

Federation Magazine

The magazine of The Federation of Worker Writers & Community Publishers £2 \$3 €3

**Report and pictures
from FEDfest 06**

Transatlantic Fed

Sixties Press

New Fed Exec

**Is the FED still
socialist at 30?**

Rosie Lugosi

Exhibiting Poetry

Book & CD Reviews



Issue 32

Summer 2006

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www.thefwwcp.org.uk

issn 1330-8598

Leaving Home

**A new adult
learner book from
New Leaf Publishing**

**Broadsheet
18 inside!**

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The Federation of Worker Writers & Community Publishers

The FWWCP was formed in 1976, and is a non-profit making umbrella organisation for writers' groups and community publishers, who wish to share their skills and work with their communities, and promote working class writing. There are Member groups and organisations around the World, sharing a belief that writing and publishing should be made accessible to all. Membership is open to all organisations working with words and language.

Our aims are:

- To create and support an international community of writers and publishers.
- To offer people greater access to developing skills in participatory writing and publishing activities.
- To encourage people to be heard and read, write and read creatively, especially those who may be socially excluded.

FEDitorial

30

My mother cried all day on her thirtieth birthday. It meant she was getting 'old', and thereafter she was always a frivolous '21'. Now the Fed has attained that milestone of maturity. It is thirty years since the first eight groups, mostly from London and Liverpool, set up a community of worker writers and publishers.

At the FEDfest this year we read a selection of the writings from the last thirty years, and perhaps as a consequence the long Saturday reading had a flavour of the marathon performances of early Federation AGM weekends, people still reading into the small hours to an overloaded audience. The new, and the old, maintained an energy and vitality - even if this exceeded the capacity of some of the listeners, who began to slope off to bed, or to the bar.

1976 was a point of transition; preparation for the Jubilee Year, the death of hair and flares: the birth of punk, the middle of a battle between trade unions and capitalism, which gave rise to the naked market led policies of subsequent decades. There was a considerable counter culture, reflected in some of the origins of the groups who joined the Fed, both at the time and subsequently. Groups like QueenSpark and Centerprise formed around alternative community newspapers, publishing projects, or leftwing bookshops. These papers and the bookshops have mostly gone. In the early 1980, it was possible to go to a bookshop in Sheffield, Bristol or Liverpool and pick up a small selection of community published books by a Fed group from Manchester or London. Today you might have to explore the internet. In some ways we are closer - it is much easier to exchange your work and even collaborate in writing with worker writers around the world, as the Transatlantic Fed has demonstrated. In others - in terms of handling the actual book that was made by the actual people who wrote and published it - perhaps we aren't.

The possibilities and the potential of worker writing and community publishing have not been

diminished, but they are different. Instead of sitting around tables with Cowgum and blue pencils, we are hunched over our keyboards. Instead of hawking our poetry anthologies in the pubs and streets alongside punk fanzines and a plethora of left wing newspapers, we're building websites and blog spots. We can reach more people, but perhaps the hard discipline of working for two hours to make one sale requires more conviction. Perhaps not - the possibilities of the media now available to us mean that we can convey our conviction better. It's easier to use images and to record readings, and there has been a growth and development of poetry as performance.

However, worker writing has a long history that precedes even the Fed. The form of media won't change it; people will still want to write. Even the debate about the value of working class writing will continue. At the beginning of the last century, 'The Navy Poet', Patrick MacGill (1912/1984) wrote, to his pick and shovel: "Will a one remember the times our voices rung/ When you were limber and lissom, and I was lusty and young?/ Remember the jobs we've laboured, the heartfelt songs we've sung?" p167.

Alternatively, James C Welsh (1917:12-13) wrote, "My songs are the expression of the moods I happened to be in when I wrote them. I do not ask the world to judge them because a miner wrote them - there is no credit in that - in fact, I rather dislike the fact that there is a tendency already in some quarters to dub me a "miner poet". Miner I am, poet I may be; but let the world not think there is virtue in the combination. "Ploughmen poets," "navvy poets," "miner poets appeal only to the superficialities of life. The poet aims at its elementals. These I have *tried to touch, and let the world say whether I have succeeded or no*; I want to "stand on my own two legs."

It is easy but ahistorical to dismiss the work of these men as being rather servile both in the forms they wrote and in their often-romanticised content. Despite the hint of an oppositional stance they offer, either in Welsh's assertion of his poetic autonomy, or MacGill's repeated stance as a voice from the underworld - as a poet from the "Dead End", they didn't have the opportunity to organise

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FEDfest 2006

In the words of some of those who attended

FRIDAY

Friday registration was very quick and easy.

Perri Haste Shorelink Hastings

Travelling up from St Leonards, all laughing and talking all the way down.

Sue Horncastle

I thought that the girl at the registration was very good and she also made us all welcome.

B. Cryer, Pecket Well College

Seminal. Life changing. Woozy.

Paul Beaumont Southwark Mind

Enjoyed the exercise we did in groups and would like to see the results in the Broadsheet. The idea of sharing the cameras is an ingenious way for people to seek each other out.

Sue Smith Meshaw Writers and Strollers

Friday registration couldn't be improved. The introduction was great, culminating in the getting to know you poetry writing exercise. It worked. I met lots of new people, some I recognised from last year, too.

Cynthia Price Stevenage Writers



John Malcomson has done it yet again - wonderful, inspirational, interesting, he made you think about what you are writing.

Michele White Shorelink Writers

Good workshops. Recited some more poetry with Jan

Holliday. Good to meet new people and purchase some literature. Not a great fan of AGMs but it was kept nice and short and was pleased

that Wakefield Writers was accepted!

Timothy Grayson Wakefield Writers

Lucia Birch, medley of words and music. Was glad that I was able to contribute some work. It was a wonderful 2 hours.

Robert Brandon Shorelink Writers

Call that an AGM! It didn't overrun and there wasn't a row about constitutional changes!

Roger Mills Eastside Writers

Bread is Rising Performance was inspirational . . . I found their political and committed presentation of their work and its spiritual delivery very inspiring.



Nick Pollard

SATURDAY

Discussion on community publishing a very interesting and useful discussion. I took a lot away from this one.

Almira Holmes Commonword



The standard of the celebratory reading just gets better every year. Strange how the Americans began and ended it . . .

Lynne Clayton Southwark Mind Arts Collective

I was most impressed with the variety of talent, both past and present. Especially impressed by the encouragement given to each person, regardless of ability. Long may that be. The way the order was chosen was very fair. Unfortunately due to the length of time it was taking, I had to give up at 11.30pm. It's my age you know. On the whole a well run event. Shame we missed out on the music and dancing.

Sue Smith Meshaʻw Writers and Strollers



Writing from a survivor viewpoint and experience led by Anne Lambie and Lynne Clayton. This workshop was spiritually uplifting and comforting.

Perri Haste Shorelink Writers

Really good - could not choose best, but Sue was one I admired for her guts.

Norman Wilson Pecket Well

Good show but it was too hot in the room.

J. Spencer Pecket Well

What variety! Fun laughter and tears. What a wonderful evening's entertainment.

Celia Drummond Meshaʻw Writers and Strollers



Over the weekend I met members of the Transatlantic Fed from Syracuse, New York State. We have exchanged email and home addresses and hope to maintain contact throughout the year.

Robert Brandon Shorelink Writers

As always, the Fedfest was wonderful. Great to see old friends (and new) and attend workshops. The celebratory reading, though longer than usual, was the best I have yet attended. The 30 years pieces and the American presence gave it an added dimension.

Roy Birch, Stevenage Survivors

I liked my room - comfortable. The meals could have been better, they were a bit too fancy.

Lily Ann Cole Southwark Mind Arts Collective

SUNDAY

Great workshop with Transatlantic fed. We put together a formula for an idea on the best form of (class and) education.

Cynthia Price

I enjoyed Alison Clayburn's How to do workshop. Lots of information and inspiration to do your own workshop. Looked at difference between facilitator and teacher which was helpful.

Michele White Shorelink Writers



The venue was very good. Bedrooms good, clean, no problem . . . meals excellent. . . I thought the Fedfest was good and I enjoyed it. I found it a bit stressful and tiring at times but got a real buzz out of it.

Roger Lill High Peak Writers

The informal networking was great! Also, I enjoyed learning something about the history of FWWCP.

Celia Hammond Meshaʻw Writers and Strollers

It was all great, however it was hard to decide

which workshop to attend, not enough hours in the day.

Jean Rodwell Shorelink Writers



See our website www.thefwwcp.org.uk for more pictures and reports

The Republic of Letters II?

Steve Parks of New City Community Press and Syracuse University, writes about an Educational Manifesto by the Transatlantic Fed writing group

The FEDfest 06 unveiled the latest effort by the FWWCP to extend conversation about the diverse heritage of working class identity across national borders – the Transatlantic Fed. In the following paragraphs, I would like to briefly tell you the history of the project as well as provide you with some samples of our conversations on education, disability, race, and mental health. Finally, I would like to invite you to respond to our manifesto on education.

The Transatlantic Fed is a partnership between the FWWCP and The Writing Program, Syracuse University. At the outset, the Transatlantic Fed was an internet-based listserv discussion group featuring participants from the FWWCP and Syracuse University Civic Writing students. (It now has its own blog: www.transatlanticfed.blogspot.com) The initial goal of the project was to address a seemingly straightforward question: Do the working class in Great Britain and the United States share similar experiences? The straightforward question, however, took many turns as participants came to realize that working class experience is shaped not only by national context, but by education, race, disability, and mental health issues as well. In fact, a common theme became how neither country seemed committed to tackling issues of economic justice within these more complicated categories.

Over the course of three months, the conversation moved between personal history, political debate, and FWWCP history.

Rosie Lugosi

"You could spend a life in formal education but still not learn what you pick up through engaging with and participating in the Fed".

Nick Pollard

"The key thing probably in the Fed is an experience of marginalisation, of writing from the periphery. However, there might be more periphery than centre, and the problem is that the centre dominates culture at the periphery. Thus, what you see in the mainstream culture of telly, popular press and literature is a kind of Disneyfication of everything, which reduces and

insults and encourages a false consciousness or false perception of the way things are.

This is an interesting issue and core to some of the origins of the Fed. As you might see in my posting to Brendan, some of the early writing that came out of the Fed or that was around when the Fed started was with schoolchildren. Chris Searle's work began - with the publication of *Stepney Words* - because when the kids he was teaching started writing about their real lives as opposed to the material they were supposed to submit for schoolwork they were writing with a new depth and vigour. Of course, when he published their work he was disciplined. The children organised a strike and he was reinstated".

Pat Smart

"I was one of the 'scruffs' I was pushed aside, left at the back, not included in discussions etc. in class. If I put my hand up to ask a question one certain teacher would give me a 'withering' look and tell me to put my hand down! When I did get to ask a question I was usually told, "because I said so!" or "don't be stupid girl!" I wasn't the only one; there were quite a few of us. So that kind of thing (class divide - no pun intended!) certainly did 'impinge' on my education.

Even in the State-run (Catholic-run) schools, there were class-divides also. I know I was one of the poorest ones, so I was the scruff, the 'thicko', the stupid one who's parents couldn't afford the correct school uniform, I was poor, so, therefore I was stupid, etc. etc. (even the school's head mistress, A Nun, told me so quite often usually when she was giving me 'six of the best' (a good whacking with a long cane on each of my hands)".

Joan DeArtemis

"The strange thing is, somehow, I didn't realize that there would be so much of a class difference between me and other college students... age, yes, but not class. I have to pass up on MANY opportunities here on campus because I either don't have the time, because I have to work so much, or else I don't have the money. For example,

I simply cannot take an unpaid internship. I can't volunteer my time to anything. I simply must be paid, because I have no other source of income".

Eric Davidson

"My parents were working class but strived and found the money to send all 4 children to fee paying school... unusual. But at school, my accent was different from the rest and in the boys club where many of the tops schools boys were represented it was even more different. However, there was one organization called the COUNTIES and there I met guys I could really relate to. Eventually I became one of the leading lights and was able to help effect change- to let the organization become more open and inclusive and to let all schools participate".

Melodie Clarke

At Syracuse University, they're doing a program called Writing on the Wall (WOW). In this program, they are having 130 concrete blocks painted with symbols or words that symbolize oppression. They can be painted by students and Faculty.....I painted a block with the word disability and a small flower. They had us fill out a card explaining why you chose the word that you did or what the symbol you used meant. I wrote that people don't see me, they see the disability and don't look past that to see me. I feel like I have to prove myself to become visible again.

I've been thinking about this subject for a couple of days now. I am using a walker (I'm being weaned off of it, to using a cane) and wear braces on both hands. I feel that when I meet people they look at my disabilities and don't look farther to see me as a person. I am a person beyond the disabilities. I have dreams, feelings, and aspirations like every one else. I feel that people are putting me in a box and it gets harder and harder to push or break my way through.

