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 Change

Editorial by Bixby Monk

Change can often be scary, since we started in the Winter of 2003, we have developed from promoting a reputable list of poets to full blown Literary Promotion. Incorporating Writing was never meant to exist, these editorials were not supposed to be here, but one organic idea led to another as we worked with wider and wider networks. Most of us here are voluntary, we do what we do because we love Literature, and many of us have, for years, been involved in the grass roots front of this field - excuse the pun. Now, the logical end to this journey has come about. In April this year, an idea was put forward that would revolutionise the way we work, this was followed up by the idea of us all fleeing to Italy and sending back postcards chronicling our descent in to madness and wine. The idea was simple, that the hierarchy in the office (there are three offices now, Edinburgh, London and Manchester) should come under a Constitution (available on request), that there should be an overall aim and that in the event of one of us leaving, the whole merry-go-round would carry on. Thus, The Incwriters Society (UK) was born, and now it's spreading, by 2005/2006 we hope to have chapters in the USA, Europe and Japan - before you run away and hide in your cellar, this is not a madcap attempt at global domination, Literature would be terrible dictator, and no two readers would ever agree, the upshot being that all readers would end up against the wall come the revolution. But a quiet revolution this is, we are creating grass root networks, plugging into existing programs, organisations, promoters, publishers and venues with the aim of bringing them together.

In June of 2004, Andrew Oldham was appointed the first Administrator of The Incwriters Society (UK), this was to acknowledge Andrew's original driving force behind Inc. in the face of illness and disability. He will hold this post for one year and will be an ambassador of The Society. From this

moment, if you are on our email list, work with us, are affiliated, then you too are a member of The Society, and you have a voice in the way it is run.

Members involved in the Literary scene other countries can contact us with a view to opening a chapter in their country. For further details of the benefits of doing this, please feel to contact Andrew via these offices. Members in the UK, should now take the opportunity to work with us closer, liaise on promotions and publications, events and listings.

The core of all this grass roots activity is reciprocation, without it the whole scene, movement and marketing industry grinds to halt and keels over like a dodo after being introduced to a hungry sailor from Bristol. There is strength and support in numbers, stand alone and fall alone, stand together and be a force to be reckoned with; we will fight them in the libraries, we will fight them in the pubs, and we shall never give up...

Yes, global domination can be a positive thing.

In this issue of Incorporating Writing (Issue 1, Volume 3) we look to the past and future, we reprint one of the last interviews with the late Spalding Gray, catch up with Janice Galloway after the monumental success of her novel, Clara. Interview the Bradford Crime Writer, M Y Alam and catch up with the press that brought his work to prominence, Route. Review the work of the late Thom Gunn and remain in the American vein as Eva Salzman delivers her account of 9/11 and George Wallace, Suffolk County (NY) Poet Laureate joins the staff as a regular columnist.

If you want to see anything in forthcoming issues, or have favourite writers you want us to interview, then email me today at incwriters@yahoo.co.uk, this is your magazine, this is your Society, get involved and join the movement.

If you haven't subscribed to updates, then do so today, if you know of people who are writers or readers, point them in our direction. You can all join me now in a rousing rendition of The Red Flag and the classic socialist song, Wake Me Up Before You Go Go.

 Janice Galloway: Full of Resonance
 Interview by Samantha Morton

Janice Galloway was born in 1956 in Saltcoats, Scotland and read Music and English at Glasgow University. She took a year out and worked briefly as a Welfare Rights Officer for Strathclyde Regional Council (1976-7) before returning to Glasgow to complete her degree. Between 1980 and 1989 she worked as an English teacher, afterwards attending a writers' class at Glasgow University.

Her acclaimed first novel, *The Trick is To Keep Breathing* (1989), a bleak story of alienation set on a council estate in Glasgow, won the MIND Book of the Year/Allen Lane Award and a Scottish Arts Council Book Award, and was short listed for the Whitbread First Novel Award and the *Irish Times* International Fiction Prize. It was adapted for the stage by Michael Boyd and has been performed in Glasgow, London and Toronto. In 1994 she was awarded the E. M. Forster Award from the American Academy of Arts and Letters. Her second novel, *Foreign Parts* (1994), describes two women's adventures on a driving holiday through northern France and won the McVitie's Prize for Scottish Writer of the Year.

