on Friday 7th October at the *Montague Arms* in Peckham. A venue down the road from *Queens Road Peckham* train station and not far from *New Cross Gate*. This being handy for me as I travel over from *Hackney* after a short bus ride I get the *London Overground* to *New Cross Gate*, in this cutting out

some of the travelling that I normally would have to do to get to Peckham. The *Montague Arms* is sometimes known as the *Monty*. It is a friendly pub that sells nice food at a reasonable price. Sadly you can't get a cup of tea there, anyway mustn't grumble.

Mad Pride's regular MC *Jason Why* compered the open-mic spots with his usual enthusiasm. As well as the guests, there were a number of open mike spots, they were slotted in between the guests. They included *Razz* and *Jazzman John Clarke*, two hard working performance poets who have been on the scene for many years. I can't remember the names of the other floor spots, but at the beginning of the evening there was a wonderful duo. One lady playing percussion, the other lady singing and playing guitar. At one point she was playing the guitar behind her back. This is a tradition that goes back to the early days of the blues and people like *Charley Patton*. In the 1960s *Jimi Hendrix* brought the tradition into rock music. It is nice to see the tradition being carried on.

I was the first guest of the evening. I read some of my poems, played a bit of harmonica, I ended with a humble version of that well-travelled old spiritual *John The Revelator*. The audience clapped along to the song. It is always nice when that happens. The second guest was guitarist and singer songwriter *David Studdert*. He was accompanied by a bongo player. I can't remember his name. This was the first time I saw *Dave* perform, I remember him singing a song about debt – a very topical issue these days. I also remember a song about being sniffed by police dogs. The next act was *The Strange Agency*. They had come up from *Wales* for the gig. I find it difficult describing this band's music. For me it was a mixture of psychedelic and punk with some topical lyrics. I felt there was a *Captain Beefheart* influence in there; They played an impressive set.

After this Edgar Broughton took the stage. Accompanying himself on an acoustic guitar he played a set of acoustic songs. Sometimes the songs had a pastoral feel to them; lyrically, Edgar is still on the ball. One song related to the riots that took place last summer. Another song was written from the point of view of a relative in a care home: very soulful indeed. I hope there will be a chance to hear more of Edgar Broughton in the future. The show ended with a psychedelic band called *Paradise 9*. Their line-up included guitarist *Tyrone Thomas* who has played alongside *Mark Perry* in *Alternative TV*. He also has his own band called *Olympic Clampdown*. Another member of the band is folk singer and songwriter *Jaki Windmill*. Back in the old days she was a regular performer at *Bunjies Coffee House* near *Leicester Square* in *London's West End*. She also did a number of gigs for *Survivor's Poetry* at this time. One strong visual aspect of the band was one of their guitarists: I don't know his name, but he was a big guy, with a bald head and a smile that went right across his face. When he came to the front of the stage he looked a little awesome. He looked like something out of *Marvel Comics*,

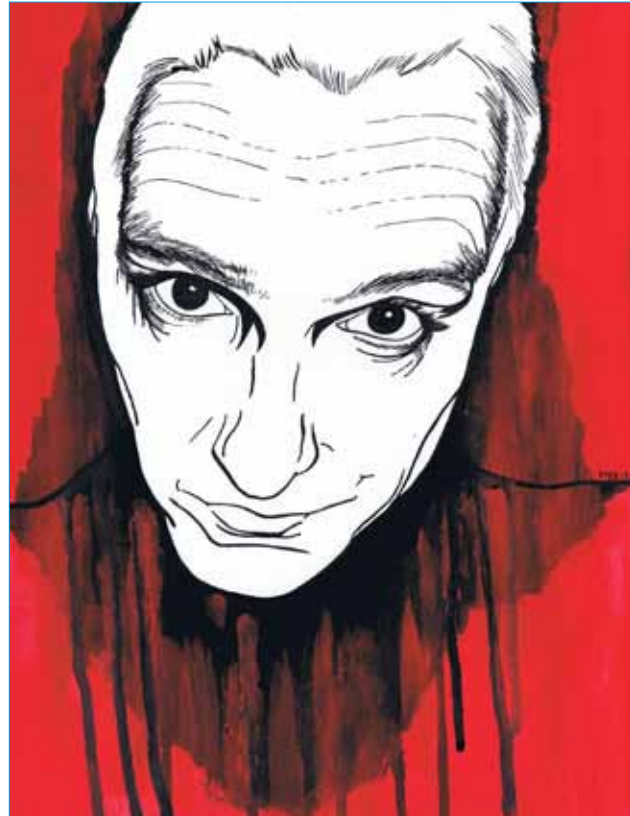
Continues on page 21

f

eature Artist

Paul of

Finsbury Park Deltics



Malfunction

All you would need is a thermal imaging camera
to see the effect of you on me.
I've tied the house in knots again,
as the world passes by in time-lapse.

My mind is a thousand radio stations,
yet still I can hear the ticking clock.
A text message from you would stop my heart
from steam-hammering me around the bed,

assurances in zeros and ones.
What I wouldn't give to be with you in shimmering fields,
nestling amongst corn still green with Summer rain.
Us the only two, the fulcrum of the Universe. Yes, I want that.



Images -

Cover image; Circles

From left to right:

Self Portrait, Making Me Feel Like

Next page:

Philosphicow, I Can't, Laura Attempts a

Semblance of Symmetry for the World, *Untitled*,

Every Boy's book of Oliver

Paul just likes drawing pictures. And the Victor Book for Boys. There's just Paul at The Finsbury Park Deltics, even though it sounds like some beatnik / baseball collective. A north London boy by birth, now living in Cambridge, he's been doodling for as long as he can remember. Initially as a way of alleviating the tyranny of childhood angst; now as a way of alleviating the tyranny of grown-up angst. As life becomes ever more complex Paul retreats into a world of two dimensions, screen tone and the certainty of ink. He finds the whole process satisfying and therapeutic.

Paul's real loves are comic-strip and pop-art, again due to the connections to and evocations of childhood. The same goes for the poetry, as since childhood he's also been writing and although some of his poems have been published, that isn't the reason for writing - it's a way of fending off the black dog.

Commission work welcome, please feel free to contact Paul;

info@thefinsburyparkdeltics.com

+44 (0) 7510 916991

www.thefinsburyparkdeltics.com

<http://www.facebook.com/pages/The-Finsbury-Park-Deltics>



Conti...

Snapshot

The photos were always of a sodden valley or blue cove,
never of us buried in sand.

Now I realise that our love was too big
to fit into two dimensions and dusty boxes,
and that maybe you knew that all the time.



Night Diesel

Slick as an aspirin factory,
the world class transport hub.

But beyond, the exhilaration of rain,
a lashed casing under gantries.

Ghost in the negative, grumbling away.
An anachronism - like Britain's Wealth From Coal.



Thank you to Paul for contributing to this issue of *Poetry Express*.
You can find more inspiring sartical works on the Finsbury Park
Deltic's website. So take a look and let Paul know what you think!

Graffiti corner

HOW DOES MAKING A MISTAKE MAKE ONE A TOTAL MISTAKE?

To me who regularly catastrophises
And only ever sees things as black or white,
It is often hard to see the shades of grey
Or discern the many diverse hours of both day and night.

So often when one says or does something wrong
However, minor to others it may be,
It appears to me to be something far greater than it actually is,
Not so much a trivial error but a major catastrophe.

I guess I'm something of a perfectionist
Willing to accept the second-best in others if not in myself,
To the extent that I often push myself too often and too hard
Without giving myself time to breathe, which is surely bad for my health.

I find it hard to switch-off and relax at the best of times
Or to accept that Rome was not built in a day,
So much so that when things don't go to plan or I lose control
What to others may appear to be little more than a pothole
Appears to me to be more than major road-works on life's way.

I continually find myself judging my performance against others
And never being confident or satisfied with all that I've done,
To the extent I often feel I've already lost life's race
Before all who have entered it have competed
And the one who comes first is declared the one who has won.

And yet, for all that, I know my limits
Whilst simultaneously setting the targets for my life so high
That when I find, or make, a mistake it is a disaster
So I fast become a slave to myself not my master.

Still, somehow, onwards I push myself much harder and faster
Not helped by chaining myself to things and persons I really should let go,
Unable to sit still for a moment or consider an alternative course
I feel stuck in a rut and, yet at times,
As unable, as I am at other times unwilling, to grow.

I look round and see others making a success
Of their lives and their significant others too;
I admire and envy their ability to succeed,
No doubt by not allowing themselves to be plagued by either the past or the present
But subconsciously look to the future and cherish the long view.

The view that recognises one is not altogether a failure
But gifted in some areas where others are not,
That one should not continually seek that which one can never have
But somehow be content with one's current lot,
To put flight to the idea one is a disaster
But in one's own unassuming way a success,
Or at least an overcomer over current adversity
And an achiever compared with at least some of the rest.

Christopher Luke

White Lace Fantasy

Totem-spider casts its strands
To capture snow-clad houses
Electrons shiver down white threads
To cast their silken message
To the reaches of the web

Fractal trees display themselves
In crystal lingerie
A delicate confection
Of white lace fantasy

Tony Democcy
10/02/2012

OCCUPY LONDON

in the harsh
arid desert
that is the
City of London
wild flowers
are blooming
on the steps
of Saint Paul's

PMcmanus

Late Connection
Late night, late taken medication,
late walk to the eight fold path,
then a long day ends with Late Junction.
Coincidence: body, meds, time send me a late connection, treat.
Music felt as pre medication
a drift towards sleep, in and out
of memory dream sensation
Kronos Quartet et al. take me down
halls of time, theirs, mine, eternal.
I feel the flavours of sound
zapping me with life deep down.

I remember the censorship of my senses, then sleep.
Tony H

I feel dirty again

I feel dirty again, soot. Blood.
Tears. Broken shards of glass
And stone cold floor
Electric lights, emergency. Street lights.
Face in soot, face in dirt.
Who can hear our, my cries.

I feel alone again, trapped beneath
The weight of the soot
the others' breath, choking
on air, on soot, on the stench.
Fearing for life,
For hope.
For air
For light.
Stuck in a tunnel.
Afraid of it all.

I want to reach out,
Stretching my bound hands
And fearfully trying to reach that
Pole. Light, blue. Silver.
Daylight gone.
Darkness. Night. Tunnel.

Silent sobs of a broken girl
White band on wrist, on hair
On memories. That's why
I wouldn't dare
And you would not notice.

The tears, and scratches
And fears that remain.
In my heart, my soul and my life.
When you look into my eyes.
As I scream for help, again and again
Silently. Silent. Broken marks
And afraid. Unable?

Starchild

WRITE A POEM!

it said
DEPRESSION
-self help
-creative activities
-write a poem

and

he wondered
if that was why
poets were always
such a happy
cheery bunch

PMcmanus

We are grok

we are grok
from out the shadows

down this way they
beam retail light
day and night
gentle violence
feeds your soul
never going
to make you
whole

hi we are grok
of the shadows
we are one who
grow not old
we walk with you
from door to door
you never see us
you never try
but we see
you passing by
what does it
take for you
to be us too
not much
toss a coin
go on do
for chance
is all there
between
and we
are grok

Grok means to understand so thoroughly that the observer becomes a part of the observed—to merge, blend, intermarry, lose identity in group experience. It means almost everything that we mean by religion, philosophy, and science—and it means as little to us (because of our Earthling assumptions) as color means to a blind man.