It even goes on at the University level, where just because you have a ramp on the outside of a building does not make it handicap accessible. I get so frustrated at times because I can't get downstairs to the Bursar's Office or upstairs to Financial Aid. I also get frustrated by people who treat me like I'm not there or they have prejudged me based on my appearance or disability. Frustration eventually turns into depression and sadness. I keep pushing against the box wall to get people to see me for who I am, not my disability, not my disease (Sarcoidosis), not because they feel sorry for me and not treating me really different from

every other student."

Eric Davidson

"I don't know first-hand what it's like in the USA, but in the UK, there is a lot of prejudice against Survivors - we are seen as incapable, socially inept, self-obsessed, boring, incapable of self-expression... right down the list to 'smelly'".

Steve Oakley

"You know, so many of us wander around this world never questioning our place in it, every door can be opened, every level reached, every direction understood, and all without a single thought. Why wouldn't it? It doesn't need thinking about, it's natural, the doors are there to let us in, the levels are a logical use of our space and the directions help us to find our way... surely? But they do something else that your experience highlights; they're a very real very present part of the 'norm'. But as you say, it's a norm based on the assumption that we can even get close enough to the doors to reach the levels, that we can actually read the signs that tell us where to go, and it really gets my blood boiling that when you look closer -for whatever reason- these assumptions are everywhere in everything".

Based on this conversation, Tim Diggles invited the Transatlantic Fed to sponsor a workshop at the FEDfest to bring the entire conference into the discussion.

For over an hour, participants shared their personal stories of balancing the demands of learning to read and write with the obstacles placed in front of them by government schools and state-run mental health/disability systems. The following day the Transatlantic Fed gathered at a workshop to draw these many conversations into an educational manifesto. Invoking the heritage of the FWWCP, the Manifesto was called The Republic of Letters II:

1. Education should teach a global humanity (not the humanities) based on an alternative sense of history and where cooperative values and restorative justice are primary.
2. Education should take place in a safe environment free from traditional social/economic biases with self-respect for each other as individuals as well as members of different classes, heritages and sexualities.
3. All educators must move from subconsciously teaching students to be a Westernized version of "them" to teaching the essential equality among

individuals and cultures.

4. The conceptual equality taught to students must also be manifested in equal Funding and equal access to well-maintained school facilities.
5. To base an education system on any other values accepts a fundamental inequity in society and acceptance that not all human potential will be fulfilled.

The Transatlantic Fed now invites your participation in the discussion as it begins to consider where its conversation should lead next. How might it expand discussions over the common experience of working class in the UK and USA? How can that experience respect the different race, educational and mental health histories of its participants?

How can the Transatlantic Fed move continue to formulate its conversation into a set of guidelines, which can begin to gain traction in the economic and political circles, which shape our daily lives?

If you would like to join this project, please write Steve Parks, Syracuse University, at sjparks@syr.edu.

Transatlantic Fed Participants: Brendan Abel (USA), Lynn Ashburner (UK), Dave Chambers (UK), Melodie Clarke (USA), Eric Davidson (UK), Joan DeArtimis (USA) Tim Diggles (UK), Dave Kent (USA), Ann Lambie (UK), Rosie Lugosi (UK) Cathy Nicles (USA), Candra McKenzie (USA), Steve Oakley (UK), Nick Pollard (UK) Pat Smart (UK).

Participation of the Syracuse University students at the FEDFEST was made possible through the generous support of the Gifford Foundation and the College of Arts and Sciences, Syracuse University

What I did when I wasn't at FedFest

Rosie Garland writes about what she was doing at Lancaster in April, and the character she's created, Rosie Lugosi

I was really upset I couldn't be at FEDfest. Especially as it meant I wasn't going to meet the new members from the USA!

But months previously I had been asked to present a paper at the Women's Writing for Performance Conference at Lancaster University. My paper was entitled: 'The Girl You Never Loved But Always Looked For: - Performing the Monstrous-Feminine.'

What a mouthful! It was a great opportunity to talk about my performance character Rosie Lugosi, the Lesbian Vampire Queen.

Some of you know I perform as a singer, performance poet and compere; in alternative arts venues, cabaret and burlesque shows, poetry slams, queer events, women's events, and literature festivals.

Not everyone knows why I do this: the theory behind the practice. So, my presentation was in two parts: a quick romp through the 'why' of Rosie Lugosi, then the chance to perform a poem and song.

I started with the question I get asked most often: why use the image of the vampire? For a number

of reasons:

As a kid, I was afraid of the dark, and wanted something really effective to help me deal with it. Something that knew the geography of darkness and wasn't afraid. So, vampires. I was attracted to their unconventional sexuality. As a teen, it seemed radical to propose a form of sexual expression not focused entirely on male genitalia (it still does).

Outsider

The vampire is the quintessential outsider. They don't fit. Neither did, nor do I. This lack of respect for rules & borders has traditionally been viewed negatively. Female vampires in particular have been viewed as 'an expression of women's position as outsiders, women's social & cultural alienation'.

This misses an important point: that the female vampire can be seen as an outsider through choice: she has not been thrown out of society, she defies it. She's a woman in rebellion against expectations of sexual passivity.

The second question I get asked is 'are you a man or a woman?'

It's true! I get mistaken for a 'man' when I am dressed as Rosie Lugosi (no, really). Rosie Lugosi is the only female drag queen I know of: so extreme a representation of 'the feminine' that it is drag. I perform the 'feminine' and perform it all wrong.

This links with the next question; 'but you don't look like a real lesbian..'

There is still a tension, a hangover from 80s feminism, that flamboyance is politically suspect. That 'dressing up' is letting the side down. (I love the Rosa Luxembourg quote 'If I can't dance, it's not my revolution'.)

Subversive

I believe dressing up is subversive; plays with notions of what we can be and what we are told we can't be. Clothing is an instrument of power, and I am appropriating it. I link it to the Suffragettes who fought for the right to look and dress as they saw fit, some wearing red lipstick as an act of defiance.

This links with the next question: should you be wearing that at your age?

I've spotted that I am growing older, and I intend to do it disgracefully. I have every intention of continuing to perform. I do not see performance as something that a woman does in her 20s, fresh from college. Why should I stop?

Rosie Lugosi challenges how women are 'supposed' to dress at a particular age. There is still a horror of older sexually active women. Of 'mutton dressed as lamb', (you've only got to look at the press response to Wayne Rooney's use of older sex-workers). Rosie Lugosi is a radical response to that question. She will not start wearing beige.

Through Rosie Lugosi I am performing the tensions about how 'real' women are represented in society/media. Women are still expected to conform to a narrow range of acceptable presentations. These 'acceptables' are about invisibility - sensible shoes, beige, eyes down, humble. We are told this will make us safe. Anyone who has lived with Domestic Violence will tell you that no clothing nor behaviour can make you 'safe'.



Why Bother?

So why bother? If neither clothing nor behaviour can make us safe, why waste creative energy trying? Rosie Lugosi is my response to that question.

And finally: 'I do hope you are all sitting uncomfortably...'

Let's finish with Sadomasochism and laughter. When I am performing, I use comedy: to subvert notions of normative sexuality and gender-specific behaviours. To subvert notions of what constitutes appropriate female behaviour. I know the power of humour over preaching!

Rosie Lugosi undermines the slander against feminists that they have 'no sense of humour'. I'm proud to call myself a feminist!

Rosie Garland
www.rosielugosi.com

Community Publishing in Literature and Mental Health

Barry Tebb of new members Sixties Press sets the work they undertake in its context

The connection between mental illness and creativity is – from Van Gogh onwards – a cliché and the subject of many studies. The use of creativity as a form of therapy is a recent innovation. Art, music and drama therapy have long been timetabled in psychiatric hospitals and in the community but ‘writing therapy’ and ‘poetry therapy’ are only just beginning. Victoria Field, a former Director of Survivors Poetry, (now Director of Lapidus) is the UK’s first qualified ‘poetry therapist’ – although she had to go the States to obtain the qualification. One UK university is now offering a two-year MA in Poetry Therapy and no doubt these courses will, like ‘creative writing’ proliferate.

When we applied for contributions to *The Real Survivors Anthology* (‘Awards for All’ funded) enough material was submitted to fill ten books but my projects concern more than providing opportunities for creativity in prose and poetry. Our catalogue attempts to address various aspects of mental illness, ‘The Cinderella service of the NHS, including essential guides to survival where patients and their carers can voice their opinions and provide feedback on the rapidly changing face of NHS care provision in mental health (e.g. ward care v. care in the community and specific new issues with a high profile like Cognitive Behavioural Therapy and ‘crisis resolution teams.’)

I am in a position through personal experience as a carer stretching over three decades to edit and publish our EGPAC series - *Easy Guides for Patients and Carers*.

Mental health caring is as difficult and demanding as any other kind of caring – in some ways even more so. I have been involved in it since the eighties when we were called recognised relatives and it was in this way (when no immediate family member wanted the job) that I became carer for my ex-wife’s late father, diagnosed with paranoid schizophrenia at the age of sixty-two. I am now carer for my ex-wife, who suffers from severe depression with all too regular attempts at suicide and our 32-year-old son, who has been hospitalised under section for three years,

with schizophrenia. Purely by chance, I had spent 30 years reading psychoanalysis and this has always been of immense value, as psychiatry has in many ways evolved from Freud’s teachings.

Dealing with patients at the very difficult end of the spectrum is extremely stressful. When I began, I was in my forties and now I am 64. I have spent an incalculable number of hours visiting wards, attending ward rounds, CPA meetings and dealing with every aspect of ‘severe and enduring mental illness’, which means everything from filling in forms, writing letters, engaging with mental health professionals and quite often being involved in highly conflictual situations, as psychiatry does not have ‘the answer’ in the way, say, surgery has.

The quality of mental health is very patchy, excellent in some areas and appalling in others. Where my son is hospitalised (Leeds) care is excellent, whereas (Camden) where my ex-wife receives treatment is probably the worst in the country (highest suicide, addiction, mental illness, homicide and crime rate in the UK) and I have used my knowledge to campaign vigorously for improvement there.

Campaigning

Campaigning has brought me into contact with a large range of NHS managers, at every level from ward managers to Rosie Winterton, Minister for Adult Mental Health and a huge number in-between. I have then learned how the NHS works or fails to work. I have also been involved with local government, as social service departments and mental health NHS trusts are either ‘fused’ or work in tandem with them.

From the beginning of my work as a ‘primary carer’ (usually the next of kin but not always), I was aware how much responsibility and huge hard work carers did and received nothing in return for. It is estimated that nationally carers save the government the cost of a second NHS. My chosen field is the education of carers, for without knowledge carers simply have to accept whatever treatment – good or bad is doled out to their relatives. If you understand the illness

your patient suffers from, you can help for more effectively and you will be given some status by the Mental Health Team.

I get a vast amount of literature about mental health through the post i.e. invitations to meetings, to join groups, to subscribe to mental health organisations and once I noted that the Scarman Trust was offering grants to carers. It was a one-off, e.g. 'once in a life time' grant and I used it to publish *Kith and Kin – Experiences in Mental Health Caring*. I had already been a small press publisher for eight years and a writer of poetry and fiction since the sixties. My first effort wasn't very good but I've brought out several books and pamphlets since then and 'Beyond Stigma', is the latest.

A writers' co-operative, Sixties Press has moved more and more towards mental health and only occasionally produces poetry. Currently we have a raft of new titles but no money with which to publish them.

Fill that gap

Guides for patients and carers are either leaflet-thin or textbook thick and the only two carers guides available are expensive and carefully avoid difficult issues such as sectioning and complaints procedures. We aim in the series to fill that gap but although we have obtained one-off funding, we need a reasonable amount to bring out several books and thus establish ourselves and have our series known valued and above all used.

Every day I have to cope with a new problem and every day I learn something new which I have to pass on in these books, as well as drawing on the invaluable experience of others. I am happy to work for nothing except the huge satisfaction in terms of feedback that has come my way.

There is a problem of books on mental health but most are aimed at professionals (too difficult) or at the general public (watered down version of textbooks with little practical advice and no input from patients or carers.) There are some excellent websites, as well as some very bad ones but the number of homes where there is a pc is only 50% and the government thinks that this figure is unlikely to increase. With mental health patients, the 'take up' is much lower both for financial reasons and the often off-putting jargon of the accompanying technology.

In mental health caring and accompanying cannot be separated for people with passion. I spend several evenings each month attending meetings in Camden, 'the suicide capital of England' to voice our concerns about 'what is on offer' and the effect of 'the cuts' on

local services.

The government has spent much time and money urging local authorities and hospital trusts to involve patients and carers in planning services, but the response is poor to say the least. I am a carer for a Camden patient and for a Leeds patient. Leeds is probably the best mental health trust in the UK and Camden the worst. Because the relatives I am primary carer for are both very ill but with entirely different kinds of illness I have many years experience not only of how patients are looked after (well or not well) but how trusts work, how NHS organisations are structured and what services patients and carers would like to have access to and how they would like to input into service provision.

