

# Poetry Express Newsletter #49

ISSN 2056-970X (NB: all back issues of the Newsletter are now ISSN registered)



Artwork by Anne Creasey



**LOTTERY FUNDED**



**Survivors' Poetry**

*promoting poetry by survivors  
of mental distress*

Charity No. 1010177 Company No. 2955445; Registered in England  
Registered Office: c/o Central & North West London NHS Foundation Trust, 1 St Mary's Terrace, W2 1SU

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# Editorial

This is the first time I've written in a couple of *Poetry Express* episodes, which is unusual, partly due to the manic fundraising. Well, we managed it, and it's down to the team. I'm particularly grateful to Phil Ruthen, and Gemma Seltzer of the Arts Council for all their feedback and suggestions. Our brief is **mentoring** and it's a new generation of mentoring access and opportunities, using new media such as film, and e-books, social media and events. We hope to integrate these far more than we have before. This includes e-books and the possible franchising of other e-books poets might produce. We've already had a couple of initiatives on that and I feel that the possibilities are limitless.

E-books – to which I'll return in a moment, feed into that other looming thing we woke from in May, and indeed the recent July 8<sup>th</sup> pronouncements by the chancellor. Less savage than trumpeted, these delay the appalling cuts promised, rather than forego them altogether, but it may be a measure of how we can resist this, and kick such things permanently into touch, and score an own try of the government with it.

This fuels a more urgent consideration for many survivors of mental distress in all forms – the obscene persecution of all kinds of vulnerable people by a government intent on rolling back the state. Much of this too seems not even designed to reduce costs, since the eternal cycle of appeals or different benefit is far more costly to the government.

I won't rehearse those here, but this is where e-books come in. The e-book is the perfect vehicle for polemical and other books often of an ephemeral nature, addressing urgent concerns, legislation that can be combated and reversed; considerations and connections not hitherto thought about. We have a mandate for poetry, but we must take an opportunity for prose.

Polemical e-books of essay-length, like the old *Routledge Broadsides* of the early 1990s released into just such a climate as we now suffer under, form the kind of model or exemplar of what we're trying to achieve. The challenge is always to find the right authors for the right kind of polemic. If any one wishes to consider this, I'd love to hear from you, and so would Dave Russell and Phil.

I feel though that this in itself would furnish too narrow a brief. It would be good to hear essay-length pieces on NHS experience and we can certainly discuss what might push the envelope of SP's prose output. Some of this of course can be accommodated in the magazine, but collections too of essays, republications, amplifications and just large-scale essays would enjoy a specific half-life out in the cyberspace element where we surf our dreams and discontents.

It's up to you, as to what we might put out, as well as to us for finding more authors. And of course, the mentoring is open . . . We can't mentor everyone down the official route,

but we do offer feedback advice publication often and continual informal mentoring on a more ad-hoc basis, though this will necessarily be briefer.

It's all to play for. I'd also like to welcome **Rob Bridge**, who's going to work on our IT, and **Carole Bremson**, who's a Trustee well-versed in performance and has already networked for events. They have much to offer and will offer it. The rest of the team, now David Andrew has retired, comprise Marius, Celia, Dave of course, Razz and other volunteers like Ingrid Andrew, and Kath Tait. Naturally there are many more of you too, and with the regional input glowing and growing from Leeds much to report on. Either way it's going to be a long hot summer.

**Simon Jenner**

## Activities

In spite of dreadful weather, May 14<sup>th</sup> at the Poetry Café went with a swing, sustaining the vital tempo of these sessions. The 'Post General Election Blues' element was prominent, with some powerful polemic from **Razz**, as an opener, and later by **Tara Fleur**. The latter denounced the brutalities of a crude work ethic – with a brilliant combination of desperation and humour – definitely of the 'black' variety – 'colleagues' can use you as a hat stand, and politely kick you under the desk. **Helmut Scholtz** did his exciting blend of poetry and violin virtuosity; the former is still quite new to me, highlights being *Tiger Eyes*, *Night and Day* and his mock-dialogue with his violin. **Maggie and Lucy Lyrical**, now firm favourites, came up with some exciting new material. Razz introduced his new song *Monkey*. Good spot from **Paul Riley** with *Gravity Wounds*, *The Grand Old Duke of York* and *Spin* – in honour of doctors of the same name, and from **Mala Mason**, with *Aquarium Crocodile*, *Survivor* and *If I were a Library*. Music from **David Leakey**. There seems to be an increase in receptivity for **Lucy Carrington's** work – a good sense of paradox: "the one who most wanted to fail won" – and vice versa. **John Peacock** remains the finest progressive jazz guitarist on my circuit, combined with super-sensitive lyrics – always a treat. First-timer **Matt** read *Spider* and *Mountain Dew* from his mobile/texter. **Alain English** unfailingly championed the oppressed – the mass of apparent losers who are the true winners. A fine conclusion with two great numbers from **Kath Tait**.

Animate as ever at **Tottenham Chances** on May 28<sup>th</sup>. Razz, resplendent in conjurer's cloak and gold-plated hat, opened with *Plan of Escape*, his pre-Election poem – magnificent foil to his post-election one. Some raunchy fiddle from **Nick Warner**, who got some of the participants dancing – vital contribution to an uninhibited evening.

Great feature spot from **Alain English**, who presented, in its entirety, an epic poem about 'the Hawk Man' a wild, visionary fantasy about a world-saving journalist. Alain's background to this poem is highly illuminating:

*"The Ballad of Jack McGee* is based on the television series *The Incredible Hulk*, which ran from 1978 and 1982. The series featured the popular comic-book character the Incredible Hulk, created by Marvel Comics. The Hulk has enjoyed a revival in popularity through featuring in the recent *Avengers* films.

"The ballad loosely followed the basic plot-line of the TV series plus the three made-for-TV movies that followed it. I am a total geek when it comes to this type of thing, and I watch DVD's of old TV shows obsessively.

"I stuck with rhyming couplets, a ballad style I had used for some other poems before. One way I wanted to make it different was to tell it in first person, from the point of view of Jack McGee. Jack McGee does not appear in the comics and was a character created especially for the TV series.

"I found a human element in McGee (his frailty, his obsession and the ultimate futility of his quest) and I used this to make the poem. I thought it was a more interesting angle to take than a straightforward retelling of the show.

"I tinkered with the show's story in the poem, and did not follow it exactly. One other reason I wanted to tell McGee's story is that in the last TV movie of the series, the Hulk does indeed fall from a plane and die (as in the poem) but Jack McGee is nowhere to be seen. I thought this was a shame to deny this character closure so I altered the original story for the poem to have McGee appear at the Hulk's demise.

"I enjoy performing it and hope to continue doing so (provided no-one tries to sue me). I intend to carry on writing poems of this kind but in the future I want to draw from real-life, historical sources than the comic book fantasies I have explored so far."

**Tara Fleur** was once again at full power, drawing on her experience as a psychiatric nurse, going into the deepest recesses of her own, and her patients' feelings. Her own observations are highly illuminating: "The first piece I performed is titled *Dear John*. It is a crossover Flash Fiction and Poetry performance piece, which deals with a very important issue. For any audience this piece is most challenging, but I felt it needed to be disclosed and explored via the creative forum of performance poetry. It is about assisted masturbation. How a very small number of nurses, off duty, no financial rewards, no erotic rewards, no penetrational rewards, travel around the UK offering physical erotic assistance to men and women who – through disabilities including Paraplegia, Spina Bifida – or, in the case of this piece, Chronic Arthritis, are unable to achieve orgasm or self-masturbatory pleasure. This is an underground movement of nurses, contactable only via one organisation that runs via a Fetish site. However, this performance piece is not about fetishism, but humanism. These nurses believe every single human has the right to an erotic life no matter how debilitating their personal circumstances. They are known throughout the fetish community as 'Angels' and yes – in my opinion, angels they are.

“The second piece I performed was a poem that I wrote soon after I found, and began regularly attending Survivor’s Poetry. It is titled *I’m Sorry* and it is my public apology to society for being a Psychiatric Nurse. I was unable to remain radical (why I became a nurse) due to the institutional nature of psychiatric care during my 20 years employment in Acute Admission Psych Services. I also battled during this time with my own chronic mental health difficulties. My need to express empathy, compassion, tolerance to patients in distress was never heard by a system that dealt with only, crisis intervention and toxic care. But most of all it is my apology for never shouting (radically) loud enough for the patients who were unable to be heard leading, to their tragic suicides. I left psychiatric nursing for two reasons, first my own Mental Health deteriorated to ‘chronic status’, and because I could not fight a system that did not want to listen. And for that too I am deeply sorry.

I perform these pieces in my old uniform, as a mark of transparency, and that alone. My performances are challenging, difficult and at times horrific, but they are written with sincerity, honesty and humility. I am so very grateful to everyone at Survivor’s for accepting my voice, with neither judgement nor hostility.”

The intensity of pace was sustained at the **Poetry Cafe** on June 11<sup>th</sup>. Two powerful main spots from **Grassy Noel** and **Wendy Young**. Grassy read his poem *Austerity* with incredible gusto and fully developed histrionics; I’m sure Allen Ginsberg would have approved. It was a searing indictment of the world’s corruptions and cruelty, with visions of malefic legions, a condemnation of Milton Friedman, and a leitmotif of *Mac the Knife*, among so much else. Another fantastic surprise from Indian poet **Baisali Chatterjee Dutt**, describing a horrendous case of rape and brutality legendary on India. **Wendy Young** introduced her set with dedications to Christopher Lee and Ron Moody – recently deceased. She proceeded with *Feel Like* – an exhaustive catalogue of celebrity role models, some of them questionable.

A strong Latin American feeling at Tottenham Chances on June 25<sup>th</sup>, partly announcing *El Sueño Existe* – a forthcoming concert in Wales, celebrating the work of Chilean protest singer **Victor Jara**, (see poster on p46). So there was a strong Latin American flavour to this evening, featuring **Jorge Morales and Friends, DD** and **Quinn Agathon**. Their repertoire included songs from Chile, Cuba, Colombia, Ecuador and Venezuela. The evening also ended with a strong Hispanic spot from **Amor Benito**. I think it would further British audiences’ appreciation of the material to have translations of the lyrics available – then the ‘protest’ substance behind these excellent melodies would be more apparent. Also featured was the poetry of **Frank Bangay** – including *Those Einstein Blues*. **Ros Kane**, repeated her famous satire on corrupt boarding schools, and read *Paid-up Pacifist*. Poetry and music from **Heartsong**, and some exuberant rockin’ sounds from **Breaking Boundaries** and **Voodoo Citi**. **Sally Smith** reminded us of our debt to the 50s, while **Mala Mason** recalled her training as a lifeguard.

**Dave Russell**

# Poems by Maggie Butt

## The Working Day Commences

I wake early in the paddock with the sleeping lions. A muscle twitches under a tawny flank. A tufted tail flicks at a fly. The sun rises. I turn to creep back into dreams but a heavy head lifts and yawns, and then another, shaking a sleepy mane. And one by one they struggle to their feet, their amber eyes fixed on me, and at my back a silent fence rises between me and the open country of sleep. The lions advance with their deliberate paws and their ready teeth.

## After the Holiday

Work comes thundering in again  
like a great wave across a flat of sand.  
I'm lost as cocklers in Morecambe Bay,  
King John's crown jewels in The Wash,  
when the tide breaks over me,  
its army of hooves and spears  
spinning me this way and that  
caught up, another piece of flotsam,  
tossed junk, buffeted by the jetsom  
of other shipwrecks, loose timbers,  
planks and masts and packing cases,  
crashing and churning in the surf  
and I am submerging and rising  
gasping again for air.

## The Pros and Cons

Work wakes me from sleep, flicking  
the soles of my feet, squeezing cold water  
from a sponge into the neck of my pyjamas.  
\* \*  
Early, in the cold before the central heating,  
I change course for work, steaming like a ship  
breasting the ice-bergs, cutting through.

\* \*

Work eats my life, chewing slowly  
in the dark – a minotaur, savouring  
my hours like new arrivals of virgins.  
\* \*

Work is the weighted boots of astronauts.  
Too heavy – how they drag me down,  
but stop me spinning off into the void.  
\* \*

I welcome work – let it absorb my losses  
and my fears, soak them up like bread  
clearing the plate of gravy.

## Lying In

Who knew how long the crossing takes?  
The ferryman paid, but rowing so slowly  
you can trail your fingers in the water  
see the little fishes rise to nibble them,  
circles upon circles radiating from their O  
mouths.

\*\*\*

Which labour is the hardest work,  
the deepest pain?  
The one which pushed your children into light  
or this, which delivers you to the dark?

Both marked by breathing, harsh and fierce,  
and effort which contorts your face;  
both leading to an unknown world.

In pregnancy you ate for two  
bequeathed your liquorice addiction;  
soon I must live for two.

Then, you lay three days in a side ward, alone  
in labour's agony and fear.  
So I won't leave you now  
however many hours and days this takes.

Afterwards it will be my turn to carry you  
furled safe inside me  
for as long as my heart beats.

\*\*\*

Night sounds: the tick of the wall clock,  
counting something meaningless, tick, tick, tick;

the rasp, pant, wheeze of your breathing,  
the long gaps where you practice stopping;

far away outside, a blackbird's song defies  
the dark, anticipates one final dawn.