From
Stranger in a Strange Land by Robert
A. Heinlein

Alembisque

“EVERY DAY IS A WINDING ROAD”

Life is full of surprises,
One never knows what lurks around the corner,
Each day brings with it unexpected events
And chance meetings with those one did not expect to meet or see.

Life is full of manoeuvrings,
Some taking one sideways either to the left or to the right,
Others pulling one back to arguably happier times in one's past,
And others still dragging one reluctantly out of the safety-zone of the present
Into the future of a life as yet unlive and unknown.

One never knows what lies beyond the horizon,
Save that the two things certain in life are death and taxes,
Both of which one feels bound to pay
Not unlike a debt imposed by some form of eternal creditor
As one's price for experiencing the here and now
And hopefully, in time, securing access to a better world to come.

Every day, although unique in its own way,
Appears to have a similar beginning and ending to the last,
In having a time one rises from one's pit
And a time when one returns to one's bed or hole,
To sleep for however long or short it may be
Before one wakes again to greet the challenges of a new day.

Life is full of surprises,
Some pleasant, others less appealing to the eye
Or restful to the vexed soul,
Which accompanies me like a piece of unwanted baggage
Each passing hour of the day,
And is left unclaimed by others
Not unlike a can of beans past its sell-by date on a supermarket shelf.

Often as I walk into work alone at night
I wonder if there is an alternative route on life's journey to that which I'm taking
But, though I may pass many side-roads on my way,
I lack the courage to take them and explore them,
Fearful that something worse may supplement or supersede
The all-too-familiar and oft-unfulfilling present,
Masked only by the shadows of things unseen under the moonlight
Which become more visible and unattractive
Under the light of the midday sun.

Christopher Luke

These poems were taken from
the Poetry Graffiti section of
the Survivors' Poetry Forum

Fighting the Benefit Cuts continued from page 15

after a couple of numbers to make that long journey back to Homerton. I had missed the last London Overground train to Dalston Junction. Hopefully I will catch this band again sometime in the future. Thank you to VJ Flickering Light for the light show, and a special thank you to Mr Dave Skull for organising the event, and thanks again to Mr Jason Why for being the MC.

Like I said earlier, this gig is a benefit for the Mental Health Resistance Network. This is a group that was set up in the autumn of 2010 to fight the insensitive benefit cuts that are currently taking place. And to challenge the stigma that is being associated with benefit claimants at the moment. The Mental Health Resistance Network was set up in the autumn of 2010, and was launched that October with a demo at Speakers Corner in Hyde Park. Unfortunately the weather wasn't very good. It was cold and damp. But despite this there was quite a good crowd. We even got support from some teenagers who were in the park at time. People had made a puppet with David Cameron's face on one side and George Osborne's face on the other. The puppet was stuffed with sausages. Then it was hung, it was going to be drawn and quartered. But people knocked the stuffing out of it with walking sticks. Showing the anger that is felt towards this coalition government, and their plans to stop our benefits, and to put us through a lot of unnecessary distress. Since then the campaign has continued to fight back against the benefit cuts and the growing stigma around people who are claiming benefits, raising funds through gigs.

People are being assessed by a company called ATTOS. In the assessments they are not interested in what your GP or Psychiatrist has to say about you. Judgement is made on this one interview. If you are lucky you will be put on Employment Support Allowance. This will excuse you from regularly looking for work. You have to convince the man at the job centre that you are still not fit for work. One helpful suggestion about the ATTOS medicals is to take someone with you. In this showing that you can't get there on your own. It is also important to show that you have both physical and mental problems. Having just poor mental health is not enough to satisfy the criteria. If you are unlucky you face the prospect of Job Seekers' Allowance. This means regularly looking for work that will be hard to find in this time of high unemployment, when even the youth are having difficulty finding work. In this people will experience a lot of intimidation, and be put through a lot of pressure. Either way it will mean a drastic cut in benefits. I know people who have been to these medicals on their own, and scored no points because they made their own way there. Despite how difficult the journey might have been. One little bit of reassurance is that a lot of people who have had their benefits cut and appealed against the decision, have won their appeals. However, the appeal process is long and stressful and can be too much for someone who is feeling vulnerable. Especially if that person doesn't have much support.

However, we are receiving bad publicity from the newspapers. They are full of stories about benefit cheats and scroungers. As a result we are all seen in this same condemning light. Sadly there are some people who fiddle the benefit system. But most people who claim benefits claim them because they need to survive. We are not lazy we are not scroungers. I left school at the age of 15 and feel I have worked hard in the past. I am sure that there are many other people currently on benefits who have worked hard too. But this bad publicity from the media is in danger of causing disability hate crime. We are facing the double blow of having our support services cut and having our benefits cut. Through this being plunged into a world of poverty. Distressingly the effects of these cuts have already caused a number of suicides. Sadly we seem to be mostly on our own in fighting back.

With the great concern that is being shown towards the cutbacks that are being made to the health services – which is indeed a very worrying situation. However, it is a shame that the Mental Health services can't be included in this concern. Taking away services from vulnerable people is indeed a terrible situation. Unfortunately we have received very little support from National Mind, and the well known group SANE (Schizophrenia A National Emergency) have shown us no support. Towards the end of last year SANE'S main mouthpiece Marjory Wallace spoke out against the insensitive comments, that Top Gear presenter Jeremy Clarkson had made about suicide. It is sad that she can't see that a lot of suicides are being caused, by the terrible affects that these benefit cuts are having on people. But we must fight on, we must keep going. When you walk through a storm, hold your head up high, and don't be afraid of the dark.

If anybody is interested in getting involved with the campaign, taking part in a benefit gig, or finding out more about the issues involved. Here are some contact addresses:

For the **Mental Health Resistance Network** contact **Mad Pride** at www.madpride.org phone 07757 715035

Disabled People Against Cuts
www.dpac.uk.net mail@dpac.uk.net or mail@dpac.uk.net
phone 01926 842253

Winvisible (women with visible and invisible disabilities)
www.winvisible.org or win@winvisible.org phone 0207 482 2496

Boycott Workfare
www.boycotworkfare.org or info@boycottworkfare.org
Twitter: #boycott workfare

Frank Bangay

Reviews

In Memory of 'Smiley' (Brian Lawrence Simms)
30th May 1935 to 8th May 2005



Brian was born in Middlesex in 1935, but as the years went by, it became difficult to know him as anything but 'Smiley'; that nickname perfectly matched his ebullient demeanour.

I first met Smiley in 1994 at Bunjies Coffee House in Litchfield Street, WC2 (off Charing Cross Road). Bunjies flourished for over 40 years as a music and poetry venue – comparable in many ways to the Troubadour in Earl's Court. Sadly, it is now defunct – a great loss. He often came to Bunjies, armed sometimes with one of his guitars (for which he had invented his own special open tunings), sometimes with a balalaika, sometimes a harmonica. Smiley performed most regularly at the 'World Oyster Club', organized by Razz, on Saturday nights. His eclectic repertoire ranged from old folk and music hall songs to pop material (much from the 50s and early 60s – for which he had an excellent memory), and even a cappella extracts from such composers as Dvorak and Vaughan Williams.

As time went on, Smiley befriended firstly Dave Russell, then myself. Through my conversations with Dave, I began to understand what he was doing at a musical level.

Smiley's guitar playing was very basic, in some ways reminiscent of a country blues artist – Dave Russell called it elemental (and was constantly reminded of his naming). Sometimes people misunderstood what he was doing; but once you saw below the surface, there were some interesting things going on.

Smiley's Guitar Tunings:

F, A, A, F, B flat, C
C#, F#, F# (one octave higher), D, F#, D
F#, A flat, Aflat, F#, B flat, A flat (equivalent to G, A, A, G, B, A)

"He was very possessive about them, refusing to let anyone except him to retune his guitars. He was right to be so, in order to preserve these tunings. 3) in particular could easily

have been used by someone like Martin Carthy, Paul Brady, or even Joni Mitchell. I am putting out a circular enquiry to all musos, to ascertain whether other guitarists, anywhere, have used these tunings. Whether or not he could be credited with their invention, Smiley's use of them showed a true, instinctive musicality. He was never into musical theory, so he could not clinically have copied them. I did some instrumental pieces using Smiley's guitars in their authentic tunings. These were recorded by Mick Hobbs, then working at Resonance FM. I hope they are still in Resonance's archives." (Dave Russell)

I encouraged Smiley to come to Core Arts in Homerton (near Hackney), to do some recording. These sessions produced some interesting results. For example, there was his collaboration with a guitarist and cellist on Moonlight Over Vermont, which came out very differently from the jazz ballad. He did, a cappella The Hills of Shiloh, a song about the aftermath of the American Civil War. This has a dubbed backing on the recording. There were also his poems, some of which spoke of his Christian faith, as did the spiritual songs he sang. Particularly moving among these was The Wayfaring Stranger, which he had learned from Burl Ives.

Smiley was very passionate about his beliefs, sometimes expressing friendly concern about my own soul.; however, there was humour in this too. He was also very concerned about the wrongs of war, which he showed both in his poems and in his versions of Sixties protest songs. Several of his traditional songs, like Barbara Allen, and I Gave My Love A Cherry, were integral to the repertoires of many artistes performing in the Sixties folk clubs. It is obvious that he had some experience there, although he did not talk about it a great deal, apart from some reminiscences about 'The Witches' Cauldron' in Hampstead.

However, there was another side to Smiley that had high ambitions. He regularly bought The Stage newspaper, looking for jobs in the music business. I remember he once applied for a job entertaining passengers on a cruise liner. Often, when I told him about a gig, he enquired if there would be any agents there. He made demo tapes to send to record companies like EMI and Warner Brothers. It is nice to think that Smiley might have succeeded in these areas. But circumstances being as they were, such success was a little bit out of reach. This realization made Smiley very frustrated. Most regrettably, he abandoned his recording activity at Core Arts; one thing which triggered off this tragedy was his objection to the rule about having a chit signed by a key worker in order to use the facilities, which he took to be bureaucratic tyranny. However, the recordings he did there were preserved: some a cappella, some with live musicians, some augmented by posthumous dubs, with live musicians and Core Art's excellent Midi facilities. His long-awaited CD will be the culmination of those sustained efforts.

However, he began to perform regularly at events organized by Core Arts, Mad Pride, Southwark mind, and the monthly

concerts for the homeless held at the Union Chapel, Highbury & Islington. Smiley seemed exceptionally pleased to be performing at an event for the Homeless. He was always valued there, by organizers and performers alike, becoming something of a local celebrity.

Sometimes Smiley's frustrations got the better of him, and would contribute to spells in hospital. (He had been a long-term psychiatric patient in the Springfield Hospital in Tooting, and was subsequently accommodated in sheltered housing). Sometimes he would talk non-stop, and it was hard to get a word in edgeways. We would have our fallings-out, but at the end of the day one would always become aware of his redeeming features. It was clear how much he really appreciated the visits that Dave Russell and I made to his home in Brenda Road, Tooting.