Ignorance

The public is frighteningly ignorant about mental illness – seeing patients as either horrifically dangerous e.g. Anthony Hardy the Camden Ripper or just 'weird.' Most violent crimes are not committed by the mentally ill but by drug addicts and alcoholics who have never been in any kind of treatment situation. The bulk of mental patients living on benefit is around one and a half million, of which only a small proportion are in hospital. Most of the rest are too ill to work but many have developed interests in writing and reading and our books aim to cater for them. Our next publication 'Shouting at the Sun' aims to collect short stories by service users, on their experiences of inpatient and outpatient care.

Wards are places of humour, passion, compassion and of course life itself. There are acute wards, long and short stay wards, 'wards in the community', intensive care wards, to say nothing of day centres, 'drop ins' and at the more serious and secure units and special hospitals and I have always drawn contributions by sending out posters to a large number of the above said sending back free copies of the books.

Our very first publication in this field was a fifty page pamphlet *Kith and Kin: Experiences of Mental Health Caring* which we expanded into a 168 page book and are now re-designing with 350 pages and a new title *Mental Health: A Carers Guide*. Although we have made many applications for funding the current zeitgeist tends to favour activities e.g. helplines and support groups and training facilities rather than publications. In spite of the internet people do still read and mental health professionals as well as patients and carers say our books are immensely useful and inspiring, this latter plaudit being especially welcome as we all had to be encouraged and the field of mental health can often be an area

of darkness and depression. Contrary to popular opinion, 'serious and enduring mental illness' may be managed with medication but is not cured by it. Psychiatrists say this constantly but the message tends to get lost. Dr. Tony Zigmond, Vice President of the Royal College of Psychiatrists recently told me that in real terms no significant new drugs for schizophrenia have been marketed in the last half century. Drug manufacturers and government ministers show the same dizzying optimism about patients being 'cured' and rehabilitated. The reality is often very different. Care in the community is cheap but often there is no infrastructure and patients are abandoned to neglect and isolation. Not everyone believes that the 'decarceration' of patients into the community is either safe or humane or even workable. Andrew Scull, Professor of Sociology at the University of San Diego and one of the foremost social theorists in the mental field for four decades describes the whole process of hospital closures, crisis teams and 'community care,' declaring that society is neglecting its most vulnerable citizens for purely financial reasons. (cf. Scull, A. *Decarceration: Community Treatment and the Deviant – A Radical View* Polity Press 2nd ed. 1984)

In *The Changing Face of Mental Health Care*, we intend to publish a wide spectrum of views from patients and carers of their experience of care-in-the-community. Patients' choice and 'carer input' are widely canvassed but little practised ideas. Twice attempts have been made to establish a 'Public and Patient Information Forum.' The first was considered a failure and the second costing £135m, has also been deemed unsuccessful and is facing closure.

The fourth volume in our proposed programme is to produce *The Collected Poems of Brenda Williams*. Brenda Williams suffers from severe depression and is categorised as 'severely disabled.' Twice she has nearly died through overdoses and the piece following this is her account of one such event *The Overdose* as a sample of the compelling reality, which is given in depth treatment in her poems.

'A bit of a mixed bag' the reader might well comment, but then so is life.

Barry Tebb, Founder/editor, Sixties Press

The Overdose 05 01 06

"During the afternoon and the evening of the overdose I was trapped between an overwhelming need to get to A & E and the terror of going there only to be turned away. I was unable to speak about how I felt, however many times I went over the details in my mind, the words would not come. If I was turned away I felt it would be fatal because it would give me

the excuse and the trigger that I needed. I spent the evening unable to talk to Barry or to anyone and my thoughts began to be no longer if but where, this was very important to me because of the absolute need to keep everything calm around me. There must be no drama. There was a foolish notion that it all had to be done quietly and with dignity because that is how I am. The cats were a major concern, not what would happen to them afterwards but that their last sight of me would be with an ambulance crew tramping into the flat and this had to be avoided at all costs. I had to leave the flat behind me in order to go through with what I had to do. I made sure that they had enough food to last for the next day and opened up six packets of paracetamol and put them in a bag.

I bought some water at Swiss Cottage and went to Keats' House, where I had often taken my children when they were young. It was also the place where I had begun a 600 sonnet sequence, written over the course of almost twenty years. I had lost both my children. I felt I had nothing left to say and that I would never write again. It was the evening of the anniversary of a large overdose the year before when I had taken 85 diclofenac, believing they would work. I was angry that nothing had moved with the managers and never would. I did try to go to A & E and got as far as the waiting room but left and walked up to Keats' House instead about six minutes away. I took twelve tablets outside Keats' House and then walked down to the phone box at South End Green and there I took another twelve, my chief concern was only that no one should see what I was doing.

There was no intervention possible at this stage, I was taken over by an absolute compulsion to punish myself for what I had failed to do and to destroy everything that I stood for. Anything that had been of value to me before was now completely forgotten. The only thing I could remember was walking with my mother as we'd always done but she was no longer there and I was alone. I walked back up to Keats' House to look at it for the last time and tried again to go into the Royal Free. I was aware that I'd been admitted from A & E exactly two months before and I thought there was no way they would believe me a second time.

I walked up to the benches where I had sat in protest for so many years and even they were gone. I continued up to the main road where I knew there were two phone boxes outside the garage and I took the last eleven tablets there because I felt that it was too late. I had drunk 750 ml of water and I had to find more in order to take the forty, the goal I had set myself. I walked back down Pond Street hoping that something would just takeover and get me to A & E. because at this stage I could not make the attempt.

I remember being gripped by an absolute need to see St. Pancras Gardens, which I could get to by the 46 bus from Pond Street, I thought that if I could see through the gates to where the protest bench was, that it would make me see that I needed to go to A & E, I also knew there was a hospital there. The only 46 I could see was going up Pond Street, away from that direction and I had to get more water. The feeling that everything was now irreversible gave me an insight into what my mother's last years had been like. The terror I went through was the worst experience of my whole life. I knew I had only a limited capacity to withstand this and yet I was aware at the same time that my mother had lived with the same terror for five years. The journey to the first stop seemed endless and the bus had almost reached the post office when I realized that I was no longer afraid of going into A & E. If I could face the end of my life I could face anything and that maybe there was a chance that they could save me. I was in full possession of my faculties throughout the whole process, my actions were both deliberate and thought through but if anyone had offered me a way out I would have taken it. I did not want to die but there seemed to be nothing left to live for and nothing left to fall back on.

All I was aware of was numbers, because the words had gone, that it was 9.40 pm when I started to take the tablets, that I'd only managed to take thirty five, that even this number was becoming a blur. I could no longer remember the sequence of when I took what and the rest of them had to be counted and where would I get the chance? It was 10.10 pm when I walked into A & E and the tablets were starting to affect me. I would no longer need to explain, the strain of speaking was taken from me. While they prepared the charcoal drink I had the remaining tablets with me, there was an urgent need to make sure I'd not made any mistakes and not taken more than I'd said, or less, I counted 61 tablets twice over and was aware that there were taps in the room but there was no desire to take any more.

Somehow the compulsion had exhausted itself, it had taken half an hour. I remember thinking there were only numbers left now not words. The kindness of the staff in A & E became an absolute barrier to the world outside that had driven me to this place. When it was pointed out to me by the duty psychiatrist in A & E how dangerous the dose was I went into some kind of shock, it was as though I was shivering in an icy wind without any clothes and this went on for half an hour, an aftermath to what I had done. When he said "Did you intend to kill yourself?" I answered as emphatically "No". I realized at that point that the

words had come back and I could speak again. It was a cry for help in every sense and one that was finally heard.

Keats House

after a failed suicide attempt for Jeremy Reed

When I was last at Wentworth Place, the end
Of my life had then already begun,
Ill met there yet lingering it happened
To be, with all that I was, left undone,
Trapped between two poets, lasting silence
Summoned me to a place I was not meant
To see, unlit and planetary, where once
My mother took her leave of me, intent
That I should follow as I'd always done
To the end as once and with her again
When there was nothing left to call my own
But Keats alone and unknown and now in vain.
Jeremy I wanted to say goodbye
Imaginary there as I passed by.

8th – 9th January 2006

Brenda Williams

Continued from page 3

in the way their literary descendants have in the Fed, but had to work through patronage. The necessity of being able to "stand on my own two legs" nearly a hundred years later, is something we experience in a different cultural context today. If anything, the Fed has not stood in the way of poets and writers wanting to strike at the elemental, but is about celebrating a diversity of stances and voices, but by working together in order to hear their "heartful songs."

*Patrick MacGill (1912) Songs of the Dead End.
In P. MacGill (1984) The Navvy Poet: the collected
poetry of Patrick MacGill, Dover, NH: Caliban
James C Welsh (1917) Songs of a miner. London:
Herbert Jenkins*

Nick Pollard, Editor

Richard Snell at The Observatory

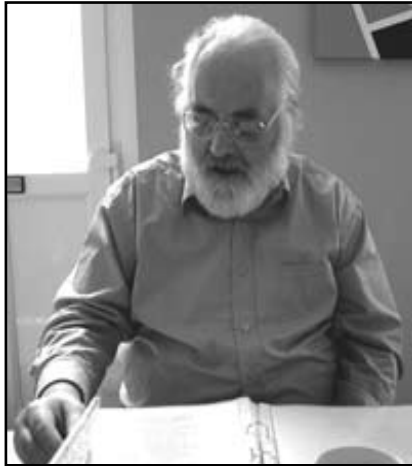
I was asked to write about the exhibition of my poetry at The Observatory Gallery in May 2006 in Stoke-on-Trent, and what it has meant to me.

My first response to seeing my poetry on display in an art-gallery of all places was a kind of shocked surprise. Thanks to Zoë Best (the Potteries Housing Arts Worker), who had organised the exhibition in the first place, and then helped me set it up, it looked good, it looked professional, but it also looked very strange: poetry, up there on the walls of an art-gallery, not a picture to be seen, nothing there but words, who would believe it? Yet there it was and that was the surprise. In the first place, the simple fact is that none of my work well, apart from the appearance in the *American Clubhouse Newsletter* of a couple of the very short ones, - has ever been published.

Many years ago in my incarnation as a performer of British traditional music, I had had a few songs appear in print, but I was never satisfied with them although one or two of them got sung around. None of my poetry, however, had ever found its way to the public domain, and I had always regretted that, to the point where I completely gave up writing it. Added to which, I had been a frequent visitor to all the major London art-galleries from my early childhood, and, as a highly insufficient artist myself, envied in a very profound manner those artists whose work was so effective that generations of people would travel to see it, talk about it, and remember their experience of it for ever.

So to see my work set up in exhibition form felt like the culmination of two long-standing ambitions, this made all the sweeter for knowing that I had done something very rare, indeed, unique in my experience. Which brings me round to the other reason that seeing the exhibition came as such a shock to me, and it relates to how I came to write most of these poems in the first place.

I am a life-long sufferer from depression, and that depression has very much ruled the way I look at myself and at the world around me. I am aware, of course, that those who don't suffer from depression can and do suffer some of its symptoms at crucial points in their life; but we poor depressives get it in the neck all the time. I am accustomed to the



same pointless grief, aimless anger, sudden confusions, intense apathy, overwhelming exhaustion, that many are. I am also accustomed, as many are, to the two types of loneliness: the misery of being friendless and without help, and the agony which too often accompanies it of feeling that no-one wishes to know you, that no-one listens to you though you beg to be heard, that no-one understands or cares for anything you have to say, that

everything you do will be wrong.

However, there is more than one way to respond to this horror. You can live with it, or you can refuse to live with it. If you refuse to live with it, you then have the choice of dying by your own hand, or working out ways of living constructively. I am one of the lucky ones who found the strength to try to rise above my illness, and who has recently rediscovered, with the encouragement of the poets and writers at the 'American Clubhouse', my desire to write, and a fresh appetite for using what little talent I may have for a worthwhile purpose.

As a result, I am told, I am able to express myself through my writing in a way that, at the very least, does not embarrass me, while at best, and despite all my natural pessimism, seems to affect people as it never had in the past: they are moved by it. So to sit in the Observatory Gallery and see my words, my thoughts, my ideas, up there on the walls because someone who was not me believed there was a quality to them that everyone should have a chance to appreciate, was a happy, but extremely disconcerting, experience. There are lessons here which I desperately need to learn: that I am stronger than I believe, that life is more hopeful than it feels, that I am capable of productive effort, that criticism is not a cause for shame, that pride is sometimes permissible, and that I have nothing to fear from sharing my thoughts with the world - it has a better idea of how frightened I am than I think.

Richard A. Snell, SWAP

See page 26 for a selection of Richard's poetry

Broadsheet18

How poems start (after Dorothy Porter)

Is this how poems start?
When a flower catches your skin,
no longer delicate, but fierce.
Is this how poems start?
When the moon appears new
and trees rasp the sky.
Is this how poems start?
When nothing appears as it was
but as it never could be,
when the sun rises at night
among stars.
Does a poem start
when a flower catches your skin?