## Death Valley

Slumped in the saddle now and entering  
the badlands; dust kicked up by horses hooves,  
dust in the eyes, dust on the tongue.

A high sun bleaches oxygen from the air,  
hazes each rock into shapes of regret;  
each cactus spiny with recrimination.

No hiding place here from yourself  
and desolation ready to let loose a volley  
of arrows anytime from the ridge.

Misery's swarm of flies circles your head.  
However fast you move, batting them,  
they travel with you, a buzzing cloud.

Nothing to do but tip your hat against  
the sun and flies. Lick cracked lips.

Plod on. Plod on. Plod through.

## Letting Go

Although I wobbled when Dad's steady hand  
released the saddle's back, I freewheeled  
on downhill into the rush of flying's thrill.  
And teaching me to swim, he held me  
by the puppet-strings formed by my costume's  
criss-cross straps;  
and though I felt him leaving go  
I kicked away, trusting my body  
and the water's lift.

But now that it's my turn, my grip is glued,  
stiff fingers must be prised back one by one.  
I failed to learn the trick of letting go  
of stale regrets, false pride, maternal frets,  
my looks, ambitions, or my dearest dead.  
I'm tethered fast, a sand-bagged air balloon.  
Oh, teach me to rise weightless in the blue!

## Cherries

A quarter pound of cherries  
and a book, beside the sea,  
the shuck of waves on pebbles  
the racing clouds, and me

the sea as glazed and languid  
as a mile of satin sheets  
the pips lined up along the groyne

small seeds of future sweets

a cherry for each poem  
bursting on the tongue  
a tide of calm is at the flood  
a harvest of songs sung

and some of them are bright as blood  
and some as warm as wine  
but each is sweet as summer's flight  
and all of them are mine.

## Risk Assessment

Dress up your superstitions with new names,  
the future is a cliff edge in the dark.  
Seem scientific, plan insurance claims,  
dress up your superstitions with new names,  
cast runes, deal tarot, hear the stars' refrain.  
However much you plan, the truth is stark,  
dress up your superstitions with new names,  
the future is a cliff edge in the dark.

## Variance Analysis

*(for Tim, i.m. Fred)*

The hours go slow and yawn and scratch  
themselves  
and we are naming parts of balance sheets,  
tight in a windowless room, totting the cost,  
while the first day of spring unfurls outside;  
and you are motorbiking scented country lanes  
absorbing this year's deficit – its countless loss.

Fluorescent tubes hum songs of swarming bees,  
no breath of blossom in this air-recycled room  
no sun with surplus warmth, awakening assets  
no daffodils turning heads to shrink the light.  
While you are chopping logs: axe-gleam, sweat,  
Pine-smell, chips flying, piling contingency.

I'm reckoning on the fast depreciation  
of my day.

Doves coo on chimneys, primed for production,  
car stretches in a patch of golden afternoon,  
ponds thrash till frogspawn  
bubbles up its yearly yield;  
and you are in the garden, planting onion sets  
thumbing each into the oil, balancing life.

# The Public Services must ‘wake up’ to gaps in Mental Health Crisis Care, warns CQC

## Share your experience

Do speak up and tell us – the Care Quality Commission [CQC] – on 03000 61 61 61, [enquiries@cqc.org.uk](mailto:enquiries@cqc.org.uk), or [our online form](#). You can also share your experience of a service with us.

**Published:** 12 June 2015

People who are having a Mental Health crisis are not always receiving care and support when and where they need it, the regulator has found.

In a National Report (Friday 12 June), the **Care Quality Commission (CQC)** has raised concerns that public services, such as local authorities, NHS trusts and clinical commissioning groups, are failing to work together to make sure that people in their local areas have around-the-clock access to crisis care. Also, it found that healthcare professionals, such as those in A&E, can appear to lack compassion and warmth to care for and speak to people who are having a crisis, including those who have harmed themselves.

As part of its review, CQC sought views from people who have experienced different types of mental health crisis care. It found that while 86% of those who had received care and support from charities and volunteers felt that their concerns had been taken seriously by them, only 37% said that they felt this from A&E staff. This is worrying as these professionals should be trained in how to care for and respond to them. In particular, people often reported poor attitudes from staff towards their injuries caused by self-harm. Overall, only 14% of people thought the care they received provided the right response and helped them to resolve their crisis.

Although it is difficult to determine the exact number of people who have a mental health crisis, more than 68,800 people were admitted to a mental health ward for urgent care in England as inpatients in 2013/14.

The experience of a Mental Health crisis can include suicidal behaviour or intention, extreme anxiety and panic attacks, psychotic episodes (when people may experience delusions, hearing voices and a loss of sense of reality), and behaviour that is considered ‘out of control’ or irrational to the extent that the person poses a risk to themselves or others.

When people experience, or are close to experiencing, a mental health crisis, there should be services available to provide urgent help and care at short notice. This includes advice from telephone help-lines, assessment by a mental health professional, intensive support at home or urgent admission to hospital.



CQC has reviewed the quality of these services in England to identify what is working well and what must improve. The review team inspected a sample of locations across England; received a survey return from 1,800 people who have experienced a crisis; and examined national data.

As well as staff training, CQC has identified that there is a clear need for better 24-hour support for people having a crisis, particularly during the hours of 11pm and 5am, as CQC found that during these hours availability and accessibility is poor. This means that people often have to go to A&E departments or even to police cells while a 'place of safety' is found for them, rather than receive specialist care straight away.

**Dr Paul Lelliott, CQC's Deputy Chief Inspector of Hospitals (lead for Mental Health), said:**

"It is not acceptable for people with mental health problems to be treated differently to those with physical health problems.

"We know that people can experience a Mental Health crisis at any time of day or night, and so the NHS and our other public services must make sure they are equipped to provide the specialist and urgent care that is needed around the clock. Sadly this is not what we have found from our national review.

"What's more, we found that when people do receive help, hospital and mental healthcare staff are not always compassionate and caring. Worryingly, many people told us that when they were having a crisis, they often felt the police and ambulance crews were more caring and took their concerns more seriously than the medical and mental health professionals they encountered. In particular, people who have inflicted harm on themselves as a result of their mental distress deserve the same respect and compassion as those whose injuries are sustained by accident.

"These findings must act as a wake-up call to our public services. We found some excellent examples of services in areas joining-up and providing effective care, with staff committed to working to make sure people in a crisis received the help they needed. These examples must become universal. This review was undertaken as part of CQC's contribution to the work of the 'crisis care concordat' which is mobilising local services to come together to tackle this problem."

"NHS trusts and other commissioners of care must make sure that they place a bigger focus on training staff to look after those having a mental health crisis, no matter where they are or when they need help. I feel that no NHS leaders can consider themselves to be a success while these issues go unanswered."

As part of its national review, CQC has inspected mental health crisis care across twelve areas. Among these, CQC found crisis care and support arrangements within the London borough of Lambeth to be particularly commendable; for example, inspectors noted the

way that primary and social care services, voluntary organisations and housing advice services in the area worked together to provide appropriate support, referral and triage for people in need. Also, inspectors praised the joint commissioning of preventative services between Lambeth Clinical Commissioning Group and South London and Maudsley NHS Foundation Trust and its setting up of a 'crisis house' in response to the lack of available beds for people experiencing a crisis who needed inpatient care.

The report, 'Right here, right now' has been carried out as part of CQC's commitment to the Crisis Care Concordat.

**Other findings include:**

- Many people will go to see their local GP first when they are having a Mental Health crisis. The majority (60%) of people who visited their GP during a crisis were satisfied with the experience. It is vital that GPs access specialist training to help them to identify underlying mental health conditions early, in order to help prevent crises from occurring.
- Most people reported that they came into contact with at least three different services when they had a mental health crisis. 12% said that they had come in to contact with between six and ten services, which indicates a need for them to work more closely together in areas.
- Encouragingly, there has been a significant reduction in the use of police custody as a 'place of safety' for people in crisis, as supported by figures released earlier this week by the National Police Chiefs Council. However, CQC has found that there can still be problems with people under 18 being able to access a suitable place of safety. In 2013/14, nearly a third (31%) of people under 18 who were detained, were taken into police custody.

**Notes to editors**

[Download 'Right here, right now' and access other related materials here.](#)

For more information about CQC's commitment to the Mental Health Concordat, [see here](#).

CQC has published individual reports for the twelve areas that it inspected as part of its review of mental health crisis care. CQC found that while 86% of those who had received care and support from charities and volunteers felt that their concerns had been taken seriously by them – with 61% and 54% saying the same for ambulance crews and the police respectively – only 37% said that they felt this from A&E staff.

Over 1.7 million people in England contacted NHS trusts providing mental health services in 2013/14; of whom, over 105,000 spent some time as an inpatient. Of these, 68,811

admissions were to acute mental health wards – the majority of which were classed as emergency admissions. Source: <http://www.hscic.gov.uk/mentalhealth>

For more information from the report of the National Police Chiefs Council on the use of police cells in the absence of places of safety (which supports CQC's findings), [see here](#).

## About the Care Quality Commission

The Care Quality Commission (CQC) is the independent regulator of Health and Social Care in England. We make sure Health and Social Care Services provide people with safe, effective, compassionate, high-quality care and we encourage care services to improve. We monitor, inspect and regulate services to make sure they meet fundamental standards of quality and safety and we publish what we find to help people choose care.

It is not acceptable for people with mental health problems to be treated differently to those with physical health problems.

*Dr Paul Lelliott, Deputy Chief Inspector of Hospitals*

**Share your Experience:** Speak up and tell us on 03000 61 61 61, [enquiries@cqc.org.uk](mailto:enquiries@cqc.org.uk), or [our online form](#). You can also share your experience of a service with us

## Anne Creasey – Featured Artist



*Descent from the Cross by Anne Creasey*

## About My Art

I was diagnosed with a mental disorder in the days when such a labelling ended a career and called a halt to a social life. In other words, you were pretty well closed down. By fifty, I had to give up work – no great regrets there, I must admit, because it gave me more time to paint, create textile pieces, papier maché and anything else I felt inclined to try that didn't cost too much. I'm a compulsive 'maker'. That's happiness for me: not to be taken too seriously. In a bad patch, I can gradually pull myself round by remembering how I feel the moment I pick up a brush and apply colour to canvas or paper.

My style changed radically after a serious set-back three years ago. It was as if a wall in my mind crumbled and at last everything I had tried, but vainly, to express before, flooded out. I gave myself permission to paint the unpaintable, to flesh and bone the world I wanted to inhabit – where love and forgiveness rule. I don't plan my pictures, which maybe all too obvious. Like some organism, I let them grow and however bizarre they may appear, I neither criticise nor judge them.

I occasionally exhibit them but generally work in a bit of a vacuum. I don't expect to sell any, not quite what folks hang on the wall these days. **Anne Creasey**