Smiley was always a sharp dresser, especially on stage. I remember the brown cowboy boots that he sometimes wore, with his trousers tucked inside. He often wore a light blue or mauve shirt, and a bright tie. Always commendable was the way he unfailingly got to any gig you told him about, no matter how far away the venue. And he always had excellent rapport with his audiences – a great stage presence!

Sadly, he was an extremely heavy smoker. As a result, he had a severe breathing problem, and there seemed to be a possibility of emphysema. However, when Dave Russell and I expressed concern about this, he would assure us that he was alright; he would tell the staff in his hostel the same thing. But the problem was a matter of serious concern. In early spring 2005, Smiley experienced a serious deterioration in physical health, and had to be re-hospitalised. After a while, the seemed to be recovering. But on 8th May 2005 he had to be rushed back to hospital, where he died of lung failure.

When I first got to know Smiley, I called him a 'diamond geezer'. At the outset he was not keen on the term, but later grew to like it, often describing himself as a 'rough diamond geezer'. Right up to the end he bought The Stage, hoping that a job in the music business would come up. He never gave up believing in his dream, and anybody who knew him well could not fail to be aware of his underlying potential to realize it.

Frank Bangay and Dave Russell

Stanley Bad on Stanley Bad

I find that their self-promotion speaks volumes:

Influences Want to annoy your wedding guests? Need a sinner for a wake? Require a versatile actor for your film or advert? Or perhaps you book acts for a venue but have no imagination? (You are not alone!)

Sounds Like: Look, listen, and learn NO FURTHER! Mr Bad is available (for a reasonably negotiable fee) and READY to DO whatever you THINK you want DONE. NOW. Do not delay, and do not jump sheep to some other myspace page: act fast: snap up this EXCITING YET STRUGGLING

"UNPOPSTAR". A superabundance of joy is but a message away. Thank you for reading this, Sir/Madam/Other. Your boredom will be rewarded.

Record Label:

Mr Bad is the head of 'nausea' (a crappy cassette label), and has appeared on cakehole (a good cassette label), PUMF (on a CD!), Peace Feast (on a single) and Ex Gratia (credited as Lynda Beast on an LP)

Stanley BaD sings. Pretty well, actually. He plays violin too. And the cornet. Alto sax he has abused. Also, he plays xaphoon, bass guitar, drums, bowed & amplified FIRE EXIT sign, Plasticoffin (a crappy invented instrument), and numerous other things. His name is an anagram of Lynda Beast - this is purely a noincidence.

Under the pseudonym Geoffrey Sick, he has worked, rested and played (thanks to a daily Mars bar) with 'the A Band' (since Feb '93), Oozit, Pineapple, Sick & Spew, The Scratch & Sniff Ensemble, Septic, Off, Nemesis, Idiot Joy's Rhythm Section, His Holiness the Pineapple Pope (as a bearded nun), Mind the Gap (well, that's how it was billed), The Suicide Cult, Boris Karloff, Gardyloo Spew, the L.A. Goons / The Keaston Pils, Sick Badger, Hebetation, the Highwaymen, Robin Twelfree, Tristan Parkes, the Inspectors, the Hawaiian Glitter Band, Geoffrey Sick's Sick Six, the Austrian Band From Outer Space (now there was a band!), the Vinegar Inspectors, Hipper than a Kipper, Ceramic Hobs, Cheap Blanket, and Rude Mechanicals . . . When he grows up, Stanley BaD wants to be a stuntman on the radio.

Here's some BLURB:—

In the early 90s a handsome young fellow calling himself Geoffrey Sick became a regular member of Nottingham's infamous "A Band", a noisy collective of predominantly unmusical layabouts which changed its name from one gig to the next, always beginning with the letter A. He was also in some of the band's numerous splinter groups, viz: Sick & Spew (with Gardyloo Spew), Pineapple (with Spew & Spacehopper), The Inspectors (with Stream Angel), Oozit (with Stewart Walden, Spew & Darwin), The Suicide Cult (with Stewart "Greeny" Greenwood), Sick Badger (with Stinking Badger), and Hebetation (with Stewart Keith), and others.

Inspired by Spew's Vommit Vommit Vommit cassette-label, he set up his own label (nausea) and half-heartedly exchanged tapes on the cassette-networking scene. He made copies of nausea releases to order, so there are not many in existence, thankfully.

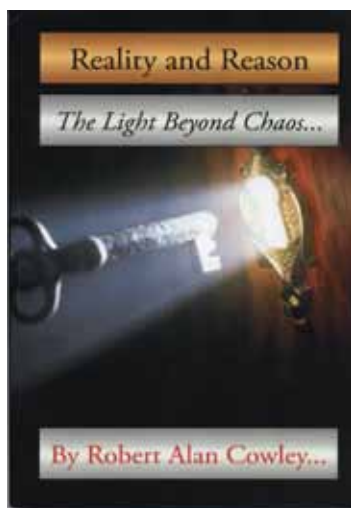
Moving to London in 1997, he grew a beard and went a bit nuts (not for the last time), founding a Sick Cult, and subsisting on pumpernickel and hummous and cup-a-soup. The few members of his cult are no doubt still wondering what Geoffrey Sick is ever going to do for them. The answer is nothing. When he was alerted to the existence of a violinist named Jeffrey Sick in Seattle, Geoffrey changed his name to Lynda Beast and gave up making cassettes for a while. As Lynda he performed with Hebetation at the Klinker. This performance inspired the formation of the Cross-

Dressed Quartet. Lynda also joined Rude Mechanicals. When he tired of shaving, he reinvented himself as Stanley Bad. (Later, when he got in touch with Jeffrey Sick, it transpired that HE had changed his name to Geoffrey Castle).

Stanley Bad continues to play in the A Band and the Rude Mechanicals, and recently performed in Sardinia with the duo Squeazy Bad, which has lately become a trio called Bad Moth and Lapsed Eel, making its debut at a Survivor's Poetry evening at the Poetry Cafe on Thursday January 12th 2012.

Frank Bangay, March 2012

Reality and Reason: The Light Beyond Chaos . . .
Robert Alan Cowley. AuthorHouse™ UK Ltd,
2010, ISBN: 978-1-4490-5734-3



The preface of this collection speaks with courage and determination : “my recovery from mental illness is not about being cured but instead to me about being able to face adversity with a positive mental attitude . . . I hope you get something from this book. It highlights the struggles of my self accepting and responding to the diagnosis of schizophrenic and the struggle for society to accept people who are schizophrenic.” There is a

great feeling of clinicality in his Recovery Programme and an excellent chapter division of the verses. His dynamic, pragmatic approach is reiterated in his postscript: “With working on a mental health ward I place importance on the fact that most chaotic incidents can be resolved without physical intervention by means of de-escalation techniques. Transferring these skills into social instances of threat can minimize risk.” Again, from his back cover: “Reality and Reason is written both objectively and subjectively in context as a journey of interaction, dilemmas, barriers to recovery and the power struggle facing people with a diagnosis of schizophrenia.”

Chapter 1 – The Dream: Reality creates dreams is a debate about Mentalism, stigmatization based on mental illness. I see in his footnote to the poem that he was a speaker at a National Conference of Leadership. There is a great political clarity about his work. The mission of the self: Robert attaches key importance to the final couplet: “No system can do as much as the self does/The mechanism of change is in all of us.” In the footnote he overtly states his didacticism: “To me my poetry must always depict leadership and purpose.” Nihilism asks a basic question: “What came first/What created that which creates?” Again, a highly significant comment in the footnote: “This was a period of thought where I had a private obsession about the theory on non-existence (Nihilism). This is not that I believed people and things did not exist but rather in my

thoughts thinking how and why do they or we exist. Victims of prejudice: prejudices are reinforced by kinship and tradition: “We are the victims perceived as problems/Due to bad kinship that perceives us without tolerance.” But Robert recognizes his need to assess his own prejudices. Leadership with meaning: a guide to self-help: “Self directed recovery enabled/reinvented/ Taught by self realizations. Some problem about relating the individual to the mass: “Am I a salmon lead up stream/Or the nature that leads the salmon up the stream/All I know is the salmon is included/And my nature is an energy of social inclusion” then “in order to lead we have to follow”. Keep me in the breeze please expresses Robert’s personal credo with a mass of internal rhymes. There is some feeling of him needing to chant his verses, rhythmically, for his self-guidance. Scientific imagery gives this poem a real edge: ‘Smashing through stigma in the prism of its dimensions . . . the positive vibration of invention the intervention of cohesion’. I yearn for an end to stigma – a bit of potted biography here, including discovering philosophy and going down with mental illness. Though he feels he still stands in his infancy, he yearns ‘for an end to stigma. Conflict of interest is an expression of optimism: “Dying are the racist days/Stagnated are the passive ways”. Interesting use of political/sociological language: ‘Representative allegiance’; ‘Instrumental harmonisation’. Allow integration to progress – a struggle for clarity of self-appraisal against pretty extreme odds: “Confused is the preface/Gathered from a mistake/Looking back into my confused mind state” Final optimism: “My strength is I’m a winner in this conflict of interest.”

Chapter 2: The essence of Love: Confucianism – positive meditation: “The self is absent from the conduits of the world inside of you/Throw away dogmatic principles, find reason . . . the metaphysical you . . .” I found a certain lack of precision in his terminology, eg: “Dignity should not be intentionally sown/It should be realized and grown”. Humble sentiments in reflection. – an excellent definition of humility: “I am humble in a reality and schizophrenic identity . . . I am humble and protect my sanity//I am now immune to the manufactured identity . . . I am humble and self aware” The Dove – sense of loss and subsequent recovery of life and love: “Once lost and we bounce back from loss”. ‘Confucianism and love’ is a curious concept. Unequanted Love: Unrequited/unquantified love? Great conflict of feelings here” “love is configured transpired and delivered/life is a battle that never withers”

Winning Without Sin obviously stems from Robert’s boxing and martial arts background. A passionate relationship is couched in the terms of a boxing match: “lust controls the adequacy of the moment/yet love is the factor that owns the potent mix/the fight is within/the love is within”.

Functional objectivity: “I dwell in trees growing intellectually”. Thought-provoking scientific analogies: “Knowledge fluctuates through spatial frontiers . . . to talk and to be heard is the isometric objective”. An appeal for leadership, together with belief in his own power and authority: “I can be the functional objectivity”. He refers twice to fear: “The only dam obstructing (the flow of knowledge) is my fears”, and “my fears are but introductive/To the instrumental quality of relating”.