Hannah Inglis

A Natural Phenomenon

The Power
A flower has to
Burst out from its bud

's transferable! And
With a rushing flood
Shoots us
To the stars!

Lynne Friedler

Broadsheet publishes writing by FWWCP members and supporters. The pieces included in this issue were chosen by the new editors Roy Birch and Lynne Clayton. Broadsheet 18 features four poems by Richard Snell on page 26.

We look forward to receiving your writing whatever form it takes. We usually publish shorter pieces; however, as our website develops we will be able to publish longer work on there.

We aim to publish something by most people who send work to us, but we will not publish a piece which goes against the 'spirit' of the FWWCP. In a future issue of the Magazine we will include an article about our ethos.

The deadline for submitting writing for consideration for Broadsheet 19 is October 21st 2006.

E-mail to:

fwwcp@tiscali.co.uk

Post to:

FWWCP, Burslem School of Art,
Queen Street, Stoke-on-Trent ST6
3EJ

Please include an address to send the printed version to and ensure you let us know if and where it has been previously published.

Manuscripts will not be returned, so please keep a copy for your records.

New York Subway

When you enter in the subway
You walk down
You pay your \$2 in the token booth
Enter at your own risk
At 116th Street
A wall of a thousand faces
In overcoats
And in masks
Of the day
Some stay human
In their living dreams on and on
The night never ends
So the hearts will remember
That we are not sardines
At time we close our eyes
To the ten million stories
In the half-burned apple
Some beg for just a penny
And some with their hard luck tales
To hijack your kindness
In the life of a subway car
Five cars, six cars, seven cars
The Lexington Avenue Line
The star of your life
With the flags of the underground
The moon dances to transform
The very language of space
From thirty minutes
A poetry in motion
Raising our voices above the ground
Into light so divine
With our wildflowers in our soul
We are free
Rhythmless movements
One by one
When we enter Bleecker Street Station
In honor of a poet
I will see my heaven
Somewhere in the future
On the Number 6

Carlos Raul Dufflar, The Bread is Rising

Third World

I'm talking about
being 17 years old,
sexually abused,
alone in a strange city,
with no family, no cash,
no benefits, and only a
handful of belongings;
cold on the streets,
addicted to heroin.
Yes, the church
lets me sleep on a mattress:
but I'm talking about February,
the coldest month.

What is a refugee?

Carol Batton

The drop forge stopped

The sleeper awoke. Time had only advanced him twenty eight years.
In the window his reflection still had hair, now balding, short
and grey. Lines. Dry skin. And he could remember how he got them.

By growing old, mostly. Not here, but now he was back, wherever,
walking old paths. Buildings had shifted and fallen between
streets of people plugged into their phones. Less smoke, less chrome.

The drop forge had stopped. Nothing is as you might expect.
At home he sat at his child sticky table talking to people
halfway round the world. Other places, other times.

Books were reassuringly still books, however. Music, strangely familiar.
And just when you might risk a dance, wasn't. But then
who would have anticipated the return of flared trousers,

and when you didn't expect them, children, model railways in the loft,
but everything made in China? And when things don't work, you can't just
fix them. They're junk. What happened to screws, wires, valves?

A bicycle becomes a riddle no spanner can touch. The streets are full
of cameras, the computers full of beggars. Olive trees in English gardens
It's a strange world to wake up to, and strange not to know

quite when this started. Or when it might stop. He found
his wife's warm hand. She didn't know either.
But had been there all the time.

Nick Pollard

A Curious Encounter

'Spare some coppers, mate. For a cup of tea, please.'

Peter Fletcher moved on quickly, trying not to catch the eye of the youth sitting on a box holding out a hand.

'C'mon mister, just twenty pence'll do.'

Fletcher glanced at the youth. He made the mistake of looking him in the eye.

'C'mon mister; I know you don't I?'

Fletcher hesitated; he ought to acknowledge the existence of the vagrant, but once that happened, he'd feel obliged to respond to his begging.

'I've seen you on telly 'aven't I mister. You're that councillor fella aren't yeh. Always asking people to 'elp their neighbour.'

Feeling trapped by the youth's staring eyes; he could hardly walk on by without some gesture of sympathy or a word of advice to him.

'Just twenty pence, for a cup of tea.'

Fletcher walked slowly back. The biting wind made him shiver. Passers by were looking at him curiously. Recognition showing in their eyes. What was this important public figure doing engaging in conversation with that street beggar? He imagined them saying.

He confronted the youth, searching for some words that might encourage him to stop demeaning himself, and break from an existence of begging. What's the point? He thought. I'm not a social worker; I'm an elected public figure. I left school when I was fifteen and started working and I've worked ever since. I'm wasting my time talking to this deadbeat. He turned to walk away.

'C'mon mister. I've seen you on the telly.'

He turned.

'Why don't you get a job?'

'I'm goin' for an interview. Me mate's getting' me in Macdonald's servin' burgers an' tha'.

'How old are you?'

'Seventeen.' The youth pulled the blanket tighter around his legs.

'Haven't you ever worked?'

'Yeh, I was a street sweeper. I 'ated it. Then I worked on the docks for a bit. Temporary

like, y'know from an agency. It wasn't bad, five quid an hour. I was makin' sixty quid for a twelve-hour day. Then the agency took their cut, then the tax man. The old fellers used to tell me about overtime rates. I never got that.'

Fletcher looked around; he felt vulnerable speaking to this vagrant on a busy street. He was getting late for an important meeting to appoint a new City of Culture director.

'C'mon, I know who you are now. Me owl fella used to vote for you. He was a shop steward on the docks till they finished him up. Bad 'ealth. He's dead now.'

Fletcher's thoughts drifted away from the youth.

What salary shall we pay the new director? I'm going no higher than £150,000 a year.

A stick poked him in the leg.

'Are y'listening mate? I only want a cup of tea.'

Fletcher's irritation with the situation grew.

'I had to work, now you bloody well go to work.'

A young couple slowed down, the young lady gave fifty pence to the youth and she glared at Fletcher.

'Fancy talking to the poor lad like that. And did you see who it was?' She said to her partner.

Fletcher felt mortified.

'All right, I'll take you for a cup of tea, there's a café just up the road, but then I've got to go.'

'I can't mate. Just give me the money. Me ma's coming for me in a bit. Till then I'm stuck here.'

He threw back the blanket and revealed his legs cut off at the knees.

'Lost them on the docks. They're prosecuting the employers. But I haven't 'ad a carrot since.'

Fletcher choked up and he handed the youth a ten-pound note.

'Sorry,' he mumbled.

He glanced back once as he walked away.

Tony Mulhearn

Paul Robeson

Strong brother, you have been our shining light
A reason, an eternal season to believe
That a suffering world will one day be no more
You are a man among the masses
Raising a voice of fire, of love, of power

From the strains of "Old Man River" to your cry of genocide
Generations now listen and will forever do
As what you have shown
By holding the standard
Of all people working and striving
You held it up high and you could see far away
Your voice called us to follow that road
Always knowing
Just you walked forward
We will never stop our marching
Carry on the struggle sung out of your hope and inspiration

Strong brother, you left much for us to take on
To believe
To be strength
To be victorious
We will keep your faith
For your revolutionary soul will forever fly in us all

Angel L. Martínez, The Bread is Rising

Fox

They asked the fox to confirm it is vermin...
It replied
"You eat chicken, too"

Carol Batton

Cruel Britannia

I woke, one sunny day in June,
To sparrow's song ('Tu - whit! - Tu - whoo!'),
And drowsily arose and drew
The curtains back. The fading moon,
Dissolving into sky, had swooned,
Replaced by old Sun's crimson hue,
Which baked the town to Gas Mark 2,
And sweaty swathes of light harpooned.
Up from the din rose mounds of fumes -
The A-road anthem, byroads' brew -
And turned once-blue skies to grey stew.
The sinning city's death, it looms...

Drew Braddeley

Rebuilding

Sometimes things don't, after all, go from bad to worse
Some winters the first of the ground frosts, is the last; green thrives
The lives of all the young birds, living, are heard; the crops don't fail
Sometimes man aims really high, and all goes well

He even remembers why he wanted the pot, left at the end of the rainbow
In the first place; and collecting his gold is as if the late summer were reversing
Autumn sold off, and unbridgeable, but with the magical qualities of Christmas still included
And the tan not having faded by the spring, and the bilberries still bursting in the mouth

Sometimes a whole gush of the ocean bursts forth onto the Earth
And it's not so far east of our window that we cannot see
How we could be of some help there, and sometimes our best efforts
Do not go amiss; sometimes we do as we meant to

Given chance, sometimes the warm sun will dry up the lands of sorrow
That seemed drowned: let this happen to you

Ellen Marsh, Yorkshire

A sense of guilt

When I was twelve years old we had a black mongrel dog called Monty, after General Montgomery for a joke. He eat anything that hit the kitchen floor he was starving like us. You never had it so good read the headlines in the newspapers in Runcorn we just never had it. The poor old dogs ribs stuck out like ours most of the time.

People felt sorry for Monty and used to feed him leftovers. Monty would fetch home lots of dishes for us to use we were grateful for what we had, we never said grace my dad didn't believe in religion. One day Monty took fits and began to foam at the mouth with a wild look in his eyes.

I think at first my dad thought the dog had caught rabies. To be safe my dad shut the dog in the cubby hole by the boiler we had little money for vets or food. The dog suffered and howled in real agony for over a week the whole street heard his cries. The noise of his slow death went threw us children like a bread knife, we had nightmares and couldn't eat what food we had and the family shame grew day by day.

The next morning my dad went in to the cubby hole carrying an old army overcoat quite suddenly the dog's howls stopped. A few seconds later my dad came out covered in sweat and shivering at the same time. I looked at his grey face and could see guilt and sorrow in his eyes all of us children just cried. I think my dad suffocated the dog with the old army overcoat to put it out of its misery and to hide our shame.

At first I couldn't believe my dad could be so cruel but what else could he do?

I did worry for a while later if one of us children took fits would the same happen to us!

I never looked at my dad in the same way after that day and a real fear of him grew inside of me I used to shake each time he shouted at us. Even with our eyes rarely meeting He knew I knew he murdered the dog, I never said anything to the younger children after all he was still our dad no matter what.

Chris Darlington, Runcorn

The Retired Bum-Bailiff

"Scout me for him at the corner of the orchard, like a bum-bailiff."
– Shakespeare, *Twelfth Night*

At eighty he is foot-dragging
down the turning cobbles
but wears a rip-along grin,
gas-bagging, tangent
with shingle weed.

He butts the doorglaze to a chink
to ruffle feelings
as he did terminally
as cutthroat to the sheriff,
an ogle of suing on his face;
ejectment and receipts
are his discipline.

The pleasures of the job were
accepted in lieu of payment:
the fondling of hollow bums,
a slow rogering,
the unerring hierarchy of figures.

Christopher Barnes, Newcastle-on-Tyne

Let Ezra Pound Speak

If you have nothing to say keep silent
let Ezra Pound speak
from the shadows the splendid old man
from the fine water line
the magnificent old man
shows you the genuine banknotes of his fortune
and all shine legitimate fish
of an infinite river which indeed
never stops.

If you have nothing to say keep silent
the high gentleman the variegated ladies
who lived and died and were born for this only cause
cannot allow by their side
the stuttering of a dwarf
the limping of a false purse
denouncing that the gold of their verbs
lacks that thin water line
that savage finesse the impeccable spot
not adorning the head of a written animal
- which goes through the paper only for an instant -
but comes out of the bottomless animal
of the live viscus where royal blood runs
- that one where red comes from -
and beats outside like a monster of light
like an image without other chapel than every thing
of every universe possible or impossible
which could indeed be adored
standing and without veils without altars or anything
- not even acolytes -
under the name of our lady of veils
crowned by manure and nerves
of eclipses and novas O you
tall and short sublime malicious
poetry reigning over the extended night
and the narrow day.

Luis Benitez, Argentina

Commercial Road

Agencies, Agencies
There's nothing like Agencies
Take your name, take your phone
Them Agencies

"And what's the minimum
you'll work for?"
"Not less than a fiver an hour"
his voice blurts out

Some firms do take older people
they're firmer, will ring in
if not turning in
will pop the question
about how to do it
rather than ruin it
not like the younger folk

Insurance Number, P60
though he's only 50
He takes their card
it being quiet at the moment
at Agencies

You ring us they say
or else we'll take you
off our books
You've got to appear keen
at Agencies

They can have his name,
his phone
but he's desperately hanging
on to his dignity
at Agencies
at Agencies

Tony Hilliar

first published in The Poetry of Swindon

Day melts

Day melts and you trust
magic blindly,
as children come out to play,
flowers dancing in fire light
to the hot sacred
rhythm of history,
the throb throb of drums.
An ashy perfume fills the air,
as smoke breathes
- inhales, exhales-
eternity's voice calls.
Trees, now barely bones,
circle from the outside,
secretly decaying.
On new days,
sad clouds float by,
and blue grass whispers.
Light shows reality for all it is,
piercing your fool's dreams.
Listen, wake, drink
the morning sky.
The tattered old sails remain
of time's wild past,
the memories of
the nights gone,
of people never freed,
broken prisoners,
trapped in memories,
watched by dirty ancestral eyes.

