

Federation Magazine

The magazine of The Federation of Worker Writers and Community Publishers

it's still hot, but now it's humid as well. The Lakes are like seas, massive

It looks just like Scotland! But bigger.

In Tidioute I expected to meet James Stewart or Garrison Keilor, people said hello, drank coffee, looked at wood. This was small town USA, which could almost come from Hollywood

The Youngstown Penguins are in training, men and women built like mountains, the stadium glitters in the ghost town

When we landed it was 98 degrees and it got hotter!

The last leg, 375 miles along Route 76 to Philly. The first rain of the visit on the last day! Still hot though!



Special Issue on the Fed members visit to the

USA and Canada,
Plus - Char March,
Poetryfest 99,
Reviews of New books
and magazines,
Letters, Hand in Hand

Issue no. 18
November 1999

Special US
& Canada
Visit Issue

Letters

Letters to the Magazine

If you wish to comment on any issue raised in this magazine write to: Nick Pollard, Magazine Editor, FWWCP, 67 The Boulevard, Tunstall, Stoke-on-Trent ST6 6BD, e-mail: fedmag@cwcom.net

Dear Fed,

WORKING CLASS '99

I really thought Donna Campbell's piece (Issue 17), was capital 'G' Great. The Fed title issue apart - I've said my bit on that, same Volume - I cannot resist adding just a few lines in support of Donna's piece.

After cogently revealing the atomisation of society and the partial fragmentation of the once so solidly knit working class she says: "Breaking up identity can also make exploitation seem personal, eventually rendering a feeling of hopelessness..." (But Donna ends in positive tone.) It made me think of Thatcher's infamous "There is no such thing as society, only individual(s)/families."

But Thatcher is wrong, completely wrong. Her ilk, they worship bourgeois individuality; the Self-Made Man, The Independent Woman. Well, of course there 'ain't no such thing: Independent of What!? And "Self Made"? Liar! I, yes even I, helped make you, as did my sister, brother and the kids across the road and...

But leave them to it: today's working class, knocked around as it always has been, is still there and as life constantly renews itself so the working class '99 can renew and revitalise itself. It must do it itself, Blair, Murdoch & Co certainly cannot do it, even should they wish! (No, not even you, Richard Branson.) I picture those dry-stone walls running endlessly across, undulating countryside, and see the working class like that, running endlessly across the decades, each rough, weathered stone fitted together, different sizes, different shapes but fitted together over the years by people, by us, each stone needing, relying on the others. Indeed, really the whole of humanity is potentially like that; (history does not deem the working class exclusive, but I believe it still has a leading role... into classlessness... together with the 's' word.)

Well, I could go on, but I can't, because this is not the present debate. So thank you, Donna, and as you say, "reappraisal"... "wouldn't go amiss": it could be time again for our reappraisal of the class issue? Big job for The Mag but it could be a bit each volume, on-going for as long as we wish. What say?

Dear Fed,

Thank you so much for your participation in the New City Press Community Publishing conference. My hope was that your participation would demonstrate the power of community-based presses. The conference exceeded my wildest expectations. The response from the participants, in writing and in personal conversation, has been overwhelming. Since the conference, we have been approached by numerous community groups wishing to start writing projects or to work with our press. We have already been contacted by local grant foundations.

I should add that such success was by no means guaranteed. The audience for this conference was quite diverse. There were over sixty individual present representing a wide variety of community, academic, and cultural organisations. The different needs and goals of these organisations could have produced a conference more about conflicts than co-operation. Without exception, however, every evaluation form spoke to the importance of the Fed's presence in creating a productive working atmosphere. Your presentation was described as inspiring, deeply moving, and a blueprint for action.

The workshops were praised for their ability to be both hands on and engaged in larger questions of community involvement. One university faculty member wrote stating the conference was the best event they had ever attended at Temple. A public school teacher said here students were re-seeing their role as writers both in school and in their community. Members of an activist working class organization hope to begin their own "fed-like" projects.

As might be expected, we are already pursuing one of the main ideas of the conference - a community writing festival modelled along the Fed's own such event. It became clear that despite the size of Philadelphia, no such event existed. Such an event might serve to highlight the interesting work being done by community writers. Several foundations have expressed interest in such an event. Certainly, those at the conference believed it should happen. I hope you will consider returning to Philadelphia. It would be great to begin an annual event where Fed writers (both here and in England) interacted with our community writers. I hope you will consider attending. I simply cannot thank you enough for your participation in our event. I look forward to hearing from you.

Steve Parks, Director, Institute for the Study of Literature, Literacy, and Culture Department of English, Temple University, Philadelphia



The Visit to the USA & Canada

Planning and Background

In 1996 Janet Zandy of Rochester I.T. (NY State) and John Russo of The Center for Working Class Studies, visited Britain. Janet ran a workshop at the Festival of Writing. Sherry Linkon, a colleague of John's, invited the Fed to the 1999 Working Class Studies Conference, covering costs.

We decided to present a version of the Feds under the bed, and organised a visit to Member group, Ontario Workers Arts and Heritage Center. In 1998, Steve Parks of Temple University, Philadelphia visited the UK, meeting several of our members. We planned to meet and perform and he set up a conference to encourage community writing in the city.

Roger Drury of Forest Artworks, and Alison Smith of Survivors' Poetry, were selected to go, with costs paid for. We offered to take people who would be willing to pay their own costs. Tom Woodin (Gatehouse), Sarah Richardson (Eastside Writers), Vie Gray (ECOHP), and Richard McKeever (Working Press), took up the offer. We agreed all would take part in the presentations.

Philadelphia

We arrived in Philadelphia on May 31 in an early season heat-wave; it was around 90°. This made travel and working uncomfortable. For the first night, Temple put us up in a very smart hotel, then members of the University faculty generously housed us. We met Kensington Welfare Rights Union, for a tour round north Philadelphia. KWRU are a pro-active group, who fight for basic human rights (see the last issue of the mag.).

The most important part of our visit to Philadelphia was the conference organised by Steve Parks, to bring together writing groups, community organisations and publishers, developing a network, with similar

aims to the Fed, using facilities available at Temple. He wishes the Fed to play an active role in supporting this development.

We performed Feds under the bed which was a great success, and listened to presentations by local groups. We took part in a half-hour cable TV show hosted by Joy Butts of KWRU. Before leaving Philly, we performed and ran a workshop for around forty 16 year olds at Edison High School which caters for around 3,500 14 to 18 year-olds, from some of the most deprived areas of the city.



Tom Woodin, Sherry Linkon & Janet Zandy at the end of conference celebrations, Youngstown

Ontario, Canada

On June 5, we visited OWAHC. They had an exhibition about the lives of Italian workers in Hamilton. The whole building was taken over for the show, which dealt with home life; food; working life; strikes; fascists; community life. It was as if one of QueenSpark or ECOHP's books had jumped off the page onto the walls. Mary Breen (the OWAHC Director) had organised for us to stay in a house in Toronto lent to us by one of the OWAHC Committee. On 7 June we met with the Autoworkers Union, who do a lot of arts work with their members. We also performed at The Ontario Arts Council, and had a round table discussion organised by Melanie Fernandez, the Community Arts Officer, with officers and local community arts organisations.

Youngstown

The main purpose of our visit to the US was to attend the Working Class Studies Conference at Youngstown State University. By the time we reached there, we were still at times suffering in the heat, and freezing in the air-conditioning!

We performed Feds under the bed in a lecture theatre, the audience loved it; we had a long standing ovation. This was a mainly academic conference, the show presented a counterpoint to



Steve Parks (back L) with his family & Roger, Alison, Sarah & Tom



*John Kusso (Center for Working Class Studies)
& Elise Bryant (George Meany Center, Washington)*

this. CWCS want to get away from being seen just as an academic conference; hopefully our success will help.

From that evening on, people came to us to congratulate us and discuss the issues raised. The strength of the words of our membership made a great impact. So much so, we have been invited to perform and work in Washington DC, Western Pennsylvania and Dortmund in Germany. As well as the performance, we co-ran a workshop with community/small presses.