Globalisation opens with a flamboyant parody of politics and economics jargon. It captures the manipulative deceptiveness of political regimes and corporations alike. Speaking for the

people, he asks: "Are we really represented or sidetracked" and pleads for more clarity and independence of thought: "So why don't we vote more vigilant/and stop our perceptions of change from persecuting us"

Conducive reasoning = reasoning conducive to action and implementation: "We like action against exclusion". Robert obviously took a serious interest in the major logical systems, and experienced an inner conflict in relation to them: "Certainties/Are found in the moment/Immunities/Transpire against certainties". He acknowledges physical influences on thought processes: "Reaction evident circumstance conducive/Fighting dwelling in time zone change". The gift of understanding: clever use of personification in describing the moon and the stars. The star in the winter sky is a benign entity, holding out a message of hope to 'the angels of the earth' "don't give up faith . . . the struggle is part of life . . .". A sense of confusion in "Yet wait a minute the star did not speak yet spoke of hope" (doesn't this reflect reality?) Finally, praise for philosophy "it gives the gift of understanding that some refuse". Love is God: love is true religion. Institutional religion, based on fear, ignores love and so the churches are sparsely attended. I could not find the meaning of 'Vail' from an initial browsing of the dictionary From the context, I could read it as veil (he does once use the conventional spelling). Another case for a footnote. Anyway, we need to remove the blinker from our own perspective (and those of the world's leaders). Finally, the poet sees himself as love personified. In times of change is an incantatory ode to optimism.

Chapter 3 – The direction of a warrior: Stress and Tai Chi shows that Robert's self-discipline routines have worked well. The opening of the poem reads rather like an instruction manual-cum-theoretical article, and highly convincing through that. A really positive attitude "I thrust myself up from the debris of yesteryear . . . Stress makes you keep your wits/about you mentally actually spiritually" I don't know why he puts his name at the bottom of the poem here. Big gets bigger: I found the 3rd verse really cogent: "Embrace your limitations/Build you/Excel in your dimensions/Construct the evolving you". Direction is a fairly straightforward expression of the debate between determinism and free will. Good metaphor with 'Moulded from an uncarved block/Born in the estuary'

Immortality represents an isolated individual's relationship with the mass or crowd, perhaps from a post-mortem perspective (In Philosophy I rise/Upto heaven then back to earth): "I understand their fears/Feel obliged to weep their tears". A strong individualist stance: "Religion teaches of heaven and hell/Making you big but small as well". Reference to Chinese philosophy without concept of hell. I do not feel that the concluding part of the poem has been fully worked on; and there are some spelling mistakes. Immunity – plea for truth through intuition, and emphasis on courage. "I dare to challenge perceptiveness/Yes I dare to live limitless . . . Mentally ill health you label my/But I dare to know immunity". There is a certain degree of confusion here; the grammar feels a bit shaky. He seems to contradict himself when he says "I see through a limitless eye of perspective". I am also curious about "I dare to make such journeys of thy self". Is this deliberate? I feel the excellent points here could be more finely honed.

Limitations – in praise and in criticism of. Skilful exploration of the contexts of that word and several other –ation words. I

particularly liked 'Enigmatic implementations'. A bit clumsy and repetitious in places: "When we are above our limitations we leave our limitations behind" "When we are humbled by limitations stage by stage/We become aware of our limitations". The validity of this poem's substance as a guide to self-help and positive thinking is beyond dispute. But as a poem it merits more work.

The warrior's journey in Rome. reflects the tensions between Robert's activity as a writer, and his self-help programme in martial arts etc. "All alone in this dream he fights . . . Words in this poem describing his inner will . . . the warrior within". Admirable point in "like him I won't let winning be a sin". One cries another sings – great eulogy to the healing power of song – 'the actualizing of a moment in time by the influence of music'. It reflects the poet's brave struggles to express himself philosophically: "A myriad of meaning befits stagnated council". Most lucid expression "Metaphysically we construct methodology/Either as a basis for intellectually knowing reason/Or as a mechanism within borders of spirituality/Or in the conduits of a liberal individuality". I am newly introduced to Matisyahu: a new pop star who has recorded a hit called 'A king Without a Crown'. Footnote, please.

Be true to yourself and grow into you starts out simplistically rhythmic, recitative, punctuated by the abstract terms 'Disseminated accuracy/dynamic fluidity'. Then he enters his philosophical struggle: 'Causation a blend of cause and effect . . . The cause is the effect awareness of diversity causes us socially to change' (I think some punctuation would have been a good idea). I have some reservations about "We are guided by systems not by people people would create mayhem" 'to have discovered in our capacity' looks like a spelling mistake. In the penultimate stanza, he could have avoided the excess of adverbs. But a very incisive conclusion: "We are not what we say/We are the context of our articulations". "Be true to yourself and grow into you" indeed.

Reiteration is a highly sensitive exploration of the poet's relationship with someone who feels paranoia about him: "you see someone like me a threat . . . I see fear in your soul". The other person's fear has been exacerbated by Robert having had a schizophrenia labeling: "my name is of no status due to irrelevance of diagnosis". The self-defence experience should be a source of stability and reassurance, not of fear.

The Battle remains unfinished – wholesome exhortations to right thinking. Violence and male pride explores the direction of male energy. It can be channeled violently, but 'Spirituality teaches me the self-control and sense of responsibility'. He interestingly related his writing to his sports: "My sport my passion goes forth with or without these words/But as I write I learn so my poems evolve as perspective is involved . . . I write reflect learn truth disown violence yet condone violence/I guess it's about consent in a controlled way as a Martial artist".

Chapter 4: Reason – Deluded: Robert's struggles to think clearly, sometimes aided, sometimes obstructed, by his philosophical terminology: "Reality abstained from consciousness" . . . "gathered in a moat is a collection of associated notions". I don't quite understand the spelling of 'sloaps'. There is a suggestion of a disturbed state of mind "confusion/Was once a reality/Are we deluded for ever once bitten?" He struggles through to light and hope, "reason is

love . . . Pessimism is never my wisdom". I did not find the last line clear: "Now what is delusion to me but abstained" – does this parallel the switching off from consciousness mentioned in the first line? Grow and Flow is a brave attempt to versify philosophical terminology. It has a lilting rhythm to deliver its cogent points. Life is about the courage to face life. Some (justifiable I think), confusion here: Life is full of hope and disharmony to the disorderly. Is hope a state of mind for the orderly, as distinct from disharmony, or are hope and disharmony fused in the disorderly? It delineates the problem of how much reality some people can take: "No one wants restricted access to life but many cant cope".

Concieled within an effortless blink: Is the first word deliberately coined? 'Ciel' is the French for sky. In the second line, 'that at which we see as truth' surely the 'at' should be deleted. Excellent expression of credo in 'Creating symbols of certainty from knowledge without proof'. I agree to his definition of certainty as finite wisdom. The poetic and the philosophical are exquisitely blended in "Diversity in itself travels in transparent circles of life". He refers to a 'blink' (hiatus of consciousness) where, 'for a nanosecond we feel that at which we think . . . we have metaphysical attachment to the blink . . . we are not bound by space and time or what constrains the mind".

Conduits concerns 'Channeling my momentum towards survival'. He enumerates the life and energy forces which flow through the conduit. Some nice turns of phrase: "relaxation energises . . . positive energy overrides the denial" The meek: dynamics of the struggle between good and evil. "Reason dwells like an estuary" is an interesting concept. But the last 3 lines are particularly telling: "Hate and reason collide and meet/But love is the answer that conquers defeat/Then defeat is nothing a naught and reason creates the meek".

Truth and uncertainty: Robert is not afraid to face contradictions: "Time measures the moment yet it passes by/The immovable movement of change". I like the idea of sequential clarities and "Truth the cure the cause and the reality. He hones in on the deeper level of truth, as against 'Existences where we can't see truth, only politics . . . Is political hindrance not sometimes the proof of uncertainty?' Final affirmation: "in love being god I know certainty".

Chapter 5 – Self-actualisation: I must survive – more wholesome, chantable catechism, enriched by the concepts of 'floating metaphysics' and 'static dynamics'. The moment of clarity is about a confrontation with a fellow-sufferer – with 'rejected hope', 'Trapped in a cauldron of fragmented stares' who, however, goes on to attain enlightenment "From one simple philosophical moment in time he found solace. . . he sprouted from depression through reality" – and kicked a drug habit in the process. The other person vanished from view, but the poet could still sense his presence. Actualising the moment speaks from the viewpoint of having been stigmatized. He is forced to reflect on the lot of those worse off than himself, such as African famine business. He struggles on, and his feelings are inevitably mixed: "I found then what I still find now solace and distress/Positivism and negativism stigma and understanding . . . Made stronger by the stigma comforted by understanding/My identity became certainty by powers of perspective"

Outer translations – interpreting ones own experiences by analyzing those of others. There is an abundance of 'emphatic

translations from victims', but of course, there is a multitude of languages to be translated from and into. Again the debate between individual and mass (common) experience: "Are we not all in the name of the same understated projections?/ No because we are all susceptible to perceptions/We all have our own interpretations/Yet we all abide by generalizations". Shattered dreams – in a sense, dreams are an ideal state, which ". . . uplifts/A fettered mind that is full of gifts". For the duration of the dream "These gifts are realized . . . But are not to take over the moment". He then dichotomises dreams and shattered dreams, and comes to the profound conclusion that "The test of character is found in how we bounce back and love new or reinforced dreams". Poetic license is a shrewd evaluation of the creative writing process – the higher imaginative levels and the logistics/mechanics: "The imagination coming up with bleakness/Until the pen becomes a rod of uniqueness . . . So don't be static or dogmatic/As the next stroke of the pen should be magic". In the acknowledgement was can mature is another ode to self-will and self-discipline, to reach the goal of "The new found maturity/Empowered in the community".

Be Unique: it is all too true that we 'stigmatise with valid reasoning'; the stigmatized are vulnerable. Robert refers to 'borders' which restrict attempts not to sin, and attempts to love. Through respecting various borders 'We live wisely yet never find solace and peace'. Confidence is a testament to self-education; how he directed and honed his skills in order to take part in a leadership programme. This also has the only instance of a footnote in this selection. It makes a great difference; more would be welcome. With Maslows transcendence I reiterate my point. I had to check the reference, to find: Maslow's hierarchy of needs is a theory in psychology, proposed by Abraham Maslow in his 1943 paper A Theory of Human Motivation. Poetry publications should respect the non-specialist. The poet seeks the solace of another person. A bit of confusion/contradiction – "nothing is set in stone . . . set in stone is a reason that evolves". Good surreal image with 'a factory of robots finding division the same'. He posits an ideal state 'accepting all and sundry into free will'. Robert should have elaborated on his appreciation of Maslow's active vision.

The title of this poem is this poem is your own interpretation in your own right – again, well-tried philosophical tenets. I query 'sole'; I would have put 'soul'. If he had meant to emphasise 'solitary soul', he should have been more elaborate and specific. I get the impression of a slapdash, inadequately-proofed edition. I hope I'm wrong. I like 'man made factory of effect' and his reminder of the complete roles of Fire and Water . . . yes, 'each of these opposites no survival/without balance'. Positive thinking about contrariness: "Inequalities unite yet equality unites . . . Every opposite in existence serves its purpose in its context to philosophy . . . don't isolate your selves from kinship opposites support." Some sound social criticism in "Alienation is a mistake in its effects on those that have no one to relate to . . ."