Hannah Inglis

Emigrated

A glass of my grandpa Constanton's blackberry wine could have
unfroze the onset of the Ukrainian winter,
I remember just a hint of his black stuff made the Christmas Eve songs,
performed aloud for us, three times as jolly,
The wedged-in corks would go pop in the scullery, setting our little grandma Olga
with eyes re-awakened stamping and laughing in fear,
While the bitter-sweet juices fermented and bottled here ran like
the excited revolutionary hordes towards us.

I think the festive season was the best of times for Constance and the rest of the time,
on those every two-weeks visits, I rarely if ever heard him speak,
He seemed even then to my just-toddling mind, almost sad, but not sad,
presumably just back strolling the lakes in the country of birth,
My learning early it wasn't worth breaking it with breathing – over-stepping
the line on all of this life that shall not neatly end,
But then full of pure sentiment in the feat of teaching me
the Ukrainian alphabet in just three weeks and two visits.

I recall he used to take my mum and his young sons to the arboretum;
grassy lands with animals to feed in which forever home,
I think of them alone like this – gran's smetana and chips
turning colder and more sour – as darkness comes,
My own fear keeping me stum, of asking to be took on the same sort of trip;
I want to see the squirrels too or watch the aeroplanes pass overhead,
But I dread, wholeheartedly, any sort of collision with this hardened,
turning like machine guns firing, pain.

Ten, fifteen years after his death I start to ask my mum what he was really like,
Her stock reply is that Con was "nice" and her face fills with such love
that I've never seen bubble up inside her before,
And it seems such the right thing to have said, about anybody dead,
that I put off asking again for any more of the detail of he,
But really am always left questioning, it gnawing away incessantly this wondering,
what my maternal grandpa has given me.

Beyond family-fated stomach ulcers and late-onset eye disorders
and being on the wrong side of British girl height average,
And a passion for lard – not even proper butter – on my bread,
leading surely to some sort of stroke or early death through heart attack,
And a compulsive obsession for factual books so that I can't even read the made-up,
feel-good, adventure tales about Captain Hook,
With one hand made of cold, solid metal and capable of making lasting scars
and re-awakened at any point pain, and the other better for reaching out
and touching, humane.

Ellen Marsh

Winter

Winter is the time for cold days
Ice & wind & snow
Sit by the fire and keep the draught out
If you have to go out
Keep your coat on

Children can't play out
Except to make a snowman
Button eyes carrot nose
And something for a mouth
Christmas presents. North & south

The animals go to sleep
Deep in their dens
Birds fly into the barn
To keep themselves warm
Not much food around
They have to hunt very hard.

Curl up with a book in front of the fire
Chestnuts roasting in the ash
Or watch old black and white films
All speaking of times gone by
When we were in our youth

*Lily Ann Cole
Southwark Mind Arts Collective*

The Cook's Tale

I'm Charlie Barnes,
I am the cook,
And now I feature in a book.*

You can't go to sea without me
You certainly will get
NO TEA!
We run a tight ship,
the skipper and me.
No nonsense from deckies
or mates two or three.
I'm Charlie Barnes
the cook.

The first thing you must know
when you go down below.
is I'M THE TOP DOG
in the galley,
and if I say 'NO'
then off you must go.
I won't stand for no shilly shally.

I pummel the dough
and heat up the pots
make tea by the bucket
and eaves-drop their plots.
Don't come down here snivelling
that you're feeling cold!
You'll know what real cold is
when you start to get old.

Don't get in my way
these saucepans are hot.
Stand back from the oven,
I won't tell you twice.
If you slip me some brandy
I can get you a slice.

If you fall foul of me
when I'm cutting up stew
this great blade could slip
and end up in you.
So just you watch out
when you come near my galley
keep your hands to yourself
and don't dilly dally.

**Fisher Folk Tales- published by Grimsby
Writers*

*Pauline Murdoch
Grimsby Writers*

*Four Poems by Richard Snell - see the article
on his exhibition at The Observatory on page 14*

Why I Write Poetry

my thoughts are

wolves
howling to a frosty sky

crows
fleeing from a sudden shout

waves
challenging a granite cliff

trees
savaged by a shrieking gale

how can i say this
if not like this?

Munch's Screams

*Edvard Munch did several versions of his painting 'The
Scream'. This poem is about all of them.*

we see them,
standing on that molten path,
their souls being shredded:
they cannot hear their own voices,
cannot assert their burning confusion,
cannot speak of it even to themselves:
if sounds are coming out of those hollow mouths,
they cannot compete with the agonised screaming
of that fire-scorched, blood soaked place;
and the hands clutching at ears
fail to withstand the torments of that world,
slashing at their disordered senses
stabbing at their panic-ridden thoughts
as they tear into the tortured land around them:
nor do their eyes stare out towards you and me:
they stare inwards,
at images of horror they cannot decipher,
cannot explain,
cannot ease,
cannot avoid or escape.
how do we answer this?
what should we do?
what?

Rhyl

A thick, plain, china cup,
Rapidly cooling -

A yellow-formica table
Cruetted and ketchup-bottled -

Two bored waitresses,
Chatting sort of behind the cakes and
serviettes -

Cars rushing blindly
Along the hissing road -

A steel-grey, granite-hard
Strip of sea -

A vast, colourless,
Featureless sky -

Drink the tea now,
Before it loses its charm.

Soldiers

Soldiers marched over a desert.
They marched without care,
For a desert is only a desert:

None of them seemed aware
That the desert was only a desert
Because soldiers had been there.

Is the Fed still socialist after thirty years?

FWWCP Chair Lynne Clayton looks at some issues at the heart of the organisation

Well, of course, socialism's a dirty word these days, or if not dirty, then at least "passé". And as for "Working Class" . . . still, I'd like to start with the main aim of the Fed as it begins our Constitution:

"The aims and objectives of The Federation of Worker Writers and Community Publishers (hereafter known as The FWWCP) shall be to further the cause of working class writing and community publishing by all means possible, and to make such working class writing and publishing accessible to all."

Presumably all the member groups have read this, as we've all signed up to it. Yet there are some of us who aren't comfortable with the term "working class" and who certainly wouldn't call themselves socialists. Since I joined the Fed I have spent many sessions (some of them sober!) swapping ideas in a fairly amiable way with other Fed members about what socialism / working class / worker writing is, or if they even exist any more. And not getting anywhere at all, really; there seem to be as many opinions as there are people. If we haven't arrived at any agreed definitions after 30 years, are we ever gonna? So I've got a tentative idea about another approach; via literature rather than politics, perhaps.

When the Fed began 30 years ago, I'd have called it an aggressively political group; it was certainly overtly politically motivated, in a very much more politically aware age, perhaps. There were only 8 member groups to start with, who have handed down our main purpose, as above. However, they also had other aims which are not in our Constitution, but which can be found in *The Republic of Letters*, that important book that explains why the Fed was set up.

Never-ending political definitions

It's these aims I'd like to have a look at now, as I think they might provide a way forward and out of the mire of never-ending political definitions we seem to have got stuck in. The original main aim is in the opening paragraph of the Introduction to *The Republic of Letters*, which calls the Fed:

" . . . a movement which aims to 'disestablish' literature, making writing a popular form of expression for all people rather than the preserve of a metropolitan or privileged elite."

I like this aim a lot; no mention of "Class", and it's all-inclusive, writing is for everyone. But it says much more than that. What is this "literature" that is the "preserve of . . . an elite"? And how has the Fed gone about disestablishing it? Of course, it is the literature of the Establishment, that we are taught to revere; you know, the famous names, Keats, Yeats, Plath, Walcott. These writers are set up as our heroes, special people following a highly skilled and essentially solitary occupation that only a few can excel at. It is very competitive and exclusive - ie. it aims to keep most of us out, and actually doesn't need that many writers; it does need lots and lots of readers, to buy the books, so it's also all about profits.

The Fed's idea of literature is very different from this elitist stance. First, we have now generated and published a sufficient body of writing (ie. our literature) that we have totally trashed the idea that only the chosen few can write effectively. And for Fed members, writing is a collaborative, not competitive practice, shared in workshops among peers, a group activity that is open, encouraging and supportive. So, in 30 years, we've certainly gone a long way towards accomplishing this aim.

"Worker Writer"

The term "Worker Writers" was chosen to be part of our name "to register the fact that the working class, the majority of the population, are still, in Tillie Olsen's words "marginal to the culture".(*The Republic of Letters* p2).

I take this to mean that those who work for a living ie. the working class, don't write for a living - we do our writing after work, mostly. Even if we don't or can't work, none of us gets paid to write; we're not in it for the money!

So why is it so important to do all this? What's so important about writing (and publishing) that we

want everyone to do it? Well, here's another aim I found in *The Republic of Letters*:

"We aim to create a living non-competitive popular history and literature. By the people, for the people." (p15)

This seems to me to be one of the foundation stones of the Fed. For the first time, perhaps, ordinary people got together to write about their own lives and experiences in their own words, and to publish those writings locally. The written word is not the same as talking; it is very powerful indeed in the Great Literary Tradition, and it is given great authority in our society. The histories of the people, neglected throughout history, finally take their rightful place; as soon as it's published it's on the agenda (which is why our archiving is so important, of course).

Liberating

OK, so writing down my own experiences might be empowering and liberating, as well as therapeutic. Writing as therapy is slightly sneered at, just as art as therapy doesn't produce "real" art - whatever, it is the first step along the road of self-realisation and our own place and space in our local community and society. In 1981 it was Fed policy "that women-only and black writers' workshops are automatically eligible for Federation membership as they represent specific sections of the community which have been particularly repressed culturally and linguistically."

This is another strength of the Fed, of course; we now have many member groups who are "socially excluded", and it is the Fed's aim to encourage and demonstrate our creativity, too.

I haven't met anyone in the Fed who would have a problem with any of these aims, and I'm thinking of our world-wide membership, too - that's how inclusive we are! The fact that they're also quite solidly, old-fashioned socialist aims, too, doesn't really matter. (Labels are over-used anyway; I've acquired a whole collection of 'em, but they haven't been all that useful.) So, it looks like the nature of the Fed hasn't actually changed much at all, really; it's just spread wider and wider.

I find it odd that all these aims aren't already in our Constitution, though I'm not suggesting that we swap "working class writing" for "disestablishing literature"! Nor am I fed up with discussing these political terms; in fact, I'd be more worried if no-one cared any more. But I'd also very much like to discuss and try to describe the nature of this "disestablished" writing. Perhaps we should concentrate on what we do rather than who we are.

I guess what I'm coming round to suggesting is that we try and write a "Fedifesto" of our collective beliefs - think outside the labels - it can be done!

Lynne Clayton

Copies of *The Republic of Letters* can be bought from the FWWCP, see www.thefwwcp.org.uk

Midwinter in Mauritius - news from LPT

Around the Mauritian winter solstice, when light starts to get the upper hand again, our association "Ledikasyon pu Travayer" (Workers' Education) held a one-week event on the theme "Artists For Freedom, Against Repression". Like the Fed, 2006 is our 30th anniversary, so this is cause for celebration.

On 20th June, there was the vernissage of the art exhibition with the finest of local painters and sculptors participating. Prisoners from one of the Mauritian jails also prepared work on the same theme, and a few of their works were part of the exhibition. A sculptor also had his pupils sculpting in the open air at the exhibition site.

The next evening, inside the exhibition hall, there was "Poets for Freedom, Against Repression" when twelve poets read or recited their work to their public.

On Friday, 23rd June, in the additional context of World Music Day, there was a concert "Musicians for Freedom, Against Repression" by performing pianist, Rajni Lallah and members of her group. Their music straddles classical, jazz, Indian music, rock and traditional Mauritian.

On the Saturday, LPT held a conference on "The Mother Tongue: For Freedom, Against Repression". On the same occasion we gave certificates of attendance and/or completion for our most recent adult literacy teachers' training course.

Book Reviews

London Time

Poetry from London's time banks. Edited by Karen Lyon, New Economics Foundation, ISBN 1899407979, £5, 36pp.

The time bank is a way that communities can support each other by literally giving time to meet the needs of other members of the community, and getting some voluntary help back for yourself. It's a great idea, and this little book is an eye opener on the possibilities that might start with running a writing group as a time bank project. You can find out more at www.neweconomics.org. This anthology celebrates time bank poetry projects that were set in London between 2003 and 2004 amid some very diverse communities – with the result that the poetry is pretty diverse too. The subject range, for example, is from car auctions to out of date sushi, both of which must be firsts. Here's a little gem:

My kitchen

I've got a teeny weeny kitchen,
Only measures ten by four,
There's a draining board, a
stainless sink,
A new 'Everest' back door,

The washing machine and cooker
Fit nicely in the space,
And when I want to drain the veg,
I turn without a pace.