Travel

We travelled over a thousand miles in a 7 seat vehicle with seven adults, luggage, and many books and leaflets; the vehicle was very full. We split two of the longer journeys, stopping in 'small-town America'



Van packing - Dansville NY

, which added to the experience. Dansville and Tidioute are places I will not forget. Our visit to Niagara Falls was also memorable.

The group who went deserves high praise. Each gave considerable time, skill, and effort to presenting and representing the Fed. This was no holiday, it was great to be in the US, but it was hard work for all. We knew how important it was to make a good impression, and in that, we succeeded. The organisations we visited gained a lot from us, and

Roger Drury's Diary

Doubletree Hotel Philadelphia 22nd floor

Bright searing light through heavy curtains from early morning 89° forecast, hazy landscapes beyond the window, we are so high up.

Night time and sirens are serenading me to sleep

After a long, long day

Strolling the streets tonight,

as if we were joining a festival

Stillness, arc lights on huge buildings,

gouged sites

Crazy shop names - Alma's World of Wigs,

In our own time picking

our way through today's history

Tom and I sharing 22 floors above the living city of Philly 5.5m people

Tuesday 1st June

After breakfast sharing translations of the menu offered and a quick call to tell you I have arrived such a clear voice spanning 6 hours of time and couple of thousand miles...

We rehearse on an outside patio 6 floors above the city by a fitness suite beneath a hot sky and nearby husk of city and a road drill. "Don't wear loud slacks" This is my mental tour guide.

Temple City you might say - walking through endless blocks at last in a cool stone tomb - like space. Live telly takes the focus direct from the White House - kids and president being calm, friendly thoughtful - we hear no bombs in the background though they must be in his mind, outside posters question why the US lost the war in Vietnam. I'd say the McDonald's virus could be one stain on the character but... These people are very serious, it seems a lot going on as we wait and I write.

Kensington Welfare Rights

USA is the richest country in the world and also has the poorest population...

Their project was formed 7 years ago (1992) when 6 families set up a tent city on a vacant lot, when they finally left there were 30 families involved...

In just a very brief shot of their story the

distance, race and nationalities disappear... this is nineties direct action... empowering people by making them visible but also practical activity...

I think of home and wonder where all the apathy came from... now we have Labour in

Power...

Richard McKeever on museums he visited

In this article I reflect on two centres that attempt to tell the story of working people; the Youngstown Labor and Industry Museum in Youngstown, Ohio USA, and FWWCP members the Ontario Workers Arts and Heritage Centre in Hamilton, Ontario, Canada. In their different ways both use a conventional museum format to represent working people's lives that are very rarely considered important enough to be included as part of history.

Youngstown Labor and Industry museum is based in a purpose built building that I initially mistook for the jail situated nearby. Although the building provides a fine exhibition space and no doubt generated employment in its construction, I could not help thinking that the exhibition might have been better housed in one of the many empty and partially derelict buildings in the downtown area. Putting this minor criticism to one side, the exhibition is a very impressive portrayal

of steel production in the Mahoning Valley. The sad fact is that this, like most Industrial museums, only exists because the industry has gone. It portrays a vanishing way of life as part of a tourism or 'heritage' economy.

The Youngstown Museum contains a permanent exhibition entitled *By the Sweat of Their Brow: Forging the Steel Valley*, and features some large scale installations such as a reconstruction of the 'blooming' mill where steel ingots were made. These give some impression of the conditions in the now demolished workplaces yet it is at the smaller scale, in the more human artefacts where the stories of the workers lives are told. One display case deals with the "last heats" small scraps of steel produced in the last firings of Youngstown's blast furnaces are inscribed with the dates of the factory closure and the names of workmates on the last shift. The installations deal almost entirely with the workplace and the work undertaken in the steel mills. It is therefore

very male and very much related to the eight hours or so of each day spent in paid employment. One of the most interesting exhibits for me was a mock-up of a locker room that gives an insight into the lives of the workers outside of the mills. A series of lockers is used to represent each decade from the 1920's, 30's, and 40's, up to the time of the steel mill closures of the 1980's. In each locker is a selection of the clothes the men would have worn, facsimiles of newspapers, copies of books they would have read, and other artefacts such as transistor radios and sporting memorabilia.

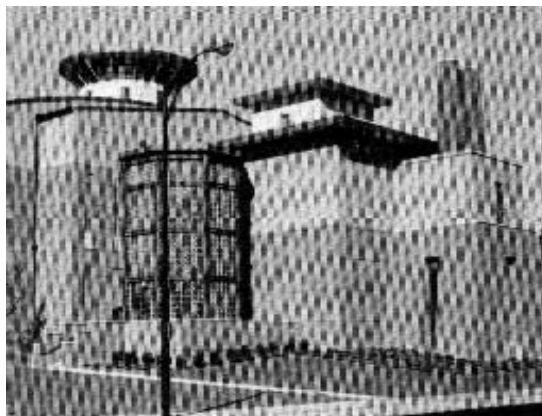


The impressive OWAHC building in Hamilton, Ontario

cover the closures of the 1980's where in a period of just a few years over 25,000 jobs were lost. In the lower gallery a longer presentation of oral history interviews with workers trades union officials and steel mill managers gives a number of individual views of the steel industry and the mill closures.

The Ontario Workers Arts and Heritage Centre in Hamilton differs from the Youngstown Museum in many ways. It occupies (and has helped to refurbish) a fine old building, the former customs house. OWAHC has a small permanent collection but features an ambitious programme of regularly changing exhibitions. We saw

La Vita Nuova - (The New Life) reflecting on the communities who had emigrated from Sicily and other areas of Italy to work in the automobile industry in Ontario. The Italian community and their descendants who live in the Hamilton and Toronto areas have loaned many of the artefacts and photographs to the museum for this exhibition. This way of working may require an enormous amount



Is it a prison? NO! It's The Youngstown Historical Center of Industry & Labor



From "Faces From An American Dream" showing at Youngstown, Ohio

of time and energy to set up, but it does result in an exhibition in which the community in a very real sense has ownership. The material collected tells the story of working people's everyday lives not just the paid work; home, school, the church, and leisure activities are all represented here.

La Vita Nuova is an interactive exhibition. On arrival an imposing desk contains forms to be completed, these recreate the harsh interviews that new arrivals had to undergo at the port of entry including a very difficult literacy test. Another section laid out like a large kitchen invites visitors to contribute their family recipes or to write their memories in a large scrapbook featuring old photographs of Hamilton, these contributions by visitors add to the exhibition content during the period of its operation. OWAHC also arrange education and other outreach events connected with the changing exhibitions.

We were lucky enough to see a performance of Cu' Fu? A monologue piece by Charlie Chiarelli relating the experiences of growing up in a working class Sicilian family in Hamilton.

Museum curation is not usually considered as a type of publishing, however both these museums in their different ways do in a museum setting what The Federation has been doing through publications for many years. They succeed in telling the stories of working people's lives, stories that might otherwise remain 'hidden from history'; they both engage visitors to tell a story very effectively using a variety of written and visual material. I wish we had more examples of this in Britain, more museums and archives that could be used to research and present working people's lives.

Roger Drury's Diary

One night in Dansville

We find Sunrise Restaurant local version of fast food just a bit less plastic - as we enter there are two moments- three teenage waitresses gathered round a family table singing Happy Birthday as if miming to a loop tape - and just across the elderly couple we had usurped by getting the last rooms in the motel, the man with a gaffer tape grey beard not unlike one of the FBI pictures I'd noted just now in the post office giving the evil eye throughout our meal... Afterwards Tom, Tim, Richard, Alison and me head back to Jacks Bar while Sarah and Vie head for bed... Jacks is packed, local busy place, 5 TVs and loud country music all at once and lots of chatting - we are noticed as strangers but its OK - beer is bit better choice but not much... settling down to sleep sharing with Tim & Tom... Black & White movies send us to sleep and in the morning send us onto the road...