In The unaffected meadow the field is a metaphor for an ideal state, related to personal insight and self-knowledge "I seek perspective and not illusion/Yet trodden down by actuality/I try to find accuracy. Good delineation of the prejudices of society 'misconstrued by the stigma/in its own social factory'. Again hope and optimism: "Real change is possible/When the attitudes fall and don't rise" (attitudes = barriers and prejudices?) The return to clarity is more 'spaced out' than any

other poem in this collection. Good word economy here, very reader-friendly. He has survived a storm (or a tidal wave). I do think 'see' on the first line has been misspelt.

Tao Of Jeet Kune Do – Another footnote please!: “Jeet Kune Do is a hybrid martial arts system and life philosophy founded by martial artist Bruce Lee with direct, non classical and straightforward movements. Due to the way his style works they believe in minimal movement with maximum effect and extreme speed. The system works on the use of different ‘tools’ for different situations. These situations are broken down into ranges (Kicking, Punching, Trapping and Grappling), with techniques flowing smoothly between them. It is referred to as a “style without style”. Unlike more traditional martial arts, Jeet Kune Do is not fixed or patterned, and is a philosophy with guiding thoughts.”(Wikipedia) This is new to me – a non-rigid martial arts system. Robert explores its implications: “We take in truth and then forget truth/we are taught then forget its source/all in the name of precision without form/yet form without limits . . .” do the cancellations and absences indicate a deeper level of self-knowledge?

Solidarity: means group loyalty: “But in its truest deliverance is it an internal essence? . . . Does the individual vision exist within all today” He comes to the conclusion that “. . . solidarity . . . in its essence and beauty is acceptance of diversity”. I cannot fully grasp the logic of that stanza which leads to that conclusion. “Transparent moment in time’ is aesthetic.

Final verse is a sensitive dedication to the reader. “I seek for this book to be something for you to connect to//In the parallel of what I ‘m expressing is my shadow . . .” Great synthesis of the concrete and the abstract with “Satisfy my metaphysical mental health with direction.” “My individuality and my momentum is about releasing the dragon” (in both a benign and a malign sense?) It seems to end up as benign: “I fought the fight gave up the fight and now have meaning and/purpose in my life . . . all of this reflection came out of chaos”. It ends in words of exhortation: “Message to those reading so far. I hope from this you go far./From chaos some great dreams. An excellent conclusion, apart from a small decline in clarity as the poem proceeds.

I feel that Robert Alan Cowley could have applied more of this sympathetic attitude to the reader in the texts and backgrounds of the actual poems. But all in all, this is a valiant aesthetic, poetic, intellectual and philosophical effort.

Dave Russell

Fire and Ice Drop-In, Poet in the City, Waterstone’s Piccadilly, London Tuesday 6th December 2011

“The original idea of the drop-in was to honour Robert Frost and the American poetic tradition, but the theme of Fire and Ice evoked some delightful tangential associations in many of us and we heard from several British and European poets as well—including some poems originally written in Lithuanian, Portuguese and French!” (Poet in the City Report)

This was my first attendance at a ‘drop-in’ event, and how invigorating! An absolute capacity audience, extra seating had to be brought in, and the atmosphere was electric. All participants were put at ease by being told that indirect references to the main theme were fully approved in poems recited.

Most of the evening was done on ‘Open Mic’ basis, with two poems per person. John Mole, chairing the session, read four introductory poems: Robert Frost’s Fire and Ice, Frank O’Hara’s Talking to the Sun on Fire Island, John Crowe Ransom’s A Graveyard Floor, and Elizabeth Bishop’s The Armadillo.

Frost’s poem, with its many depths, and susceptibility to multiple interpretations, was an excellent opener: “Some say the world will end in fire,/Some say in ice./ From what I’ve tasted of desire/I hold with those who favor fire.//But if it had to perish twice,/I think I know enough of hate/To say that for destruction ice/Is also great/And would suffice.”

The poem was partly inspired by part of Dante’s Inferno, where the miscreants are buried in ice up to their necks – this passage was highlighted later in the evening.

Frank O’Hara’s sun represents the fire of positivity and individuality, the light of poetic reassurance. John Crowe Ransom definitely takes the side of Ice: “Better to walk forth in the frozen air/And wash my wound in the snows; that would be healing; Because my heart would throb less painful there,/Being caked with cold, and past the smart of feeling.”

Cold is a protection, a source of strength and resilience. He does, however, have some apprehensions about fingers dropping off from the cold.

Elizabeth Bishop’s The Armadillo, as is well known, was plagiarized by Robert Lowell for his poem Skunk House (read later in the evening). It glorifies the fire balloons, emulating the sun on earth.

The Open Mic started with black Beat poet Bob Kaufman’s The Results of a Lie Detector Test, read by Jazzman John. Here fire and ice come face to face: “I cannot face the bewildered summer with a/ pocketful of snow/I imagine the accusing finger of children/ who will never be born/How to shut out the cries of the suffering/Death wishers, awaiting/ The silent doors of winter tombs, deprived of/cherished exits. Ice and frost crystallize anxieties and fears.

With a rendition of Monet’s Water Lilies by Robert Hayden, fire was shown to be apocalyptic: “Here space and time exist in light/the eye like the eye of faith believes./The seen, the known dissolve in iridescence, become illusive flesh of light/ that was not, was, forever is.//O light beheld as/ through refracting tears./Here is the aura of that world/each of us has lost.

Here is the shadow of its joy.”

Dream Song 14 by John Berryman stands out as a poem not explicitly connecting with Fire and Ice, but an implicit crying out for them to escape from the torpor of the middle (temperate?) state: "Life, friends, is boring. We must not say so./After all, the sky flashes, the great sea yearns,/we ourselves flash and yearn,/and moreover my mother told me as a boy/(repeatedly) 'Ever to/ confess you're bored/means you have no//Inner Resources.' I conclude now I have no inner resources, because I am heavy bored.

David Neita read Charles Olson's A Scream at the Editor. Sarah Hesketh's read from her collection, Napoleon's Travelling Bookshelf, which is definitely ice-based. I particularly like the phrase "please whisper when speaking the avalanche's name"

In Wallace Stevens' The Snowman, ice is celebrated as mentally invigorating: "One must have a mind of winter / To regard the frost and the boughs /Of the pine-trees crusted with snow;//And have been cold a long time/To behold the junipers shagged with ice,/The spruces rough in the distant glitter/Of the January sun; and not to think / Of any misery in the sound of the wind,/In the sound of a few leaves,/Which is the sound of the land /Full of the same wind /That is blowing in the same bare place//For the listener, who listens in the snow, /And, nothing himself, beholds /Nothing that is not there and the nothing that is." This poem was set to music by George Benjamin

In the second half, John Mole read Ragnar Rock and A Conflagration; Natasha Morgan A Polar Carol and Wonderland, and Mira Nehta – A Commonplace Story. There followed Lithuanian Atan Skjem, after which Michael Lowe read Carol Ann Duffy's The Duke of Fire and the Duchess of Ice, where the ice finally melts in the fire of passion, Meeting Midnight, where the fire of expectation turns into the ice of anticlimax, and his own Not Quite The Truth. A reading of Anne Hébert gave a sense of the snowy expanses of Canada ". . . set us dreaming on vast plains/ What light decays? While Herberto Hélder did a rendition of 'a knife doesn't cut fire...' – in English and in Portuguese. An impassioned plea for more fire: "here are in the world few fire phenomena,/not that much water,/. . . for in the world there's not much fire that cuts and the cut water is spare,

Louis MacNeice's Snow – an excellent synthesis: snowy winter out of doors, and home fires indoors: "The room was suddenly rich and the great bay-window was/Spawning snow and pink roses against it/Soundlessly collateral and incompatible:World is suddener than we fancy it . . . And the fire flames with a bubbling sound for world/Is more spiteful and gay than one supposes – On the tongue on the eyes on the ears in the palms of one's hands – There is more than glass between the snow and the huge roses."

Writings on this theme in traditional verse forms were highlit in Derek Mahon's Antarctica, which is in strict Villanelle form, and the terza rima of Dante's Inferno, where the ice-bound damned are described in graphic detail: "eyes gushed out of their lids – like clamps of iron". Then a move to an English classic, with Thomas Carew's Mediocrity in Love Rejected, where the poet embraces

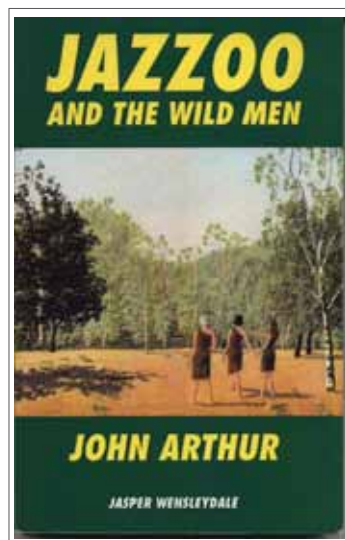
the extremities of fire and ice, and eschews the safe middle ground: "Give me more love or more disdain;/The torrid, or the frozen zone,/Bring equal ease unto my pain;/The temperate affords me none;"

Sarah Hesketh read Robert Lowell's Susannah Ibsen is Cold, and Jennifer Johnson read Uncomfortable Time. Theodore Roethke's I Wake to Sleep was an excellent inclusion; although its theme 'I wake to sleep' does not refer literally to the fire and ice theme, its exploration of the relationship of opposites does. Spirited rendition by Eve Pearce.

The event concluded with Graham Henderson reading Robert Frost's Storm Fear, and Billy Collins's Christmas Sparrow, which relates loosely to the theme, in that it depicts a sparrow fleeing the rigours of an icy winter. An excellent presentation, with all the right poems to give a lucid framework to the scheme, while allowing ample scope for variety, contributed by an enthralled and enthusiastic audience. It would be good to have a full record of all the Open Mic contributors.

Dave Russell

John Arthur, *Jazzoo and the Wild Men* Jasper Wensleydale, ISBN 978-0-9543875-1-8



Jazzoo And The Wild Men is a fantasy adventure story set in the Stone Age, shortly after the Ice Age, in Central Europe. At 17, Jazzoo shockingly finds out why he has never really felt at home in the settlement where he has grown up. He sets out in search of his roots – unaware of the romance, imprisonment, war and reconciliation that his journey will bring.

John Arthur's detailed adventure novel sustains the story well as the reader gets engrossed in the imaginary world that the writer has created. *JATWM* is well written with some strong descriptions and is highly recommended – especially for anyone who likes intricate, historical adventure novels.

(Review) *YAWNING* in a maths lesson, a teenage John Arthur began daydreaming about a story set in the Stone Age, where a courageous young warrior embarks on a treacherous adventure. More than 40 years on, John has finally seen that daydream realised with the release of his debut novel . . . Speaking about the book, the 60-year-old Walthamstow author explains: "As a teenager I was interested in fantasy and read Tolkien, Burroughs, and Haggard. I was drawn to the freedom it gives you and that sense of wonder, which I have tried to capture in my book."

The story follows our eponymous hero who, when a baby, is abducted by raiders with his mother and raised in a neighbouring valley. As he nears adulthood, his mother tells him his true identity and he leaves the tribe with the aim of reuniting his parents.

“Jazzoo has a certain energy and determination about him,” says John, who works at the National Centre for Social Research. “In the language of Jazzoo’s people, the Ossassentans, Jazzoo means ‘as fast as a deer’.”