It's ever so convenient,
And suits me to a 'T',
T'was built like that, in thoughtful
days,
In eighteen ninety three!

Mollie Hattam

This is a useful and inspirational book which depicts in words



and lots of photographs the sort of community enjoyment that can be got from running poetry and writing workshops. From the descriptions of the various activities – distributing free books, poetry exhibitions, festive poetry nights and Burns' suppers with haggis and *Irn Bru* (a Burns' style ode in praise of Irn Bru – there's a workshop activity to turn the Bard in his grave!), and the brief accounts of how groups confronted and dealt with issues raised by the subjects they wrote about, it is a shame that most of them were time limited... but some of them are still writing, publishing and, most of all, talking about their lives.

Nick Pollard

Hackney My Hackney

An anthology pub. by Centerprise, 44pages, ISBN 0-903738-77-5, see www.centerprisetrust.org.uk

When *Hackney My Hackney* arrived at the office I wanted to review it. I've known Hackney for more than 30 years, and I remember what an exciting place it seemed after the dullness of where I lived.



The cover features a bus passing the huge mural opposite the old Four Aces club, an emblematic image of the area. The journey from 'elegant' London on the number 38 is always one of increasing anticipation as you get closer to the London of markets, narrow streets, and close-packed housing.

I especially enjoyed the opening poem *My Ridley Market* by Adisa, which captures the chaotic mix of smells, colours, and people of Ridley Road, for example in the second verse:

Salt fish and mackerel
Fight the air supremacy
Children barricade their nose
Dad ducks into the record shop
A chance for mum to buy more
clothes

I loved these lines later on:

Bodies wrapped in cling film jeans
and

Mother tongues colour the canvas

Hackney My Hackney is partly aimed at schools, it's a mix of writing by well known authors, children and young people, and everyone can enjoy it. At the end there's a well thought out page of ideas and inspiration, to

Book Reviews

encourage you to write which is great for workshops with all abilities.

Centerprise is at the heart of this community, and the book gives a great 'impression' of the area. *Hackney My Hackney* follows in their long tradition; encouraging writing that is true and in the voice of the people who live there, written from the inside.

The writing reflects a love of the area, but with the overriding knowledge that this is a deprived, often violent, and depressing area. 15 year old Bercilisa Pontes' poem *Leaving Hackney* captures this very well. The second verse says it all:

I love Hackney.
I hate Hackney.
It's sweet and it's scary.
I believe in Hackney.
I trust the people.
It's the best place to live.
It's the worst place to die.
Someday I will leave and
I will fly.

Hackney has one of London's largest open spaces, Hackney Marshes, and this is captured in some of the writing and in Garry Laybourn's photographs. However, the photographs were for me the weakest part of the book; too many 'said' very little, the light squiggles of nightlife felt like fillers. It is a highly photogenic area and I would have preferred the same sort of mix that the writing had.

That said *Hackney My Hackney* is a book which I highly recommend for both the energy of the writing that reflects the energy of the community; and as a model for other community publishers and writing groups to work towards.

Tim Diggles,
FWWCP Co-ordinator

Dog Bark

Edited by Wendy French and Francis Viner, pub. by Rockingham Press, ISBN 1 873468 88 1, 72pp £5.95

Sebastian's Golden Ironing Board

Because she was young he ate a gold ironing board. When, without a doubt, she walked into that operation room, he was sky rocketing. He saw the sky in her eyes, and he actually smiled. The radio was beside him, so he asked her if she would dance with him, she said no. He asked her why. "Don't play games with me," she said. He danced alone by the oak tree all day. She reluctantly even chose to see his recovery. It rained and rained. Happily the golden ironing board slipped out of his mouth. Finally she met up with him again, and she ironed his clothes.

Antonino Sala

This collection of writing, comes from Bethlem and Maudsley Hospital School. Some of it is by the staff and poets who have worked with the young people there, and some is from the young people themselves. The pieces range from the intensely painful to striking and colourful work, telling it like it is and also telling it like it isn't:

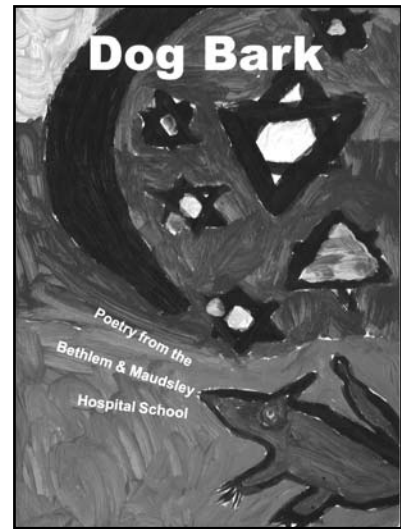
'Yo, I murdered Bethlem hospital one patient at a time,

You never heard of a mind as messed up as mine...'

He raps Timothy Bleakley in his tall tale *Crazy*, a poem which plays subtly on perceptions as it engages you with the dilemma:

'...they say I come from hell
But I got mental health...'

This is sometimes hard writing that doesn't shrink from the



tough issues around mental health problems in adolescence, and it will be a provocative and stimulating resource for use with other young people. Adolescents are rarely heard, sometimes they have to shout to get an audience – this material is often, like the example which begins this review, weirdly uplifting, but it also bravely contains the uncompromising and insistent voices that people often don't want to hear.

Nick Pollard

Publish and Be Published

by Eddie Willson, 50p
available online from www.eddiewillson.cjb.net.

This is a somewhat idiosyncratic, but very informative 24-page booklet on DIY publishing. It is essentially a description of the author's self-publication of his novel *Black Car Leaving (BCL)*, and how he costed it, had it printed and then (the hard part) distributed it.

Anyone interested in the idea of self-publication would benefit from reading this as it gives some very practical hints and tips, including the idea of blogging, as

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well as turning it into a spoken word CD, and putting it up with a zine distro (read the booklet if you don't know what this is.)

The idiosyncratic style is actually a perfect complement to the author's ideas, and practical, if unorthodox advice (like - if using the office photocopier make sure it doesn't jam and give you away!) I would recommend this to anyone considering publishing their own work.

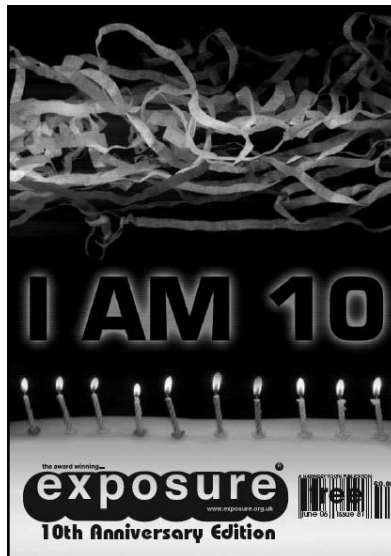
John Malcomson

Tenacious - Exposure tenth anniversary edition

Available free in pdf format from www.exposure.org.uk, or in print form from Exposure Ten years ago, a young person was told no. That isn't unusual and might have led to anti-social behaviour or disenchantment. Instead it led to an exciting and innovative community publication.

When one looks up tenacious in the thesaurus one gets many words that we use everyday to describe our young people, not all of them at first glance flattering. Words such as stubborn, bolshie, unyielding, and pushy appear again and again. I suppose you could add obnoxious, self-opinionated, loud and pigheaded into the equation. Over the ten years of Exposure there have certainly been articles that individuals have matched to all these descriptions and more.

In this anniversary issue you will find hard-hitting articles on subjects such as drugs and date rape, such deeply personal accounts that I defy any reader



not to be moved by what our young people have to say.

There are also witty, wry pieces such as, *Is This Ewe?* a stark warning about becoming one of the flock! From the supernatural to the superpowers, from how it was then to where are they now, the lay out, editing and printing are stunningly professional and Exposure deserves every award it has received. The message from the first editor and the snippets of information on the articles are fascinating and informative and as a collection it perfectly encapsulates the style, purpose and ethos of this groundbreaking magazine.

Tenacious has many definitions, but a recurring one is determined. A young person was told no, but was determined not to let this prevent him from doing something else. It is this resolute determination to allow young people to say what they think and get involved in the media that has carried this publication forward and will for decades to come.

Anne Patrick, Newham Writers

See FedMag Issue 31 for more about Exposure

Memoirs of Bygone Days

Ann Cole, pub. by Southwark Mind Arts Collective, and available from Cambridge House, 131 Camberwell St, London SE5 0HF

Ann Cole's story is that of a survivor, but this is not a tale of mental distress, it's the narrative of an ordinary life. Ann describes her Pimlico childhood, the death of her Mum while she was still at school, and growing up and getting her first job. She marries, has a baby daughter, and experiences post natal depression. She stops at the point where she feels it is too painful to write any more.

This might leave you, as the reader, with a puzzle. Should she go on and describe the difficulties she has had since and overcome – which she has done, or is it best that she ends the story where she prefers rather than where the prurient reader may want her to. The sudden stop makes you look back over what Ann has already told you. It is, in fact, the story of someone, someone down your road, who becomes depressed. It therefore doesn't need any drama to be quietly dramatic, and most of what it tells you is of someone developing, making their own way in life.

This is a short book, produced on a photocopier, but a valuable one, worth reading. It just sets out some memories – but in their straightforwardness Ann says as much as a far weightier tome.

Nick Pollard

Book Reviews

Weather Report

Anthology pub. by Heaventree Press in association with Sampad, ISBN 0-9548811-3-3, £3.99

A collection of the winning entries of a competition for young Asian writers from Asia and the UK.

Sampad, a South Asian arts organisation based in Birmingham, designed this project to bring together young Asian writers, tempting their creativity most successfully with the clever theme of the Weather. The result is a celebration of young people's writing that is a great mix of prose and poetry full of the exuberance of youth. Though some of it is, perhaps inevitably, a bit conventional and "worthy", there is also some tough writing that makes it well worth reading. *Storm*, by Taaeba Khan, describes a real storm that also serves as a wonderfully powerful metaphor for one all-too common problem of conflicting cultures within the same family:

Lightning struck at quarter-to-nine
As she put her neck on the line
I need room to breathe
She began to plead
And it flashed again
So bright
There was going to be a storm tonight.

Room to breathe, what for?
We give you freedom and you want more
This isn't what you were brought up for
He yelled as the rain began to pour
Her parents were prepared for a fight
There was going to be a storm tonight

I'm not like you, she pointed out

We agree, they began to shout
You're more fortunate, more lucky
You have so much opportunity
They were going to prove themselves right
There was going to be a storm tonight

I know I'm blessed
And I'm grateful
But come down to my level
I want to find my own fortune
She explained
Inviting a monsoon
She tried hard to disguise her fright
There was going to be a storm tonight

We only want what's best for you
One day you'll understand
And as outside rose a deluge
She announced: I've found myself a man
His name is Simon
He's white
There was going to be a storm tonight

Water levels began to rise
Drowning out her resonant cries
You aren't to see him anymore
We're catching the first plane to Lahore
Our worlds don't mix
They collide
There was going to be a storm tonight

The tempest arrived and left again
Sweeping her away before daybreak
Her parents tossing and turning
Unaware but awake
The past, present and future
Failed to unite
There was a brutal storm last night.

The young winners have each written a brief introduction to themselves and their writing, that is a real plus for reading the book. These are thoughtful youngsters, who are able to reflect on what they are doing, for example,



Saeed M Hussain, who explains: "Being of dual heritage it's always been difficult to "fit in" until I realised, why not celebrate this fact and explore my own culture through my writing!"

PS. I totally loved the illustrations by Matthew Krishanu, too!

Lynne Clayton

Signatures 2004

Anthology pub. by Rochester (NY) Institute of Technology, go to www.rit.edu/signatures

This is an interesting collection of Poetry, Prose and Images gathered under five sections entitled Unbarred, Unearth, Unheard, Unroot and Unstable. Usefully it includes a CD, as a short story is read in full on the CD but only the beginning is printed, presumably for reasons of space and cost. It is a well-produced volume in full colour and has a clever jacket design.

Jonathan Sondergeld's *Eyes* is an intriguing poem of a meeting, while *Mascara* by Alexis G. McVicar pulls an amazing number of images into a short poem. The pictures are mainly, though not exclusively, photographic, and have been

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carefully placed to meld with the text. Rachel McLaughlin's untitled photograph has two travellers seated on a bench, one of whom, suitcase beside her, is a pure white angel complete with wings and halo; on the facing page a photomontage by Nicole Killian has a girl in red minidress and knee-high red boots, rifle nonchalantly in hand. It is given the title *Damn*. This juxtaposition complements the poem *Obvious Pinks* by Alistair Davies.

John Malcomson

Shawnie

by Ed Trewavas, pub. by Tindal Street Press, 256 pp, ISBN 0 9547913 8 X, £7.99, www.tindalstreet.co.uk

There are issues raised by this book far greater than can be covered in this review.