She is the author of two collections of short stories: *Blood* (1991), which was short listed for the *Guardian* Fiction Prize and the Saltire Society Scottish Book of the Year Award, and was named as a *New York Times* Notable

Book of the Year; and *Where You Find It* (1996), a series of narratives exploring relationships. In 1999 she was the *Times Literary Supplement* Research Fellow to the British Library, and recently she has worked with the composer Sally Beamish on an opera libretto, *Monster*, based on the life of Mary Shelley, which was performed in Glasgow in the spring of 2002. Her new novel, *Clara*, about the nineteenth-century musician Clara Schumann, also published in 2002, is the winner of the Saltire Society Scottish Book of the Year Award.

In January 2002 she was awarded a Scottish Arts Council Creative Scotland Award in order to work on collaboration with visual artist Anne Bevan. The project will incorporate text and sculpture, 'throwing a new perspective on the medical processes surrounding women', and both a touring exhibition and a book are planned.

Janice Galloway has one son and lives and works in Glasgow, Scotland.

In your recent novel, *Clara*, you appear to have struck a rich vein within yourself, which is reflected via the characterisation of Clara Schumann, the celebrated nineteenth-century concert pianist and composer. How hard was it to depict this 'real' character in a fictional medium?

"Complicated question. The book took six years in all, and the research was the 'light relief' part. Reading and ingesting and thinking and piecing together a psychology from factual details - all of that was straightforward compared to the demands of craft, of piecing together what I hoped would be a convincing set of characters who seem to have life on the page. A novel is a novel; it's not a biography. The research was sprawlingly huge - all the listening, biographies, examining of letters, tracking down of autopsies and trawling of musical, instrumental, familial, literary, military and medical histories - but the chief demand was the novel to write on top, dealing with voice and verbal scenery and atmospherics etc. Writing fiction was the toughest bit. Marrying the research with it involved a kind of method-acting mindset it was not always easy to get into or stay with, but that is much the same when you are making the character entirely by yourself, just that the making has a kick-start from fact."

How important is music to you and your work?

"Isn't it important to everyone? I guess not just because I get so much from listening to music, but also because music changed my life, as they say, it matters inordinately. I come from a background of pronounced and fairly hopeless poverty (in British terms, that is) and assumed there were things out there with possibility for me - good things in general, much by way of aspiration, all that stuff. Life was what my mother called "getting by" and much else did not occur, or was pretty thoroughly suppressed by liberal applications of the rhetorical question "Who do you think you are? The Queen of Bloody Sheba?" I guess my mother thought that Big Ideas of whatever stripe were likely to lead to disappointment by not being able to be realised, and she was trying to save me from that disappointment. "There is a life out there, but it's not for us". She wanted me to "do well" kind of thing, but not too well. There was a hovering, non-specific worry about conspicuousness attached to this now I think of it, safety in keeping your head down or something. You know the kind of thing. Anyway, I went to secondary school and met the head of music, Ken Hetherington, and he replaced all that worry and fear with permission. Every child was ear-tested and given an instrument if they wanted one; every child who could hold a tune was given a place in a choir, of which he ran seven. And it was tough stuff: Gesualdo, Britten, Kodaly and Bartok were favourites for the choir, while the orchestras, both chamber and symphony (this in a state

school) and the ensembles ranged most things including in-your-face contemporary "classical". The first thing he did was tell me how to pronounce Mozart. Of course you should know these things, his teaching said. You should hear these things, grasp these things. Of course. There was no question that whatever was out there was for me too if I wanted them. He encouraged me to compose and perform and I gorged on it. I nearly died of a broken heart when I left school, a depression that lasted years till I tried to apply some of that sense of possibility he opened up by myself. Ken is dead now, but I think of him every day. I am grateful every day. I can't always listen to music though. Sometimes it is too much. But that is positive too. It's good to have something like that, something that means a great deal. How this works on my writing is hard to pin down. It's sometimes obvious (with Clara) and sometimes less obvious, for example in the preference for strong, clearly defined rhythms in the prose. But I'm sure it's there all the time."

What fascinated you about the idea of a historical character?