Unlike other fantasy novels full of blood-thirsty vampires and warring wizards, John, who has also penned two other fantasy novels yet to be published, believes his book offers an altogether different approach.

“Although Jazzoo is tortured and imprisoned, on the whole the book is very light and the characters have a certain gentleness, not like a lot of the dark tales out there. And even though Jazzoo is a hunter, he is nevertheless shocked when he is tortured because he is made aware that people exist who would hurt other human beings. It’s a sort of fall from innocence.”

Brought up in Woodford and a Walthamstow resident for the past 25 years, John took inspiration from his immediate surroundings for the book, which is set in the fictional forests of Ossassenta, Oचना and Ucar.

“It’s nice always being near to Waltham Forest,” he says. “I love just wandering through it, and when we were young hippies we would camp out.”

The forest also provided inspiration for the book’s cover, which was painted by the multi-talented John, allowing him to indulge in a passion he had long since abandoned.

“The reason I restarted painting was because I needed a cover. I knew a photograph of a forest wouldn’t do it because photos are static, but a painting is fluid, so I thought, darn it, I’ll paint it and I’m really enjoying it.” His tenacity is vindicated by the cover, and by the introductory map for his fictitious country.

Describing himself as a “creative type”, John is also a keen musician, playing “‘60s-influenced pop rock with shades of acoustic stuff”, and he has recently released a CD of greatest hits, *A Life in the Outer Darkness*, which he refers to as “tracks I can listen to without wincing”.

So, what’s next for the man with many strings to his bow? “In terms of writing, I don’t imagine I would do any better than the three I have written, but I want to play music until I get too old and keep painting until I get arthritis.”

The protagonists of this story are mainly hunter-gatherers, based in Ossassenta and Oचना, sophisticated enough to have shelters, gates and stockades – also to make earthenware; later there is contact with the pastoral/agricultural urbanised civilisations of Urca and Siarring. The hero is introduced into the narrative with the distinction of having killed a bear at a very young age. It soon emerges that he is a timid, effeminate-looking boy, complimented on his looks by the women of the community, and has to prove himself. Furthermore, he had been ostracised from his community for committing adultery with Jonnica, wife of the elderly warrior Zabaitor. There was a general consensus that Jonnica had led him on, but Jazzoo still felt he had done wrong, and killed the bear to redeem himself. This gesture was accepted with honour by Zabaitor.

Nonetheless, Jazzoo still feels an outsider in the community of Oचना. Hessiahla, another lover to Jazzoo, reveals her true identity – as his mother. They had a close relationship, with some physical intimacy. I wondered whether they consummated their love, but John’s explanation of this scenario is crucial: “In the narration it says he lay with her, which just means shared her bed. I think I was trying to indicate that the Ossassentans and Oचनाans were different from us in their attitudes. I wrote that scene as far back as 1969! I forget exactly how I was feeling. The book is intended to be teenage/young adult fiction. I wouldn’t want anyone to get the wrong idea . . .”

She explains how she was taken captive from Ossassenta to Oचना, and wondered about the whereabouts of Kerar, Jazzoo’s father. Ossassenta and Oचना were in perpetual conflict; there were constant raiding expeditions, where the women of each land were abducted. Hessiahla had given birth to Kerar’s son shortly before her abduction, and took her baby with her, managing to conceal him from her captors, and then passing him off as a twin of the baby girl Lassen. The baby Jazzoo, was then put in the care of an adoptive mother – a changeling.

The plot is largely based on quests for ancestry and identity. Jazzoo had the sense of a life’s mission to go in quest of his father. He tried to persuade his mother to go with him, then common sense made him realise he had to go alone. After being approached with suspicion by patrolling warriors, his mention of Kerar’s name gains him instant acceptance as an Ossassentan. One of the warriors knew Kerar, who had apparently vanished, desolated after a protracted and fruitless search for his wife after the abduction. Jazzoo comes to the conclusion that Kerar is probably dead. The Ossassentans form a raiding party to rescue Hessiahla. Jazzoo tries to dissuade them, as it would be extremely hazardous to enter defended territory. Among the party is the aged, red-headed Harlan, who becomes Jazzoo’s companion. The two separate themselves from the others, and head back to Oचना. They are accosted by Aians, wild predators who menace all the forest communities. Jazzoo and Harlan repulse their attack; Jazzoo kills one of them, and becomes a fully-fledged warrior. They discover and free the girl Indolen, whom the Aians had tied to a tree. He suggests taking her to Oचना, from which she can be returned home. She describes her settled environment, with its lake dwellings and domesticated animals – a bit of ‘culture shock’ for Jazzoo. Jazzoo becomes fascinated by her. There is some ‘love interest, then a quarrel. Indolen goes off with Harlan, and Jazzoo follows their trail, in spite of a contrary pull to return and tell his mother about the probable death of Kerar.

His quest leads him to the sophisticated urban environment of Urca. It is difficult to convey the sense of culture shock of a Stone Age person encountering a civilisation for the first time. But I feel that some of the approach used in William Golding’s *The Inheritors* could be used here – to give a sense the struggle to describe a complex building experienced in awe for the very first time. The same would apply to a Stone-age (pre-metal) person’s first experience of gold. There is a strange reference to the city complex

being decayed, and to abandoned pieces of stonemasonry. A phrase like 'a chiaroscuro of deep black and brightest high tone' is obviously the author's observation, not Jazzoo. Jazzoo explores this labyrinth in search of Indolen, and is taken prisoner. After strenuous attempts to escape, and recapture, he is brutally coerced into revealing his whereabouts. He is then incarcerated with an old man who turns out to be Kerar, Jazzoo's father. Kerar reveals that he had spent five years fruitlessly scouring Ocahna for Hessiahla. He also learned of the alliance between Ocahna and Ucar to crush Ossassenta.

There follows a protracted sequence of imprisonments and heroic escapes – until he finally locates Indolen, now a prisoner of Zed Zonnith, the potentate of Ucar. In terms of 'realism', it would have been more 'credible' if Jazzoo had come from a more sophisticated culture. It is a real 'quantum leap' from the Old Stone Age to negotiating the highly sophisticated labyrinths of Ammarucath, capital of Ucar. The author's description, 'a primitive forest man, intellectually defeated', does not quite give the sense of trauma one might expect. However, this is a work of speculative fiction, and these reservations are overridden by the pace of the narrative and the iridescence of the detailed description. There is a great feeling of escape and spy story here, followed by a time-transcending description of Incarceration and imprisonment, including interrogation under torture.

Father and son engineer their escape, and wreak havoc in their path. Eventually, they of the harem, locate Indolen and rescue her. They escape to open country. Indolen imparts her knowledge of the projected invasion. She emphasises that her people, the Siarrans, will oppose the attack. Eventually they return to Jazzoo's 'native territory'; Kerar and Hessiahla are reunited. Jazzoo has to intervene in a fight between Kerar and Baisen, Jazzoo's stepfather. The four of them head toward Siarring. After being menaced by wolves, they meet a troop of Siarrans. They come to the Urdgaring river, where Jazzoo has his first sight of propelled rafts, then his first journey on one. They meet Farring, Indolen's father. Farring is warned of the impending danger, and responds to the appeal for help from the (admittedly pacifist) Siarrans. There is a highly graphic description of Farring's 'conference', where he spells out the State of Emergency – almost Churchillian in feeling. His address had a divided response from the Siarrans. Farring 'puts his foot down'; as head of a tightly organised community, he has great authority. Preparations are made for action; Indolen was detailed to march with the Siarran army because she could identify Zed Sonnith.

The invasion is defeated. This part of the narrative reads like an allegory of contemporary total war the 'delirium of slaughter' – bitter, hand-to-hand fighting involving women and children – and the utter devastation of the Ossassentan settlements; also a reference to burying prisoners alive. Kerar is badly wounded in the conflict.

Then Indolen reveals that Zed Sonnith had not marched with the invaders. So there is an expedition to Ammarucath to 'run him to earth'. Zed proves to be a genetic freak. He has a huge harem, from which he breeds prolifically, and

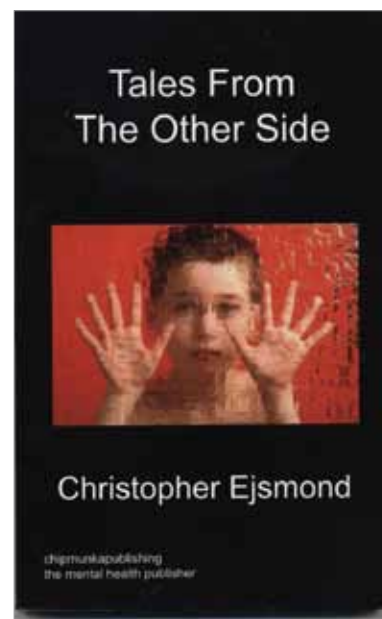
a band of Amazonian women guards. Again transcending time, he is a dictator bent on World Domination. There was a suggestion that Jazzoo and Kerar might have been kept as 'breeding stock' to revitalise Zed Zonnith's 'race'.

The denouement of the story is labelled as the start of the New Stone Age, involving a great gain in knowledge, perhaps involving the loss of innocence and security. For Taiyor, The Ossassentan leader, who had so intrepidly coordinated the defence, this is an occasion for grief, at 'the end of the age of truly wild men in this part of the world . . . What have we set in Motion? What have we done?'. But forebodings about the future are offset by the 'happy ending'. Indolen makes a half-apology to Jazzoo for not having told him about her father. She is all set to say her last farewell and return to Siarra, but finally, melodramatically, Jazzoo seizes her in his arms.

Dave Russell

**Tales From The Other Side, Christopher Ejsmond
Chipmunkpublishing 2011,
ISBN 978-1-84991-663-9 £10.00**

Testament to triumph against mental illness and abuse – excellent descriptions of 'thought swapping'.



Across the Sky – search for truth 'In the language of the heavens'. After the Rain Has Fallen a new Creation: "The world has just been born this moment in time . . ." And I will sail out in the Storm in a Boat – Christ ". . . is a contradiction/ of human and divine origin." –

Aspergia's Dream: Asperger's sufferers and 'Aspergia's children' are supremely

innovative!. Background Noise: absolute/objective and personal/subjective time; Beginnings – bi-directional time/motion.

Circus Maximus – decaying and overgrowth of civilisations. Crystal Palace: "Technical marvels repeat . . . The veiled mysteries of the green spaces . . ." He finds hope in the palace's relics. Exodus: bondage = psychiatry system; the Exodus was to freedom; this poem laments exile. *Extravaganza* – "The cycles of creativity . . . usher in a new age of artistic genius". The visionary ". . . has set himself a multitude of goals . . ." The psychiatrists have wrongly given him a differential diagnosis.

Green and Pleasant Land – war-zone: '. . . the broken bones/And battle-scarred souls of this land', adescant from

paradise to chaos. Hindsight – to a converse partner: “Give me a sign to interpret . . . That after it has been read by you, I know the/opposite to be true.” Invisible Hand – ‘individual action’ furthers the common good, including an end ‘which was not part of his intention.’

