



Presents

Poetry Showcase 2021

Selected poems

TRA[verse]

Collections of work by acclaimed East Midlands poets

TRA[verse]

verb

1. travel across or through.

“he traversed the forest”

synonyms: travel over/across, cross, journey over/across,
make one’s way across, pass over, go across, negotiate;

2. move back and forth or sideways.

“a probe is traversed along the tunnel”

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BEARDED BADGER
PUBLISHING CO.

Foreword

Welcome to our first foray into poetry by Bearded Badger Publishing Company, titled TRA[verse], a series of nine poetry chapbooks each featuring the work of a single poet with a link to the East Midlands region.

I moved to the Derbyshire region over ten years ago, and through attending various poetry nights during this time, I was often left full of admiration at how rich our region is in talent, yet frustrated by how inaccessible it feels for so many writers to get their work published. Hence the birth of Bearded Badger, and our poetry imprint TRA[verse], to offer a platform for writers from our region.

This sample e-pamphlet is a taster of what we will be publishing throughout 2021, a range of poets that whilst different in styles, use of language and subject matter, are joined by a love of words.

I hope you enjoy the poems in this publication, and hope you will continue to support both Bearded Badger, and our poets, as each chapbook is published throughout 2021.

Thank you.

Paul

(aka The Bearded Badger)



Rory Aaron

Rory Aaron is a poet originally from Derby but currently based in Manchester. 'I have been writing for a number of years, but have recently tried my hand at performance poetry and more traditional forms. In regards to performance poetry I have had a number of small-scale successes. I have competed in the Commonword European Slam finishing 2nd and as the highest UK participant, I have performed for Manchester International Festival and recently supported Louise Fazackerley in her latest book tour. I am also part of the BBC New Creatives development scheme.'

Rory's forthcoming collection, from which 'Saying hello' is taken, will be published in April 2021 titled *Doglike*.

Saying hello

It was Tuesday afternoon. I was fighting with a scratch card. Applying for Youth provision in North Manchester. My phone vibrated. It was him. In front of that home made boxing bag. Hung from an old oak tree den down Wyver Lane. A hanging pipe of PVC. 3 meters in length. The base a perfect 10" diameter. A piece of plywood stuffed inside, rolled with carpet cladding. His titanic shoulders let rip a dying frown. Belly an ageing balloon. Snorting. A crooked Chesterfield spire of a nose. Moving his fists. Knuckles jagged like javelins, he landed blows. Feet steady. Up on toes. Just like we were taught as kids. He'd have given Damon Hague a match. Thud. Crunch. Thud. No gloves needed. Tennis court rules. Men thrice his height. Before we even had anything to smell above our lips. The strut it gave him. A stone wall. His name a verb for worried mothers. He stops, faces his phone and grunts to the camera. No words needed. A tear beneath each eye. A cross on his proximal phalanx. Lungs sharp and haggard. He disappears out of view. I lean back into my chair. Pen chewed between my lips. He must finally be out. I think, wondering where he is sleeping during all of this.

Becky Deans

Becky Deans is a Derbyshire writer with an MA in Creative Writing from UEA. Becky published her first novella, *exposé*, in 1998. She has performed poetry and prose across the East Midlands, Sheffield and the East of England, with a highlight being supporting Vanessa Kisuule at Derby Poetry Festival in 2018. When not writing, Becky can be found hosting various poetry events across the region, as well as supporting local festivals such as Belper Goes Green and Duffield Arts Festival.

Becky's forthcoming collection, from which 'Slab' is taken, will be published in April 2021 titled *Uninformed*.

Slab

Put down a concrete slab, put down another
 Put down concrete slabs everywhere, until
 Concrete pervades everything, you, me
 We're dusty and stuck, white-faced
 Unable to move because we're part of the development
 And your slab is our tomb.

Create new roads, bypass those roads
 Then build a bypass bypass
 So every place is connected and
 No one ever has to stop to a chug in their cars
 And all you can see for miles around at night is streetlights
 Dazzling every single inch of the planet
 So there is no night.

Throw up some houses, make it an estate
 There's a square of ground there on those tarpits,
 Throw up some more
 It doesn't matter how small they are as long as
 They have a patch of grass at the back and a hair's width
 Between them. Pile them high, house upon
 House upon house. Smother the earth with brick
 And plaster and gravel. Build a tower of houses
 So high you can see them from the moon.

Chop down the trees. They're in your way.
 They litter the place with their leaves and seeds.
 We don't need their drainage. We want empty
 landscapes, nowhere to shelter, nowhere to run.
 Nature's overrated. The planet is better
 When we get together and sweep it all away.