Toronto

I stalk a strange house
Flat footing to limit sound
I am not prepared for creaking stairs
This house has many aches From spill bucket to catch heavy rain on the top floor
To missing supports on the front porch
As guests alone we are also detectives, left to solve problems
Where to sleep, what to build our comfort with
Spaces to briefly unpack our touring wardrobes
Morning in still halls
birdsong chimes through open window
A huge fan turns the room to swell the draught
7.45am Sunday, in the 90s, Tom snores and shifts
I click the radio on and I am in another world
Flamenco guitar lilting into my ears
Whilst in my head a panic of concern clouds
Where is my address book?
I try and shift back into detective mode but I have few clues
Only memory and this diary of recent footsteps
Gospel show - light organ chords and a white female hymn -
"Shall we pray heavenly father-rejoice at our saviour
We today have direct access to god" - Yah!

Inside the Cigar Store

A visit to Pig Iron Press in the ghost town centre which is Youngstown

In five minutes
I breathed in and inhaled Jim's dream
25 years in the making
As we move through hours of being here
We are immersed, catching time

Pig Iron Press is a writers brain laid out over three floors
words, pictures, ideas and fragments of all three
blended with books, music and stories

The old cigar store-
This place contains a lifetime of choosing and preserving
as thorough as any farmer seeding, tending, harvesting, selecting
the softness of hands
which might have chosen leaves
moistened and rolled them to perfection

Each of Jim's collection
From toy pigs to Sonny Rollins
are part of a similar contribution
a special universe of thought

Interview with Jim Villani at Pig Iron Press, Youngstown, Ohio

JV I'm Jim Villani and we're at Pig iron Press in Youngstown Ohio, Youngstown's only community press.

RD We've just done a quick tour of the building, would you like to tell us what resources you have here.

JV On the first floor of my building I have copy machines and all the peripheral services you have in publishing, a fax machine and a binding machine, paper cutters and all that. Then upstairs in the mezzanine where we are sitting now, this is more of a lounge area where we have a CD and record player - we still listen to a lot of vinyl here at Pig Iron Press - you know we're not into that new fangled stuff - We go upstairs to the second floor that's where I do the design work for my books we have the computer and the light table. I still prefer cut and paste work mostly for designing.

On the third floor I have a library, my collection of books, its an immense collection of books I don't have a count but there must be at least 10,000 books up there. And its a lot of small press and underground publications and if I ever get them organised I'm going to open it to the academic community as



Jim Villani outside "The Cigar Store"

research resource facility.

RD How do local people get to use Pig Iron Press?

JV It's a struggle, I do public programming, monthly open poetry readings at Cedars cafe round the corner, I run workshops on the last Wednesday of every month and I'll get 8,10,11 people for that and we talk about writing and work with each other's writing. I read freelance manuscripts I put my call out nationally for people to send in their work. I will get manuscripts from all 50 states and a sprinkling from international places.

So, in a sense whilst they are not here in this community the reason I've been able to maintain a national presence for 25 years is because I read manuscripts and even small presses don't do that anymore.

RD So you are filling a gap to offer access to open submission and publication.

JV I do feel we provide a service that is unique, that is different, there are a lot of people that are doing similar things, I'm not going to claim that we are special but all together we are just a sliver.

RD In a year how many books will Pig Iron publish?

JV The difficult part of course is that there's a lot of

work, in the past when I was doing my operation from the basement of my house I did one book a year. Five years ago I came up with the idea that if I bought a separate building I would be able to produce a lot more work, unfortunately what I discovered was that having a separate building and location created a whole new bunch of other things you had to attend to. So I'm only doing about two books a year I haven't reached where I have to be that's 6-10 or 11 books a year.

I have a lot of books in progress, I do believe I will get up to that level but it's a fight.

RD Just coming into this place is like coming into a space of dreams and inspiration there's lots of artwork, music and illustrations do people come here because it is this sort of environment.

JV Yes there is a sense of an identity that people relate to Pig Iron and that was the lack when I was doing it out of my home is that it wasn't a public space so you did not get people just dropping in or get visitors but now I do. Everyday people come in for a service or to talk about writing and I get a lot of phone calls which I didn't used to get because before there wasn't a listing for Pig Iron Press. And we get a lot of mail, which makes it a three pronged process of contact. People come here for workshops and people who come to the Poetry reading have scooted through here at some stage. I have several part time assistants who work with me, Chalet is here at present, I have an intern from Kent State University which is 45 miles away and I have another starting from Youngstown State University (YSU), I employ a lot of students because they are eager to get involved and it beats working at MacDonalds.

CH I have a degree in English at YSU and after working from out of state when I came back Jim is really the only person in Youngstown that is doing anything in publishing and writing that I am interested in. I'm more involved in the editorial process reading the submissions, helping to do that kind of work and helping to keep the office going...

RD Having worked elsewhere is it your experience that Pig Iron is quite unique?

CH Quite definitely and its really exciting to have people approach us, they are so excited about their work and really don't have any other outlet for it to be able to publish them and see their reaction is really rewarding.

TW How did you buy the building, did you get a grant?

JV I wish I could have got a grant but there are grants available from the state for the arts but they are not for capital expenditure projects. So I had to it on my own and it wasn't easy, but because we are in a decaying industrial city property values

Roger Drury's Diary

Sunday, Toronto

Visit the local mall after 2 hours of rehearsal which moves us on a way, Lunchtime when all should be calm is full pelt, nowhere to park cars squeezed into every space - people locked to trolleys.

Inside - a haze of bright coloured fruit and vegetables stacked high and wide, mountains of fresh produce stretch far away. We shop & shop and are out through the checkout very fast trundling toward our distant van, Tim chases Alison to tell her that the trolleys only operate within a certain area, she reaches the van without a problem whilst I have to abandon mine when the wheels lock and refuse to go out of limits.

I talk briefly to Lily on the phone, Anni is taxiing Amy to work, I feel homesick, it is the halfway point of the trip.

Later visit HONEST EDs an elephant of a shop which lures you into its jungle of junk but leaves you wandering a strange endless maze of a planet where special offers and the world of your dreams are merged into flannelette nighties, ice sets and life size pottery Elvis impersonations - But the staff pose as happy customers who people the huge place, an old theatre, no one knowing how to escape save the dangerous tides which force you to fill a basket and suck you magically toward the check out - It was harder to get out without buying something than crossing the border under the smiling gazes of immigration at Buffalo. Wander then take a tram to Lake front, deep strong water scape, meet a Newfie - a man collecting cans which he can get 11c for, he recognises British accents and we talk, this happens a lot and is a positive way to meet strangers.

MORNING MONDAY

..... wakes with a dense airless heat I feel more than homesick maybe the sun is inflicting its power on me... I need another shower - on the radio "Hot & hazy & humid 23-33° just a risk of a thunderstorm" 33° high - that is 90°+!...Kosovo bombing continuing as peace talks stall...

Last nights feast and laze together in the garden of 150 Delaware where we have made

in the downtown area were real low, in a sense people get real jealous when I tell them I only paid \$40,000 (c£25,000) for this building and I raised half of that in cash through my family and my job and I borrowed the other half and was able to pull it off and eventually after three years I figured out something else, because nobody ever



Jim Villani of Pig Iron Press

tells you anything about business, I was paying an exorbitant rate of interest on my loan as it was listed as a commercial property which attracts a much higher rate of interest than residential rates. In America they are trying to get everybody to buy their own houses so interest rates are a lot lower so I have used that to pay off what I owe on the shop and it lowered my repayments by \$150 (£100) a month.

RD How do you distribute your publications?

JV I rely heavily on the writers I publish using them as a resource to distribute the work. That's the nice thing about doing collections and anthologies where you put a lot of writers together who are scattered across the communities and borders and its been an effective and an underground method of selling to grassroots. Every one of those writers get half dozen to two dozen copies to their friends and community. I don't get a lot of success with my books into bookstores, a little bit locally but usually a single copy, distributors won't touch me at all, they want to deal with the big guys, they're not interested in a small press.

SR Who submits work to you; do you ever get people who have problems with literacy?

JV I don't really get much opportunity, the freelance writing community do tend to be people who have been writing even just as a hobby for a while, though we do make jokes when we read some of the manuscripts about just how literate they are. The sector of the population that you are talking about I must say I haven't found a way to make contact with. So unfortunately I don't and I admit that is a lack but I don't have the time or the resources to cater for that group although if they came to me I think I would find a way.

TW Can you tell us about the editorial process you use, how is material dealt with?