Last Seen Wearing Black – a manipulative female wears black on a ‘day of reckoning’: the last martyr, or the sole survivor? Again: “A synchronous development and social withdrawal/ Are the price I pay (for personal growth). . .” Adversity has strengthened him. News from Nowhere – lost abroad, the subject is enlightened by his mentor: “. . . The false division of life, art and work/Fall aside and render the impossible possible”.

On Language: “Linguistic compounds shatter the conditions/necessary for truth.” Repetition: ‘Renders knowledge into the unconscious realm/Where it is . . . a process by which we act’. Verbal/elemental fusion: “A river cascades down a ravine . . . And a word is placed at the end of a sentence/To invoke meaning in the commonplace . . .”.

Secret Mind: attack on pedantry? He has a secret “. . . Confidential and attired in naked virtue” – self-critical: “I . . . spoke with a forked tongue to escape judgment”.

The Asymmetrical Resistance Theory of OCD: Obsessive Compulsive Disorder. Asymmetrical Resistance arises from asymmetry between the left and right sides of the brain – vital for sanity and perception. So: “Resistance is futile against the chemical aggressor . . .”

The Beat Goes On – idyll of ‘shared values and rituals . . . Rising to the challenge/Of free expression’. “The epitaph of time stands in the mists/Of unknowing and premature judgment”; “Revisiting the past . . . will bring about one’s undoing.” He has hope for the new generation: “If we free ourselves from death/ We shall have a new beginning.”

The Code-Switchers: code-switching = concurrent use of multiple languages or dialects in conversation. Christopher has suffered from tension between different linguistic modes, but feels he can prevail against terminology.

The Lodger is malignant: “. . . has given you nothing but empty triteness”. The Test – Christopher’s struggles – excelling in one sphere; disadvantaged elsewhere. The Witness – CPA = Clinical Pathology Services and External Quality Assessment Schemes. Theory of Forms: a half-blind cave-dweller is guided by a sage guides: “He taught him that the Forms were outside the world/and outside time.” Contradictoriness of “. . . the existing non-existence/ Is something and is nothing . . . Contradictory properties of one form”.

This is not a Pipe – quest for inspiration and thought: “Reject category and label . . . the absence of aesthetic and ethic, custom and structure”. Time Machine – the eternal traveller sets off on his eternal journey and gets lost: “Time lapses and fragments into altered frames . . . with the movement of the planets and stars/The traveller changes history . . .”

Uneasy Silence: authoritarian naming “Giving it (an object) a specific meaning which it cannot possibly/ know or fathom in itself . . . Without reference to its own subjective nature . . .” However, “the object named stands silent and defiant . . . it is what it is in itself . . .” Intermediary silence: “In that translation from form to word or phrase is that silent reckoning/ Where preference and choice enter into the dialectic”. Vortex: ‘Modal confusion’ = inaccurate use of modal verbs. “Utterances at once so simple/Follow a hidden grammar of expression”. Waiting on the Platform – in suspense, near despair – ‘For a train that never arrives/And a journey that never begins’. Some uplift: “Common values . . . Fall asunder as the thunder of freedom sounds”; then pessimism: “. . . the hopeless and futile pairing/of reason and hope” Watching the World Fade Away – Christopher is a prisoner: “. . . locked away in a land of my own inspiration/Where time stands still and the will is broken.” Ways of Seeing – “Defy tradition and break the rules/For Art’s sake . . . The commonplace assumes a new aspect . . .”. Whatever Happened to Samuel Stow? – intending or accomplished suicide? – a guiding light: “in death go forth, grow strong and find peace at last”.

Wipe Out: war = ‘collision . . . at the subatomic level’. . . He pleads for an ‘intermediate quantum state’.

Young at Heart: “. . . my inner world is an open book/ And my words are not my own”, then proclaims independence. Then “the carousel of life springs out of control” – ‘on the road to perdition once more’. Young Radicals – sloganeering: “Artisans of the world unite! . . .”; Realpolitik: “Coalitions . . . have stood in the way/Of fundamental political change . . .”. ‘Take a leap in the dark’ versus ‘Anchor the revolutionary tradition’.

So Christopher ‘reads like academic coursework, not poetry’? No: he blends those modes, stretching language and rationality to breaking point, intuiting reality through the cracks. This was a demanding but rewarding read. Explanatory notes would have been helpful.

Dave Russell

If you wish to submit a review, we are always happy to receive reviews about events, books, blogs, websites, collections of poetry or art. Naturally we are keen to hear about the work of survivors however, we accept all that is of interest to you.

Finding Yours Selves by Trevor Innes

ISBN 978-1187495-36-6

First Published in 2011 by Survivors' Press

The dream is so simple for a New Age.
Think of one human family,
where across the world your sisters and brothers
live. Think of one world where our United
Nations fight against slaughter and poverty.
Think of one planet, a guided and protected
planet cabled and linked to prevent disasters
and climate change. - - -

This is not a poem - Try universal values
(the poet's title - NOT this review writer's comment.)
Born in Lowestoft in 1946, Trevor Innes can be justly proud
of his fishing and working class roots, and equally so of
his impressive scholastic achievements that were to shape a
credible career in the teaching of English in the challeng-
ing field of Sixth Form education. It would seem clear that
the overwhelming pressures of work, combined with what
he must have seen as a full scale attack upon the general
social order and working class values that he so dearly
cherished, must very much have preyed upon his mind at
the time of his gradual mental breakdown. And make no
mistake about it, Trevor Innes is an intellectual, a profound
thinking person with a superb command of language How-
ever, it must also be very considerably borne in mind that
Trevor is essentially his own man. — Not for him, the doc-
trinaire utterances and demands of the faceless authorities of
church and. state. Neither does he subscribe, in his poetry
presentation, to the rigid requirements of format, line and
metre, for even when applying some apportionment of
verse order, these consecutive verses at times are interlinked
by continuing sentences.

A teenager of the early Sixties, the Rock influence and ac-
companying Dylanesque Folk culture of those turbulent
years has certainly left, each its mark:

'I wanna hold your hand, so come with me
always led beyond places and times by what they offer'

Currents from the Sixties
Although suffering the serious emotional setbacks of the
breakdown of his former marriage, together with (one pre-
sumes) reduced access to his children:

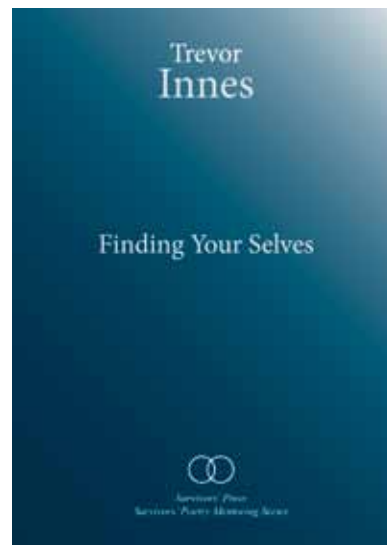
'Someone will tuck the kids in' – Atonement and Jet Lag

Trevor's poetry, nevertheless, promulgates the language and
universal-guidelines of Love across the entire spectrum of a
world society. This collection makes meaningful references
to his hospitalised stay while undergoing treatment for his
health condition. It is, then, so heartening to find that here
is a writer who has not only survived and come to terms
with his earlier mental health trauma, but has, through the
medium of his fine poetry, come to a greater awareness of
Self, and the use and development of the creative powers
within. It matters little whether we, the readers, empathise
or even embrace the philosophies expressed so earnestly
herein, for though this writer is adamant in his condemna-

tion of Thatcherite-
Cameron Tory
precepts of govern-
ment, his writings
are appealing by
the very nature of
the sincerity and
playfulness of his
wording, choice of
imagery and ele-
ments of political
soap-boxing The
prose poem section,
entitled Proverbs for
Finding Your Selves,
certainly took some
reading, for T.I.
flits from allusion
to allusion with
all the alacrity of a busy, well-informed butterfly; but with
renewed application, I did manage to absorb, appreciate and
positively admire the main trend of this unique prose poem
sequence

Whether or not this poetry collection attracts a widening
readership is yet to be determined, but the social aims and
internal structures of this veritable tour-de-force remain
a tribute to sheer human endeavour and well deserved
achievement - An achievement in which Trevor's 2nd Wife,
Pat, and his mentor (Peter Street) have each played no small
part, it would seem.

Bernard M. Jackson - International Review Writer



... items of interest

NSUN: Development of the NHS Emotional Wellbeing website

This website is to bring together information about emotional well-
being, mental health issues and learning disability. This is so that
such information can be shared by all who:

are interested in these issues
use services
work in or with mental health services
commission them.

This is to improve understanding of emotional wellbeing and
mental health care - knowledge by all of what works, what should
be provided and how it should be delivered can only enhance the
quality of services. This is a request to explore the site and consider
how it might be useful for you, your organisation and other stake-
holders. Email your views on the aims and ambitions for the site,
as well as how you find it now and what you would like to see in
it in future. Email Julie Kerry: Julie.Kerry@southcentral.nhs.uk
The website also includes a useful map of local services across Eng-
land.:

http://emotionalwellbeing.southcentral.nhs.uk/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=52:local-services&catid=2:getting-help&Itemid=33

Members of the Mental Health Resistance Network (MHRN) have been working with a solicitor towards making a claim for a Judicial Review of the Work Capability Assessment (WCA) which is the assessment used to determine whether we will be granted Employment Support Allowance or sent back to work (if there is any work to be found!).

link to Mental Health Resistance Network
<http://www.nsun.org.uk/news/mhrn/>

The wider determinants of mental health, such as a lack of affordable housing and changes to the benefits system, are to be a priority for the Department of Health's Third Sector Strategic Partner Programme. NSUN, which is a part of the group of charities that advise the DoH on policy, backed the move which should mean representatives from other government departments have to listen to how their policies are producing pressure on members that is bad for their physical and mental health. At last week's meeting of the strategic partnership NSUN was also chosen to present explain how to involve service users at a training event for national charities seeking to influence the new local health and social care commissioners. NSUN is taking the lead in seeking to make sure the new national NHS commissioners listen properly to service users and other citizens. At a Department of Health meeting of charity partners last week NSUN was chosen to draw together evidence on how involving service users actually saves money, improves provision and empowers citizens. This evidence will then be presented to the government's policy leads on the NHS Commissioning Board, which will take over commissioning of many services including those for mental health.

If you would like more information or if you have been involved in service user led commissioning then please email:
edward.davie@nsun.org.uk

Slutwalk Press Release

We are inviting you to perform at a spoken word poetry fundraiser for SlutWalk London 2012, which will be held Sunday 29th April at the Shacklewell Arms from 7-10pm. Slutwalk last year was a march against blaming rape victims for their attacks rather than the rapists. It was held in Trafalgar Square and attracted 5,000 people. We want to have SlutWalk again this year, to continue the pressure we have put on those who would allow sexual assault and victim blaming to continue and welcome the silencing of those who are raped. To ensure this can happen we need to raise money to cover the permits, sound system etc.

