



TITLE: ENCLOSURES AND DISCLOSURES
AUTHOR: MERCER SIMPSON
PUBLISHER: ROCKINGHAM PRESS
PRICE: £7.99 (95 pages)
REVIEWED BY: IDRIS CAFFREY

I first dipped into Mercer Simpson's new fourth collection of poetry on a very dark, wet and dismal day in January. The best time to read a poetry book if it is good, the worse possible time if it is not. So did reading this collection make me feel better? Well, yes it did and that is one of the powers of poetry. It can give you a lift, transfer you into a world of new experiences, surprises and the sheer delight of the written word. Mercer Simpson's work did just that.

This is quite a long collection of ninety five pages and split up into eleven sections ranging from "Prologues" to "Moving into the end game." It is inevitable, with so many poems included in the collection, that some will be weaker than others and I found the section titled "Love Issues" to be far weaker than the others. However, when I read poems like "Redevelopment", "Honest to God" and "On a Blank Page" ,it more than made up for this.

He enjoyed the poetry of Henry Vaughan the metaphysical poet (1622-1695) and there are two poems about him in the section of the book titled "Literary Landscapes."

This from the poem "Discovering Henry Vaughan's Grave at Llansanfraid Churchyard" –

*At last we find your grave, suitable yew-curtained
for sleeping out of the sun, under the north wall
always deepest in shadow. Lying flat on its back
your massive slab's diagonally cracked
as if the last trump has sounded for you
out distantly, off-key, and you couldn't escape
from the great weight of guilt that was pinning you down.*

Many of the poems are quite long but one of my favourites in the collection is only six lines long. It's called "On a Blank Page." Here is the whole poem –

*Here is the poem
I tried to finish,
its words revolving around
a white silence,
a paper thought
for the bonfire of dreams.*

This I think is Mercer Simpson at his very best – accessible, subtle, beautiful. Mercer Simpson died recently. He was born in London but spent most of his life in Wales living in Cardiff. He has made a significant contribution to the literature of Wales as editor of *The New Welsh Review* and also the magazine of the Welsh Academy, *BWA*. He has left us four volumes of his poetry. I recommend you read the other three and this one –his last.