JV I utilise a consensus process largely with all the books especially when I put together freelance anthology. I was trained back in the 60s in consensus process I was active in Students for a Democratic Society which was the key anti-war group in the 60s and that was where I was introduced into this way of getting agreement from a

group of people, rather than from one person striking out and I use that. When I get a manuscript I circulate it and let several people read and evaluate and often if one person says I don't like something that's enough to let it go, because if somebody doesn't like it you can't get consensus you might be able to get a democratic majority but that's not consensus.

That's a slow process but after that where the typing, layout, cut and paste stage I do take over because it's hard to get people to have the time to do it.

RM Are there set criteria that decide what does or doesn't become a Pig Iron press book.

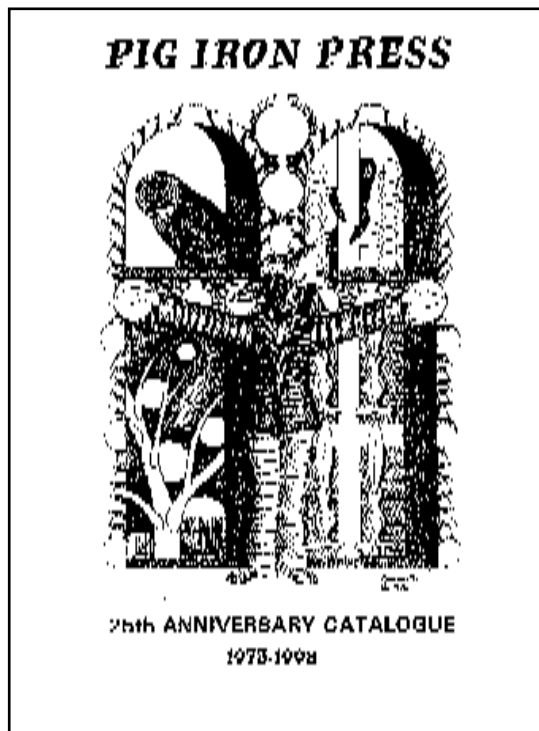
JV People always ask that and whilst there is I'm not sure its written down, there is certainly a quality issue of the writing, and there are many ways creative writing is taught in workshops and Universities that share a view on what is contemporary writing. I would have to say that the work that Pig Iron selects falls within this, if I were to send some work I have selected to University of Pittsburgh they are most likely to agree yes this is good writing. I do in a sense fall into the philosophy which is espoused by the national writing community but to put it into words that's impossible.

Syntax, I'm interested in a certain flow, I could show you some examples I do anthologies with a theme so I'm looking for different voices but having a sense of the theme.

RD We are here representing the FED which is about giving access to people. Do you see your role in giving access to disadvantaged voices?

JV Yes in serving the freelance community, people that are not fully empowered, they are writers who are denied by the larger press, this kind of vehicle I think that I an empowering people and I hope I am.

AS You mentioned the process of consensus how many people are involved?



JV They roll over, many days I wake up and wish I had a constant partner, over 25 years there will have been maybe 125 different people involved, some sat around and helped for a couple of months others for years at a time and they do tend to be young or college age and their lives drag them away its not that they don't want to continue, at any given time I make sure I've got 2,3,4,5 different minds helping out. We're editing a book now on religion modernity and we've been reading manuscripts for 5 months and its been 6 different people and three of them have gone now its summer.

RD We've come from lots of different groups in Britain, do you see any ways we could make permanent links.

JV There is no reason why Pig Iron Press we could not become one of the groups in your federation that's absolutely logical, one of the attractive things about your group is that you are a collective of organisations that are functioning and working in different areas we don't have a lot of that happening in the states, there are a number of groups that gather together but they all seem to be of the same endeavour, so all the small presses form an association but my sense from listening to your presentation is that you're not just presses you are coming from a number of directions and that's a very creative approach I don't know there's anything like that happening in the States and that is a big lack for us and that's why I applaud what you are doing and welcome you to Youngstown.

I think we need to be part of the Federation!

TD I've got the forms with me... (another successful

Roger Drury's Diary

Niagara

The Niagara experience was strangely human, reducing us to awestruck observers of the thundering energy of nature. Spray and Choppy waters compete to plummet down the sheer rock - we decide to take the walk behind the falls - Donning ceremonial capes we enter a lift to travel below. Tim says Marilyn Monroe made a film down here but there is no sign of glamour rather the shadow and flickering of a silent black and white early horror-this is the view through video eyepiece - shapes of all sizes moving along glow lit tunnels toward views of the falls, spray swirls like a palace garden's hose pipe. A giant's pool of water would not satisfy writing its size. Line upon line, families, lovers, us, an antlike army, all pose before this eccentric edifice of nature, few words make sense of what our eyes and ears were feasting on...

The booming falls pound above us - constant - There is a sense of ritual, everyone is friendly as though hypnotised by the experience.

Back above clutching souvenir capes, once more in sunlight only 92° today... Postcards I hope Graham back at the office will be impressed with the postmark (it arrives 10 days later with merely a line through the stamp) - we picnic to consume a little more of our Toronto mall harvest days ago, fruit & veg to balance the onslaught of meat & meat & meat on most menus.

Across the bridge across the border back into US - I'm driving through "villages" like Hamburg just being built as large as small towns in England aiming to soak up the rural urge. The real towns are older and smaller. Thru Buffalo and at last we are in more open green country. We pass huge Blair Corporation complex and enter National Recreational Area.

S'funny as I am writing this remembering these details, not as I begin for it will be a single thought that sets the pulse pouring ink onto this page, but a flashback of seeing a small deer close to the road. Sums up the last 30 miles of leafy river clinging route. 8.30pm we get to Tidioute.

Following Allegheny River for miles and decide to stop, over grand girder bridge into small town. Isabella's next door to funeral parlour, be sure to park in the right spot for Karma - they are both places of rest.



One of many massive Kensington murals (Philadelphia)

My Visit by Vie Lawrence-Grey

My image of the USA is and always has been a very materialistic and individualistic country, where people do not strive to work together as a community, but tend to want to emulate people like Bill Gates of Microsoft. This is not the first time that I have visited the US, but to me all that is fed to you is how the stock market is trading well, how big a profit margin a company made in its financial year, and how well certain millionaires/billionaires are doing.

If I had been asked whether I would like to perform, I think that my initial reaction would have been no. On the actual day of the performance, I felt a little anxious, as I wanted to give it my all. I was extremely pleased with the plaudits received by the audience. I felt that they gratefully received the play and the effort put in by all the Fed members in putting forward such a strong rendition.

One of the highlights of the trip for me, was to meet my cousin Patsy whom I have not seen for twenty-seven years and her son Clive. It was an exhilarating experience for both my cousin and me. We spent our time swapping stories about our childhood days in Jamaica.

After one of the workshops that I attended, whilst milling around talking and trading ideas, I met a Professor Tom Zaniello. It was interesting talking to him as he

showed a lot of interest in the Oral History Project to which I am affiliated to and was also coming to London in July/August.

Professor Zaniello belongs to CCSA (Cooperative Centre for Studying Abroad), a consortium of American colleges and universities with study abroad programs in English speaking countries.

Whilst in England, Professor Zaniello has been visited by some of my Oral History Project colleagues, who listened into one of his lectures on Going Underground: The Literature and Culture of London.

These groups of lectures covered by Professor Zaniello explore the layers of London's culture from the 20th century back to the 18th century by "going underground" to cover a powerful and influential past.

I also entertained him and some other guests at my home in London, where the discussion was fluid, expressive, and extremely diverse.

I was extremely happy that I went on this visit to the USA and Canada. Even though the trip was exhausting, and at times very mentally demanding, I feel that I got a lot out of it with regards to meeting new people, expressing my ideas and thoughts and visiting parts of that continent which I have



Vie at The Canadian Autoworkers Union

never visited before.

The downside of it all was the food part of it! Also some of the workshop participants, although very intellectual made the workshops very staid and uninteresting, as the workshops became very serious without a hint of frivolity and mirth.

I am dearly looking forward to the next one...

In future, I would suggest that there is some more time off planned on our schedule.