Kevin Qweaver Jackson

Kevin Qweaver Jackson, based near Nottingham, UK, has been writing and performing for over 10 years. A queer community activist, he writes from the edge, revelling in poetry's subversion, its capacity to reach deep from within. His second collection, *Loves Burn*, was published in January 2020 by Big White Shed to broad acclaim. He performs all over, most recently at Nottingham's Poetry Festival 2020 supporting Anthony Anaxagorou. Work has been published widely including in Burning House Press, HCE Magazine, Porridge Magazine, RFD Journal in the US and various anthologies including *Desire, Love, Identity*, contemporary perspectives on queer lives, published by Global Words Press in 2019. He's a proud member of Nottingham's DIY Poets collective.

Kevin's as yet untitled collection of poems will be published in June 2021.

Boy on a pier

A lad of maybe twenty,
prisoner in a sprawl of limbs,
centres a toddler's carousel
where the old pier draws in,
as if afraid.

One narrow girl
in a glum pink cup, round

and round and round,
cheerless as his empty pint eyes.
Lad on a low light but smoky inside,
defiance, desire boiling off, guitar
in pursuit. Something urgent
to be said,
a flare gone up,
desperate to be followed.
No words ever reached
that far. Last look fixes,

comes away with me.
A wire tugging back
these many years,
where a dying sun
hides behind long brown hair.

Jack Cunnington

Until recently Jack Cunnington was carving out a meagre living as personal tobacconist to the Lord Mayor of Macclesfield, until being forced to resign amid accusations of grievous shag embezzlement and lying. After this debacle he completed a degree in English at the University of Derby where he continued to write throughout his studies and developed an interest in Modernism, Postmodernism, Cultural Theory, and Soviet bus stops. Originally from Nottingham, he now lives in Derby, patiently awaiting the end of his world.

Jack's as yet untitled collection will be published in June 2021.

untitled

the thing breathing itself out of nilotic
mud, a cancerous aberration
of englishman's spirit. tawny owl

rain down rain down! rain so glee and
glib. porous as the stone they birthed
you on. soaking every drop to its core.

where the afterbirth of sunlight hurts
them twice the second time round,
barbarous tales of flesh rippled in your veins,

scheherazade in a maid's outfit,
behind walls to tell stories each night. veils
over stars, blackened sunshine. the ghosts of

christmas passed. there's no end in sight,
a plainfield geiner, a joke on the nightly.
news. this is not the world. this is not

america. this is not amniotic fluid
living in pond water. this is yeats
breathing his last whilst the dead child

waits under earth to be made new in
flesh. this is not death. this is no crypt.
a shudder in the loins engenders there.

Oliver Cowley

Oliver is a poet for whom his love for poetry started whilst he was studying at undergraduate level in English & Creative Writing at the University of Derby. “I already had a curious mind for all things eerie and the poets I discovered used the sort of gothic tone I loved.” In 2017 after graduating, Oliver began posting poetry to Instagram, engrossing himself in a community of poets. Since then, Oliver has gone on to enjoy success in poetry competitions, open-mic nights and has consequently gained a sizable following on social media. He goes to describe his work as a depiction of the human condition and thrives best when he is emptying his thoughts onto paper!

Oliver’s as yet untitled collection of poems will be published in August 2021.

If You Were a House

If you were a house,
Your eyes would be windows,
Your mouth, a door,
And the architecture, a blessing.

Your body is entirely,
a foundation,
Mouth is open, garden stretched,
A blessing to the street.

I could cook inside your chest,
And rest within your navel,
Bathe in your blood basin,
Pray at the loins.

And if I am sad,
the mind-attic I would hide,
To light a candle in your thoughts,
Watching the architecture pass me,
The last blessing as I fall.

Cullen Marshall

Cullen was born in London, and grew up in Essex, spending ten years working in pubs. The loss of his granddad sparked a change in career, and led Cullen to become a care worker, training in youth work. He came to Derbyshire to complete his degree at the University of Derby, before going on to work as a Young Carers Support Worker in Derbyshire.

Cullen discovered his love of writing as a teenager, rapping (terribly according to him!) in his friends' bedrooms and making up mixtapes. Around this time, he discovered spoken word poetry, and ever since his first experience of it, has not looked back. Using a beat-style flow to give his poetry rhythm, Cullen writes about journey, loss, love, and mystery from a place of passion.

Cullen's as yet untitled collection of poems will be published in August 2021.

