

EQUILIBRIUM

MAGAZINE FOR WELLBEING



Shardenfreude

Ivory Coast Poetry

Volunteering; Singing

Bipolar Disorder At First Hand

Life In A Therapeutic Community

SUMMER EDITION

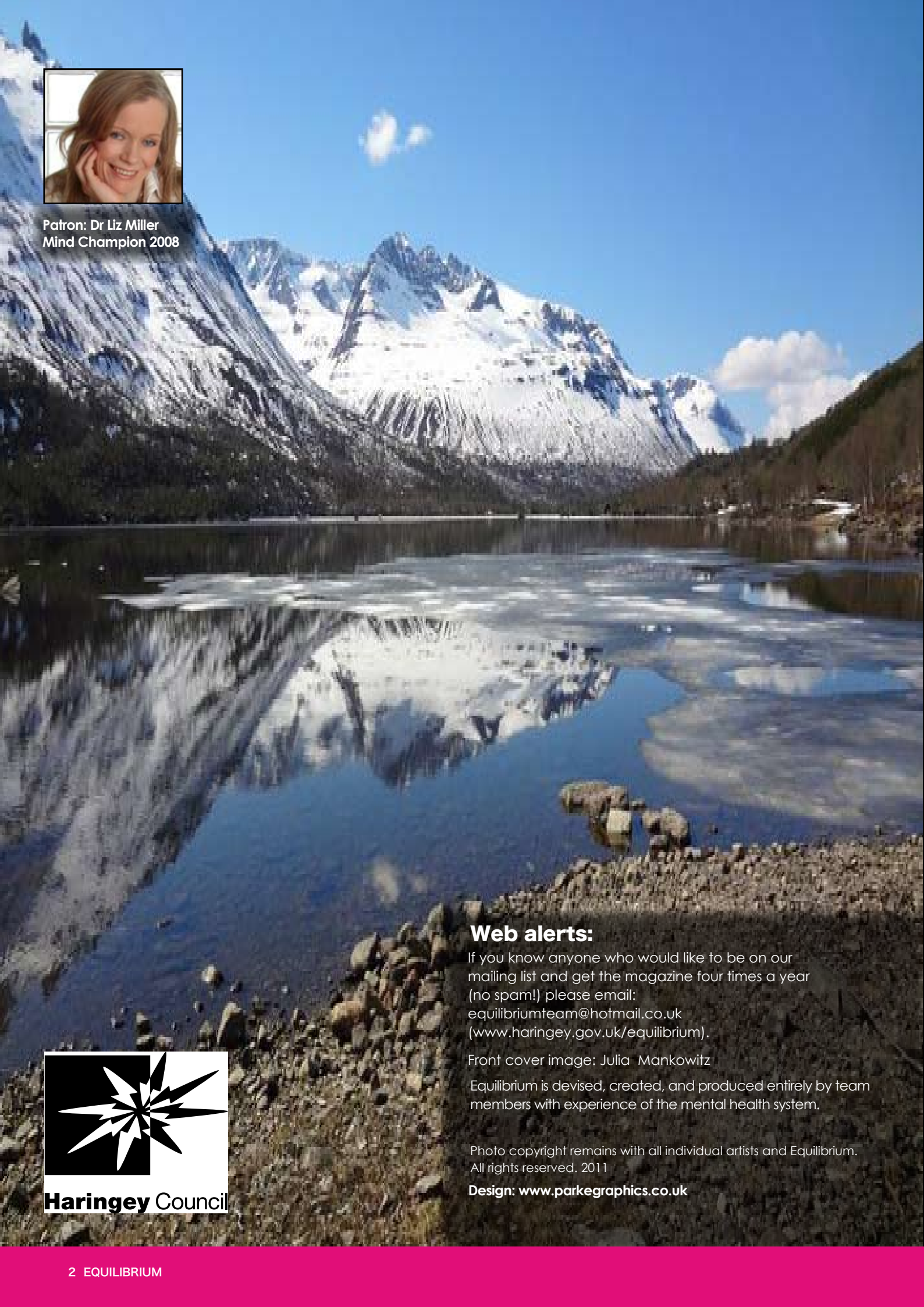
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SUMMER

2011



Patron: Dr Liz Miller
Mind Champion 2008



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(www.haringey.gov.uk/equilibrium).

Front cover image: Julia Mankowitz

Equilibrium is devised, created, and produced entirely by team members with experience of the mental health system.

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editorial

Here's our Summer offering - hoping we reach more people with a wider mailing list. A panoply of delights: bold, bright London and Norway photos, life in a PA house, exploration of an Ivory coast poet's work, more volunteer stories - from a kibbutz, and gobbets from the New Scientist. Have a good read!

Flagging up:

News, Research, walking, volunteering, Therapeutic communities, Book reviews: Henry's Demons and Grace Willaims Says It Loud; team work; Cote d'ivoire poetry explored; Siham's photos; Psychosis: online resource Ect: Celia Imrie; Poetry page; Gasometers and other landmarks

contributions

Wanted: contributions to Equilibrium! Please email us with your news, views, poems, photos, plus articles. Anonymity guaranteed if required.

contact us

Equilibrium, Clarendon Centre, Clarendon Road, London, N8 ODJ. 02084894860, equilibriumteam@hotmail.co.uk. We are in the office on Wednesday mornings 9.45-11.45, but you can leave a message at other times and we'll get back to you.

the team

Facilitator: Polly Mortimer. **Editorial team:** Pumla Kisosonkole, Angela, Siham Beleh, Ian Stewart, Tizzy McKenzie, Meg Kelly. **Graphic design:** Anthony Parké. The views expressed in Equilibrium are those of the individual authors and do not necessarily reflect the opinions of the editorial team.

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* Losing it

by Ruby Wax and Judith Owen at the Menier Chocolate Factory Theatre, SE1



Ruby wax is an American comedian who made most of her career in the UK. In her latest comedy show, alongside singer-songwriter Judith Owen, also a sufferer of depression, Ruby Wax talks very openly about her depression and ending up in the Priory. Also, she has trained as a psychotherapist.