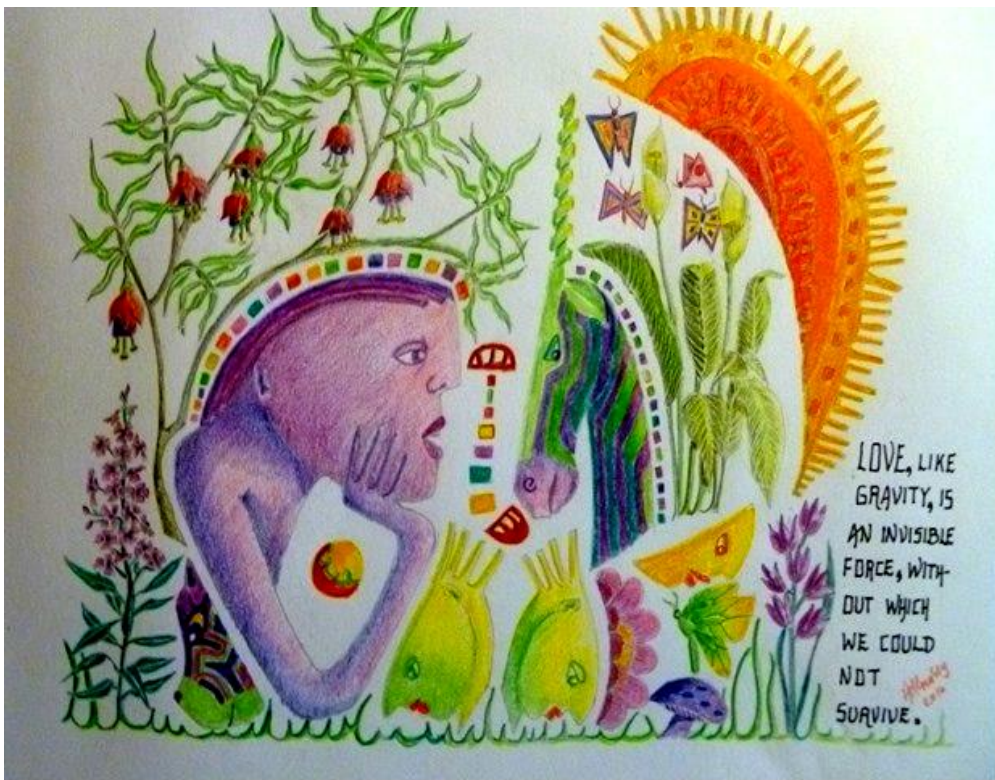


*Waking* by Anne Creasey





Artwork by Anne Creasey



Thoughts on Love 4 by Anne Creasey



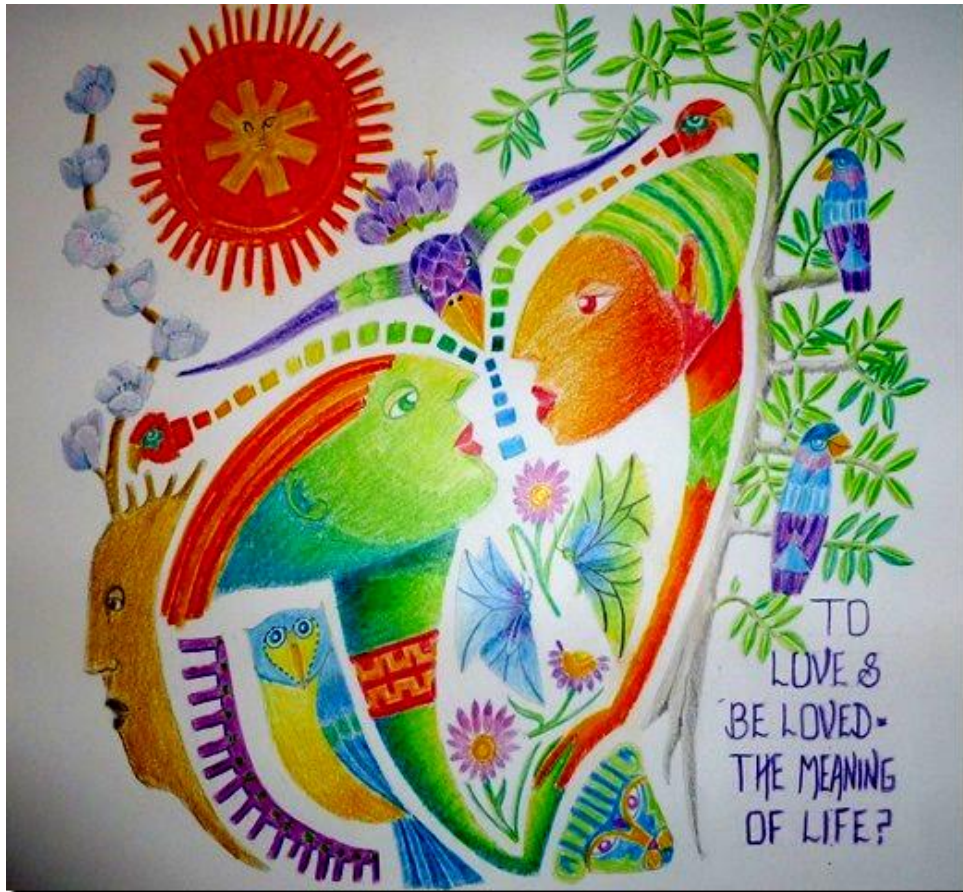


Artwork by Anne Creasey



Thoughts on Love 5 by Anne Creasey

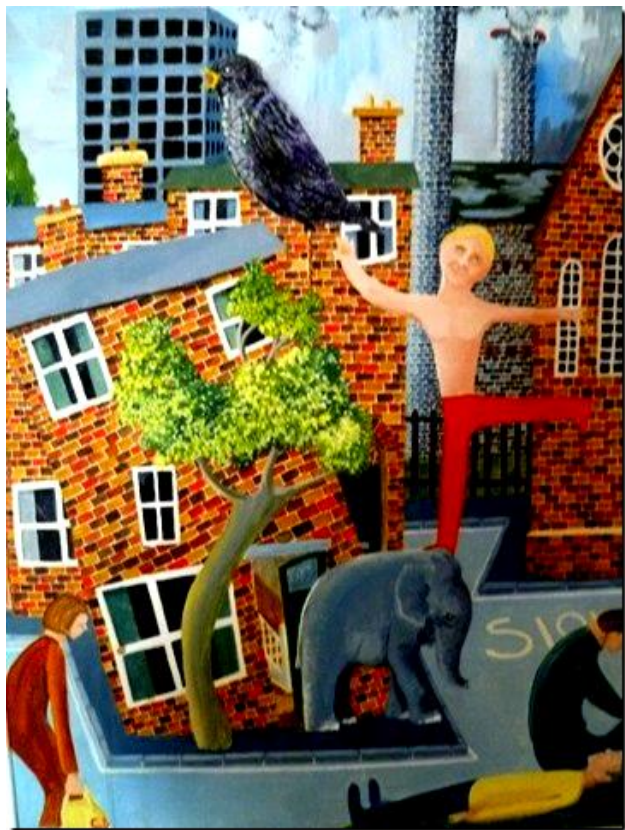




*Thoughts on Love 3 by Anne Creasey*



*Lord of the Dance by Anne Creasey*



*Indifference by Anne Creasey*

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# Tolerance



Let us first look at the word tolerance which wears many hats – There is an outdoor sculpture in Israel near the Goldman Promenade – The Tolerance Monument. It forms a visual broken column which stands divided but still very much linked – So are they tolerating each other? It can be the study of accumulated and variation within mechanical parts and assemblies. There is the tolerance of drugs or alcohol, simply because the more we use or drink the more our bodies deal with the substances we consume or afflict. Pain tolerance is also very much up there, oddly it seems that the longer we live the pain our tolerance increases. Before I rattle on here in danger of sounding very much like a dictionary, let's move on to something that we neither would nor could think would sit right within the middle or that word – Abuse tolerance.

So how do we make this distinction? I have it mixed up – Turned over – Beaten with a stick – Along with juggling all of the parts within this puzzle. But still I am not wholly aware of why we would do so? So I am going to stick my neck out here, and make a guess to the best of my knowledge and past experiences. If we were to crawl around amongst every word sitting here right above us at this time, then maybe we could find the answer to my ever burning question. Why would anyone much like me tolerate abuse? The entire variables above stand fast in our every growing effort to make our lives have meaning.

**Let's first look at the Monument** – Over many years it has stood there trying it would seem to break away from the base that holds it together. Each part seems to want to leave the other behind, but unable to make the final splintering at the base to make that possible. Are



we not splintered that way whilst we still hold on to our abuse? No matter how far the pillars move away from each other they are still only bending not breaking.

**Mechanical** – If we were to think about the working parts of our bodies are we not in essence a machine? All parts needs to hold fast working within our tolerance. We do this every day with our abuse. The problem is that no matter how hard we try these parts will always fail never tolerating this intrusion into our bodies and minds. Until we take over the maintenance because we are the only ones holding on to the tools to alter that part of us.

**Pain** – Pain tolerance is something I can vouch for. After having an accident in 1998 in which I injured my back it's been a challenge. As time passed I became drug/pain killers tolerant – Result I had to increase the dosage. On reaching the ceiling of that pain killer I could no longer increase the dose safely – where was I to go? In truth it has almost become a part of me.

**Drugs or Alcohol** – This comparison is very different because we already have the key in hand to stop the continued use. Please don't think that I am saying – It's your fault – You are doing this to yourself – Why can't you just stop. In all honesty I could never say those words to you because I used one of those props for so very long. I never went down the road of drugs, but alcohol was very much where I went to hide from the world. If I am being even more honest it was also where I went to find myself.

Yes we may be able to see the drink in our hand or the particular choice of drug sitting in front of us, but that only means that these props are visible. The other three comparisons I have used are just as accessible to us when we learn to look within. Within our minds eye we can repair break away and alter every part of our being, it doesn't need to be seen with the naked eye.

So why am I here today? It's to share with you the oddest thing that I may ever encounter within my life – Although it's taking me a while to get to the point – Sorry.

There is knowledge deep inside of me, which recognises that for so many years I was totally tolerant of my abuse along with its memories. I guess that everyone needs an anchor of sorts somewhere; to feel a connection to this world. It pains me to say that for so many years my anchor was my abuse. It was all I remembered as being the largest portion of my life. As sure as hell it was not the anchor that I would have hoped for it was the one I was stuck with. I was in a position of needed an anchor in life to feel that I was on solid ground, whilst trying with all my might to leave behind the abuse that I had suffered. I tried many times before I succeeded, but the point to make here is that in time I did – You will also.

So there was I – a plan in hand, intent on moving forward; but time after time I was left holding a spanner in hand ready to throw it into the works. Once thrown each time it caused my best thought out plans to crash and burn. The mental effort I had thought through so carefully giving it my up-most consideration. I was left with the remains of a car crash with myself being the only mechanic in town. The truth was that I was the one applying this

outcome each and every time it happened. Why? It was natural for me to hold on to an anchor for stability, but I was burning my hands with every touch. I needed an anchor in my life, but the one I had was only destroying me.

An anchor is something solid it gives us the strength when necessary to hold on. Without it we would find ourselves flailing around unable to make a connection to anyone or anything. The end result deep down inside finds us thrashing around vigorously, aimlessly crashing around like a puppet with broken strings in an endeavour to find solid ground. Everyone needs to feel a connection to the world and our place within it. The one thing that dominates our lives is a structure implanted as we have grown. Something put in place that had or has an overbearing affect; if you like we can even call it our shadow. It's always there but unless we are standing in a certain light it just not visible to us. Given a situation where we are standing where our shadow should be visible and it's missing, it's a very unnerving situation as we really cannot fathom its departure. Never in a million years should we tolerate our abuse. But we are so very unsure of our place within the world without it. Quite simply it's all we know. It has been our anchor which sounds so completely off the wall and it's been a heavy weight to carry.

Just like the picture depicts at the top of this piece we are somehow shackled to its longevity. So I should not need to tell you that for those of us that have or are still suffering abuse it's by far one of the hardest things to overcome. We are left with nothing more than cause and effect. We need solid ground – The only solid ground seemingly available to us is our abuse. I know all this astounds but that's where we will stay until we realise that there is another way. Wouldn't it be great if we could just obliterate our past – Remove it completely leaving no trace – Wipe it out – Destroy every memory? I admit it sounds pretty good doesn't it? But choosing that path is never a sure bet there could come a time where it will be back with you biting at your ankles. Suddenly tolerance seems the only action that can be taken.

But there is another action that will bear far more fruit; we should never feel that all we ever had through life was our abuse. It took me many years to be able to pull back the curtains just to take a little peek beyond my abuse; that's where I found to my delight that there were good memories to be found they were simply lost within the circus. From that day forward I began looking for solid ground that I could build on. It's a little scary out there because for a moment within that time, you find yourself without the anchor that everyone needs to feel safe. The reality check is that you were never safe because the ground beneath you has always been rocky; it seems at times we feel that what we know is safer than the unknown, no matter how fearful the right there and then may seem.

There is a metaphor that comes to mind here quite readily – We are to keep both feet on the ground – Have they ever tried that when the ground beneath you is so unstably . . .

**Teresa Joyce** (Author of *There's a Fine Line*, published by Chipmunka and review in PEN)

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# Survey of Fringe Theatre in Brighton

by Simon Jenner

## **The Others – *I Am Not Antigone* – The Otherplace at The Basement, Brighton 10<sup>th</sup> May**

The title hints the difference. After some directionless wig-dancing Sophocles' play is framed by the protagonist commenting on the first female freedom-fighter, who steps out of role to comment on Twitter as the new chorus (people were invited to contribute, though tweets looked manufactured and below eye-line); and later critique social media as dopamine-fed placebos killing all will to make any difference. This ignores recent history but in its place this fuzzy interface with ancient Greece ('by Zeus') is compromised by consequences: Antigone's only threatened with prison by ruler Creon for wanting to 'bury' her 'bad' brother whereas the 'good' one gets a state funeral. Fiancé Haemon, Creon's son, is too wibbly to even offer support. In the original, like Antigone, he hangs himself. Creon here convinces Antigone that both brothers were equally criminals; nothing remains of any bodies consumed in the fighting. Fuzzy interfaces work best with Antigone's Skype-talk with herself as sister Ismene, face distorted to look ugly. Timing with a pre-filmed self is crucial and comic: Ismene only wants to know what dress Antigone will wear to the funeral. Sparky, but in short-fizzling Antigone's 'metaphoric death' at 45 minutes, the tragedy is the death of real tragedy.

## **The Bucket Club – Lorraine and Alan, TOM 21st May 2015**

To launch a re-telling of the Selkie myth you might expect it to sashay through post-student fringe humour, and stumble onto genuine enchantment just as Marine Biology graduate Alan does over a naked young woman fallen out of a seal-skin. But the tale's core appeals because it's a straight love story torqued with the girl's handshaking at first in flipper-fashion with cute *oiks*, four-hour baths, licking salted peanuts and eating out of tuna tins. And trying to jump back into the sea – Katie Sherrard's outstanding, provoking

Adam Farrell's befuddled foil. Following his parents' appalled return – anything wet infuriates – Alan hauls Lorraine farthest away from brine in landlocked Leamington Spa. She's named herself after Lorraine Kelly TV presenter, preternaturally mastering speech. Their child should cement them but Lorraine's clearly not a Leamington girl with the sea in her eyes. An atmosphere-creating couple manipulate sonics from a mixer amplify an auric wonder with songs that might resonate even better on radio. Hundreds of plastic bottles doing various service resemble beached symbolism fermenting fun. The eponymous couple narrate often in third-person, lending distance and enchantment, but pulling back on a big desolate finish. The play needs to breathe more, nearing water.