The theme of the night will be around challenging injustice and oppression, whether that be around issues of rape, or around gender, race, sexuality and other issues, so if you're interested we would like you to perform poetry on this theme. We hope that you will support us and perform as SlutWalk really helped people find their voices when fighting against rape. We cannot unfortunately offer any payment as we are an unfunded organisation. If you are interested please contact slutwalklondon@gmail.com with a link to your poems or a copy of one.

Keep Up with Changes in the Mental Health Laws

Here are a few links to our recent policy work at the Mental Health Foundation: HS Reforms in England: <http://www.mentalhealth.org.uk/our-work/policy/current-policy/nhs-reforms/?view=Standard>
The Government's proposals for NHS reform will only succeed if certain conditions are met, including expert GP commissioning of mental health services and service user agreed outcomes.

Commissioning mental health services: <http://www.mentalhealth.org.uk/our-work/policy/current-policy/commissioning/?view=Standard>
New GP consortia in England need to develop their skills and expertise in commissioning mental health services. GP-led commissioning does have the potential to improve both physical and mental healthcare for

people with mental health problems – but only if certain conditions are met. Veterans' mental health: <http://www.mentalhealth.org.uk/our-work/policy/current-policy/veterans-mental-health/?view=Standard>
Many veterans (ex-service personnel) experience mental health problems, often relating to their experiences in the armed forces. Any such problems need to be addressed quickly and effectively. We recognise the importance of appropriate and timely mental health support for people who have served in the armed forces.

Physical health and mental health: <http://www.mentalhealth.org.uk/our-work/policy/current-policy/physical-health-and-mental-health/?view=Standard>
Physical health and mental health are inextricably linked. Action is needed to improve the physical health of people with mental health problems, and to make mental health a key public health priority. Here are some links to statements that our Head of Policy, Simon Lawton-Smith, and our Chief Executive, Dr Andrew McCulloch, have made relating to UK policy:

- We called for the Mental Capacity Act Code of Practice to be revised to enable more effective best interests decisions to be made, following the launch of our report Making Best Interests Decisions: <http://www.mentalhealth.org.uk/our-news/news-archive/2012/12-01-31/>
- We welcomed new data on the use of specialist mental health services: <http://www.mentalhealth.org.uk/our-news/news-archive/2011/11-12-05/?view=Standard>
- Comment on how care in the community is often very successful: <http://www.mentalhealth.org.uk/our-news/news-archive/2011/11-10-31/?view=Standard>
- Response to the Government's £32m investment in children and young people's mental health: <http://www.mentalhealth.org.uk/our-news/news-archive/2011/11-10-26/?view=Standard>
- Our response to NHS Improving Access to Psychological Therapies report: <http://www.mentalhealth.org.uk/our-news/news-archive/2011/11-09-20/?view=Standard>

Lisa Gilbert -Communications Assistant
Mental Health Foundation and Foundation

SHEFFIELD CITY COUNCIL PRESS RELEASE -



Debjani Chatterjee MBE

SHEFFIELD SHOWCASES THE TORCH ROUTE

Sheffield is today profiling the route through the city the Olympic Torch will be following, and the inspirational stories of the Sheffield based torchbearers.

Councillor Julie Dore, Leader of Sheffield City Council, said: "The Olympic Torch coming to Sheffield will be the culmination of years

of hard work putting the city firmly on the sporting map nationally and internationally.

"The impact of the 2012 Olympic Games extends well beyond London, and Sheffield has been a perfect example of a city that has grasped every opportunity with both hands.

“Work to bring additional sporting events and international pre-Games training camps to the city is set to benefit the city to the tune of £19 million. We are also a key city nationally for GB athletes. By the time the Games come round more than one in seven GB Olympians will have trained in Sheffield. This acts as a fantastic inspiration to the people of Sheffield to get active themselves, and take up sport and activity.

“We also want to take this opportunity to pay tribute to some truly inspirational local people who will be carrying the torch along its journey.”

Simon Green, Sheffield City Council’s Executive Director of Place nominated local girl Carys Hall to be an Olympic torchbearer on behalf of the Council. Simon Green said: “Sheffield is full of fantastic sporting talent, and this is the chance of a lifetime to give people a ‘moment to shine’. My nomination is an amazing young lady from the Sheffield Academy of Young Leaders called Carys Hall.

“Carys has given up so much of her time to volunteer at sporting events over the last five years, and now acts as a mentor for other young people who want to get into working in sport. She has such enthusiasm and passion for sport in Sheffield, and it’s a privilege to have nominated her to be a torchbearer.”

Carys said: “I was really shy before I got involved with the Sheffield Academy of Young Leaders, but now I’ve met people from all over the world by volunteering at sports events and I’ve become much more confident. It will be amazing to be an Olympic torchbearer, and one of my other ambitions is to volunteer at the Olympic Games themselves.” Other torchbearers in Sheffield include James Needham, GB wheelchair rugby player who was confined to a wheelchair aged seven following a car accident, and now works visiting spinal units around the country teaching wheelchair skills and helping newly injured people.

James Needham (28) added: “It’s a huge honour to have been selected as an Olympic Torchbearer through the Lloyds TSB nomination process. Carrying the Olympic Flame will be an experience like no other and I’m really looking forward to representing all those I’ve worked with at the Backup Trust and the students I work with at Southfield Primary School in Doncaster. It also means a lot to my family as my uncle, who has since passed away, and cousin have carried the Flame in Canada during previous Olympic Torch Relays and I’m proud to continue this family tradition.”

Debjani Chatterjee MBE is another of Sheffield’s torchbearers. She is a poet, writer and storyteller who works with children in schools, community centres, libraries and hospitals. At Sheffield Children’s Hospital she set up a Poetry Corridor for the poems written by children during her time as the hospital’s Poet-in-residence. Debjani (59), said “I’m very proud to be running as an Olympic Torchbearer, having been selected through the Lloyds TSB nomination process. It will be a once in a lifetime experience to carry the Olympic Flame and an honour to have the opportunity to represent all of the community groups I’ve worked with in Sheffield and across the UK.”

The Olympic torch will arrive on the streets of Sheffield on Monday 25 June 2012.

Councillor Dore added: “Highlights of the route through Sheffield will include a community event at Hillsborough Park, and running past the children’s hospital, the Crucible and the Lyceum. There will be more opportunities for the public to get involved at events in the Peace Gardens, Tudor Square and on Devonshire Green.” Sheffield will also host one of the 66 evening celebrations on the Olympic Flame’s journey across the UK. This is one of only 5 celebrations in Yorkshire and the Humber. It will take place in Barkers Pool and will be free for spectators to watch. London 2012 and the Presenting Partners of Lloyds TSB, Samsung and Coca-Cola will stage an exciting 2 hour entertainment

show, and the Olympic Flame will light a cauldron marking the end of the day’s proceedings. The torch will depart from Sheffield on the morning of Tuesday 26 June from an event involving local schools at Don Valley Stadium, and will then pass the English Institute of Sport (EIS). Steve Brailey, chief executive, Sheffield International Venues (SIV), which operates Don Valley and EIS Sheffield, said: “As part of the legacy of the Games, it will be fantastic to showcase the Flame to the next generation of young athletes with a special event at the iconic Don Valley Stadium. “It is also fitting that the torch will pass the world-class EIS Sheffield where so many sports men and women are preparing and training for London 2012.”

Sebastian Coe, Chair of LOCOG added: “Today we bring the Olympic Torch Relay to life. The Flame symbolises the Olympic spirit and its journey around the UK will bring the excitement of the Games to our streets. Now the people know the route the Olympic Flame will be carried along and the Torchbearers for their community, they can start planning how they might celebrate and make it Sheffield’s moment to shine.” An average of 115 Torchbearers a day will carry the Olympic Flame during its 8,000 mile journey around the UK before it arrives at the Olympic Stadium on 27 July 2012 for the lighting of the cauldron at the Opening Ceremony, signifying the official start of the London 2012 Olympic Games. LOCOG has worked closely with representatives from a number of sectors in each Nation and Region of the UK to devise the route and is taking the Olympic Flame to within ten miles of over 95% of the population.

If you have further questions contact Sheffield between 8am and 6pm, Monday to Friday: General Enquiries on (0114) 27 34567 or email firstpoint@sheffield.gov.uk

The Poetry Café performers

10th May, Jude Cowan:

“Jude delivers her unique songs with a wonderful combination of wit and wise observation. She spreads light and warmth from her place on stage.”

March 22, 2010

SON OF PSYCHO YOGI – an acoustic solo set from Chris Yogi – the founder and songwriter of the musically diverse and eclectic band, known for their rejection of any one musical form

12th July, HeartsSong: “Ingrid Andrew does exactly what her ‘aka’ (Hearts song) suggests – she sings beautiful songs straight from the heart” (Andy & Phil, The Icarus Club)



Network

Leeds Survivors

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

Bristol Survivors

Contact Steve Hennessy
email: cd2007g8825_2@blueyonder.co.uk
www.steppingouttheatre.co.uk

Manchester Survivors

Every Mon 4-6pm workshop
Common Word, 6. Mount St.,
Manchester M2 5NS
Contact Jackie Hagan
email: jaclynhagan@hotmail.com

East Sussex

GROW -
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: TBC
email:

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

The Bread is Rising Poetry Collective

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

York Survivors: SWAY

SWAY (Survivor Writers and Artists, York):
Contact Brinley Price: brinleyprice@yahoo.co.uk;
mobile: 07985 510458

Tottenham Chances



399 High Road
Tottenham
London
N17 6QN
Tel: 0208 365 0653
<http://www.tchances.co.uk/>

8pm Start

The Fourth Thursday of each month:

- 26th April Accoustic Clampdown +
- 24th Maytbc
- 28th Junetbc
- 26th Julytbc

email: Xochitl (pronounced Zochal):
xmtuck@hotmail.com
Tel: 0753 44 33 408

The Poetry Café

The Poetry Café (The Poetry Place)
22 Betterton Street, Covent Garden
London WC2H 9BX
Tel +44 (0)20 7420 9880
<http://www.poetrysociety.org.uk>

7.30pm Start

The 2nd Thursday of each month except August:

- 10th May Jude Cowan + Son of Psychoyogi
- 14th June The Children
- 12th July Hearts song + Quint Fontaine

email: Xochitl (pronounced Zochal):
xmtuck@hotmail.com
Tel: 0753 44 33 408

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 ish. Finish time for the event dependent upon the amount of people who want to do floorspots however, generally around 10.30. There will be a break half way through. These events are organised by Xochitl Tuck, Events' Coordinator.

Bulletin

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

Congratulations to Rosie Garland

for her outstanding accomplishment, of winning the

MSLEXIA 2011
WOMEN'S NOVEL COMPETITION:

Rosie Garland, 1st Prize winner in the 2011 women's
novel competition with her book *The Beast in All Her
Loveliness*.

http://www.mslexia.co.uk/whatson/msbusiness/ncomp_active.php

Survivors' Poetry has vacancies for **new
trustees** to join our current
Board of Trustees.

We are particularly interested to hear from individuals with
business and arts project management experience. You may
have an interest in poetry or literature, or have worked in a
commercial enterprise. Whatever your background we'd be
interested in hearing from you.

Please contact;
info@survivorspoetry.org.uk,
+44 020 7281 4654

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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.org



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