Now she has coped with her bipolar disorder and turned it into a stage show. The comedian is quite energetic and comes across confident. The show is filled with laughter as well as some deep sadness. But then it can make a huge difference on any human being to tackle a situation or something negative in life and turn it into positive thinking.

The show was excellent and inspiring! There was a post show talk and I participated. I expressed my concern on how it can have an impact on people suffering mental distress by just being there for that individual, listening, being present. Usually, people do not want "anything" but a presence is more than enough, it can make a good impact on how someone feels.

Siham

* Kibbutz – Volunteering

When I was in my early twenties in the sixties I hitch-hiked across Europe to Athens and took a boat to Haifa in Israel where I joined the volunteer programme there which had been set up after the Six Day War. I worked on a kibbutz near the Gaza Strip south of Ashqelon along with over 20 others from all over the world. Kibbutzim are collective, usually agricultural communities that work the land together for the communal good.

You don't see money on a kibbutz as all the kibbutzniks pool their labour and resources. The kibbutz that I was on at that time had about 200 people on it.



Work consisted of picking oranges, milking cows, working in the communal dining room (everyone eats together- except the children who don't live with their parents but in children's houses) and managing the irrigation pipes. There was a laundry where everyone's clothes are washed, ironed and mended and there is always something to do.

The produce is sold commercially – which supports the kibbutz. If you ever eat Jaffa oranges you know they are from Israel as they take their name from the Old Town of Tel Aviv Jafa or Jaffa.

The people I lived and worked with there for almost a year remain as fond memories and if you want to get up at 5.30am and start working as the sun comes up, kibbutz is the place for you.

Pepper

* Reception volunteering at the Clarendon

I did a good interview for the vacancy as a receptionist at the Clarendon Centre part-time. There are 4 users taking part. We have basic duties like answering the phone, putting callers through, letting people into the building, maintaining the register and making sure that visitors sign in. We also pay other users who work for the centre e.g. cashier and cook. Labels have to go onto the envelopes for community meeting minutes to be posted out to users.

There is an issue concerning confidentiality. The volunteer receptionists are not allowed to take personal calls e.g. referrals. Personal calls have to go to a member of staff. Only users that are registered in the Clarendon are allowed to stay. I like working as a receptionist because it makes me feel important, it is positive use of my time and I get paid on the same day.

"Good morning Clarendon Centre how can I help you?"

Angela

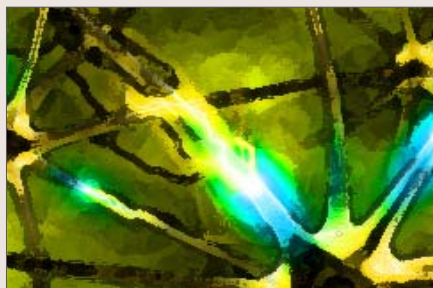
* Largactyl shuffle



www.cooltanarts.org.uk

Legacy walk with Cooltan Arts. Through Olympic borough and Olympic park. 12 noon Hackney museum 1 Reading Lane E8 1GQ Finishes at Pudding Lane DLR

✿ **Electrical Impulses**



American scientists are today re-searching various methods of stimulating the brain using different techniques to administer electrical impulses to the brain. Ranging from deep brain stimulation to ultrasound techniques, different researchers in different fields are attempting to control symptoms of depression or Parkinson's Disease and other illnesses like Tourettes Syndrome, by, for example, stimulating neurons in the brain by light, electrical impulses or magnetic fields.

Some techniques use invasive surgery as a last resort but others are attempting more risk-free treatments as a way of triggering responses in the brain in order to overcome the effects of mental illnesses.

As someone who has never liked the idea of electric shock treatment for mental illness I think that the research is positive if only to understand better the effects on the individual in an area where there is still so much to learn. Mind enhancing is in my opinion best left to techniques like TM – transcendental meditation – that research has already proved cause better synchronisation of the brain and settling of the mind.

Ian Stewart

Article from feature "Enhanced Minds"
(New Scientist – 9.04.11)

✿ **New research**

New research into the immune and nervous systems offer the possibility that some depression and other mental illnesses could be triggered as the consequence of an infection. Scientists trying to understand the links between the immune system and the brain believe their research could lead to new treatments for "all kinds of disorders from depression to Tourettes Syndrome" and "could change the way we treat mental disorders forever". All this according to an article in New Scientist (15.01 11.) entitled "Happiness is Catching", which discusses the bacteria *m. vaccae* and the effects it might have as a mood changer therapeutically in an age where in childhood we are no longer exposed to infections that we were and the effect it has in the brain of producing serotonin.

✿ **London Photo walk event with Emergence**



A photowalk organised by Emergence took place in Central London, Southbank during September 2010. Two photographic experts leading the group were present to guide people if needed when taking pictures. Many people attended the event which happen to be quite popular. People were friendly

and it turn out to be a brilliant outing. Please see below some of the photos I have taken. After taking a picture of Fiona Thompson (second picture from the top), at Emergence, I thought she was a little poser!



Siham

✿ **Philosophising: Whats 'mad'?**

The 'heavyweight' singer, Meatloaf, who, by his size alone would strike terror in anyone's heart, not to mention the wild follicles on his head to top up the image, added to this the non stop use of the 'F' words in his TV appearances is something formidable!

I used to watch professional wrestling on TV on Saturday afternoons where the highlight of the show was the Heavyweight section – Big Daddy, Giant Haystacks etc

Then you find out that the Blob of Fat that specialised in squashing the opponent by falling on him backwards on the canvas from a standing position is a very gentle lump of lard as a person (if you take away the media image!)

So in life at what stage in anyone's rantings do we know whether they are just 'mad' i.e. incited by something or 'mad' as in clinical lunacy? Does a media person offend for show or is it sometimes a scream for help?!

Pumla

* Art from Ephemera

Joint exhibition between the Bethlem Art Studio and Bethlem Archives and Museum. This exhibition combines artists' use of the everyday and 'throwaway' in their art with items selected from the Museum's collection of ephemera.

Includes artwork by Phil Baird, Jane Fradgley, Sue, Terence Wilde, Katy Phillips, Peter, James Tanner, Sebastian Jones, and Sue Morgan.