### **Shaw – *Man and Superman* National Theatre Lyttleton, May 6<sup>th</sup> 2015**

Ralph Fiennes tears through Simon Godwin's astoundingly fleet production like a cerebral athlete. Shaw's life-force play slyly avoids pitting male intellect against maternal vitalism, citing men as mere tools. It's a sleight-of-hand Fiennes – stalking and skulking – comically summarises by echoing Indira Varma's reduction of him: 'Talking!'

This three-and-a-half hour production triumphantly embeds the philosophical Don Juan scene. This, Jack Tanner's dream, follows his capture by Mendoza's brigands, more genteel than Tanner's own Revolutionist's Handbook. Shaw condoned the scene's detachment – at the expense of point. Like the NT's 1981 production it's not shirked here. Fiennes' Tanner exudes bewildered magnificence fleeing sleek sets in a real Jaguar pursued by Varma's slinky, deadly Ann Whitefield. Another foil, Nicholas Le Prevost's Ramsden, blusters as fellow guardian of Ann, and in hell a cheery Commandatore. He's on convivial terms with Tanner's alter ego Don Juan, to the incredulous horror of newly arrived daughter Donna Ana. Varma's scorn marks her will as dormant merely. Tim McMullan's raffish Mendoza aka the Devil in Tanner's dream may be trounced by Tanner; but the final act defeats Tanner himself. He's captured not by brigands but Ann. Fiennes and Varma prove themselves terrible equals, talking.

## **Tom Morton-Smith, *Oppenheimer*, Vaudeville, May 23rd 2015**

It's not atoms that make everything up in this apotheosis of a play: it's lighting turning a cast in a second from dance floor bopping to scrawling sums on the floor. John Heffernan's *Oppenheimer* – a frantic tour de force – leads a fluid cast from an opening perky address to the audience: 'I can make everything clearer, but not less complicated.' closing with Vishnu's 'I am become Death, the destroyer of worlds.' The script's brilliant cautioning squeezes like an elusive fistful of mercury.

Oppenheimer's journey from idealist to compromised establishment figure who can't talk to his own brother till he's sent for – is fraught with a lanky angst from Heffernan exuding the sweat of sell-out to beat the Germans to the bomb. That he discovers too late theirs wouldn't blast a paper bag underlines his abhorrence of its use against the non-nuclear Japanese. He's contaminated. The bomb lurches in Co2 overhead. Thomasin Rand as Kitty, ditching a husband to hitch Oppenheimer, and Laura Cubitt's tragic Ruth, exude humanity, counterpointing Ben Allen's dry Teller and wily general William Gaminara. Jack Holden's Robert Wilson draws back from his own privilege; Frank Oppenheimer's Michael Grady-Hall sings his brother a Requiescat: a sardonic *Internationale*.

## ***So It Goes* – The Otherplace at The Basement, Brighton 10<sup>th</sup> May 2105**

Hannah Moss lost her father when 17, in 2006. Six years on she found a way of finally talking about it, and the result is one of the most talked-of plays of the Fringe. But talking here is voiceless: Moss with her partner David Rafe uses white-boarding to tell a non-chronological tale of premature cancer, loss, and Moss's relationship with her father and mother (both played with touching travesty by Rafe). With music, dance and the most expressive face for 100-Watt smiles and utter devastation, Moss sashays physically and chronologically around her father's absence, partly by bringing on placards delineating him and for instance a duck-train of miniature doctors whilst the 'Dad' figure is white-boarding denial ever more frantically and indecipherably till his messages are gently wiped by Moss. This and her 'favourite' part of the show, saying goodbye, are just highs in an hour full of running, philosophy, her parents' courtship, and a stand-out Freshers-Week dance scene where her 18-year-old rave self is pursued by a dork – and David.

Moss's expressions throughout irradiate, and her starting tears answered sobbing from the audience. With cartoon scenery echoing the whiteboards, and a Norfolk beach, the final *coup* must simply be seen.

**Fine Mess: The Common Land. Brighton Festival, The Warren, St Peter's, May 2<sup>nd</sup> 18.00-19.00.**

This play won't let you go in its 50 minutes, perhaps ever. Joel Samuel plunges us into a manic, ferociously lucid one-man account of growing crooked in the fens. The polar diametrics of love and revenge collide when a very bright farmer's son 'Farmarse' meets Leah when he overturns a quad bike at ten and becomes her *stuntman*. From then on when they meet again, he turns a gleaming foil to her proxy revenge on his foes. Samuels' breathtaking delivery is a locally nuanced *Not I*, stretched with a gamut of voices: pauses, shrieks of pain, abject terror, laughter; all with starkly effective lighting. Farmarse is very bright; Leah extremely cunning. He reads classics and Stephen King. She reads torture thrillers. Or does she? When they're separated they swap stories, but in whose hand? When revenge against his bully of eight years, the horrendous Scarface – Farmarse bit him at eight – is plotted, Leah turns Lady Macbeth and pushes him further. And it's she who fires the gun. Or does she? At the end you wonder who's imagined who. Founded 2013 Fine Mess have won Brighton Festival awards and wowed at Edinburgh. Joel Samuel's play and performance show why.

**Permanently Visible Productions – Time to Talk to Jane Warren,**

**13<sup>th</sup> May 2015**

Tragedy disguised as stand-up. One thinks of *The Entertainer* but this astonishingly candid work is based on personal experience of Bulmina. Its themes however are existential: despair, laughter, mental distress, suicide are etched into the very sweets the audience is given as it files in: it's about complicity; our relationship with food, even intimacy.

Actor **Jenny Kendol** has also written and devised a Fringe show about a character who's written a Fringe show about going off the rails and and goes off the rails. A mixture of stand-up, confessional, clowning and sheer raw theatre. The wry Scottish girl who quips about weight obsession strips to her undies then turns on the front row 'so you can get a better look'. She's also alternately consoling to those she interacts with, then explodes shrieking: 'I want to be skinny' tearing food up into her hair. This visceral self-loathing and breakdown, alienation from boyfriend and colleagues, is riotously turned; as is her love for her fire-blitzed bike. One moment she's carousing with a Chardonnay bottle in her undies to rave music, off her head; next she shudders breakdown. This must travel and inform; its devastation lies beyond Bulmina. Kendol is a phenomenon.



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# Lifesaving Poems

Edited by Anthony Wilson

Bloodaxe Books 2015

ISBN 978-1-78037-157-3 £12



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What better introduction to this collection than the lucid words of Anthony Wilson, the Editor:

“The idea of the *Lifesaving Poems* blog stemmed from a remark made by **Seamus Heaney** in an interview, when he wondered how many poems can affect one across a lifetime. This prompted Anthony to start copying out poems that had made a strong impression on him, or had helped him out during difficult periods, especially during his treatment for cancer. He chose poems he felt he could not live without, limiting himself to

just one poem per poet. The poems were not necessarily famous, nor even the best work of that poet, but were the ones that made the most impact on him.”

*‘Lifesaving Poems* is not designed to be a perfect list of the great and the good. It is a group of poems I happen to feel passionate about according to my tastes.’

“They show the power of a poem to move and to help during a time of crisis.”

A most pertinent slogan in “C’mon people, this poetry ain’t gonna appreciate itself” (**Bart Simpson**). **Anthony Wilson** accompanies each poem by putting it in the context of his own reading and living experience. This highlights the fact that appreciation of a poem involves criteria supplementary to objective criticism, though he does offer the latter at a high level of perceptivity. I find this approach really refreshing, having long complained about the lack of ‘reader-friendly’ footnotes and background in the many anthologies and collections I have reviewed. “I loved finding myself mirrored in lines which looked simultaneously casual and minimal.” The unfamiliarity of most of the poems here is most refreshing, as is Anthony’s openness about his own struggles with the writing process – a ‘writers’ writer supreme. The anthology is divided into 8 parts, to embrace the totality of experience, including severe illness and mortality – the sections *What it’s like to be alive* and *I came near to dying* are of special relevance to Survivors.

With great humanity he embraces resilience, vulnerability and impressionability – “feeling as though someone had taken a look inside my head and made a snapshot of it for all to see.” He senses the elusiveness of the goal of the poet’s vision: “it (a well-loved poem) seems to reach into spaces we all carry that are non-verbal . . .” There must be magic and



vitality: “I want the poem to talk to me in a way I know and yet have no knowledge of. I am in the business of wanting to be surprised. I am already falling in love with the words taking place in my throat and under my breath.” He happily quotes **Jean Sprackland**, who stated “When I am writing, I am only happy when I have no idea what I am doing.” Hiatuses, vacua and contradiction are the essence of creativity, spelled out with extraordinary acumen in his note on **Derry Rees-Jones’s** *What It’s Like to be Alive*: “Looking at the poem now I greatly admire how it is not ambitious for anything other than remaining within the cry of its eternal present moment. It is as though the speaker’s linguistic synapses have been held in suspended animation for a moment of daydream and self-forgetfulness. They provide a vital pause, unglamorous in themselves but nevertheless taking the poem into a realm that is part grief and part elation. The sudden dip of temperature that they create is not unlike burying your hand below the surface of icy water. It is a most curious phenomenon, to read lines of such certainty sounding like the least certain utterances ever made.” Later he refers to ‘the limiting effect of language on communication.’ My own reaction to this poem is that it expresses the uncluttered perceptivity of a child – “we were children, not lovers”, and an overwhelming sense of awe in the face of the cosmos – transcending categories of feeling – “I did not know if this was grief or love”.

Also interesting is his observation on **Margaret Avison’s** *Twilight*: “Something about those short, declarative sentences, the way they innocently purport to paint a picture whilst carrying the weight of the world on their shoulders . . .” Later – “What (Mark) **Halliday** does in this poem, it seems to me, is create an alternative universe in the shape of a mythical ‘missing poem’. In reality, what is

missing is not the poem, nor the world it portrays, but concentrated quality of attention to what stays right under our noses, day after day.” Speaking of Jackie Kay’s *Dusting the Phone*, he says “I think it is a great example of the way the title of a poem can set up an expectation in the imagination of the reader, then explore the gap between what is promised and what is ‘happening’, which is the poem’s real subject.”

The commentaries radiate the comprehensive richness of the editor’s experience. The entire spectrum is covered; the experience of the patient, undergoing chemotherapy, threatened by mortality; the teacher – covering the whole age range – even including one poem by a ten-year-old; decades of interaction with other writers and readers through poetry workshops, and a highly developed sense of academic criticism. But of his chosen poems have a ‘gut reaction’ connection with his real, living experience, and the academically critical is subordinated to the experiential. Each reader has times of elemental emotional need, which sometimes link crucially with the casual discovery of a poem. He is both the thorough scholar and the random browser, and he rightfully values the function of the latter in depth appreciation of any poem. A truly sensitive soul, he values illuminating the ordinary, especially in **Thomas Transtroemer’s** *Alone* – “the connecting of the familiar and everyday to an abstract and real state of terror.” Of **Mandy Coe’s** *Let’s Celebrate*, he says: “Few poems have the power both to acknowledge life *in extremis* while offering a vision of how it might be otherwise.” He compliments the approach of Clare best re *Bookbinder*: “In the words of her publisher, this is indeed ‘pioneer territory’, which explores ‘how it feels to experience radical surgery and its aftermath in a society permeated by orthodox ideas of perfection and beauty.’”

Wilson makes one of the most eloquent pleas for honesty which I have ever read in literary criticism, with reference to **Evangeline Patterson**: “The most memorable thing she said that day . . . was to ask us to pray for her writer’s block . . . This unlooked-for utterance had a profound impact on me, not least in the way I listen to poets when they speak about their work. How many of us abjure the vulnerability so wonderfully modelled by Evangeline that morning, preferring instead the easy answer about our writing process.”

As regards the therapeutic value of poetry, Wilson is convinced that persistently reading poetry to the victim of a severe road accident led her to health and success. In his dedication to Elizabeth Jennings, he is honestly appreciative of socially integrated writers. He includes **Norman McCaig’s** *Aunt Julia*, which he encountered at the age of 14. McCaig stayed with a relation who could speak no English, and so had severe communication problems. This poem was a prime catalyst for Anthony:

“It is the poem that got me writing because it appeared when I needed it, (which wasn’t until after I’d read it). It told a story – while leaving most of the ‘questions unanswered’; and because it taught me that plain language can be heart-breaking too. I feel I owe it everything.”

As regards the roots of composition, he describes workshop activity which involved making structures from the utterances of children, dividing their words into three columns, and making new metaphors from these components: “The resulting poems do not need to make a narrative or linear sense. The purpose of the exercise is to see where the language takes you. The end-product of one such exercise, “the language of education

sat scribbling with delight” made a decisive impression on all those who heard it.