Shawnie is the first novel by Ed Trewavas, it deals with abuse and violence in a family on the all white estate of Knowle West in Bristol. The story is told from the viewpoint and in the voices of the four main characters, with each chapter headed by the name of the person telling it. There are

often the same events and people (including themselves) seen by each character in different ways. It is written in first person, and in Bristol dialect.

The title character Shawnie is 13, she goes to a special school, and is desperate for someone to love and care for her. She finds consolation in fast food and cigarettes; she finds care and 'love' through giving oral sex to her brother, then eventually her mother's boyfriend, his workmates and her brother's friends. Her mother, Lisa, hardly ever leaves the settee drinking everyday until she is paralytic; Steve, her mother's boyfriend, organises 'parties' on Fridays, where his workmates pay him to have sex with her. Jason is Shawnie's brother and has become psychotically violent, so much so that his friends start to dump him after one particularly nasty attack.

So, as you'll see this is not a pleasant world! But even in such misery *Shawnie* has (in context) amusing moments alongside the grim realities of the situation. Their world has totally disintegrated, and the great tragedy is that this story is just a reflection of real life. This is the forgotten society who no-one wants to know, with generations of people living on benefits and very little opportunity to get out of their plight. Ed Trewavas knows these people well, the 'voices' are real, his use of language feels like the character is sitting opposite you telling you their story, and the situations genuine.

For many readers *Shawnie* will be a very disturbing book, and I would advise anyone who has suffered from sexual or violent abuse not to read it, as the graphic nature of the writing may



trigger bad memories. However it is important for the wider community to face up to the issues involved and see the world through the eyes of the characters involved. Not enough writers are dealing with this breakdown in family and community lives, the people featured in *Shawnie* usually go unheard.

Shawnie raises some issues which I feel need further discussion elsewhere, and I will just outline two of them here. I am not an expert, but the descriptions of the sex that Shawnie is involved in would, in a graphic medium (i.e. film, photography, etc.), be seen as child pornography. So should it be any different just because it is in a written form and the characters are 'fictional'? I am absolutely sure Ed Trewavas did not write with that in mind or Tindal Street Press publish it with that intention. I realise that the characters are telling the story from their own points of view, and with that their limited vocabulary makes the sex and violence very (porno)graphically described, but surely isn't there another way to write this?

My other point is that Ed Trewavas was/is a social worker

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and in an article in Guardian Society he says that *Shawnie* arose out of the cases he dealt with, basically to get them out of his system. That is good 'therapy' for the writer, but, is it ethical?

As I said these are huge issues and it would be interesting to hear from others about this.

Perhaps I am overreacting.

I appreciate the importance of the subject matter, admire the structure and use of language, but the issues above worry me. If I had been Tindal Street Press I don't think I would have published it.

Shawnie raises more questions than it answers.

Tim Diggles

Page as a Stage

A collection from the Lambeth Mind Survivor's Poetry Workshops email: info@simind.freemove.co.uk, 34pp, £2 (edition of 250)

Naturally, given the title of this collection of poems, they are crying out to be performed or in some cases, sung, rather than read in silence, and probably the best way to read them is to read them aloud a few times to see where they are going. Rainer Sanger's *Waiting for Julia* is particularly so, unless you want to be taken in with what sounds like a stalker's lament at face value, and the tight rhythm of Razz's *S.O.S.* also demand that you have a go at declaiming it and feeling the tension it is sprung with.

Albert Hall delivers a couple of googly shots at the NHS: "maybe the shrinks are right/about anal retention/ it's not yet a movement/ but it's gaining momentum" (*Unclear Medicine*); and on being

born in the 1960's welfare state (*Look back without Anger*). In the latter of these he makes a good case for the very things about that times that everyone has forgotten, not having to do national service, student grants, school milk: "I give thanks for being born in a sensible place on an optimum date".

Finally Jean Cozens *Seven Gates* is a very strong work that blazes out of the pages with all the grim and repetitive experience and disempowerment of the treatment process, described as a descent into the inferno. This is a fine, powerful and very much value for money anthology – as the edition is limited, you'd best hurry to get your copy.

Nick Pollard

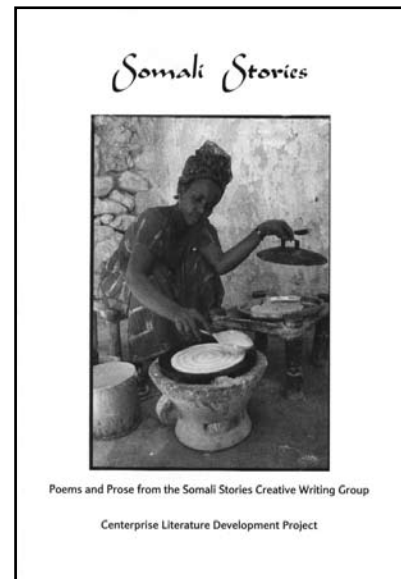
Somali Stories

Poems and prose from the Somali Stories Creative Writing Group, pub. by Centerprise 25pp, see www.centerprisetrust.org.uk

This booklet is the result of a ten week creative writing project run by Centerprise, working with the Ocean Somali Community Organisation in east London. Once again Centerprise has produced a book that's vital to our London community, both north and south. Vital, because it breaks barriers, telling us about the experiences of a small group of Somali immigrants. Through their stories and poems they provide us with vivid descriptions of lives cruelly disrupted by war, of the confusion and misery caused by being moved forcibly and dumped willy-nilly into an alien environment:

"I had never seen such snow before

Unable to understand this foreign tongue



Confused and shattered outside my land

How will I survive?"

Vital, too, because Somalia has a rich tradition of poetry, music and song, and this collection gives us a good example of this. Despite all the hardships, there is joy and happiness, too:

"You chat to the neighbours

You are healthy

You don't ignore your family

All are well"

London is the richer for their coming: Mahadsanid! (Somali for thank you).

Lynne Clayton

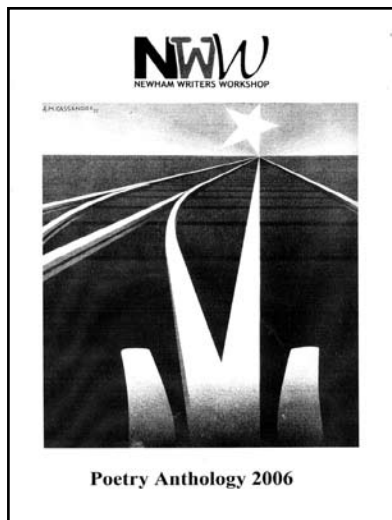
Newham Writers

Workshop 2006

Contact www.newhamwriters.newham.org.uk for copies

Newham Writers annual anthology gives its authors the luxury of a full A4 page on which their work is set in 14pt type. This approach is worth considering because while it means that you can't get quite as much material into the same

Book Reviews



quantity of paper, the poems really do get a better chance of grabbing your attention.

Belgin Durmush's work, four poems all dealing with losing a loved one through debilitating illness, is very powerful with a tightly written style that really complements the content. *Weeping and Even the Flowers*, probably the strongest of these, are especially so, taut in their straightforward, almost unembellished expression, clear and neatly crafted.

Two pieces really benefit from the full A4 page approach and allows writers to experiment with the type and layout. It is difficult to imagine J G Dighton's *Mission Statement*, a clever balance of nonsense and political message in a wall to wall barrage of capital letters in a smaller format. The uneasily appealing boozy frenzy of Matthew Savings *Mb (Mother Brown)* is another striking piece from this collection, where the kneesup fades to a smaller font.

Newham Writers are a strong group exhibiting a good range of flavours in this enjoyable sample. With humour, passion and experiment, this is another great workshop outing.

Nick Pollard

T-Shirts and Suits - A Guide to the Business of Creativity

by Dave Parrish, pub. by Merseyside ACME, 112pp, £9.95, isbn 0-9538254-2-6, see www.t-shirtsandsuits.com

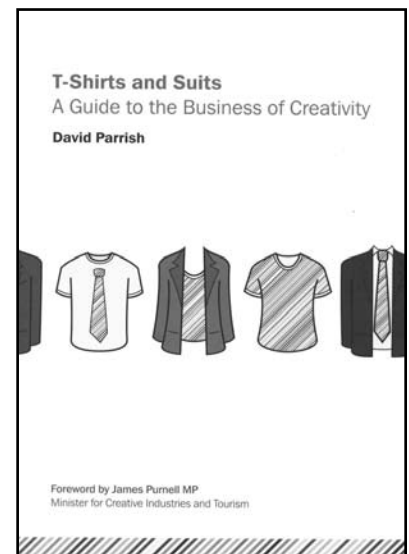
Many people in the Fed will have been to workshops and training run by Dave Parrish that we have organised, so will welcome this book.

T-Shirts and Suits is like having a series of Dave's workshops set out in an easily accessible format. It is about the business of running arts and creative organisations.

It's not too long, and I read this on the return train journey to London. This is important as it is not forbidding. A few years ago I remember attending an almost impenetrable talk about continuing professional development, I (and most there) could not understand what the speaker was on about, the fairly basic concepts were so shrouded in buckets full of jargon and business speak it was impossible. If only Dave had given that talk! This book is totally the opposite, *T-Shirts and Suits* is about inclusion, not exclusion.

Dave explains what are often complex ideas in accessible language, using jargon only where necessary, and where he does, explaining what it means. The page of key points at the end of each chapter is really useful, this is written by someone who knows what information is absolutely necessary!

T-Shirts and Suits is aimed at exactly the sort of organisation which is a member of the FWWCP. Dave looks at how to



get the best from your 'product', and issues such as how employing people changes an organisation. What I really liked were the real-life examples, giving a practical realistic approach to what can often be just theory. The examples are arts and creative organisations across the board, and are equally relevant to writers groups and publishers.

The style of writing is authoritative, and for anyone who has done even the most basic training in organisational or marketing management then *T-Shirts and Suits* is an ideal reminder of what you should have learnt. For total novices *T-Shirts and Suits* makes a good starting point, and if you are going on some training for the first time, then it's worth reading as a 'primer'.

I recommend *T-Shirts and Suits* for all groups to have in their collection, especially if they want to sell books, organise performances, or raise money. It tells you what you need to know in plain English, explains the jargon you will need to know, and introduces often difficult concepts in a straightforward manner.

Tim Diggles

B o o k R e v i e w s

A Tale of 3 Cities

New Writing from Derby, Leicester and Nottingham 100pp For copies naomiw@charnwood-arts.org.uk

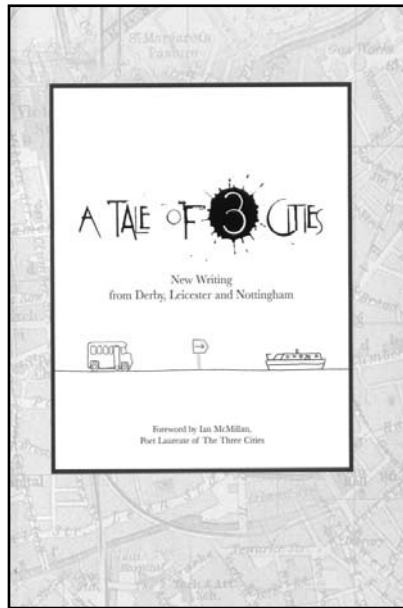
This anthology is the concrete result of an ambitious arts project involving the 3 major cities of the East Midlands. Headed by Ian McMillan, "poet laureate" of The Three Cities of Derby, Nottingham and Leicester, he worked with a team of 7 regional poets who all helped to get ordinary people writing creatively and sharing their creativity in a variety of events.

This beautiful book reminded me irresistibly of *Voices*, the old (70s?) Penguin collections of poems by kids and famous poets that was also lavishly illustrated and produced. Immaculately and imaginatively designed and finished, it is a pleasure to hold and peruse; it's almost edible! Dip into any page and be enchanted; it's a real treasure trove. One of my favourites was *Weaving at the Mill* by Les Bayton:

Nine writers sprawl scribbling
In Derby Silk Museum.
This was once the first
The very first factory
In England, maybe the world.
They are weaving words now
Instead of silk and wondering perhaps,
How this place changed the world.

One of my favourite anthologies for a long while, my advice is to get hold of a copy for your group!

Lynne Clayton



Cheminots et Chemins De Fer En Nord-Pas-De-Calais

identities regionales et
professionnelles 1830-2030,
pub. by Editions La Vie du
Rail, 11 Rue de Milan, 75440
Paris, Cedex 09, 240pp

When you are suffering a jolting ride on some ancient collection of old bus parts bolted onto a couple of bogies in a forgotten British branch line, this is the book to read. A positive two hundred year assertion of railway longevity, not only does it reach into the history of French railways, but it finishes in a blazing comic strip vision of the future.