Address: Bethlem Royal Hospital Monks Orchard Road, Beckenham



Travel: Nearest British Rail: Eden Park / East Croydon
Contact: Beth Elliott, Gallery Co-ordinator, 020 3228 4835
Email: thebethlemgallery@gmail.com
Website: www.bethlemgallery.com

* Hot news:

Equilibrium bumped into Mark Brown from One in Four magazine at the Festival Hall the other night who had just run a really successful conference nr Euston. Speakers included Rachel Perkins, and there was a panel discussion on policy and where things are going. Good luck for the future, Mark!

* Coffee Break

The country I come from is a producer of one of the finest coffees around, and they don't do too badly in tea either! By the time the raw product (beans, leaves) has been exported and refined, its dependent on the manufacturer on how it comes out. In this case since I don't have milk in my drink I decided to give a kick to the tea and neutralise the coffee but make the libation more throat tickling. I am now known as "1/2 coffee-1/2 tea". Its delish! I was even given a silly statuette to this end. **Pumla.**

* Shemesh

Shemesh – magazine from Kadimah Centre for Wellbeing, Stamford Hill. Shemesh is now online through www.starwards.org.uk. Representatives from the mag and the centre came to visit - Patricia and Anna - and sat in on one of our sessions. They were very friendly and interested and it's great to build up links with other organisations.

Their latest edition has articles on rationing, living with bipolar disorder, a trip on the Orient Express, what's on offer at the Centre for Wellbeing, 'fear of standing still' and recipes – a very good read. Shemesh HQ is Kadimah Centre, 91-93 Stamford Hill, N16 5TP

* Twittersphere

Join Twitter (www.twitter.com) for some great mental health chat, information and exchanges of ideas. Follow @mindcharity @markoneinfour @rethink_ @timetochange @thereaderorg for starters. Go to www.mind.org.uk for excellent and up to date blog posts which invite people to add their comments too.

* Signatures needed

http://www.ipetitions.com/petition/truth_and_reconciliation_in_psychiatry please sign this petition - more information at the website listed.

* Liam

LIAM from the Clarendon has taken part in a sponsored 10 k walk/run for CALM (Campaign against living miserably - a charity that works, among other things, to prevent suicides). Well done Liam!

* Outsider art

www.foroneweekonly.com Useful website for contemporary and outsider art - including our very own chewing gum man, Ben Wilson's canvases, which are amoeba-like and faintly island-ish.

* New Cafe

73c Stapleton Hall Road. Serving fresh, seasonal and fairly priced meals Open every Friday 12-12.30



Experiences of Psychosis



I went with a colleague to the Royal Society lately to the launch of a new health resource which is part of an initiative from Oxford getting first hand accounts of health issues out to people via the web as video pieces, text and as audio.

It was a grand place for a launch – v august, but hot! The section of the website on psychosis seems like a brilliant idea – the people interviewed talk about what it's like to take antipsychotic medication, what it's like to be sectioned and how their episodes affect their life, work and relationships. There are negative as well as positive accounts, a point that was raised by a questioner who was worried about some of these accounts being negative triggers to people who come across them while in a desperate state. This was countered by another questioner who said there's so much stuff out there – negative and positive – that possibly there was no place for censorship of such a vital resource.

Pete Bullimore – of Asylum magazine and chair of

Sheffield's Hearing Voices Network – made a passionate and compelling speaker. His words resound still. He spoke of hope, not hopelessness; he told of doctors telling him he would not recover. He said the one question that they need to ask: How have you got here? (as in life events, not by bus!) What has happened to you? If you are not asked about past events, it will take 16 years to disclosure. He does not describe himself as ever having been 'ill' – what he has experienced (hearing 40 voices among other things) is a reaction to sexual abuse he suffered when a child and teenager. He spoke of believing he was Jesus Christ – 'you're not a fully paid up member of the Psychotic Society if you haven't been Jesus' – and his rejection of the 'schizophrenia' label.

The tea afterwards was epic – homemade scones, tiny sarnies and mini cakes. I urge anyone interested to go on the website, and encourage their GP to as well.

Polly Mortimer

Equilibrium Plaudits:

'The local magazine with national appeal...'

Mental Health Charity Manager

PLACEBO

Under the heading of "Not all placebos are born equal" an article in New Scientist discusses the effects of placebos as part of trials of new drugs. Those drugs intended for the treatment of mental illness form a large part of the research and illustrate how the drug companies spend millions on testing drugs for their safety and efficacy. Sometimes in the trials placebos are given to the test group that have no effect whatsoever and in the past this has passed as satisfactory. However Professor Irving Kirsch of the University of Hull challenges the idea that the use of placebos is entirely reliable. He believes that patients should be asked to guess if they have been given the real drug or the placebo and that so called active placebos should be given. These active placebos could be used in a trial that is 'blind' or double blind' where the patients or the patients and the doctor do not know who has been given the placebo and could influence the way we test drugs in the future, perhaps by making it a requirement of drugs law.



Meanwhile in Germany doctors are prescribing placebos for patients with significant success. Recent research shows that placebos have had the same effect as anti-depressants in about a third of cases. In fact half of German doctors prescribe placebos according to the study (published in the Guardian 06.03.11). These placebos range from pills to homeopathic remedies or even sham surgery and can prove highly effective. In Bavaria 88% of GP's sent patients home with prescriptions for placebo drugs.

On the other hand nocebos or the "nocebo effect"... "describes any case where putting someone in a negative frame of mind has an adverse effect on their health or well-being". (New Scientist 2 Sept 2009) Scientists are now trying to understand this lesser known effect and it will be interesting to see what they come up with in future years. In the past witchcraft was probably the first 'nocebo' and nowadays anxiety is thought to be at the root of its effects, so looking for ways to combat stress is probably the way forward.