(Vie is a member of Ethnic Communities Oral History

Feds under the bed

In addition to the standard 'talk' and workshops about the Fed we offered an updated version of Feds under the bed, originally devised by Roger Drury for the 21st anniversary of the FWWCP. The hour long show, was performed to the conference and Edison High School in Philadelphia, the Ontario Arts Council, and the Working Class Studies Conference



The show begins at Youngstown

in Youngstown.

The show presented a montage of events and writing that allowed us to present issues of class, culture and identity, all central to the Fed's work. We used scenes from the Stepney school strike; from writing groups using interview material from Pat Smart and Janice Day; from literacy work at Pecket Well and Gatehouse; from the Festival workshops and performances; from a QueenSpark books market stall; and ended with Roger Mill's Ban Fascism, written in the 1970's but still strong and relevant today.

Before the visit, the group had met to work on the script. Parts were changed to suit the skills of those travelling. None of us were 'professional' performers or as experienced as many of those who originally put on the show. The fact that we were not actors was noted as a strength by the audiences, who felt they heard a 'real' and direct voice come through. The response was incredibly positive, much greater

Roger Drury's Diary

Youngstown State University Working Class Studies Conference

Workshop - Robert W. Whalen - The Triangle Shirtwaist Fire, New York, 1911

146 people killed in factory fire became a crusade to change working conditions: "an incandescent symbol - at one moment it rained bodies as people dived out of windows to their deaths". In the press "cinematic descriptions of individuals falling was slowed down to allow a story to be consumed"- mostly young women who died.

The Fire Marshall had begun imposing orders for sprinklers the day before the fire, ads publicising this were in the papers. Mostly Italian and Jewish women at Shirtwaist, they were already generally militant and keen to change conditions. Irony was that the Shirtwaist blouse was a symbol of female independence for young middle class (bourgeois) women this was not lost on the low paid workers."

He speaks well and confidently - a woman nods throughout his links to Russian revolutionary immigrants being in the sweatshops of New York. Is Labour a commodity or something else? Most Trade Unions and others stressed it was much more, there was widespread outrage at the fire from Religious leaders, the state and the unions. In December 1911, two owners of the factory were tried for murder. Used eye witness account of someone who was trapped by a locked door - defence got the witness to repeat & repeat their account relating to a statement given 8 months before, several discrepancies arose through this process, the jury agreed that this account could not be trusted and they were acquitted. He ends. Donna who greeted us when we arrived is chairing this session she poses during questions up at the rostra as if the proceedings have interrupted her own chance to speak... Venus at this point remembers the title of her book which she has to plug...

Sarah Richardson looks at literacy & people

Literacy

The visit began with a one-day conference at Temple University where academics, High School students, writers' groups & local activists were invited to our presentation and then workshopped & discussed setting up a community press. The University is able to fund the press but this brought up serious discussion of selection of material and ownership. Could equipment go off site? Could members of the public come & use University facilities? Would many of them want to? How would Literacy students' work be edited and by whom? There was a lot of goodwill on all sides but some of these questions have yet to be resolved. Moreover, the main group of activists (from Kensington Welfare Rights Union) primarily wanted to use the Press to produce propaganda and publicity for their campaign to end poverty in the U.S. Philadelphia Women Writers wanted to produce another anthology and some individual writers wanted to produce and promote their own work. Could the Press accommodate all of these or would it have to prioritise?

KWRU had funded a 30-day/ 30-city bus tour of the US to highlight poverty in 1998. They plan to march on the UN Autumn 1999. The project had documented their work and begun some Adult Literacy work using volunteers, pairing and mentoring but wanted to expand particularly by recording life experiences. (see Reviews p.19)

Mary Breen of OWAHC told us about the now defunct "Storylinks" an oral history/literacy project, which produced several publications. We heard of a week long annual Literacy festival where a whole street is closed and given over to stalls, readings and performance for all ages.

Our final stop was at Youngstown University in Ohio. We attended the biennial Working Class Studies conference where again we made a presentation. We met Elise Bryant from the George Meany Trades Union centre in Washington DC and again had some

stimulating discussions and debates over language and inclusion/exclusion. Should working-class academics present in a different/ more accessible way?

The conference ended with a brilliant art/literacy exhibition. An artist from an old steel town - Braddock - had photographed the semi-derelict main street. Tony Bubba then invited local people to write their own memories above and below the pictures. Comments included "My Grandad built this shop; the

best salted peanuts on the block; my Mother bought her wedding ring here in 1923 and I bought mine at the same shop in 1958."

I talked to a woman who had set up a mothers and daughters' reading group at her daughters' school. They met monthly in a school classroom and over takeaway pizza discussed a book that one of the girls had chosen and all had read. She said it helped her talk to her daughter in a different way.

The tour was only a snapshot of the Literacy life of such a vast

continent. However, everywhere we went we met people fighting to get their stories out in whatever way they could.

People Watching

The most important parts of the trip for me were not the sights (although Niagara was spectacular) but the people. It was my first time in North America and while I had expected our hosts to be friendly I was touched to discover that strangers talked to us too, at length, on hearing our accents.

Two friends it was great to see again were Kim McGee in Canada and Albert French in the US. Kim emigrated to Toronto eight years ago and works as a puppeteer

running "Suitcase Stories." Her mother was Gladys McGee, a founder member of Basement Writers, who sadly died recently (see issue 17) When Kim was in Britain she found out about the Fed tour and we arranged to meet. We had a lovely evening with Kim and her German friend Monica, in our borrowed



The Tony Bubba Exhibition



Edison High School Workshop, Philadelphia

house in Toronto. Alison Smith coordinated the cooking of a huge vegetarian meal which we all ate together in the back garden by candlelight, under the stars. Later, we decamped indoors, so that Kim could hear Gladys' tribute read by members of Eastside Writers at this year's AGM, and recorded by Roger Drury. A happy and emotional evening.

I had first met Albert French at Centerprise two years ago. Billy Albert's first novel is one of my five "best ever" books. He was reading from his (then) new novel, *Holly*. Set in the 1940's American South, it tells the story of the developing relationship between a white woman and

a black man with tragic consequences. After the reading, I talked to Albert and told him I was also writing a story about a mixed relationship, set in London and Morocco. He said he would be interested in reading it when it was finished.

The book was finished and a copy sent to Albert via his publisher a few months before the trip. We had several long distance 'phone calls where Albert made useful suggestions on "telling the story." He lives in Pittsburgh which is a two hour drive from Youngstown and so on the night of the Fed's under the Bed show he came over and had some beers with us and assorted friends. Here, another coincidence. He knew Nick Coles from their shared work with school children. We all had a lively evening in a student bar and agreed it's always great to meet other writers.

Bookshops

It was interesting to have a little time to spend in some good bookshops on the trip. We came across some very different types.

The Women's Bookshop in Toronto was a radical place with titles you don't see in Britain, *Real Girl Power* for under eights to over eighties. Slogans on badges; stickers; washable sanitary towels (!); campaigning literature and news all in the Kensington area of small shop-fronts and Korean shop keepers.

Borders, and Chapters, are huge chainstores with branches in Toronto and Philly. On several floors, you can get coffee, read a paper, have a lifestyle. There were acres of new and cut-price remaindered books. They also ran a Small Press of the Month slot with displays and readings. This was good for the authors and publishers but less so for independent



bookshops as it cut back their custom still further.

One such independent bookshop was Jim Villani's Pig Iron Press in Youngstown. The ground floor was a walk in shop front, stocking short run books, cards and pamphlets. It was a hot, dusty cavern of a place on four floors - housing a library, printing presses and binders and Jim's collection of miniature pigs. A fan turned lazily as we chatted to Jim and Chalet (his assistant), ninety degrees in the shade of the shop. They hope to open it all to the public one day, but for now the shop, at least, is open for passing poets and novelists.

Near the University campus was Dorian Books - a second hand bookshop. They had a wonderfully eclectic range of books- alternative health; children's books from the 1930's; jazz scores and candles. Again, so warm that all you wanted to do was curl up in their rocking chair and read *Swallows and Amazons*.