His relating of Subjective to Objective is articulated in his discussion of *Psalm* by **Wisława Szymborska**: “Her achievement . . . is to find for Polish poetry a method of ‘existential meditation, leaving behind pure lyric and embarking on discourse. The influence of ‘biology lessons learned at school’ may never be far behind, ‘Yet she never makes the reductionist turn.’ This is a critical point and perhaps a counter-intuitive one: for the poems to work on us as ‘discourse’ they need first to work as poems . . . Let us go further than that, into the realm of make-believe, childishness, even, and imbue it with consciousness.”

All the poems featured here are super-durable for Anthony Wilson, constantly to be re-read. He also admits that there can be a ‘delayed action’ factor with powerful poems, sometimes a matter of years between the first reading and the penetrating impact. He also asserts that there can be subconscious, telepathic links between reader and poet-poem. When talking about **Philip Levine’s** *Magpiety*, he says: “Though it corresponds to no event or landscape in my life that I can remember, I distinctly remember coming up against the sensation of having encountered it before.” Similarly, with **Adrienne Rich** “It felt to me on first reading that the speaker had somehow intuited knowledge and information about the deepest and unspoken parts of my family history and stripped them bare for all to see.”

With a first reading of *Lifesaving Poems*, the commentaries tended to preponderate over most of the poems. That fact necessitates at least one extra reading giving priority to the poems. Some of these are already familiar to me, but the commentaries certainly prompted

re-read, and discoveries of new depths. It was great to be introduced to *May the Silence Break* by **Brendan Kennelly**, *The Beautiful Apartments* by **George Messo**, and *In the Desert Knowing Nothing* by **Helen Dunmore**.

I feel that *Lifesaving Poems* will appeal mainly to struggling writers in search of inspiration from kindred spirits. The inclusion of *A Letter to Peter Levi* by **Elizabeth Jennings** and *Literary Portrait* by **Evangeline Patterson** emphasise the 'knock-on' effect of inspiring role-models.

## Dave Russell

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**MAY 16th INTERNATIONAL DAY OF PROTEST  
AGAINST PSYCHIATRIC ELECTROSHOCK**

**LONDON PROTEST**

## **Psychiatric Electroshock (ECT) can be given against your will in the UK and Worldwide.**

On **May 16, 2015**, from 2pm until 6pm, there was a demonstration at the Houses of Parliament against Electroshock as a psychiatric 'treatment'.

An infamous teddy bear from Vermont in his straitjacket was given ECT in the shadow of Big Ben by 'nurse' Cheryl Prax.

[http://content.time.com/time/specials/packages/article/0,28804,1927306\\_1927313\\_1927345,00.html](http://content.time.com/time/specials/packages/article/0,28804,1927306_1927313_1927345,00.html)

22 protesters handed out leaflets and spoke to passers-by. Most of the people who stopped were sympathetic; most did not believe Electroshock still happens. A couple of professionals including an ECT anaesthetist could not understand why we were protesting but as **Una Parker** from ECT Anonymous in Leeds remarked – “they only see the dazed patient straight afterwards and not many weeks after when the brain injury ‘high’ wears off and they sink back into despair worse than before as they have lost memories, education and cannot relearn as easily as before.” Another protester came all the way from Scotland – such was his determination to show solidarity.

Photos here:

<https://www.facebook.com/media/set/?set=oa.873879749352517&type=1>

The demonstration was part of a coordinated international event involving over thirty cities in nine countries on the same day. This historic event was organized by three shock survivors: **Ted Chabasinski** from California, Debra **Schwartzkopff** from Oregon, and **Mary Maddock** from Ireland. Protests began in **Rotorua**, New Zealand, early on May 16, and ended many hours later at an evening forum held in New York City. List of protests here:

<http://ectjustice.com/protest.php>

Psychiatrist **Peter Breggin**, who has written extensively about electroshock (also known as electroconvulsive ‘therapy’, or ECT) says that , “No one should be given shock treatment.” He cites many studies that show that ECT invariably causes brain damage, memory loss, and cognitive malfunction. Furthermore, he notes that shock is never really voluntary, both because of the coercive nature of being on a psychiatric ward, and because the patient after the first shock becomes docile and too confused to resist.

Doctor Breggin says that ECT ‘works’ by damaging the brain. Each treatment results “in a temporary coma and often flat-lining of the brain waves, which is a sign of impending brain death . . . Abundant evidence indicates that ECT should be banned.”

**John Read** and **Richard Bentall** Literature Review, “**Conclusions** – Given the strong evidence of persistent and, for some, permanent brain dysfunction, primarily evidenced in the form of retrograde and anterograde amnesia, and the evidence of a slight but significant increased risk of death, the cost-benefit analysis for ECT is so poor that its use cannot be scientifically justified”.

One survivor has written: “Electroshock robbed me of my history and my future. I lost most memories of motherhood, of my twenty-eight year marriage, and my twenty-five year career as a trauma nurse, which is now over. I know I am not alone. This must be stopped.”

A Canadian woman wrote: “After 14 months, I returned home to a family I had no memory of. I didn’t know how to be a mother to my young sons or a wife to my husband. I had to learn my name, how to speak, do up buttons, brush my teeth, and so on. I didn’t even know

my own parents, sisters, brothers. My social work career and law aspirations vanished.”

**Ernest Hemingway**, Nobel Prize-winning author who killed himself after complaining that psychiatric electroshock had ruined his career by destroying his memory.

*"Well, what is the sense of ruining my head and erasing my memory, which is my capital, and putting me out of business? It was a brilliant cure but we lost the patient."*

Electroshock treatment is a crime against humanity and has no place in civilized society. In the UK most Electroshock is given to elderly women often without consent. The UN Rapporteur on Torture said that forced psychiatric treatment can be considered torture.

More information about the London event can be found here:

<https://www.facebook.com/events/1629280310635711/>

## Stevenage Survivors

### Poetry

## ‘FREE’ COMMUNITY THERAPY DAY

**Saturday 27<sup>th</sup> June 2015 –**

**Starting 10.30 am – 5.00pm**

**Doors open 10 am Free lunch 1-2 pm**

**At the Friends Meeting place (FMH  
Quaker Hall)**

**Cutty’s Lane, Stevenage,  
Hertfordshire SG1 1UP**

Join us for a day of sun, poetry, creative writing, meditation, mindfulness, sound healing, art workshop, celebratory readings, chill out garden and storytelling and much, much more.....

Join us on facebook- **Survivors' Therapy Day**

We are members of 'The FED: Network of Writing & Community Publishers.' See web site: [www.thefed.btck.co.uk](http://www.thefed.btck.co.uk)  
[www.survivorspoetry.org](http://www.survivorspoetry.org)

**Directions:** Walking from the railway or bus station enter the **town centre square**, pass the clock tower and Primark clothes store on your right, then turn left and go down **Market Place**, at the bottom go down the steps and through the underpass below the ring road (**St. Georges Way**.) Pass the **Stevenage museum** and **St. George Church** on your left and the Holiday Inn on the right. At the top of the walkway is the FMH but you need to turn left and walk around the building as access is at the back off Cutty's Lane. Disabled access is at the roadside on **Cutty's Lane**.

For more information contact:

**Chairperson:** [andrewhsmith@sky.com](mailto:andrewhsmith@sky.com)  
mobile: 07817 581 692

**Treasurer:** [Christopher.munt@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:Christopher.munt@hotmail.co.uk)  
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**Secretary:** Carole Lorimer  
[Clorimer@strawberrypirate.com](mailto:Clorimer@strawberrypirate.com) 07776  
254876

Bring a friend – both get in FREE

**Stevenage Survivors**

**Poetry**

**Meets fortnightly at 7.45 pm at the  
Friends Meeting place  
(FMH Quaker Hall)  
Cutty's Lane, Stevenage, Hertfordshire  
SG1 1UP**

We are a mixed group of people who enjoy poetry. We call ourselves survivors as some of our group are surviving some form of trauma, health problem, addiction or disability. This may be our entry point but all you really need to join in is an interest in creative writing and poetry.

We take turns to facilitate the group setting a theme or topic for the evening. In the early part of the evening we normally write a short piece based on the theme that has been set for about 25 -35 minutes and then have a 'share round' – but you do not have to read your work if you choose not to do so.

Did I forget to say we drink tea, coffee & juice and eat cakes and biscuits! To help with the rent & refreshments we pay less than a cup of Costa Coffee – just £2.

In the second part of the evening we bring poetry we have enjoyed to read to the rest of the group. It can be our own writing or another author's work, famous or unknown. This is a chance to discuss poetry and writing and socialise.

Did I forget to say we drink tea, coffee & juice and eat cakes and biscuits!

We are members of 'The FED: Network of Writing & Community Publishers.' See website: [www.thefed.btck.co.uk](http://www.thefed.btck.co.uk)

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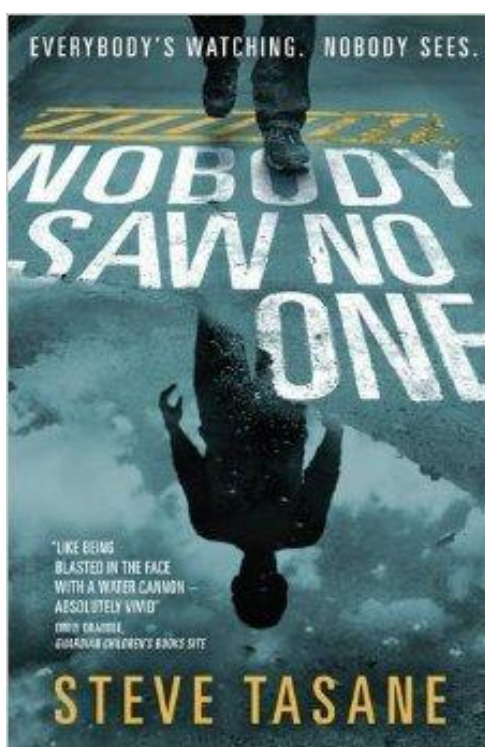
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## ‘No One Saw No One’ by Steve Tasane



This is a powerful, gritty modernisation of Oliver Twist: a story/novel for young adults (12 +) about two teenage boys trapped in a world run by paedophiles, crooks, violence and corruption that beggars belief.

### The main characters are:

**Citizen Digit** who is very much the **Artful Dodger** type.

He is streetwise, invisible when he needs to be. His narrative is a wonderful eclectic

mix of language, crossing over from Dickensian cockney to modern urban slang. He is a thief on the outside but very much a survivor on the inside.

**Alfi Spar** is **Oliver Twist** in a nutshell – a pretty young boy, vulnerable, lost and alone. Only a slim trace of his family history remains, via a handwritten Birth Certificate with minimum details. Alfi is homeless, living a sparse existence but never breaking the law. Even in desperation for food Alfi would rather eat nothing than be immoral.

Both boys were (kinda) friends at **Tenderness House** (Young Offenders' Secure Facility).

**Citizen Digit** (aka Byron) a young offender, of small-time criminality.

**Alfi Spar** not guilty of anything other than being judged as so.

Following two equally creative 'Great Escapes' they both return to London to seek out the 'beautiful' helping hands of Grace (a Nancy figure, anchoring much of the battle between good and bad in the book ) who was known for helping boys re-adjust to independent living!

The boys are reacquainted by pure chance on the streets of North London. Their relationship becomes quickly partisan, but always with an underlying flavour of mutual annoyance and irritation.

We are taken through the book with two dialogues. Both boys take it in turns to tell their stories intertwining as we enter and become absorbed all in how their lives brought them here, between the pages of *No One Saw No One*.

**Excerpt from 'No One Saw No One' – everybody sees but no one tells:**

***I (Citizen Digit) acquainted Alfi Spar when I was in Care. Tenderness House Secure Unit they called it, like it was a hotel for nervous peeps with sensitive skin. Alfi was one of the WhyPees. For your inf: WhyPees = YPs = Young People = kids. Kids like me and Alfi who aren't able to be looked after by normal groans – that's grown-ups – because of our behavioural difficulties***

Both boys come from backgrounds filled with trauma both in their nuclear families, foster families and beyond. They find themselves becoming more and more absorbed in a society and penal system where paedophilia is always just a closed door or corridor away.

I really engaged with both of the two main characters very quickly.

Beyond the bravado of surviving in a city where wealth bags (wealthy people) are rich pickings for Citizen Digit, and where Alfi Spar kinda lives in hope one day he will find a warm bed to sleep in, but in the meantime he tries toughening up (as much as was morally acceptable) as a street kid.

You can tell via the dialogue both boys are hiding soft hearts and an eagerness for justice and a wish to belong to a world that doesn't really want them, other than for abuse in one way or another.

We soon meet all the other main characters . . . who are not so dissimilar to Dickens' characters.

**Norman Newton (Mr Bumble Figure)**, or as the boys refer to him 'Call Me Norman' the manager at Tenderness House. A very dislikeable character with a history to boot. The leader of a Paedophile ring that spread out its wickedness far and wide.

**Virus (Fagin Figure)** who runs Cash Counter in Seven Sisters – a cover business for a much wealthier, illegal range of online businesses, staffed by a myriad of teenagers all of whom had to pass through Tenderness House or I guess other negative environments.

**Jackson Banks (Bill Sykes Figure)**. Nasty, ugly and a complete thug. I'll leave you to meet him if and when you read the book.