Pepper

Living in strangeness

Life in a Philadelphia Association house

by Anon

I had been living in one of the Philadelphia Association (PA)'s community houses for just a few weeks when *An Uneasy Dwelling* arrived for us in the post. I devoured it hungrily. I had come across the house as the survivor of a shipwreck might be washed up on an island: disorientated, wary of my new surroundings, but damn grateful not to be drowning any more. A diagnosis of personality disorder eighteen months previously, coupled with other pressures in my life, had sent me into a seemingly unstoppable spiral of despair and panic. I lost my job, and became increasingly isolated, struggling to manage anything beyond twice-weekly appointments for therapy at the hospital.

The one thing that seemed to allow me to get through my crises was having other people around, yet I was living alone in a bedsit. I was on my fifth admission to the psychiatric ward in a year when a friend suggested I try the PA. When I saw from their website that they offered places in community households, funded by housing benefit, I had a glimmer of hope. Applying to move in was not an easy business. First I had to meet the two house therapists on my own, then

attend meetings in the house itself once a week for a month. A day or so after each meeting I came to, someone from the house would ring to let me know whether I could return the following week. All this was nerve-racking enough, but I also had to stand my ground with my former therapists at the hospital: they were insisting that the house would be unsuitable for me, and telling my social worker as much. But I knew from the start, when I saw the chipped brown teapot and had the ginger and white cat climb purring onto my lap, that this was where I wanted to live. On my fourth meeting I was accepted, and I was overjoyed. And nervous.

Life in the house revolves around the house meetings, which take place several times a week, with the two therapists in attendance. The cat pads in and out, we're interrupted by the phone ringing or the doorbell, someone gets up to make a drink (or to storm out – rows do happen), the weather shifts outside, and the conversation ranges from whose turn it is to clean the kitchen to very personal concerns. Outside the meetings, day to day life is much as it might be anywhere else. We each get on, or not, with our own things – studying,

part-time work, music, painting and drawing, watching TV – together or alone, in and out of the house. We try to have a house meal once a week, and maybe do a bit of shopping or gardening together. Nothing is forced on anyone.

There are reasons, though, why each of us has come to live here – reasons which don't simply evaporate the moment someone puts their bags down and moves in. The ways in which we experience our distress are often painful and disruptive, both for the person going through a crisis, and others. Yet great emphasis is placed on being with each other through the problems which arise, and on being able to respond rather than just react to each other. Rather than 'intolerable behaviour' simply being tolerated, we try to speak about what is disturbing about how a person may be relating to herself and others, in the hope of understanding better what is happening among us all. This takes time – the time in which each person's life unfolds day by day, as well as time shared in house meetings. With luck, the criss-crossing of our daily lives makes possible a particular kind of familiarity and, hopefully, trust. We come to know each other not as cases of diagnosis

Plus a book review: *An Uneasy Dwelling*

X or Y, but as individual people, each with our struggles, our hopes and our different ways of looking at the world.

Reading *An Uneasy Dwelling* when I first moved in was like reading a travel guide to an unfamiliar country. It all sounded very interesting and exciting, and I was delighted by the idea of a way of approaching distress which resists the mainstream. But most of the time now, I forget that I'm taking part in an endeavour which is still radical. I'm just sitting having a meal in the garden, or sipping tea with one of my housemates, or playing the piano.

Psychiatry wants to know everything, to shine a bright light into every corner of the human psyche and map it all out, discover laws that it can apply to all the people it puts into this or that box. But when you're already very frightened and ashamed, the last thing you need is a searchlight blinding you or some textbook telling you what you are and why. Rather than 'fix' me, or jolt me into a terrified pretence of normality, I would prefer to find people who are able to be with me (and I with them) through my darkness, in the hope that we might understand it better, and that I might find my way through.

There is this quotation from Beckett on the wall of the PA offices: 'A bright light is not necessary; a taper is all that one needs to live in strangeness, if it faithfully burns'.

What I am most grateful for is the chance of finding my feet in the world again.

www.philadelphia-association.co.uk



Tizzy 's review:

An Uneasy Dwelling is the story of the Philadelphia Association and community houses which have been running for 40 years. They have been very successful and have helped many people with different types of mental illness. I found the book very interesting, well written and eye opening. If you are thinking of living in one, or just interested in the theory of this type of living, it is a very good read. The style of the writing is quite dry, without emotional embellishment. It is written by Paul Gordon a psychotherapist who is a member of the Philadelphia Association and who works in one of the

community houses.

It initially gives a brief history of how the Philadelphia Association came about, how it was born out of a search for an alternative to mental hospitals, but one which was without drugs or medical intervention. The initial prototype for the community houses was 'Kingsley Hall' a collection of residences in Archway. These have been discontinued but later in the book a description of the two existing Philadelphia Association houses is given; Freegrove Road and the Grove. It talks about how behaviour is feasible in the houses which is intolerable in most other places. The sort of people the houses accept, the process by which new residents are accepted by the current householders and the waiting list is described. How long people can stay is also talked over. It also brings to light group therapy, which is part of living in the house and what it consists of. What happens when a resident gets ill and how other people living there respond is discussed. The motto of the houses are 'to enable to be together and let each other be ' and this peaceful message can be found within the walls of the Philadelphia Association houses.

Henry's Demons

Living with schizophrenia: a father and son's story



Image © The London Independent Newspaper

This is, as David Mitchell, who endorses it on the cover, 'a truly remarkable book, and a brave one'. It's a lot more than a journey through madness. It's a story of a family, a story of desperation and anxiety, shocking and upsetting. The book alternates between the father Patrick's story and Henry's. Patrick, a former war correspondent who seemed to go out of his way to report from the most dangerous places in the world, was in Kabul when Henry first got ill, and sets out on a rickety and dangerous return journey immediately.

Then begins a nightmare decade for them all. Henry is found hypothermic and nearly drowned in the sea, off Brighton where he is at uni; he runs away from most places where he is put, often under section, and a lot of the institutions are frightening and contain people who bully him, among others who become his friends. 'I dreamt of running away and took every opportunity to do so...At the same time, I found something attractive about DVH (a hospital he was in). It wasn't the sort of place you could take a baby, but it had a community spirit, and the staff shared in this.'

I met everybody from humble Christians to outright criminals there, and I didn't feel lonely.'

He escapes again and again; he is found one very cold snowy night naked lying in the snow in a garden. He grows a wild beard and goes barefoot.