The other unusual second-hand bookshop we had come across was a tiny one at Mount Airy station in Philadelphia. Here, suburban commuters could buy decaf and muffins and pick up a bargain read for their



*At Philly Airport on the way home
l to r: Sarah, Vie, Tom, Richard, Alison, Tim
& Roger*

Roger Drury's Diary

Elise Bryant - Keynote speaker - mid morning back in the Chestnut Room

Intro - "Winner - Woman of the year award, Mother of peace award, artistic director/performer - Common Ground Theatre"

From nowhere into song

"Which side are you on"

Elise Bryant on stage

Her timing is absolute

People finding voices in their politics

"We are on our way to glory"

This way of becoming a common group

Taking words to our other being in song

On whose shoulders did you come?

we build moments in our minds

eyes closed, deep breaths

In the darkness of memory

We find elsewhere - that is so close

Stored deep in the passage of time

Softened, the room is a new place

strangers moving to begin stories

that have guided their lives

choosing lines to draw symbols of ourselves

sharing, projecting slides of passing experience

our drawings and words blending to reveal us

"It is vital to our life and well being"

How we got involved-never cross a picket line

Not complaining-get involved

It flows from pennies dropping into place

Through a history which swerves between dates

generations leave us space to fill -

between us a voice

Sound-an idea which chooses to pulse

"Not diamonds - but gems needing a polish"

"Next thing you're going to have us wine tasting or eating quiche!

She tells of getting union workers to write

plays from their own life stories

once more looking at the chalk line

rather than straining for the horizon

"workers and artists both need to create-they have this in common"

breath the spirit back into ourselves

People who do not know their past are

Condemned to repeat it!

symbols drawn by a group of workers

Justice=Security/People=Community

Reaching to help/puzzle=fixing what's broke

Heart=love

"Story telling-lifts/explores/affirms"

She moves, weaves, tells her story

Life energy, the truth, the details of lives

She sets us singing once more as she prepares toward her closing sweep of passion and poetic rhythm

I have drawn around my hand

choosing this symbol as the grip on life

the touch and the discoverer

the power of my writing limb

the strength of hug, direction of my gaze

This is not far but not so close

"Soul between the lines"- Dorothy Randall Gray
"seeds"

People introduce themselves - take pieces

and create a poem that links everyone

write a story about yourself at nine years old

exchange and take parts to make a shared story by drawing out the "seeds"

"3 minutes on one work experience"

detail spins a web of written life

it is these jigsaw segments that pass from us that build another view

pushing to always give but make it solid

I fill these sheets of paper

-a special offer in Woolworths

carried across the world -

becoming the surface to hold the weight of meanings sifting through me.

To look back-for memory

For people not here

For future eyes and ears

Each time I begin a line

A moment has become an idea

Translated into ink

Lasting, filling the page

Spilling from muscles, nerves, emotions & thoughts

And then I turn the page until it becomes

time to retrace my own story

"Trust" is the word that comes to my mind

And she uses it as if we share a script

We do - it is the spirit she describes

This is no mass produced pattern

It is beauty, power, streams running away

With possibility into oceans

where still - each pebble bounces or

makes its own ring of influence

against the tide -

and yet becomes part of the landscape



Aberystwyth Poetryfest99

Arthur Thickett, QueenSpark Books

I couldn't make the US/Canada trip but felt involved with the party and with them in spirit; they 'did The Fed proud', and speak for themselves in this volume.

I was, however, one of the party representing The Fed at 'Poetryfest' 99 (an International Poetry Festival) held at the Arts Centre, University of Wales, Aberystwyth, 19-27 June - FED attendance, 25-27 June. My only previous visits to Wales had been a couple of rush-through trips to catch ferries.

So what was it like? What did we do...? My impressions...

Charming? Chaotic? Well, charmingly chaotic with more than a touch of the surreal. Drifting haphazardly as we did into that great sprawl that is The University of Wales... some chaos was almost inevitable. Friday evening and early Saturday morning

were the times when they occasionally 'lost us', or, was it 'us' that got lost? Speaking for myself, which I'd best, I even managed to lose myself entirely on the Friday evening, not only from our hosts but from the rest of our own mob! I arrived 7.45pm-ish, I knew four others were there - I didn't know where they were but I could see where they'd been! I searched, inevitably looked in The Bar (wrong bar it turned



out) I took a walk into Aberystwyth, found myself approaching Machynlleth instead, I ate, went back to the bar - wrong bar. 9.30am next morning I bumped into Fitz, pissed off, as I was, at having (someone?) 'misplace' the breakfast venue: "Where's the others?" "There's Alvin", Fitz pointed. Alvin was coming round the corner ringing me on his mobile, asking where I was (I'm here mate, here!). A bit later Tim rang, asking where I was but by then I was wondering myself.

If it hadn't been for this wonderful sky-scraping crane, arising Phoenix like from the rubble of some new campus construction, and located more or less centrally to our goings-on... If it hadn't been for kindly Mowlem's guiding star I'd be wandering the Welsh hills still - probably none the worse for it... a better poet for it. Something moved me there, inspired me there; not

slop no kidding, it did. (I'd felt this too the previous weekend Beverley, East Yorkshire while confronting vivid childhood memories: the Minster; The Folk Festival; The North Bar - a Towering Gate & Gate-House built 1403 by The Beverley Council at a cost of £96-0-11d). But I digress; back into the intrigue of Wales...

The Arts Centre was quite grand, spacious, imposing, our hostess charming, organised and helpful; an easy friendliness reigned. Our Fed slot 1pm to 4pm Saturday went pretty well, the evening performance reading; which we joined, well run and timed and enjoyable, dancing and celebrating great! All of this brushed with a magic of Wales that left me vainly wishing to grasp and understand; alas, not time enough! But from the stalls I did pick up a beautiful Welsh souvenir, "Lines and Curves".

Next morning at breakfast we even got a packed lunch.

Wales - haunting.

Do you want to help the Fed make writing and publishing more accessible? If so, why not become a Friend of the Fed.

Friends receive this magazine, the Broadsheet and Newsletter, and are eligible for discounted fees to the Festival and weekend events. You can become a Friend by making a monthly or annual donation to the Fed. For a form either write to:

FWWCP, 67 The Boulevard,
Tunstall, Stoke-on-Trent ST6 6BD
or e-mail: fwwcp@cwcom.net

or phone: 01782 822327



“Ooooo, aren’t you brave!”

Char March (performance poet and playwright)

I’m always in a rather odd state when I’ve just finished a performance. A bit out of it; the adrenaline sloshing round and suddenly nowhere to go. People from the audience come up - to buy the odd book, to ask where the toilets are and, often, to try to think of something more to say. It’s the done thing these days - to break down the divide between the performer and the performed to. And I’m all for it, even though I’m usually dead on my feet; one does try to give one’s all in performance.

Sometimes it’s just banal - the “where do you get your ideas?” and “do you use a wordprocessor?” variety. And I feel a complete bastard at wanting to scream at them, particularly because of my own dismal showing the one time that I ventured up to speak to a writer after her performance.

I’d read everything of hers - she was an early role model - and we’d recently had stories published in the same anthology. So I should have had at least a few reasonably interesting things to say. Instead I mumbled some dreadful inanity about her writing being “very nice”. I couldn’t even get it together to ask her to sign my lovingly battered collection of her books.

So, yes, it can be banal, painful even. But equally it can be amazing.

Those occasions when strangers show the startling quality of genuine contact and open up as if I’m already a trusted friend. Disconcerting, but also, when it works, beautiful. Because then, sometimes, they share intimacies of their own. Just briefly, nothing OTT, nothing too un-British. And, even though I’m desperate to crash out and switch off, and even though it sounds extraordinarily corny to say it, those are the moments I feel it’s all worth it. Those moments of someone saying exactly how it is, where it is, that they’ve been moved. Those times when someone I’ve never met before, or after, says they felt I was talking about them, about their life, and how they’d never realised that anyone else could know so exactly how they’d felt, and how that had only ever happened once before - with a Bob Dylan lyric, or their first-ever kiss, or that time on a mountain in Peru, or when they were sat on the loo in Preston - and it all suddenly seemed to make sense,

fit together, fall away, not matter anymore, whatever. And I think - Christ, you’re brave.