And last but not least **Obnob** (the dog) a bit like Bull's Eye but much more three-dimensional and prevalent in this story.

Both Citizen Digit and Alfi Spar find themselves willingly part of Virus's empire. But Virus also holds a punitive twitch over all the boys and has a dark history, which further weaves and tangles the web of lies, deceit and nastiness we meet later on the book.

But the boys have evidence! Here we are drawn into the main story of this book. Explored not in a graphic manner but told very much by Citizen Digit's emotions and suggestions as he films on a smartphone one night's activities at Tenderness House...

**Excerpt from 'No One Saw No One' – everybody sees but no one tells . . .**

***I get to the door, ease my way through it and make my way down the corridor towards the back lounge.***

***Where's Citizens brain gone? Only gone and fallen out into the mud by the rose bush, ain't they?***

***Cos at the end of the corridor, I slide the door open, just a tad, and keep filming.***

***Never-Been-Seen      Never-Been-Seen  
that's me, yeah?***

***Classical music is flowing out of the speakers – and you-don't-want-to-know-what is playing on the widescreen. On a sofa, the flabby groan and the girl with the cigarette, together. I really don't want to look at what's happening in the room.***

***I turn my head away and just point the iPod.***

***I close my eyes. Try not to imagine what it is I'm not watching.***

***But I can hear it, can't I going right through my brain. Those two girls, and moses, and the groans.***

***I clap my hands to my ears. Block it all out.***

This evidence is crucial to where the story takes us. And ultimately to where we hope justice will be served, and where we hope the boys and Grace will find lives beyond just surviving.

I won't spoil the story by disclosing how all is finally resolved (or not), but I recommend you go along for the ride.

Because it is really a ride into a world we all know exists but perhaps are, as adults too busy to visit on a societal level? Or maybe we don't want to hear from kids what happens to kids when left in the hands of the authorities.

This is a Young Adult book: would I let my 12 year old grandson read it? Yes I think I would, but I think it would also open up a long term discussion on how and why grown ups can behave in such horrific ways. A worthy discussion that any adult should be having with their sons and daughters as paedophile abuse is often only a closed door or corridor away in real life and often with adults that groom an air of trust, companionship and salvation.

As a mature woman I was surprised at how engaging this book was to read.

It had everything I look for in a novel . . . great pace, tragedy, pathos, humour, despair . . . deeply engaging characters, a wonderful language and dialogue . . . twist and turns everywhere but most of all a book with a moral mission that by chapter 5, I wanted as much as the boys, and I expect the author Steve Tasane did too.

Are there any happy endings in this book? I suggest you read it and find out for yourself. Highly Recommended. Bravo!

You can find out more about this book and about the author Steve Tasane at <https://stevetasane.wordpress.com/stev-e-tasane/>

## **Tara Fleur – Woman Of Bones**

**'No One Saw No One' was released  
Walker Books on June 6th 2015**

[Walker Books - Nobody Saw No One](http://www.walker.co.uk)  
[www.walker.co.uk](http://www.walker.co.uk) > Books



## AFTERMATH

They've been let off the leash  
We're in deep shit now!  
There's no humble pie in them  
They made a vow!  
They mean to be mean  
and they know just how  
to turn the everyday  
into the here & OW! !

Sadists & masochists  
are feeling smug!  
Empathy is so last century!  
Sweep it under the rug!  
They cleared their throats  
they cast their votes  
they scored their drug!  
So willing to be punished,  
do the forelock tug!  
We're going back in time  
since loves been disallowed!  
You'd better watch your back  
We're in the here & OW! !

The cuts are piling up & up  
hour by hour!  
Suicide is on the rise,  
the callous heart empowered!  
They've been eaten up by Eton  
They're a cruel & loveless shower!  
But a lack of love is in us too  
like a dream gone sadly sour!  
There's nobody can say to me,  
"This is our finest hour!"  
When all that really fits with them  
is money & the whip of Power! !  
Coming down hard on us  
with a crack & a big KAPOW!!!  
So, gather your friends around you  
It's time to stand up to the  
here & OW! ! !

**Razz – May 9th 2015**

## Survivors History: Bedlam (and beyond) and dialogues about journeys

From Andrew Roberts  
<http://studymore.org.uk/>  
[studymore@studymore.org.uk](mailto:studymore@studymore.org.uk)  
tel: 020 8986 5251; mob 07505527755  
Home Address: **177 Glenarm Road,**  
**London, E5 ONB**

How many miles to Bedlam?  
. . . If your heels are nimble and light,  
You may get there by candle-light  
. . . Yes, and back again

On Wednesday 27.5.2015, the Survivors  
History Group met from 1pm to 5pm at  
Together, 12 Old Street, London, EC1V  
9BE.

This meeting focused on Bethlem  
Hospital [once called Bedlam] and the  
Survivors' Movement. It involved two  
presentations:

The theme of collaboration and conflict in  
1997 by reviewing *Beyond Bedlam:  
Poems written out of Mental Distress*,  
which was published in 1997 through  
cooperation between Royal Bethlem and  
Survivors Poetry

[http://studymore.org.uk/4\\_13\\_ta.htm#Bethlem1997](http://studymore.org.uk/4_13_ta.htm#Bethlem1997)

**Jenny Walke** made a Power-Point  
presentation about the modern Bethlem  
Hospital (1930 to the present). We did not  
know a lot about modern Bethlem, so  
Jenny's work was important. It will add to

the little we have at [http://studymore.org.uk/4\\_13\\_ta.htm#Bethlem1930](http://studymore.org.uk/4_13_ta.htm#Bethlem1930)

So much has been happening in the Survivors History Group that it is difficult to report back fully (*Sorry*). However, I am sending below a report of the last meeting based on notes made by Emon (*Thank you*).

The theme of this meeting turned out to be

## DIALOGUES ABOUT JOURNEYS

Present at our conversation were:

**Peter Campbell**, a long-term service user who was one of the founders of Survivors Speak Out in 1986 and was also a founder of the Survivors History Group.

**Andy Brooker**, a service user who is now a Director of The Consortium for Therapeutic Communities (TCTC)

**Nelsy**, a survivor from South America who became mentally ill and has learnt to live without medication.

**Jenny Walke**, a researcher at the Institute of Psychiatry who has made a study of the 20th century Bethlem, in which she was once a patient.

**David Kessel**, who was active in Hackney Mental Health Action Group back in the 1980s and co-founded F.E.E.L. (Friends of East End Loonies) in 2007.

**Naheen Ali**, a service user who has been active in a local health service consultative role.

**Nathalie Fonnesu**, editor of the F.E.E.L. blog and newsletter, is a Survivor who works to raise awareness of the dangers of medication after suffering from its side effects.

**Andrew Roberts**, as a member of the Mental Patients Union in the 1970s, was a co-author of the *Directory of the Side Effects of Psychiatric Drugs*.

## OPEN DIALOGUE

F.E.E.L. (Friends of East End Loonies) held a discussion on Open Dialogue on Friday 24.4.2015 at Kingsley Hall

**Nathalie** explained that the Open Dialogue approach has been used in Finland for thirty years successfully. Friends of East End Lunatics is interested in this because F.E.E.L. support alternatives to medication and because the approach involves listening to people and respecting their experiences. Open Dialogue is an alternative treatment approach for mental health patients which takes place in their own home, so that they can be in their own environment. It is seen as a gentler approach.

**Andy** (Brooker) said he went to a conference on Open Dialogue. He feels there is not going to be enough training to roll out this new approach. He is worried that it is not going to be a skilled (skills based?) approach. Training costs thousands of pounds so it excludes service users. A private company is profiting from the training.

See

<http://friends-of-east-end-loonies.blogspot.co.uk/>

## NELSY

Nelsy has worked with the Survivors History Group for many years developing her autobiographical approach to Survivors history. She uses her own experience of treatments as a spring-board to develop an alternative journey to mental health. What is madness? – she asked us. The system is her definition of madness. She did not want to rely on medications; she sought another way. She feels that the Survivors History Group helped her recovery.

On 26.2.2015 Nelsy published *Standing up to madness – An Autobiography* online. She says:

“In the midst of my madness I took advantage of my circumstances living among ‘mad’ people, to make sense of my madness and of psychiatric treatment. I have explored my madness over ten years and it has gradually enabled me to unmask, understand and defeat my ‘illness’. I have proved to myself that madness and many other concepts that we know as negative, have a very different, and above all, a Healthy Meaning. Welcome to my new and Healthy World.”

See:

<https://standinguptomadness.wordpress.com/>

This is a journey that Nelsy wants to share with you.

## HOWARD MINGHAM

A memorial meeting for **Howard Mingham** was held in October 1984, thirty years after his death. Howard's friend, David Kessel, read his own poem *Fury* and Howard's poem *After the Rain*. He described *After the Rain* as a ‘deeply romantic poem’. Howard died much too young. He worked hard on his poetry. He was a schizophrenic who was undergoing treatments. David believes there is a relationship between his illness and poetry; they are deeply connected. “Mental struggle expresses itself in Howard's poetry”

**Andrew** (Roberts) commented that he found Howard's poetry very compassionate. It does not offer a solution (“I am neither the light nor the way”) but has a message that we are all in things together. It reminded Andrew of ideas that Louise Pembroke had shared about how people should relate to one another.

See:

<http://studymore.org.uk/bio.htm#HowardMingham>

## MARY BARNES

See:

<http://studymore.org.uk/bio.htm#MaryBarnes>

Mary was a patient in the Kingsley Hall alternative asylum from 1965 to 1970.

See:

[http://studymore.org.uk/4\\_13\\_ta.htm#KingsleyHall](http://studymore.org.uk/4_13_ta.htm#KingsleyHall)

Howard Mingham and Mary Barnes both

lived in Arbour's houses at one time and it is possible that they met one another. Both used religious imagery. Howard wrote:

"To all things I am sanctuary.  
I am their church, their catacomb, their nunnery  
And I am neither the light nor the way."

Mary was part of the Catholic Church and she said that joining was very important for her. She had wanted to call her first book *Treasures of Darkness* because she felt Kingsley Hall was 'hell', and a very dark period in her life, but one in which she had discovered treasures, so it was also heaven.

Andrew said he thought Mary's poems and paintings are closely related. She had themes to her poems and pictures that she writes about, but people tend to present her work split between poetry and paintings separately. Art can be interpreted differently by different people. Mary's art expressed her Catholic values.

Out of the darkness Mary had a vision of a society in which people of different faiths and none could all live in harmony. She wrote:

"I want in such a community as ours to see real freedom and respect towards different ways of life.

"I would like then, for Noel, a Meditation Room with symbols of the Buddhist way of life, decorated according to Noel's taste.

"What we believe in our minds affects our bodies, and so for Noel and others, a vegetarian diet."

"Joe is Jewish. For him, the Passover *Seder*, the ritualistic telling of the Exodus from Egypt, is an expression of his being.

"I am Christian and have been mad. My madness uncovered more clearly and revealed the faith within me.

"Going through madness is a purification; it brings me nearer to God, to myself, helps me to a more conscious awareness of God, to a fuller participation in the sight of God.

"I desire facilities for 'going in' to further purify my remaining madness to holiness, to wholeness.

"That's the sort of place I want, something sacred, full of love."

**Andy** (Brooker) feels strongly about the spiritual experience of madness. Psychiatry is too scientific. The issues are more subjective and personal. Professionals cannot diagnose patients because they are working from an objective view point. Our narrative is often discredited because we are seen as mad. The language of what society considers madness is translated by somebody else and not the individual experiencing it. Our own narrative does not have enough value in society.

**Naheen** commented that mental illness is a reaction to life. It is a journey only an individual can go through.

We looked at prints of some of Mary's paintings and found them emotive and

expressive. Natalie agreed that the paintings show a journey and Andy commented that the paintings reflect her own state of mind.

Mary's first book (1971) was eventually called *Mary Barnes: Two Accounts of a Journey Through Madness* by **Mary Barnes** and **Joseph Berke**. Joseph Berke was her therapist and the two accounts, although inter-related, are naturally different. In 1979 a play by David Edgar called **Mary Barnes** was performed. Mary was consulted about this, but it is a fiction drawing on material in her book. Mary's reflections on her life were published in 1989 as *Something Sacred: Conversations, Writings, Paintings*, which she wrote with **Ann Scott**.

We discussed the emphasis that should be given to the different accounts. Andrew thought that the fictional Mary Barnes in David Edgar's play had negative features that do not belong to the real Mary. It is more positive about her doctors (therapists) than Andrew would be. The play shows the doctors as humane people who set up a liberal asylum and invite mad people to live with them. It does not reflect the positive role that Mary played in setting up and running the asylum. She was the first person to live there and the last to leave. None of the doctors lived there to the extent she did. Andrew thinks the asylum was at least as much hers as it was the doctors. The Mary of the play is described as someone with 'a history of mental illness' who 'imagines that she is a nurse'. The real Mary was actually a respected, perceptive and well qualified Nurse Tutor (teaching other nurses). In this sense, the play may perpetuate a myth that the world is divided into people

who are simply 'sane' and people who are simply 'mad'.

Natalie noted that **Joseph Berke** has said she worked with Mary to be close to the Senior Doctor, **Ronald Laing**. She felt there was some insensitivity in the relations between doctors and patients. There was general agreement that working with one another's accounts of journeys in madness could be very rewarding.