His words, which are scattered through the book, are vivid

and sad and take us directly into his experiences. His writing is clear, child-like and searingly honest, sometimes reminding me of the poet William Blake who had similar experiences in the early 19th century and wrote and illustrated extraordinary poems.

His descriptions of his tortured fantasies and unshared perceptions interspersed with experiences on the streets and in the wards tell us so much about how it is for him as a mad person. His account rings a lot of bells, and because it is in the now and reads in a verbatim style, it seems truly 3d and 'lived'.

I urge people to read this book – it is revealing, sad, desperate, shocking, eloquent, and Patrick's portions are a mix of deep anxiety, a quest for understanding and answers, thoughtful and enduring support and the visceral love of a father for his son. Henry's mother contributes her diary entries too; frank, sad and beyond anxious sometimes.

Brave family, brave book. I do hope that Henry's 'polka dot' days lessen and leave him, and he can continue to hope for good times, different times, and can delve into his art (which is often stunning) and find his lost 20s in his thirties.

Polly

Patrick and Henry Cockburn
Simon and Schuster London 16.99

Or free if ordered through any public library.

Equilibrium talks to Equilibrium

Experiences of the team working on the mag - **Angela**

Facilitator – Polly Mortimer

I'm very happy to work on Equilibrium and feel that we have a great team. There's a feeling of solidarity and mutual support and we look out for each other.

Everybody works tremendously hard and we reward ourselves with cake, chocolate biscuit and occasional outings. Last summer it was our Clarry Awards ceremony in the park, and this summer it'll be Southend. At Christmas we have our regular Mamma Mia singalong combined with mince pies and sparklers.

I've worked on a mental health magazine before as an editor ;I am endlessly fascinated by the topic of mental health. I constantly strive to try and find information about gentle ways to live and recover.

Our goals are achievable, it would be great to have a complementary printed edition again, and to continue to work towards informing a wider public of our needs, views and opinions.

Angela

My social worker recommended me to Equilibrium because I had some ideas on employment and mental health in 2005. After a few weeks I was told that I'm part of the editorial team.

My job involves writing reviews on books, plays, art exhibitions, interviews and articles on a variety of subjects such as young people taking drugs.

I find working on Equilibrium a positive way to spend my time. We work for 2 hours on Wednesday morning at the Clarendon Centre. It gives me the opportunity to use my

ideas. I never run out of something to write about.

I like working for Equilibrium and I find it therapeutic. I enjoy working as part of a team, (we help each other), I get the coffee. The magazine has evolved, over the years, and it is on the web. www.haringey.gov.uk/equilibrium.

I am now interested in pursuing a career in journalism.

Pepper

Pepper likes the structure of Equilibrium. He finds it beneficial as a form of expression and finds it interesting. The magazine gives him the opportunity to read and write, engaging writing skills gained from writing essays from a Humanities degree from Open University. In the future Pepper would like to see the magazine return back to being printed.

Nigel Prestatyn

My time working with Equilibrium has been a very fruitful period, being involved in the creation of this excellent (biased?) magazine has brought an array of benefits, most notably that of being in a thoroughly productive working environment. Equilibrium has gone from strength to strength, and I've had a great time being a part of its growth.

Pumla

If there one thing Brits like to do is to compare notes (with or without reciprocity) about the weather. This was the distinct opportunity for opening the floor to comment/discussion.

Equilibrium is a bit like the weath-

er-comment at any given time it might strike the right note and doesn't look for praise but can lend on to other considerations. As so many people in any given specialised area tend to be isolated, Equilibrium serves as a sort of window on the world: there are those living it and there are those looking through darkened glass and observing : two worlds brought unknowingly together, to a greater and lesser extent.

Everybody makes of it what they will, some needing the spirit simply to survive.

Tizzy

It is very enjoyable working on Equilibrium as there is a fun, laid back attitude in the meetings. I get out to exhibitions which I otherwise wouldn't go to. It is good practice and focuses the mind writing articles.

It is very satisfying seeing the finished product – a glossy, slick magazine which is very informative on mental health issues.



Reed in Partnerships

Supporting with People with Disabilities back into the Workplace



Reed in Partnership has been very resourceful. I have had three jobs from Reed but unfortunately I lost all three. Two were catering jobs and one was a cleaning job in a care home. I enjoyed being in work. I am not sure what is going wrong, is it my medication, is it my illness or is it me? I have decided to mention it to my consultant. I am scared that I will lose the next job.

Reed in Partnership supports its clients in a variety of ways. It is better to go for a basic job and then work yourself up to a dream job, when you haven't worked for a long time. They advise you on how to prepare for the interview. They tell you what to wear; black or grey is suitable, no large earrings, and no bright make-up – natural colours are best for women. Men should wear shirts and ties that are comfortable. They also advise you not to wear strong fragrances.

Timing is important. It is best to arrive 15 minutes before the interview. Researching the organisation will impress the employer. They also help you to practice your interview on a one to one basis.

They have sent me on three courses. I did two food and hygiene courses and a course on building confidence. I hope I keep the next job I get. Please keep your fingers crossed for me!

Marcia

.....

Time To Change

I attended an event by an organisation called to change on 7th June 2011. at Big Mix in Bethnal Green it was quite interesting. There was a panel talking about their experiences of mental health, particularly in the work place.

One person said that she was made redundant when she disclosed her illness. She had a very supportive lawyer, and sought advice from DDA, her case got into the papers and she got her job back but in a different role.

It was said that there is a long way to go with employers. And it was suggested to get employment with organisations involved in disabilities, because it is a more accepting work circle.

Someone mentioned 'Self Stigma'. She gave an example. When you are going for a job, if you think that you are not good enough you won't get the job.

There was on one person on the panel who had problems his business partner and then he became unwell.

It was mentioned that there should be a law against calling people with mental issues names like nutters, and schizo. One lady on the panel said only she can call herself a 'loony' but nobody else can.