Holding back the Twilight

Her eyes jolted provided with full PPE
barrelling through to intensive care
stopped, behind the cold silence of a clean protective screen
Blinking passions mist over her hills

Her cornerstone laid slabbed
pale frail fixed to a ventilator
Unaware she was there
each excruciating beat tortured transfixed by dyspnoea
Selflessly she wished to swap places
watched breath falter body buckle
Out of reach from her loving arms
Nurses guarded what dignity remained
comforted his conclusion her bereavement
Their partnership so close, divided by the virus
She was one of too many scorned
Nearby, a witness to goodbye

Now she is carefully

Holding back

The twilight

**this is just a section of the poem – the full poem will feature in Cullen's chapbook, published in August.*

Sonia Burns

Sonia has always written creatively and accidentally began performing at open mic nights in 2018. Things escalated quickly and the following year she found herself performing in an international poetry slam as part of the Nottingham Poetry Festival. Soon after, Sonia gained a place on the Arts Council funded Wise Talk Poetry Development Programme, led by Matt Abbott, Jamie Thrasivoulou and Genevieve Carver. She has performed at arts, literature and music festivals, in libraries, books shops and care homes. She is a member of the Wise Talk, Paper Crane Poets and World Jam collectives.

Sonia has won various competitions and has recently had work published in several magazines and anthologies. Sonia settled in Derbyshire after a nomadic upbringing. Her poetry is shot through with humour, nostalgia, cats and the benefit of 20:20 hindsight.

Sonia's as yet untitled collection of poems will be published in October 2021.

The Beat

The Beat drags us from bleak suburbs in Ballardian beige, from picture-postcard villages, cityscapes, fear-stained high rises glinting with knives; crowded yet isolated lives. The beat draws us closer in our vintage vans, with patched up exhaust pipes and half-baked plans; Wacky Races cars filled with spliff and cigarette smoke, or hitching, with a hand-drawn sign and hope. The beat animates us with rolls and drops, your Monday to Friday corpse finds a pill to pop, something to drink, a rush, and suddenly you sync into the rhythm; those drums are for you. The beat is inside us, it rings in our ears; feet throbbing and tapping to a silent disco each. Fags burn forgotten in fingers yellow as sin. We leave the club and the magical hour kicks in. The beat unites us, twenty years on. We still feel like we belong to something, while habits started to enhance our experience, consume us as we dance. The beat saves us from our real lives, we're locked in the rightness of a moment as light as movement. Laser smiles split skulls; we are the here and now.

Camille McCawley

Camille is currently Derby based, however has moved a number of times since a young age. Her education has focused on environmental and social justice issues, so her writing skills have been self-taught with the support of peers in the poetry community. She is a keen advocate for poetry being accessible.

Camille has performed at numerous events and festivals across the country and supported Joelle Taylor, Matt Abbott, Genevieve Carver and Leanne Moden. Camille is a member of the Wise Talk Collective whose debut show 'The Art of Losing' was showcased virtually at Saboteur Awards and Nottingham Poetry Festival 2020. She is champion of Slam of the North and Derby Poetry Festival Slam 2019.

Camille has poems published in World Jam, Nottingham anthology, For Women Who Roar online magazine, and has won multiple competitions.

Camille's as yet untitled collection of poems will be published in October 2021.

Clearing Uncle Joe's

I.
Fingertips scroll through carousel
lifting transparencies for
personal slideshows of lost memories.

Mum appears in dust particles
glistening like a lava lamp.
Red wellingtons swallow toddler knees.
She looks at me with calm reprieve.

II.
Key lock released.
I take my chances.
Stampede stairs to
the first door at the top,
I'm in luck.

Wash hands.
Spy single toothbrush.
Needing toothpaste,
I pocket Sensodyne
without a second thought.

Months later,
the tube sits squeezed
at the back of the shelf

The longer I leave it
the harder it is
to clear the dust.

Anita Jackson

Anita was born in Derbyshire but now lives in Nottinghamshire. ‘I’ve “dabbled” writing poetry for many years, but it was only during the Covid lockdown in 2020 when I had lots of spare time I began writing more. I had never shared any of my poetry and it was a spur of the moment decision to send a few poems to a new publishing company, The Bearded Badger, asking for contributions for a series of Chapbooks. I wasn’t really expecting to hear back - but I did, and here I am putting the first compilation of my poems together! I hope you will enjoy them.’

Anita’s as yet untitled collection of poems will be published in December 2021.

Thursday’s Child

From Derbyshire never thought to roam,
Nottingham was exotic, somewhere far from home.
Il’son School where kids were so mean,
Wishing you could disappear, pass through, be unseen.

Who’d have thought such a quiet lass
would travel so far, could travel so fast.
It just goes to show,
it’s not where you start from,
but where you believe you can go.

TRA[verse]

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