And it isn’t till afterwards I think You bloody hypocrite, March. Not because I didn’t mean it about them - they did touch me, and they were brave. Very. But because I really hate it when anyone says “Ooooo, aren’t you brave?” about me.

It’s not a description I like. It makes me uncomfortable. This is partly because “brave” is all too easily pinned on us crips. But mainly it’s because what on earth is “bravery”, “courage” and all that jazz? Even people who rescue others from a hail of bullets don’t often see themselves as “brave”. I’ve performed in some rough joints, but never met with any projectile more lethal than the odd heckle, so how can I possibly be seen in that Hall Of The Courageous category?

To me, writing and performing feel more like a necessary honesty. A hoping for an echo. Is anyone out there? Has anyone else felt this, experienced this, thought this? Is this what it was like for you? If I analyse it, it feels like an often uncomfortable exercise in impertinence; in casting out into the dark; in stupidity; in brass neck even. This strange thing I do. This trying to get as near “the truth” about life as I see/touch/taste it. And they are sometimes uncomfy truths about uncomfy bits of life.

So, why do I hate people telling me I’m brave so much?

I’ll try on a few Because hats:

Because I don’t feel brave - and therefore feel a fraud when they tell me I am.

Because I worry I’m becoming blasé about the impact, on the audience, of what I’m doing. It hasn’t touched me as much as it touched them - so am I turning into a complete Ice Queen that I can wring emotion from an audience and leave myself so, seemingly, unmoved?

Because it would only feel “brave” if I allowed myself to feel the full impact each time. But that would be too scary cos I might blow it. It’s a thin line to tread. Appear too moved and the audience simply focus - in worry and embarrassment - on you the performer. Appear too slick, professional, detached and they’ll write off both you and the material as glib: you’re a

Reviews

Our Voices Volume 3

Published by The Mayors Commission on Literacy in Philadelphia

trickster for trying to get them to feel stuff that you clearly don't.

Because I, like Tim Fountain, (Literary Manager at The Bush Theatre*), think that "the best writing is about life... honest work, work which exposes you." And so it is a completely integral part of my being a writer that I explore this territory - and therefore nothing to do with me being "brave".

Because it feels like they are saying that for them it would be an act of bravery, whereas for me it feels more like an act of asking, of questioning / searching?

Because I'm jealous? I want to be moved / touched / shocked / prodded - and it rarely happens.

Because I want everyone to be brave and courageous and to take risks and dare to speak the unspeakable and do it well and to stick their heads above the parapet and to open up the possibility that we're all in this together and and and and other idealistic and clearly crazy stuff.

They all seem to have some "truth". But the last hat feels like it fits me best.

Tim Fountain also said "when you hand your script over to someone it should feel as if you are peeling off a layer of your skin in front of them."

Well, if that's what my audiences feel I'm doing when I perform, maybe they are right to come up to me and tell me I'm brave.

And maybe, just maybe, they are right. It does take guts. And therefore, in a world increasingly dominated by the Nanny State, the safe option, the middle way, the third way, the dumbing-down, I am, unfortunately, seen as brave.

So maybe I'll just have to put a brave face - on being "brave"!

** In the June issue of the WGGB (Writers' Guild of Great Britain) 'Writers' Newsletter'*

You can contact Char at her e-mail address: charmarch@clara.net

I want to look up with my mind
and not my eyes.
When I look up with my eyes
all I see is sky
When I look up with my mind
I see higher things and all suspicions are erased.
Look Up
by Evalina C.Jones
who attends Temple University Center for Research
in Human Development and Education

This book is a collection of writing from the Philadelphia literacy community. The writers have produced an inspiring anthology of poems, letters, essays and book reviews reflecting a huge range of subjects; birth, life, learning, baseball, love, sickness and death are just a few.

Work from an impressive list of groups is presented in the book including the Community Women's Education Project, The State Correctional Institute and recent Fed members Kensington Welfare Rights Union. I would have liked to see more information in the book about each of the contributing organisations.

One task that faces compilers of any anthology is editing. In this publication each of the pieces forms a single page of the book, they have been printed as sent in by the authors. Some are hand written and others typed or word-processed, this avoids difficult debates over editing other people's work and makes for a lively and interesting design. I am sure many Fed groups could adopt a similar strategy to quickly produce an anthology at very little cost.

This book would provide a good resource for literacy teaching with the writing used for comprehension exercises or as triggers for student's own creative writing on similar themes.

Richard McKeever



Reviews

In The Doghouse

By *Angela Roscoe*, Gatehouse Books

ISBN 0 906253 GS 9, also available on cassette.

One of Mike Carter's excellent illustrations to Angela Roscoe's *In the Doghouse*



After reading Angela Roscoe's *In The Doghouse*, a whole new chain of thoughts opened up for me. The author did nearly find herself in the doghouse but was able to work her way out of what could have been a problematic situation.

This easily read story should strike a chord in the minds of its readers and animal lovers alike. It is indeed stimulating, gives food for thought and illustrates that most of what takes place in everyday life can be of enormous benefit if placed in a creative context.

For beginners it is the perfect vehicle on which to start, making the material simple and accessible. Children play a part in the story, and in reality, adults and children alike have had similar experience at some time.

This book has taught me to look at creative writing in a different light. It is recommendable for schools and adults who wants to develop their skills in creative writing.

Fitz Lewis

The Private Lives of Carrots and other Vegetables

Poems by *David Floyd*

£2.50 from: *Piffling Publishing, c/o Exposure Youth Enterprises, The Bigger Shoe Box, Muswell Hill Centre, Hillfield Path, London, N10 3QJ. (Cheques payable to D.Floyd)*

A collection of delightful poems from an enquiring mind. Well worth the read.

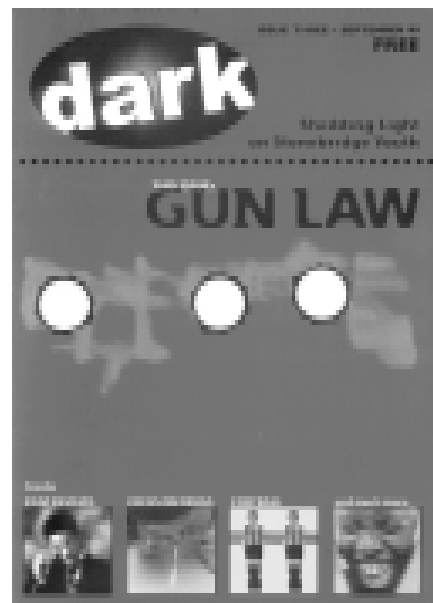
Imagine the monarchy reduced to eating KFC, Russian social theories thrown back into their dead faces, and the sandal wearing brigade saving the world, then you'll realise we are not talking vegetables here.

Alvin Culzac

Dark Magazine

Free (send large S.A.E.) from *Stonebridge Housing Action Trust, Kassinga House,*

37-41 Winchelsea Road, London NW10 8UN



A lively and well designed magazine written, edited and designed by young people of the Stonebridge Estate, with support from Ethnic Communities Oral History Project. A good read, shedding light on issues that are universal, good design makes it an attractive read. A fine piece of community publishing that is a



Reviews

Hell & Eden

Poems by Rosie Lugosi £3.25 from: Dagger Press, 70 Dagger Lane, West Bromwich, B71 4BS ISBN 0-9522909-4-4



Cinderella

She smiles. She's drunk a lot
 As usual. But not so much
 As to lose her sense of being on the outside.
 Alien to all this partying. It's hot.
 She spots the lover for tonight.
 Laughs as they climb the stairs,
 Fumble with buttons, shoes,
 Turn out the light,
 Fall on the bed, and start to use
 hands, mouths. The drink will spur her on
 To last the night. She does not sleep
 Too heavily. Wakes early. Puts back on
 The clothes thrown off just hours ago.
 Before the hour's too late runs down the

 stairs
 Into the light, into the air.
 She did not leave her number.
 She'll not be traced.

To read these poems without seeing Rosie Lugosi (The Lesbian Vampire Queen of Manchester) performing them, is difficult.

Rosie is one of the most entertaining performers, a mix of leather, laughter, whips, opera and pathos. She has a fabulous voice and the daring to wear skin tight leather cat suits. She is a 'must-see' act!