There was an Asian man that has been giving support to Asian women called Chandrakant Shah. He helped to set up an organisation called 'Khameshi' which means cocooned and silence. It was a group of six people suffering domestic violence. He mentioned that some people suffering end up in people trafficking and drugs. The group made a DVD about domestic violence, it was seen by an Asian counsellor so that person decided to keep the organisation running. Mr Shah is involved in an anti-stigma project called 'Take Action Speak Out Project' We had some singing live from Emily who also has mental health issues. Her music has been played on Radio 2.

Afterwards we were divided into groups. First we did a warm up exercise. We introduced the person sitting next to us. Then we had to discuss the following.

What does leadership mean?

What does involvement mean?

What support would be good for you from Time to Change?

I enjoyed the session and I am trying to do something about getting people with mental health issues into the work place.

Angela

Bipolar Disorder

As seen through the eyes of a sufferer



When I was born I had a congenital defect. My father had this also, which was caused by a malformed gene which sometimes skipped a generation. In my father's case it would only go through the male line. In other words if I had had a brother it would probably have affected him to some extent, but if I had had a sister it probably would not have been transferable. Of course, if this theoretical sister had had a boy child it may have missed a generation again.

When I was young – back to the congenital defect:

I had when I was born and still have it to this day, which is a trapped nerve down the right side of my spine. Now when I was very young, I distantly remember my father put up some safety gates at the top of the stairs because I had the habit of wandering down the stairs and going into the kitchen.

I went to hospital called Bethlem Royal Hospital connected with the Maudsley

in Denmark Hill. I would not in any way comment on the doctors' behaviour because they tried to help me or put them under disrepute, but the drugs they gave me gave me a form of bipolar- in those days called manic depression.

“I believe that the drugs I was given at the time were manufactured from hormone derivatives and caused my mood swings to change very rapidly from high to low.”

To this very day I have been very high at times in mood- so high that I would sit in a room with other people and laugh and laugh and feel at the end of laughing if I felt that I had created something – a model, painting stitch

work or pottery, I would be relieved and inebriated at the same time. Sometimes I cry at the slightest provocation and night time is very difficult. I hate to go to bed early and I study micro circuitry as a hobby, but my great hobby is photography but when I got sick I tended to smash up equipment. I believe this is a general trait of people who are suffering from depression or who have bipolar., upon speaking to them about the subject. You have no particular, regular friends except one who is completely loopy but I manage to get on with. I know more about her son but when she says what happened, I could not speculate on her, but she has another boy friend who she sees once a week, but his relatives are getting suspicious. She had scratch marks all over her on every part of her I could see.

Clive Suttle

Photos & words by Siham Beleh

Photos: Wales and Bath

With its stunning georgian architecture, Bath is one of the most visited places in England. During the Roman occupation of Britain, temples and bathing complex were built. Roman Baths were like leisure centres, people went there to relax not just to get cleaned. I found the Roman Baths quite impressive! Although you should allow a couple hours for the visit.

Fairbourne is a Welsh village, with a Blue Flag Beach seaside resort. Fairbourne Miniature Railway runs along the coast to Barmouth. It is tranquil and peaceful place to visit, especially for walks along the beach. Barmouth has loads of tea rooms where you can have some very tempting freshly made walnut or lemon cake; also some very attractive gifts shops in town are not to be missed!





* Where to Begin?

Review by Meg



For one week in April, the Residence Gallery in Hackney was the honoured host of Where to Begin?, the first in a series of three exhibitions curated by Charlotte Meddings, showcasing work from the Studio Upstairs,. As a friend of mine was one of the artists exhibiting, I was lucky enough to be at the opening night, and spent an evening sipping cranberry juice and exchanging impressions of the pieces on display.

For a relatively small exhibition, the diversity was impressive: from ceramic bees (at various stages of development), to a video installation showing the artist waxing her legs - on the tube! -, to tissue paper over a lightbox, evocative of a stained glass window, alongside paintings in a range of styles. My favourite was a kind of memory-painting in which the artist herself appears as a small girl: a ghostly, windblown figure on the edge

of a rural scene remembered from the wall of her family home. It was also moving and illuminating to see my friend's work hanging in a gallery, having watched it grow from a sketch on canvas to a vibrant portrait of a young woman crouching in bright sunlight.

All in all the exhibition extended an invitation to glimpse the world from each artist's perspective: sometimes troubling, often playful, and always engaging. An intriguing introduction to the two installments to follow.

Studio Upstairs is a therapeutic arts community, 'dedicated to exploring complex human emotions through the creation of art', based in London and Bristol.

www.studioupstairs.org.uk

www.residence-gallery.com



* Singing in a choir

by Tizzy Mckenzie



The Highgate Choral Society choir is very large in number. About 200 people sing there. You tend to make friends with other people in your singing category: upper and lower sopranos, altos, tenors and basses. The atmosphere was very welcoming although there weren't many young people- most seemed over 50. Once the rehearsal begins I find time flies and the two hours goes quickly. The music choice so far has been very beautiful and I find singing very releasing and therapeutic. I enjoy singing the less well known music which nonetheless have lovely melodies, and the very famous anthems which are so familiar. I also enjoy the challenge of sight singing. To become a part of the choir you don't need to be of a particularly high standard of singing but you do need to have the ability to read and understand music.

BOOKS

Grace Williams says it loud



by Emma Henderson
Sceptre – 7.99
Shortlisted For Mind
Book Of The Year 2011

This is a gem of a book – following the life, love, disappointments and traumas of Grace Williams, a girl born with cerebral palsy, who later contracts polio. She's put in The Briar, a huge hospital for people with many differing needs, the sort of place that was common in the Fifties, when it is set.

Written in a touching, child-like but not childish way, it weaves through her life there, and her friendship with Daniel, an epileptic who lost his arms in a car crash.

There's a joy and a redemptive simplicity around her, especially in her relationship with and latter absence from Daniel.

'Believe it or not, I enjoyed myself here at Christmas. Shh, though. That's a secret too. Secrets and stories – yours, Grace, and mine.' Daniel tapped my shoe, once....

If you had friends in the ward next door or above or below you, he said, you could talk to them by tapping. 'As simple as that'. He tapped my shoe again.' Tap back, Grace.' I did.