*Best wishes, Andrew*

## András Mezei

### VICTORY IN EUROPE, 1945

Holocaust Poetry Translated from the Hungarian & Edited by **Thomas Ország-Land**

### MEMORIES

Like burnt grass, my life endures  
after the hunger, strife and terror –  
The sword, the pestilence retreat  
though I remember . . . I remember.

I've survived the sight of the scorching  
embers of stunning wickedness.  
I need no evil fantasies  
since I remember, I remember.

Skeletons tramping the ramparts of Babel.  
I've arrived from bottomless depths  
that hold my beloved, moaning dead  
whom I remember, I remember.

Even my pursuing killers  
share the sunshine, but still I freeze –  
My gaunt and mighty angel soars  
as I remember, I remember.

But I stop the chase and turn

facing up to my tormentors.  
I am a gravemound: let them strike  
while I remember, I remember.

I am homeless, with only a gate  
hanging ajar to the lamentation  
of bitter, hateful poverty  
that I remember, I remember.

Here in the ruined autumn streets  
shuffles a trembling, sightless beggar,  
and I defer to him from afar  
for I remember. I remember.

## **FACES**

Blessed be those whom I passed on the street,  
those who beheld on my chest  
the yellow Star of David,  
those who were saddened by the sight,  
those who walked on with heavy heart  
burdened by shame; and blessed be also  
those who chose to avert their faces  
closed with fixed and frozen looks.

## **FRIDAY EVENING**

The table stands on pounded dirtfloor  
covered by a white damask tablecloth,  
with plaited milk-bread set out and  
prayerbooks,  
and some small candles already burning,  
the silver candlesticks expecting  
the moment when the Sabbath will enter,  
the Bride will stand upon the rag-carpet  
and join us in the empty chair,  
the one by grandfather, and this night  
no-one should be missing among us,  
this pious family murmuring prayers,  
blessing each piece of milk-bread in turn,  
sitting together in the kitchen

where the fringes of the double-thick  
tablecloth  
softly cascade down onto our laps,  
I see fiddling fingers plaiting the fringes  
for today is holy, holy, and  
our hands today must do no work  
as people who are joined by the Sabbath  
must not even think of business –  
I watch grandfather's Sabbath face  
depart from time to time to Jerusalem  
and return again when our eyes meet  
as though his kingdom were right here,  
and grandfather sits in peaceful silence  
at the head of the great long table  
laden for Friday evening with milk-bread,  
laden with wine and candlelight,  
he is the first to break and taste  
the milk-loaf, to bless it and pass it on  
to each of us for further blessing –

Every fallen crumb of that golden  
braided milk-loaf collects here now,  
the stars that have scattered from the  
timeless  
table of God all gather here now,  
but, my God, where is that Sabbath  
the day when everyone could sleep longer  
and grandmother read in the big double-bed  
and my dangling feet did not reach the floor  
and my eyes could not yet see past the walls  
where a wagon was pulled up for us  
with everyone brutally crammed inside . . .

Mother and I, the lucky survivors,  
sit on one side of the great laden table:  
the fringes of the double-thick tablecloth  
dangle over empty space.

## **THE ORPHANS' KADDISH: 1945**

The orphans saying Kaddish, praising Him,  
after the genocide, praising Him the Eternal,

Kaddish said by the orphans, singing His  
praise,  
praising Him the Eternal, after the genocide.

What kind of people are the survivors ready  
already to chant:  
holy, holy, holy be His name, the smoke has  
not even  
dispersed, the surviving people, chanting  
already, what kind of smoke  
is this, not even dispersed, His name be holy,  
holy, holy.

His law will light up the broken eyes of the  
dead,  
already it has lit up the gaze of the living,  
the broken eyes of the dead lit up by His law  
already, it has lit up the gaze of the living  
praising Him, the orphans saying Kaddish,  
the survivors, what kind of people are they  
ready already to chant,  
the broken eyes of the dead by His law lit up:  
holy, holy, holy be His name,  
the smoke has not even dispersed.

## BLANCHE SCHWARCZ

Her elder son has emigrated  
to Palestine. Her daughter Leah  
has married in America.  
But she, Blanche Schwarcz in the kitchen  
with war-time lemon-tea substitute,  
some goose-fat treasured in the pot  
and brown bread on the table  
(she is still busy day by day)  
keeps spying through the curtain of  
the years down to the dusky portal,  
keeps glancing up to the square blue sky  
framed by the ventilation shaft,  
that small blind window on her final  
residence in this world.  
She stands outside by the well-wrung mop  
that she has placed before her threshold,

she goes on rinsing the long red passageway  
to welcome a new arrival.  
She would never leave the ghetto  
not till her younger son returns

. . . although she knows he will not.

## EXHUMATION, Sept. 12, 1945

*(1945. Szept. 12.)*

As most female corpses still  
hide their features behind their shawls,

as their intertwined torsos and limbs  
teach us about resurrection,

as one infant's small remains  
reach to snuggle a woman's remains,

as that speechless jawbone still  
nestles a baby's skull,

as the flesh decomposes, yet  
these bones are bleached by the sunlight,

as that fallen mother's hand  
recalls its endless, weightless chores . . .

thus the Eternal considers all  
mass murders, each by each.

## THE STREET OF THE DEAD

I walk along that street as though  
nothing had occurred there,  
I recall each face as though  
the residents were still present,  
I name the name of every soul,  
from house to house I walk and call  
my brothers who still live there,  
together, beyond the present.

**András Mezei** (1930-2008), a major voice of the Hungarian Holocaust. More of his poetry in Thomas Land's English translation is published in *Survivors and Christmas in Auschwitz* (both by Smokestack Books, England in 2014 and 2010, respectively) and in *The 100 Years War* (Bloodaxe, England, 2014).

**Thomas Ország-Land** (b. 1938), a poet and award-winning foreign correspondent who writes from London and his native Budapest. His contributions appear in current, forthcoming or recent issues of *Acumen*, *Ambit*, *The Author*, *The Hungarian Quarterly*, *The Jewish Quarterly*, *The London Magazine* and *Stand*.

### Jewish-Hungarian Poetry:

#### **AN INSECURE HOME NESTLING IN A BLOOD-SOAKED LAND**

#### **From THOMAS ORSZÁG-LAND in BUDAPEST**

THIS VOLUME offers English readers an enjoyable and faithful introduction to the enormous contribution made by Jewish writers to the treasury of Hungarian poetry, which is itself a little-known but essential part of Western literature.

The book is bound to make a great gift to one's loves, friends and colleagues and find a place in university courses of creative writing, literature and history. Very seldom do I purchase two copies of an anthology in order to keep one near my two desks in London and Budapest. This is such a book. Jewish poetry has been loved the world over since the Psalms of King David. It made its public appearance in vernacular Hungarian after the emancipation of Jews in 1867, and was received with a delighted if uneasy welcome. The book shows why.

Hungary's educated aristocracy then still communicated mostly in French, its tiny bourgeoisie preferring German. Jewish emancipation heralded an age of literary flowering and material prosperity, much of it generated by Hungarian Jewry, enriching the whole of society and reinforcing its cultural aspirations. It lasted until the First World War.

The Jewish community – founded here, according to some traditions, after the fall of Jerusalem to the Roman legions under Titus – responded with an enthusiastic wave of assimilation that became its undoing. These poems relentlessly illustrate the unfolding tragedy.

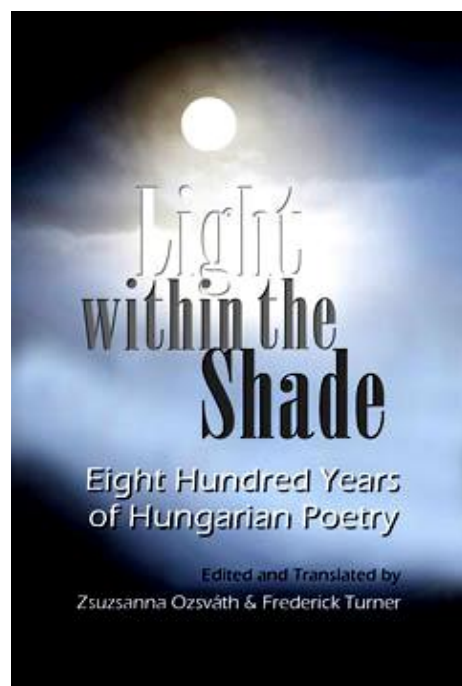
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### **Light within the Shade: Eight Hundred Years of Hungarian Poetry**

**Edited & Translated by Zsuzsanna  
Ozsváth & Frederick Turner**  
Syracuse University Press, 2014, 272pp.  
Cloth \$24.95c. ISBN: 978-0-8156-3362-4

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Even the poetry of **József Kiss** (1843-1921), the most famous among the early Jewish-Hungarian writers, is steeped in foreboding triggered by events leading to the infamous 1882 **Tiszaeszlár** blood libel trials. The charges were properly dismissed by the courts after widely reported, lengthy and painful deliberations. Yet they still resurface from time to time, even in parliament – the last such event outrageously occurring just three years ago.

But Kiss' pupil **Jenő Heltai** (1871-1957), a master of irreverent light verse and elegant comedy, declared his exclusive loyalty to Hungary, famously declining an invitation extended to him by his cousin Theodor Herzl, the founder of the modern Zionism, to promote the movement in Hungary. Heltai, a Christian convert who later returned to Judaism, eventually also declined a rare offer of immunity from anti-Semitic legislation, made during the Holocaust by the Hungarian authorities in recognition of his services to literature.

More than half a million Hungarian Jews perished. One of them was **Miklós Radnóti** (1909-1944), almost certainly the greatest among the world's Holocaust poets, who fell victim to a racist mass murder committed by the regular Hungarian Army despite displaying a white armband signifying his well-documented, sincere conversion to Catholicism.

Many contemporary Jewish-Hungarian masters like **Ágnes Gergely** (b. 1933), who is included in this anthology, responded to the Holocaust by doggedly holding on to their racial/religious identity as well as the Hungarian language, and rebuilding Budapest as a vibrant European Jewish cultural centre. Others like **Dan Dalmát** (b. 1934), excluded from the book because of

a shortage of space, have sought to heal their broken lives by transplanting their literary careers to Israel as Hebrew authors and Hungarian translators.

**Zsuzsanna Ozsváth**, a co-author of this volume, was a Jewish child survivor of the Hungarian Holocaust and the three-month Soviet siege of Nazi-occupied Budapest. She recently set out her experience in the heart rending autobiography *When the Danube Ran Red* (Syracuse, 2010). Today, she holds the Leah and Paul Lewis Chair of Holocaust Studies at the University of Texas in Dallas, where she is also director of the Ackerman Centre for Holocaust Studies.



Her co-editor and co-translator of this anthology is the Anglo-American poet **Frederick Turner**, Founders Professor of Arts and Humanities also at Dallas University. They have co-authored many scholarly studies and literary translations of Hungarian poetry, including the landmark collection of Radnóti's poetry *Foamy Sky* (Princeton University Press, 1992 & Corvnia/Budapest, 2002).

I have been aware of their work over many years while they and I were translating, editing, revising and publishing rival English editions of Radnóti's poetry, which has thereby gained a robust international literary reputation. I have been astonished by

Ozsváth's sensitivity of comprehension and Turner's explosive literary talent.

They say here that they sought to present their readers with digestible representative samples of Hungarian poetry by translating the best works of the greatest writers of the eight centuries under review and placing them in their historical, biographical and cultural contexts.

Above all, they hoped to create good English poems in their own right. This sounds simple enough; but it is not. It takes a great writer (or, very rarely, two) to do justice to a great poem in a different language and culture. Ozsváth and Turner have met that challenge.

Consider an 1884 poem by Heltai, comprising six quatrains mostly of iambic tetrameters including five masculine rhymes chiming with the word Kate, the heroine of the composition, and almost 10 feminine rhymes to the word ailing, describing the supposed mood of the poet. (A masculine rhyme employs harsh, single-syllable accented sounds like Kate/mate; a feminine rhyme comprises soft, double-syllables placing the emphasis on the first of the two, like Katie/matey.)

This can be translated into English fairly easily, given a passion for words and a decent rhyming dictionary. But lesser writers have wisely avoided trying because such a poem would become doggerel in their hands.

Yet the original is one of the loveliest, playful, irreverent pieces of self-mockery in the language, written by an exuberant poet in his early 20's lost in lust for words and women. The translators have turned

it into a firework display of wit and delight. Here is their English version in full:

### **My Songs**

*The part that one might call prevailing  
Among my songs, madam, of late  
— And why should I deny my failing —  
Were writ for you, my little Kate.*

*That moiety, deemed so prevailing,  
Among those little songs of late,  
You found, madam, less than appealing;  
Indeed you loathed them, little Kate.*

*I "thou"'d you, true, in ways revealing  
Motives deemed inappropriate,  
"You" surely the more proper styling  
When one addresses little Kate.*

*But that part one might deem prevailing  
Among those songs you execrate  
Were writ with all my heart's true feeling  
Straight to your heart, my little Kate.*

*So if, from all your cold reviling,  
Which one might malheureously call your  
hate,  
I die in grief of such misdealing,  
You are to blame, my little Kate.*

*Then blame yourself, my little Kate,  
If nought remains of me but ailing  
Songs you did not appreciate  
(The ones that one might call prevailing).*

The translators conclude the anthology with an essay each, Ozsváth tracing the evolution of Hungarian poetry since the arrival in the Carpathian basin of the migratory Magyar tribes about 1,100 years ago, and Turner placing the poems in the context of West European literature.

