



TLC SHOWCASE

Simon Maddrell

Introduction to the Manuscript	2
Extract from <i>Untitled: a forthcoming poetry collection</i>	4
About the Writer	9

Introduction to *Untitled: forthcoming poetry collection* by Simon Maddrell

I am delighted to have my first collection forthcoming from Out-Spoken Press next February 2026. I was fortunate enough to have two TLC Free Reads -- one thanks to New Writing South in February 2022 and the other thanks to Arvon in February 2024.

The first working title, *Three Legs*, was reviewed by Ahren Warner who was so supportive and encouraging, which massively boosted my confidence. Of course, sometimes we have to prepare for more holistic critique but in this case I was lucky enough to get a range of very specific feedback, suggestions and edits that helped me hone many of the poems. Many went on to be published. It is however worth noting that Ahren said, *This is wonderful!* about my poem 'Back to the Soil' and I kept on submitting it as it was also a poem I loved. Twenty-six submissions later it was finally published in the amazing *Gutter* (Issue 31, Feb 2025). The lesson, if one is needed, is to be persistent with what you believe in, especially if someone you trust convinces you that you aren't deluded!

Because the Free Reads have a word limit, I was unable to submit full manuscripts, so instead chose to include poems I was either less sure about or confident about but unsure why they weren't accepted for publication (whilst also being aware that some poems will always be more suitable for a collection than a single poem in a magazine). Simon Barraclough reviewed a selection of poems from what was now called *blue spine*. As with Ahren, there were some great specific suggestions, but I was also very taken by his advice of *less hesitation...more assertiveness...keep fresh and not too encumbered by philosophical meta-considerations*. It is poetry after all!

I'm excited about the next stage of working with the remarkable Anthony Anaxagorou of Out-Spoken Press. I'm certain we will be cutting the manuscript back in terms of poems and reconfiguring it, alongside a new title, I imagine. The collection is autobiographical, covering almost sixty years. Being a 'late starter' poet, it is perhaps unusual in the breadth of its scope. The book explores the shame of being queer and its redemption whilst also mourning the loss of my brother and other friends. The spine of the book is my HIV diagnosis and HIV stigma, prompting meditations on mortality and grief -- and my love of gardening. The book finally develops into nature and eco-poems including human and other species extinctions. But it will be exciting

and equally instructive. My debut collection will contain only a handful of my pamphlet poems, and even though many have been published in magazines, it will still be an excitable meerkat that emerges from its nest.

Extract from *Untitled: a forthcoming poetry collection*

in nineteen ninety-one I stepped out of my skin

for the first time

there was a young man

sucking a cock

like he'd arrived back home at last --

not in the sense of the seventies

oblong blocks

of Manx Ices, unwrapped

and shoved into a round cone

but more so that rocket lolly,

you remember,

wide at the bottom, ridged

with a sweet-lipped tip

of white chocolate.

the nineties wonder

at what dialling 0898 offered

-- cool, fresh & wild for it

until just after that
moment of melting white,
hundreds & thousands flashed by
-- now too exposed

to survive so raw,
i crawled back into my skin, sagging
& dragging itself to the bathroom
-- then I threw up.

(First published by *Under the Radar*, Nine Arches Press, Issue 30, 2023)

I've got this gut feeling that inside somewhere

there is this hairy creature, a fenodyree
busy naked with its chores
a nimble mower of rough hedges
shouldering stones one way or another
with a melancholic wail
when my body crumbles like a tholtan, maybe
it is released from its unchosen home
to herd loaghtan sheep on foggy nights.

Perhaps it's a buggane, a huge hairier ogre
ripping the roof off Sunday School
beliefs, a bull with tusks glistening red
eyes torched with rum until I'm gone
when it shape-shifts out of my form
into silver snauanee, into ferrish mist.

Glossary:

tholtan ruined cottage

snauanee web-like covering of the ground on a dewy dawn

ferrish faerie

(First published by *Amethyst Review*, 19th Feb. 2024)

Even a stone has a soft spot

a worn through hole after years
of attrition, a heart
whose emptiness is its strength,

as in how a mill grinds wheat
and a cup fills up, and how
their threaded weight makes
looms and fishing nets complete.

And if by chance, you don't
believe in hexes, hold one stone
with one hole, in one hand,
and notice if your eye resists

a telling stare, drawn through
by its own event horizon, like
the heart pulls in your dark
blood, then blows out bright.

(First published by *Finished Creatures*, Issue Six: Pressure, May 2022)

Life is there, above the walls

after Paul Verlaine

the iron stairway is filled
with lavender and mint.
A flag is, above the walls,
a symbol of wind and rebirth.

The rooftops across
squawking tiles and chimney pots,
common gulls plotting their forays
above the sea, the world is --

pigeons roosting amongst the figs
like flying squirrels without teeth,
life is there, above the walls,
but quietly murmurs here --

what will you do, below there,
dreaming without pauses,
say, what will you do, below there,
with your choices?

(First published by *The Rialto*, Issue 99, November 2022)

About the Writer

Simon Maddrell is a poet, editor, educator and wellbeing facilitator. He was born in the Isle of Man and now lives in Brighton & Hove after twenty years in London.

He has a corporate background but also in development and conservation in Africa's drylands. He is a world authority on sand dam technology, having founded Sand Dams Worldwide in 2002.

Simon has been writing poetry since 2019 and has had over 160 poems published in numerous anthologies and magazines including *Acumen*, *AMBIT*, *Gutter*, *Magma*, *MODRON*, *Poetry Wales*, *SAND*, *Southword*, *Stand*, *The Moth*, *The Rialto*, *Under the Radar*.

Simon has had six pamphlets and two joint anthologies published since 2020.

In 2020, *Throatbone* was published by UnCollected Press (USA), and *Queerfella* jointly won The Rialto Open Pamphlet Competition.

Nine Pens Press published two collaborative anthologies with Vasiliki Albedo and Mary Mulholland -- *All About Our Mothers* in 2022 and *All About Our Fathers* in 2023.

Isle of Sin (Polari Press, 2023), *The Whole Island* (Valley Press, 2023) and *a finger in derek jarman's mouth* (Polari Press, 2024) were all Poetry Book Society Pamphlet Selections.

His sixth pamphlet, *Patient L1*, is a verse memoir in the voice of Jonathan Blake and was published by Polari Press in February 2025.

Simon's debut poetry collection will be published by Out-Spoken Press in February 2026.

Simon can be found on all good social media @simonmaddrell and at his new website simonmaddrell.com