'See? Easy'. He tapped. ' Lets call it G for Grace. Tap back.' I did. ' And D for me. Good. it means we can share, secretly.'

They suffered heinous abuses – rape, major drugging and ECT among others. It is all relayed in an uncluttered narrative – which makes it all the more shocking. The reader feels huge anger for what has happened to them, and lives with them through the decades, which bookend the chapters.

Emma Henderson manages in an unaffected and honest authorial way to achieve something magical with this novel. She brings us into this world, often unthought about, and creates rich and sparkling inner lives for her characters, especially Grace. There is no hint of being patronizing.

hope that this book is singled out for a prize of some sort; it's like nothing I've read lately.

Polly

Books for books

Some of the best books dealing with mental health issues:

Affinity by Sarah Waters ("Not really about mental illness, but it skims the subject. Damn good book, anyway.")

Agnes' Jacket by Gail Hornstein. ("Brilliant!")

An Elegy for Easterly by Pettina Gappah.

An Unquiet Mind by Kay Redfield

Bi Polar Expedition by Neil Walton

Darkness Visible by William Styron

Depression and How to Survive it by Anthony Clare and Spike Milligan

Frost in May by Antonia White

Get Me Out Of Here by Rachel Reiland's ("A great auto-biography about BPD.")

Girl, Interrupted by Susanna Kaysen

How to Become a Schizophrenic by John Modrow

Hurry Down Sunshine by Michael Greenberg

I Never Promised You A Rose Garden by Joanne Greenberg (on schizophrenia/depression)

Mad, Bad and Sad: A History of Women and the Mind Doctors from 1800 by Lisa

Appignanesi ("Not a novel but incredibly interesting nonetheless.")



Curtains designed for Polly by the Textiles Group at the Clarendon Centre

Equilibrium Plaudits:

'I am delighted to have been introduced to Equilibrium, a lively and well-informed magazine that keeps me up to date with national and local mental health policies, projects, people and publications. Created and produced by current and former mental health service users, ((Or however you want to phrase it!!), it rivals any other magazine in its professionalism and insightful coverage of the issues...'

Lucy Johnstone – clinical psychologist Bristol

Too Big?

by Celia Imrie

“Too big? I was shattered. Surely this could not possibly be true? All right, so I might be too large at this moment, but I had seen diet adverts in newspapers. Surely if I worked hard enough at not eating, I would get small enough for the whole judging panel at the Royal Ballet School to get fat themselves – eating their words.

Over 18 months I lost an astonishing amount of weight. It was noticed first at six months by our nanny, known as Pop, when we had to try on summer clothes for our annual family holiday near Bognor Regis, West Sussex. After that I realised I was being watched at mealtimes.

I would look at myself in the mirror and, even though I was something near a skeleton, I didn't think I had gone far enough. In despair and I am sure with some embarrassment – my father being an eminent doctor – my parents brought in a child psychologist. I was 5ft 2in and weighed 4st. What was the problem? Why couldn't they make me eat?



In those days there was not the excess of food there is now. People ate three pretty meagre meals a day if they were lucky, with no snacking in between.

Many people in those days were malnourished, but not through personal choice. So it was a mystery to the experts to find someone who had decided not to eat, just as it might have been then to find someone who was obese.

I was sent for a brief spell in the local hospital, where, bewildered by a condition they had not seen before, staff simply offered me three meals a day, which I politely refused.

After a few weeks, I was released to spend Christmas with my family.

I was happy to come home, but, far from being cured, I now knew that in future I must find even better ways of avoiding eating. I became sly. I worked out every way to dispose of food. I was so successful at it that soon I was little more than a carcass with skin.

Desperate now, my parents decided to send me away to St Thomas' Hospital in London, to enter one of the special wards belonging to the Department of Psychological Medicine. And once there I was placed under the care of world-famous psychiatrist William Sargant. I was 14.

Now, more than 20 years after his death, Sargant is notorious for his work for MI5 and the CIA, particularly its covert MK-ULTRA mind control programme.”

copyright Daily Mail

Blood And Bone Marrow Donation Needed From Ethnic Minorities

There is a charity organisation called African Caribbean Leukaemia Trust (ACLT) which is encouraging people from the black, mixed race, and Asian community to come forward to donate blood and bone marrow. The ACLT was established on June 2nd 1996 by Beverly De -Gale and Orin Lewis. So they have recently had an anniversary.

They did a fund raising event on Saturday 7 May 2011 at Tottenham Green Leisure Centre. This function was absolutely fantastic. There were guest appearances from 3 black celebrities, Victor Romero, Carol Thompson and Janet Kay.

The chances of a white person getting blood which is a match is 1 in 4. For a black, Asian, or mixed race person it is much worse. The problem is a higher proportion of the black community need blood, bone marrow and organs. There is only 1 in 250,000 chance of a match for a black person.

The organisation was started off by Beverly De- Gale because her son was very ill with leukaemia. He needed a match. He did get a match from the USA, but sadly he died, but the charity lives on.

Testing the saliva is an option for being a donor. There is also a need for people from, the Chinese community to come forward.

Unfortunately I cannot donate blood because I am on medication. There was some body from the organisation collecting money at the fund raising event so I just gave the money there and then, which saved me time having to send it through the post.

I am glad this organisation exists which helps to save people lives. Please help out by giving blood or make a donation. www.aclt.org Email : info@aclt.org Tel no.020 8 240 4480

Angela

poems

Tizzy McKenzie

FEELING STRETCHED

Feeling stretched
confidence goes in surges like tides on a beach
My voice dammed
the gush held back by a malfunctioning mind
Held together by pills and blood tests
Mountains of them dull my existence
A robot running on chemicals
A metal feeling through my veins
I miss the air in my head
the wind brushing my face
the delicate touch of life like a butterfly on your skin

.....

Thomas Land

HAPPINESS

Happiness sprouts as a humble plant
that Ogre, the purposeful, in his haste
towards a looming ambition can't
spy out, for he has no time to waste.

But Jackeline and Jack, forgetting the tale
and hunting for field mice on any ground
(imagining lions along the trail),
may find it blooming all around.