Turner views Hungarian poetry as a fresh and wild Asiatic response to West

European sensitivity. He thinks it may serve as a model for the regeneration of what he describes as the vital human community of poetry.

Such work, he believes, demands great humility exercised by the translators as well as their preparedness for close identification with the authors of the original material. His essay includes a useful description of technical aspects of the translation process that he has developed jointly with Ozsváth over the years.

Ozsváth assesses the dramatic effects of the country's cataclysmic history on the evolution of its culture and the lives of its greatest writers. The pagan Magyars were late-comers to Christian Western Europe, and their early experience in adapting to unfamiliar conditions under duress has been reinforced over the subsequent centuries by recurring foreign invasions.

Hungarian poetry is rooted in the classical and Medieval Latin traditions of the region. But it has been also set apart by its heightened intensity and verbal energy inspired by the struggle for the cultural and even physical survival of people perpetually isolated by their language and history among suspicious neighbours.

Jewish literature – both religious and secular, written in Hebrew, Yiddish and other languages – has also evolved over the last two millennia as a vehicle of survival among hostile neighbours in all the lands where its practitioners were tenuously tolerated. That is why, perhaps, it has found a place in the heart of the poetry-loving culture of Hungary since its prominent appearance in the country's own, long-neglected native language during the 19th century.

The Jewish poets have introduced Jewish themes treated in a Hungarian style and also adapted their ancient literary tradition to express the modern concerns of the host community. Their consequent influence on the poetry of Hungary and even on the lives of the Hungarian poets has been enormous. A third of the country's 34 greatest poets included in this anthology are Jews. And some of the greatest among the rest were either close friends and lovers of Jews like Endre Ady (1877-1919) or, like Lőrinc Szabó (1900-1983), prominent anti-Semites.

## ESCAPE

The walls are closing in  
There's a wave of pure hate.  
Someone blew the hinges  
off the garden gate!  
The grass needs mowing  
& the cat needs fed.  
I had to talk to someone  
but the line went dead!  
My mouths been stuffed up  
with rags & tape!  
Still, all I really need now  
is a plan of escape!

But everywhere I look  
I start spitting bile.  
There's a sly politician  
with an insincere smile!  
He wants my vote  
but I think he's vile!  
He stole my money  
for his country pile!  
He calls it progress  
I call it rape!  
Still, all I really need now  
is a plan of escape!

The Spring is howling  
like a dog on heat!  
Coats are coming off,  
people showing off their meat!  
I'm stumbling around  
on my two left feet!  
An advert on the tube  
has asked me

if my life's complete !

Are you feeling empty,  
are you feeling down?  
Are you in a horror movie  
full of narcissistic clowns!!?  
Well, keep doing what you're doing!  
Don't you be brought down!  
Keep pointing that finger,  
keep wearing that frown!  
Keep pointing that finger  
with your sour old grapes!....  
Because, all you really need now  
is a plan of escape! !

**Razz**  
.....

## PRESS RELEASE

### Degrees of Twilight

by Maggie Butt



We are delighted to be publishing the stunning poetry collection *'Degrees of Twilight'* by Maggie Butt, available from 7<sup>th</sup> July 2015. The passage of time is tangible in Maggie Butt's fifth collection. These poems use history, memory, work and travel as lenses to examine the inevitable pains and sharp pleasures at the heart of our transient lives.

*"Maggie Butt is a poet who writes with elegance and wit, skill and sensitivity: her new collection offers the reader powerful insights into our twenty-first century purposes and predicaments. Time, work, birth and death; love and loss; the*

*essentials of human experience are here. More alert than many contemporary poets, she is also haunted by a disturbing awareness of lurking danger, 'a cliff edge in the dark'; by the frailty of the human condition, and by its pathos. There is wistfulness as well as courage."* R V Bailey

*Maggie Butt's poems focus, with clarity and humour, on the past's strength, the present's warmth and on all our futures: tender and apprehensive, as briefly glimpsed as twilight."* Alison Brackenbury

### About Maggie



Maggie is an ex-journalist and BBC TV documentary producer, with four previous poetry collections. Her poetry is widely published in international magazines and has escaped the page onto the internet, choreography, BBC Radio 4, readings, festivals, and a mobile phone app.



Her pamphlet *Quintana Roo* was published by Acumen Publications in 2003 and her first full collection, *Lipstick*, was published in 2007 by Greenwich Exchange. A collection of short poems, *petite*, was published by Hearing Eye in 2010, and a year later Oversteps Books published *Ally Pally Prison Camp*, a historical collage of poems, photos, paintings and extracts from memoirs and letters, which tell the moving story of 3,000 civilians imprisoned at Alexandra Palace during the First World War. The fully illustrated poetry collection, *Sancti Clandestini – Undercover Saints*, was published in 2012 by Ward-Wood Publishing. In 2007 her edited collection of essays: *Story The Heart of the Matter* was published by Greenwich Exchange.

Maggie is an Associate Director at Middlesex University, London, England, where she has taught Creative Writing since 1990. She is vice-chair of the National Association of Writers in Education and was chair from 2007 to 2012. She is Principal Editor of NAWE's peer reviewed journal *Writing in Practice* and was a key figure in writing AQA's new Creative Writing A level.

Maggie has a PhD in creative writing from Cardiff University and is a University Teaching Fellow and University Orator.

She lives in North London with her husband. They have two daughters.



Artwork by Anne Creasey



Artwork by Anne Creasey



# Jason Why / Harris

William Cornelius Harris Publishing UK  
In Collaboration with Second Chance  
Supporting Mental Health In Performing Arts



“You may need it next”

Jason Why is a man with a mission, and that mission is now well and truly on its way.

Jason had a dream to set up a publishing company, creating niche poetry books written by performance poets & spoken word artists.

He launched W.C.H Publishing UK in 2014, with a wonderful ethos for publishing poets who are known to Survivors Poetry. Poets and writers who have experienced mental health difficulties. All are definitely ‘Survivor’s’. All are in their own right established (and up and coming) poets on the London Poetry Circuit.

He has published: **Alain English, Ant Smith, Ingrid Andrew, Ernesto Sarezale, Nicky & Heather Sullivan, Habiba Hrida, Ernie Burns, Quinn Agathoni** and more recently **Cam Ringel, Fran Isherwood** and **Amy Neilson Smith**. He will be publishing more poets this year including **Cathy Flower, Keith Bray** and myself **Tara Fleur ‘Woman Of Bones’**

Jason is also a poet in his own right and has poetry collections available to purchase at W.C.H publishing. **‘Life and Hope’ & ‘Death Suicide Despair Poetry’** under his other name **Jason Harris**

**Excerpt From his website ethos for William Cornelius Harris Publishing UK ....**

We aim to promote mental health awareness and de-stigmatise mental illness. Writers promote their work with W.C.H Publishing and Second Chance performance platform. Second Chance is an organisation offering performance poets an opportunity to make their work available to a wide ranging audience.

Jason is really doing something very special here, supporting mental health and a positive creative environment.



<http://williamcorneliusharrispublishing.com/>

Jason also has two other online bookshops which promote and sell all the above poets titles.

<http://www.southlondonbooks.com/books-books/>

And . . .

<https://londonbooksandarts.wordpress.com>

***Tara Fleur – Woman Of Bones***

# Poems by Maggie Butt

## The Working Day Commences

I wake early in the paddock with the sleeping lions. A muscle twitches under a tawny flank. A tufted tail flicks at a fly. The sun rises. I turn to creep back into dreams but a heavy head lifts and yawns, and then another, shaking a sleepy mane. And one by one they struggle to their feet, their amber eyes fixed on me, and at my back a silent fence rises between me and the open country of sleep. The lions advance with their deliberate paws and their ready teeth.

## After the Holiday

Work comes thundering in again  
like a great wave across a flat of sand.  
I'm lost as cocklers in Morecambe Bay,  
King John's crown jewels in The Wash,  
when the tide breaks over me,  
its army of hooves and spears  
spinning me this way and that  
caught up, another piece of flotsam,  
tossed junk, buffeted by the jetsom  
of other shipwrecks, loose timbers,  
planks and masts and packing cases,  
crashing and churning in the surf  
and I am submerging and rising  
gasping again for air.

## The Pros and Cons

Work wakes me from sleep, flicking  
the soles of my feet, squeezing cold water  
from a sponge into the neck of my pyjamas.

\* \*  
Early, in the cold before the central heating,  
I change course for work, steaming like a ship  
breasting the ice-bergs, cutting through.

\* \*  
Work eats my life, chewing slowly  
in the dark – a minotaur, savouring  
my hours like new arrivals of virgins.  
\* \*

Work is the weighted boots of astronauts.  
Too heavy – how they drag me down,  
but stop me spinning off into the void.  
\* \*  
I welcome work – let it absorb my losses  
and my fears, soak them up like bread  
clearing the plate of gravy.

## Lying In

Who knew how long the crossing takes?  
The ferryman paid, but rowing so slowly  
you can trail your fingers in the water  
see the little fishes rise to nibble them,  
circles upon circles radiating from their O  
mouths.

\*\*\*  
Which labour is the hardest work,  
the deepest pain?  
The one which pushed your children into light  
or this, which delivers you to the dark?

Both marked by breathing, harsh and fierce,  
and effort which contorts your face;  
both leading to an unknown world.

In pregnancy you ate for two  
bequeathed your liquorice addiction;  
soon I must live for two.

Then, you lay three days in a side ward, alone  
in labour's agony and fear.  
So I won't leave you now  
however many hours and days this takes.

Afterwards it will be my turn to carry you  
furled safe inside me  
for as long as my heart beats.

\*\*\*  
Night sounds: the tick of the wall clock,  
counting something meaningless, tick, tick, tick;

the rasp, pant, wheeze of your breathing,  
the long gaps where you practice stopping;

far away outside, a blackbird's song defies  
the dark, anticipates one final dawn.

## Death Valley

Slumped in the saddle now and entering  
the badlands; dust kicked up by horses hooves,  
dust in the eyes, dust on the tongue.

A high sun bleaches oxygen from the air,  
hazes each rock into shapes of regret;  
each cactus spiny with recrimination.

No hiding place here from yourself  
and desolation ready to let loose a volley  
of arrows anytime from the ridge.

Misery's swarm of flies circles your head.  
However fast you move, batting them,  
they travel with you, a buzzing cloud.

Nothing to do but tip your hat against  
the sun and flies. Lick cracked lips.

Plod on. Plod on. Plod through.

## Letting Go

Although I wobbled when Dad's steady hand  
released the saddle's back, I freewheeled  
on downhill into the rush of flying's thrill.  
And teaching me to swim, he held me  
by the puppet-strings formed by my costume's  
criss-cross straps;  
and though I felt him leaving go  
I kicked away, trusting my body  
and the water's lift.

But now that it's my turn, my grip is glued,  
stiff fingers must be prised back one by one.  
I failed to learn the trick of letting go  
of stale regrets, false pride, maternal frets,  
my looks, ambitions, or my dearest dead.  
I'm tethered fast, a sand-bagged air balloon.  
Oh, teach me to rise weightless in the blue!

## Cherries

A quarter pound of cherries  
and a book, beside the sea,  
the shuck of waves on pebbles  
the racing clouds, and me

the sea as glazed and languid

as a mile of satin sheets  
the pips lined up along the groyne  
small seeds of future sweets

a cherry for each poem  
bursting on the tongue  
a tide of calm is at the flood  
a harvest of songs sung

and some of them are bright as blood  
and some as warm as wine  
but each is sweet as summer's flight  
and all of them are mine.

## Risk Assessment

Dress up your superstitions with new names,  
the future is a cliff edge in the dark.  
Seem scientific, plan insurance claims,  
dress up your superstitions with new names,  
cast runes, deal tarot, hear the stars' refrain.  
However much you plan, the truth is stark,  
dress up your superstitions with new names,  
the future is a cliff edge in the dark.

## Variance Analysis

*(for Tim, i.m. Fred)*

The hours go slow and yawn and scratch  
themselves  
and we are naming parts of balance sheets,  
tight in a windowless room, totting the cost,  
while the first day of spring unfurls outside;  
and you are motorbiking scented country lanes  
absorbing this year's deficit – its countless loss.

Fluorescent tubes hum songs of swarming bees,  
no breath of blossom in this air-recycled room  
no sun with surplus warmth, awakening assets  
no daffodils turning heads to shrink the light.  
While you are chopping logs: axe-gleam, sweat,  
Pine-smell, chips flying, piling contingency.

I'm reckoning on the fast depreciation  
of my day.

Doves coo on chimneys, primed for production,  
car stretches in a patch of golden afternoon,  
ponds thrash till frogspawn  
bubbles up its yearly yield;  
and you are in the garden, planting onion sets  
thumbing each into the oil, balancing life.