The poems? They are sad. Poems of the outsider, quite dark. Poems about love that never works out; about longing; about long forgotten memories.

I urge anyone buying this book to wait; wait to buy it at one of Rosie's blood curdling performances. Then you will have the best of all other-worlds.

A wonderful collection. Sharpen your fangs Rosie, and let's have another collection to get our teeth into soon.

Those Unschooled Minds: Home-Educated Children Grow Up

by Julie Webb £9.95 100pp ISBN 1-900219-15-8 Educational Heretics Press, 113 Arundel Drive, Bramcote Hills, Nottingham, NG9 3FQ

"But isn't that illegal? Children have to go to school!" They don't, of course. It's education that's compulsory, not education in schools etc...

Pissarro's men "burnt their boats" in Mexico circa C15th, walked to the Pacific and retaught themselves, and Ivan Illyich in USA 1975 wrote about Deschooling Society so what's new about the above book's stance?

As the book states, "The possibilities are literally endless, since the world and the student are constantly changing." My view is take all with pinches of salt since whilst self-taught = good, some can be bad and conversely whilst school education is bad, lots can be good verging on very. Go to the book's back first and read both Appendix and References/Recommended Reading ... Never too late and Unjobbing for example. Then begin at ... wherever. Use the book as a reference point NOT a bible. "One size DOESN'T fit all" "Education is not the filling of a pail but the lighting of a fire" (W B Yeats).

So, dip into it to read of 20 persons personal experiences ... just like Anne Daniel and May, my students at Townhead Hotel Artists, Lockerbie. They have been self-taught by me in Poetry and Visual Arts. Now they need to go further one to night school, one to decide what learning she wishes teachers to provide for her - both requesting/needng technical experts, NOT experts - since there are none.

Other pointers within ... "Useful ideas and new thinking can come from anywhere." "I think therefore 1 ... mmm? ...might be." "Children sometimes grow up to spite their parents NOT despite them" (my words, actually) Anyways....

2.93 Cheer's for this tome.



Hand in Hand

Reaction to "Be Small - Think Big"

Margaret Pearson, Prescott Writers

Debden House, run by the London Borough of Newham, is an adult education centre, founded in 1947. It consists of a large house and cottages. Debden has been chronicled since Saxon times, and the name Debden derived from the Saxon from the word meaning "Valley". It is surrounded by 50 acres of streams, hills and vales cradled between the town of Loughton, the village of Theydon Bois and ancient Epping Forest. "Be Small - Think Big" Training Course was attended by representatives of the following workshops:

Basement Writers, London
Dumfries & Galloway Survivors' Poetry
Ethnic Communities Oral History, London
Leeds Survivors' Poetry
Newham Writers Workshop
Northern Voices, Tyne & Wear
Prescot Writers, Liverpool
Shorelink Community Writers, Hastings
Working Press, London.

Tom Woodin, Gatehouse Books, made the introductions and commenced the first tutorial entitled 'Keeping it Going: Sustaining Small Groups'. Most of those present identified with the attitudes and problems described in the workshop. The training notes provided will be most useful and informative for all workshops throughout the FED, containing many suggestions for remedial action where and when required in the workshop with difficulties.

The second speaker was Kadija George, who had been the Black Literature Development Worker at Centerprise for four years. Kadija was a mine of information about publication and printing, and produced for our inspection many forms of pamphlets, leaflets, and post cards, which she produces economically in the course of her work. Her advice on press releases and publicity included the following - Interesting but informative title; Punchy opening; Quote if possible; Contact information, clear and distinct at the bottom.



Debden drawing - Eric D Davidson

The final speaker of the day was Jonathan Davidson, Literature Officer, Birmingham City Libraries. His talk, entitled "Joined-Up Writing: being part of a national community" was lively and amusing and included descriptions of various events arranged by Birmingham Libraries. One particular scheme which captured the imaginations of the group, when he described a unique post operated by Birmingham, their own Poet Laureate. This is not a life long tenure, the chosen poet is appointed for one year and creates a stir when he or she attends various literary events in the official role of Laureate. It was generally agreed by the group the idea would lend a certain gravitas in our own areas.

The session enjoyed a beautiful sunny weekend, Sunday commenced with Roger Mills, Eastside, who have a bookshop and Arts Project in Whitechapel. He convenes a regular workshop at Eastside. Roger has been with the Federation since it commenced 23 years ago.

The training session was split to discuss and possibly suggest solutions to workshop difficulties in various forms clearly defined on two lists. A further exercise was "Some contradictory thoughts on criticism" because as we are aware most writers groups meet to share their work and accept honest appraisal, however, some do not. The handouts provided by Roger should be part and parcel of every FED group information pack, as they provide help and solutions which would be most beneficial to all.

After lunch, the programme continued with a

history of QueenSpark Books, Brighton by Lorraine Sitzia, who has worked on several book projects. She is a tutor of oral history and active in community publishing in Brighton.

All present were intrigued by many facets revealed about QueenSpark, who are community publishers in the true sense, they publish local peoples work, a lengthy process. Writing submitted to the group

is examined closely for its suitability for publication by QueenSpark, if not they refer the owner of the manuscript to more suitable outlets for that particular work. The accepted manuscripts are placed in a file, and a group work and prepare the manuscript for



Another Hand in Hand project taking place was the "Working with the Media" training weekend at Wedgwood College. Digital photo by Dave Parrish

eventual publication. In some instances the author attends but this is not always satisfactory.

Lorraine brought along a selection of QueenSpark Publications, for economic reasons most of the work is published in black and white, with similar pictures and illustrations. The effects achieved by clever artwork and various printing techniques are most

attractive and sell well.

Finally, Tom Woodin closed the course with a discussion and evaluation of what had been learned and achieved during the intensive 2-day course.

I feel sure those who attended are grateful to Hand in hand Co-ordinator, Christine Bridgwood, the FED and

Wee-Debden- iteress's

Eric D Davidson, Dumfries & Galloway Survivors' Poetry

Nigerian Cockneys

Scottish Scousers

Chanel-ling Home

Counties Northern

Tykes.... All Voices

Sorta Genders...

Balanced in Con -

Federation,

Hand-in-Hand

With Each Others

Ethnicities (or wiz it

Eccentricities)

Who cares?

We did actually,

Act -

"u" -

Ally, D-Do-Doo

Yoo-Do-The-Colour-Full

-DGRAP-

YEHH!

Be Small Big Thinker

Metaphorically Speaking

John Kerr, Prescott Writers

Metaphorically speaking at Debden House one day, I heard a fellow traveller discussing on the way. The road to our Damascus which was paved with good intent, leading to Nirvana were our words are heaven sent.

We walked down sunlit Boulevards and there we found a flower, it was made of hands and fingers and growing by the hour. Symbolically we watered it with tears of love and laughter, we left it cogitating it goes on forever after.

The stick that once supported it was now a mighty Oak, and hanging from the branches there hangs the writers cloak. This literary garment was there for all to see, with manuscripts and copyright on who you want to be.

Cross-pollinated regularly with wind blown thoughts aplenty, you'll find your flower soon will be matured to one and twenty. The road goes ever on and on. You'll see me on the highway and then you'll see me gone.



2000 April 7 to 9

The 2000 FWWCP Festival of Writing and AGM will take place at The University of Leicester, from Friday April 7th until Sunday April 9th.

FEDFEST2000 will be a celebration of writing by FWWCP members, highlighting the "Milestones" Poetry Places project, with workshops, skill sharing, debates, networking. The opportunity to meet writers and community publishers from around Britain and abroad. Meet old friends make great new contacts. Bookings are being taken now.

FEDFEST2000 will cost:

£85 for Members, Friends and Subscribers (add £10 for en-suite rooms)

Federation Magazine

The next two deadlines for submission of articles or reviews for consideration for this magazine are **28 January and 26 May 2000**. Send copy to the address above, preferably on disk or e-mail. Send books for review asap. The next edition will centre on issues around Language and Languages. So please send articles asap. To:

FWWCP, 67 The Boulevard, Tunstall, Stoke-on-Trent ST6 6BD or e-mail fedmag@cwcom.net

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