This book provides a detailed account of the development of the regions' railways and their infrastructure across a region rich in both agriculture and industry. Railways were vital to the economy of the region, and the large numbers of people employed in them necessitated the building of garden cities to house railway workers and their families. There is a history of the importance of the



railway workers in the resistance under the Nazi occupation, stories of the many acts of sabotage, the effects of bombing and the post war reconstruction. In comparison with many of the railwayana books available in Britain, this volume has the distinctive feature of offering both a social history of the workers (men and women) and a political analysis of railway economics and development, including the union perspective on maintaining the SNCF in public ownership – but like other French public services, the magnificent SNCF is also under threat. Perhaps even more uniquely, it offers an interesting account of union struggle in the region.

All this is well illustrated with many fine photographs and graphs. One particularly good picture shows a woman hauling an iron gate across a level crossing. For me, just about able to remember steam railways and the cumbersome early diesel and electric trains, the promise of Francois Schuiten's ergonomically designed driver's cab of the future speeding over viaducts with apartments built into the pontoons, for all that it looks thrilling, lacks the romance

B o o k R e v i e w s

of grime, strange protuberances, snaking pipework, and oil. It's the Chapelon Pacifics and the BB 12000's that still hold my attention, but fundamentally this is a worker's history of the railways. In many of the photographs, dwarfed by and conscious of the size of the machinery they have been operating, the eyes of women mechanics, sooty firemen and greased up engine drivers confidently meet the camera lens.

Nick Pollard

En el spiritu de la verdad/In the spirit of the truth

The Bread is Rising Poetry Collective, CD, 20 mins. Contact the FWWCP for copies.

Despite the sometimes intrusive hum, this is a forceful blast of poetry which is truly inspirational. Delivered with a passionate and political commitment, sometimes in song, each of the 12 tracks demands attention. The polished performance of Carlos Raul Dufflar evokes a 1960's atmosphere of political protest and social unrest mixed with soul and salsa in *1830 Lexington Avenue*. In *Song for Vieques* Angel L Martinez tells the story of the American occupation of Puerto Rico (a prize from the Spanish American War), punctuated with the explosive BOOMs of military exercises. David Gordon's *A Gathering of Leaches or NAFTA the Ball is Over* exploits every possible e-n-d rhyme in its satirical denouncement of dominant economics.

Part of the strength of the



writing performed here is the sense of intergenerational heritage and spirituality, evoked in Dorothy Johnson-Laird's *In Exile* and *Warrior Woman Comes out Fighting*, but also shining through many of the other pieces, Carlos Raul Dufflar's voodoo incantation *Madre de la Flor*, and the chants of Sr Amn Ra Schmm Khnuu most especially. I've given this CD a lot of play, and the strength and sheer attitude of these performances have riveted those people I've sprung it on. I'm looking forward to the next.

Nick Pollard

Leaving Home

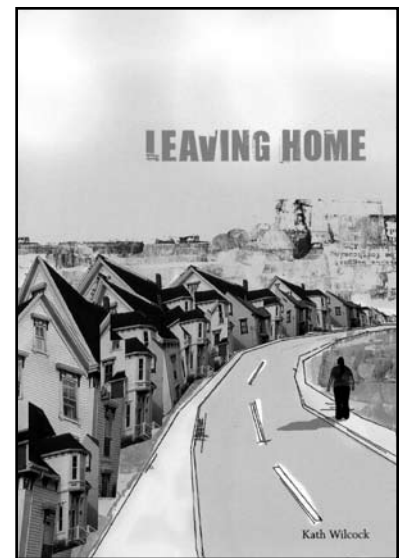
by Kath Wilcock, pub. by New Leaf Publishing, £3.95, see www.newleafpublishing.org.uk

If I could write as concisely and with such calm simplicity as Kath Wilcock, this review of her book *Leaving Home* would be over already. But this slim volume deserves more words of appreciation. Each page is a beautiful combination of text and illustration, working in unison to create a glimpse of one person's determination to overcome her fears of beginning life anew.

"For a minute her strength drained from her will as well as her limbs."

Yet as she glanced at the sky...

"surely blue could mean hope for



happiness in the future."

Small but powerful and empowering, this book is a credit to all involved with its production. Well done New Leaf.

Lucia Birch

Stvenage Survivor Poets

When the Thunder Woke Me

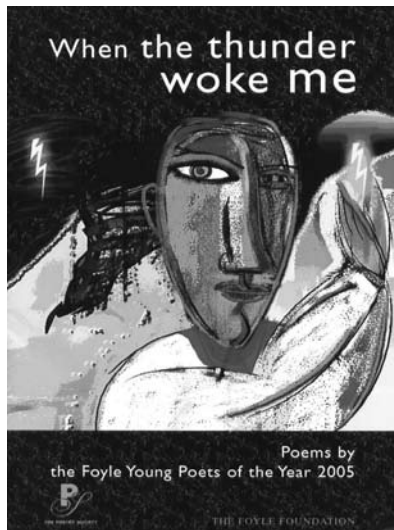
Poems by the Foyle Young Poets of the Year 2005 32pp pub. by The Poetry Society

This prestigious little collection demonstrates the wealth of talent our youngsters have for creative writing. In this philistine age of the National Curriculum a nationwide annual competition like this one is needed to encourage young people to write creatively and to explore their own talents.

Although this is a small anthology, there is a quite a nice range of topics; the heavy themes of death and old age are tackled, but there are lighter moments, too, as in *Country Lass* by Emma Lawrence:

Frowning at the crease in your lavish sheets,

Book Reviews



You are revolted by my stories of
Lovers in the barn, straw in my
knickers.

I'm a dirty country lass in a fouler
city.

Some of the poetry is very
accomplished and mature,
showing great promise for the
future.

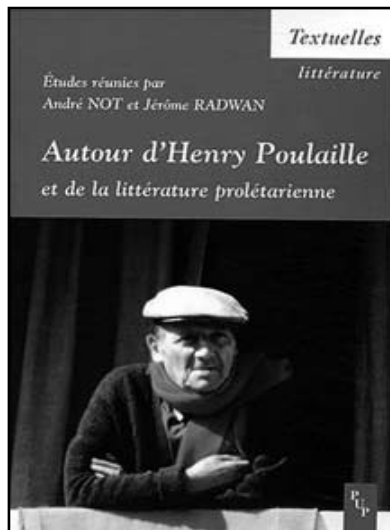
Lynne Clayton

Autour d'Henry Poulaille et de la littérature proletarienne

by André Not, Jérôme
Radwan, pub. by
Publications de l'Université
de Provence, 235 pages
ISBN: 2853995410, €23

The blurb explains how Henry
Poulaille (1896-1980) and some
of his friends came together
to introduce the elite to the
real life of the working class
people through the medium of
literature.

Indeed, the book consists of a
selection of essays regarding the
work and theories of H. Poulaille
who was a well respected French
writer and critic. Having got



together with like-minded
people in 1932 he formed the
Group des Ecrivains Proletariens
— bringing the voice of the
people to the people in many
forms of writing.

This book is not so much a
historical review of H. Poulaille
and his career, but focuses more
on the influences his writing has
had on new writers. The book
divulges a neat, clear critique of
H. Poulaille and his influences.
The language is not complicated
but it is of course academic
writing and therefore its weakness
lies with the fact that it can only
possibly be used for students of
literature, which is a great pity,
as the motivation of H. Poulaille
was to bring literature in its many
forms to the lesser elites.

Elisia Mole, AB Writers

FED NEWS

“Living Together — Together Fighting”

In 2005 at a meeting of FWWCP
Associate Members Werkkreis
in Schweinfurt, Germany, it was
agreed that Werkkreis, TEC/
CRIAC (Roubaix), and the
FWWCP will work together
on a tri-lingual book, which
has funding from the EC, and a
working title of *Living together
— together Fighting*.

We are looking for writing by
young people (16-30) along the
following themes:

- Europe's Future
- Fascism/racism
- Immigration - not just
inward from Africa and
Asia, but between European
nations
- Migration – from Europe to
other continents
- Mobility – looking for work
within your own country
- Unemployment

Writing can be in any form -
poetry, fiction, journalism, life
experience, non-fiction – no
more than around 2,000 words,
probably the shorter the better!

We are also looking for graphics
and photographs. We aim to
publish the book in 2008, with
readings the countries involved.

To discuss this, contact 01782
822327 or e-mail fwwcp@tiscali.co.uk.

2006 AGM

The 2006 FWWCP AGM at The University of Leicester elected the following Executive Committee:

Chair: Lynne Clayton (Southwark MIND)

Vice Chair: Anne Lambie (Lockerbie Writers)

Treasurer: Ashley Jordan (Shorelink Writers, Hastings)

Secretary: Eric Davidson (Lockerbie Writers)

Members:

Lucia Birch (Stevenage Survivors)

Jan Holliday (Pecket Well College)

Steve Oakley (AB Writers, Stoke-on-Trent)

Anne Patrick (Newham Writers)

Pat Smart (Stevenage Survivors)

George Tahta (Basement Writers, London).

The AGM also ratified Membership for the following groups:

Meshaw Writers (Devon)

New Leaf Publishing (Warrington)

AB Writers (Stoke-on-Trent)

Wakefield Community Writers, Sixties Press (Surrey)

SWAP (Stoke-on-Trent)

Syracuse Cultural Workers (USA)

An updated and revised Constitution was accepted and is available in pdf format on the FWWCP website www.thefwwcp.org.uk.

New Editors

After nearly 15 years as Editor, Nick Pollard is handing over to Roy Birch of Stevenage Survivors Poetry and the new FWWCP Chair, Lynne Clayton of Southwark MIND. This issue and the next one will be jointly edited between Nick, Roy and Lynne. The FWWCP wish to thank Nick for all the time and hard work he has voluntarily given, and look forward to Roy and Lynne's contribution.

Reviewers Wanted

We are looking for people to write Reviews, on books, CD's, DVD's, websites, performances, training, all the activities that groups undertake. We are also wanting ones on classic working class texts.

If you are interested please contact us at fwwcp@tiscali.co.uk or phone 01782 822327.

Words from the Chair

Can't quite believe that I'm actually chair of the Fed! What an honour!

First, a big thank-you to Tim Diggles, our Co-ordinator, who not only keeps the whole organisation afloat, but is also a great ambassador, who has put the Fed on the international map. He also, helped ably by Ann Lambie, our Vice Chair, does a fantastic job of organising the Fedfest. Thanks, too, to Dave Chambers, our outgoing Chair; he deserves a good rest!

Some of you may have noticed by now that the Fed is 30 years old this year. The Exec. felt that this nice round number would be a good excuse to have a Big Review of where we are now and where we want to go . . . We are planning some special events around the country, so watch this space!

The Exec. will be busy this year, as usual. This year's priorities are:

- Developing an effective Race Equality Action Plan to add to our Equal Opportunities Policy. We have always, of course, had treating each other with respect and dignity as our central ethos; our challenge is now how to actively promote this ideal;
- fundraising issues for member groups;
- 30th Anniversary events;
- Fedfest 2007;
- The archiving! The fact that this is actually happening at long last gives us hope for future plans!

The Exec. has the responsibility of carrying out the wishes of the member groups, and we meet 4 – 5 times a year.

If you have any concerns about the Fed, please let us know.

Lynne Clayton

SAVE £20 BY BOOKING EARLY FOR FEDFEST07!

FEDfest07 takes place between April 27th to 29th 2007 at Stamford Hall, The University of Leicester

The Fed is already planning FEDfest07, with workshops, readings, discussions, book stalls, networking. We return for a second year to Stamford Hall, a lovely venue, with good road and rail communications.



Remember we welcome all to attend, not just Fed members!

The weekend will cost £145 for Members and £175 for non-Members, which includes all workshops, meals, and accommodation.

Members, if you get your booking in before March 1st 2007 you pay £125, a saving of £20!

For a booking form ring 01782 822327, or book right away on line using PayPal, at the Fed's website www.thefwwcp.org.uk

If you want to pay in easy stages ring 01782 822327 or e-mail fwwcp@tiscali.co.uk, to arrange it.

We look forward to meeting you there, it really is a great weekend!

Federation Magazine

Federation Magazine is published by The Federation of Worker Writers and Community Publishers.

The contents and opinions in this magazine do not necessarily reflect the views or policies of the FWWCP or its funders.

Next Issue

The deadline for submissions of articles and reviews for consideration for issue 33 is October 21st 2006.

Post to:

FWWCP, Burslem School of Art, Queen Street, Stoke-on-Trent ST6 3EJ

E-mail: fwwcp@tiscali.co.uk

All writing and imagery submitted by an author or organisation is on the understanding that:

- It may be republished on the FWWCP Website (www.thefwwcp.org.uk).
- It can be used for non-profit making purposes by the FWWCP in future publications, talks, and promotions.
- It may be edited at our discretion without recourse to the author.

Please do not send 'only copies' of any writing or imagery, as we are unable to return them. It is greatly appreciated if writing can be sent as an attachment to an e-mail or on disk, as it saves considerable time and funds re-typing.

FWWCP Members may have a free quarter page advert. For non-members the charge is £35 per quarter page.

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