FLIGHT

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

EPITAPH

While there's still time to sing and laugh
I shall attempt this epitaph.
He was a jester and a king,
and at his best he was much more:
a child, enjoying everything.

Thomas Land is a poet and award-winning foreign correspondent. He has contributed to The Observer, The New York Times, The Times Literary Supplement and Poetry Review.

Equilibrium Plaudits:

"this excellent local magazine..."

John Vincent - Library coordinator

BITE- SIZED HARDY

Far From the Madding Crowd

Far from the madding crowd is one of the best loved and enduring pieces of literature of our time. It focuses around the central protagonist Bathsheba a woman. So to look at how Hardy presents and treats women in the novel one must firstly look at the portrayal of Bathsheba. The plot of the novel goes as follows- Bathsheba a clever, vain and headstrong woman is being chased by three very different admirers. There is sensible, reliable and dependable Gabriel, stuffy, uptight and slightly emotionally fragile Boldwood and dashing soldier Troy. There are various natural disasters which creates eddys and flows in the plot. The main theme of the book is love and marriage around a rural setting.



As Bathsheba rejects Gabriel and Boldwood who both develop an infatuation for her, she is seduced by Troy. Troy's heart however belongs to a different woman, although he does nothing to discourage Bathsheba. The woman of Troys heart eventually dies in childbirth and his marriage to Bathsheba crumbles. He goes swimming in the sea and is presumed dead and in his absence.

TizzyMcKenzie

A
Radical
& Inventive
Ivory Coast
Poet

NOËL X. EBONY



Review and
Translation
by Meg

With So Much Violence and Upheaval

Following the contested results of the presidential elections, Ivory Coast has been in the news for all the wrong reasons recently. But not many people in Britain are aware of this West African country's rich cultural and literary heritage. Equilibrium seeks to redress the balance with a visit to the life of Noël X. Ebony, a radical and inventive Ivory Coast poet.

Some Unexpected Luck

One sunny afternoon last July, I popped into New Beacon Books on Stroud Green Road, to nose round their amazing selection of titles on Africa and the African diaspora. I had studied some West African poetry while I was at university, and so I was curious to find out whether New Beacon would have any.

I couldn't believe my good fortune when, from a dusty row of books at the back of the shop, I pulled down a volume of poems from Ivory Coast, entitled *Déjà vu*. This is how I began to get to know Noël X. Ebony, an elusive and daring writer, and one of the most inventive poets to have emerged from the colonial collision of French and African cultures.

*l'exil au coeur
ces départs toujours recommencés
l'adieu au bout de chaque baiser
et le chemin qui monte
et le chemin qui descend
sont le même chemin
au bout duquel nous guettent un autre même chemin
d'autres exils
l'adieu following chaque caresse
c'est un feuilleton inachevé
aux épisodes jamais dénoués*

*(la ville sous flaque où gémissent les générateurs
la ville sous vide où nous avons croisé les doigts
la ville sous charme où le ciel n'est visible que des sommets)
là où un truculent haoussa nous tendit des liasses
assis en tailleur les yeux pétillants
et compta des centaines de naïras au prix noir
tu t'inquiètes et nous descendons un efu-egusi avec une bière star
nous parlions sans cesse et sans cesse
nous parlions des oiseaux qu'on sermonne et suicide sans doute
et des hommes qu'on trouve par semaine et par douzaine
nous parlions des navires fantômes et de complaisance et
qu'on arraisonne*

A Life of Courage and Exile

Noël X. Ebony was born in the early 1950s, when Ivory Coast was still a French colony. He left school at an early age: legend has it that when his father sent him money to pay his boarding school fees, he decided to teach himself instead, and went off travelling in neighbouring Ghana.

Ebony spent most of his professional life as a journalist, and it's as a journalist that he is best known in Ivory Coast today, with the prestigious Ebony Prize for journalism named after him. During his lifetime, however, his daring public reflections on the successor to the country's first president led to him being held prisoner and threatened with death. He fled Ivory Coast, and spent some time in Europe before moving to Senegal in 1984. The exact circumstances of his death – in a car accident in Dakar in 1986 – are unclear. His courage as a journalist may have cost him his life.

Yet alongside his journalistic writing, Ebony saw himself as a writer of literature. While his journalism may have been disrupted by his period in exile, his poetry was nourished by his travels.

exile in our hearts
these departures forever starting over
farewell at the end of each kiss
and the path that rises
and the path that falls
are the same path
and at its end another path just the same awaits us
further exiles
farewell following each caress
it's an unfinished serial
whose episodes never resolve

(the town under a puddle where the generators whine
the vacuum-packed town where we crossed our fingers
the town under a spell where the sky is visible only from the summits)
where a fierce Hausa sat cross-legged with sparkling eyes
and counted out hundreds of naira at the black market rate
you're nervous and we chase down an efu-egusi with star beer
we talked on and on
we talked about the birds that get lectured and no doubt suicided
and about the men shot down every week and by the dozen
we were talking about ghost ships and complacency and
how they are boarded and inspected

The Story of a Journey

I was captivated by Ebony's style. I had lived in West Africa whilst studying for my degree, and so many of the places, types of food and snippets of language in the poems resonated with me, as did the theme of love and separation. I decided to try translating part of the book from French into English.

These extracts come from the middle section of the book. In it, the speaker is sitting alone late at night, a dim lightbulb swaying above him. He remembers his meetings with and partings from a woman he was in love with, and describes them as if he were speaking to her.

They meet over many years and in many different places, and at times the scenes overlap and slip into each other, as if the speaker isn't quite sure what happened when or where. He borrows words and phrases from the languages of the places they stay in or travel through, and moves constantly between different towns and countries, different smells, sights, and sounds, fragments of conversation, songs. And yet the writing is simple, with no punctuation expect for line breaks and occasional brackets.

What's more, the way these threads of place and human contact return, criss-cross and interweave mimics the fabric of memory: of Ebony's memory, and that of the woman who is the poem's 'you'.

But by the end of the poem, it becomes clear that their relationship is over. At the same time as he's been remembering what happened between them, the speaker has been mourning his loss.

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Photos by Lucy Fisher and Polly Mortimer