"That very fact. This was a lived life, not something that could be dismissed with the double-edges of the words "made-up". I think because Clara's life was so extreme, so remarkable, there was no chance - and no need- to make up something half so full of contemporary resonance. What matters does not change much in any life. She, and her husband, were a way of talking about things that mean a great deal to me regarding art and its making, the double-standards of supposed genius, the daft class assumptions and appropriations that attach to capital-A Art, the multiplicity of lives that creative women still lead compared to their less multi-taskable chaps. Make someone up to say or even approach those things and one is so easily accused of "agenda": this is less tenable if the story is already extant, as hers was. Is. Mind you, I can confess to the strong desire to de-romanticise, to "defluff" some things that these lives do wonderfully well. The lives of the Great and Good are often so misrepresented; preconceived notions of Great Art or "genius" drive me round the bend. These were people first and foremost, who did the things we all do, not rarefied fantasies talking like Radio 3. To see them as people who did extraordinary things merely within their context as people, this before the music or whatever else they offered into the bargain, mattered to me. The lives of creative women, especially creative women with husbands and children, are routinely overlooked as dull while the bad boys - the mad, bad and dangerous to know sorts - are eulogized. There was a deliberate desire to address that. I'm also fascinated by mental illness, and this story makes it inescapable. Robert Schumann suffered from serious mental illnesses all his life. That is not a facet of genius (another misrepresentation that drives me barmy): illness is illness, from which his composing is separate, and the more remarkable for his managing it. If it had not been for Clara's care - at times full of drudgery and endurance of the near unendurable - he would have killed himself long before he was admitted to Endenich. Even today, however, the weak-minded notion that bad or sick behaviour is merely "creative temperament" persists. The overlooking of Schumann's illness or the sanitizing of it because Schumann was "Great" is horribly elitist. The wonderful thing about human creativity, surely, is that work of genius comes from people whose lives were entirely full of their complement of humanity, of ordinariness and strife and banality. I wanted to write the Schumanns as people, with all of that "ordinary" stuff intact."

Clara Schumann seems to have been peripheralised by history, often misunderstood and buried beneath the mental illnesses of Robert, how hard was it to bring her to the page?

"Nightmarish! For reasons I alluded to above, we're awfully well schooled into seeing the wild-siders, drama queens, self-destructives and oddballs

as interesting that it's almost easy to render that on the page. Writing Liszt was no bother at all to keep on the boil, or Weick, Clara's father. Robert was more complex because he's not a bad boy, not by a long chalk. He's ill and often desperate to be calm, desperate to live well and decently and can't. Clara, though, was driven to be Good. To serve everything and everyone the best she could. That is a kind of honour we don't seem to think much of these days, and certainly we don't find it terribly exciting, if we ever did. It's often thought to be women's natural state and blamed for being "victim-behaviour" or "unassertive". In fact it's hugely assertive of a great deal, and helped her survive too. It was not easy to try to keep that very determined, tough yet humane mindset at the forefront and trust folk would stick with her."

One could say that Clara was a feminist icon, in the same ilk as Wollstonecraft; do you feel that feminism was a driving and central core to this book?

"No. I don't use the word "feminism" if I can help it because it so often means automatic dismissal from talk of aesthetics or meaning or craft. You could say I've been bullied out of it, but for sure the word has become a corner for any writer. Alasdair Gray is a feminist author, but he doesn't get sidelined by it - I would because I am a girly. Besides, Clara herself was a great believer in men first - men as more valuable and valued - not remotely like Wollstonecraft who advocated women's re-evaluation in society from a moral standpoint (and at enormous personal cost) clearly and overtly. Clara's heroism is not that: it's in her survival, her bravery, her being the very best woman she knew how to be despite horrible odds. Feminist iconry is all to pot these days - you hear people seriously advocating the late Diana Spencer or even, god help us, Sarah Jessica Parker, as the same. How desperate is that? Time to focus on value as people and what that value consists in. Where does that leave the fair Jessica?"

The book tackles issues of gender, was this from research or do you feel that you drew on your own personal psychology? How did you tackle these two issues, research vs. the personal?

"Gender isn't an issue, it's a fact of life! Clara's life was to some extent dependent on gender expectations of the time and place she belonged being followed or challenged: how do you write without that? It's not "choosing an issue", it's being accurate. And of course it's me. Who else's eyes or perceptions can I see through? You can disguise and all that, mask, defy and deny within certain parameters to deliberately "slew" a character into "THIS IS NOT ME" but that's more "issue" writing to me than acknowledging gender! Of course, it's also necessary to try to think within the character, based on research, so far as you can. It's acting, I guess": you and not you, the way acting a role on stage is, if you do it with sincerity. What is it Muriel Spark says? "It's not autobiography for heaven's sake. But it's me. How else would you write if not through the personal?" I guess that's why they call how one delivers a novel, the style you write in, "voice". It is something unique to what you are, and that cannot cut out experience and the personal. How could it?

What annoys you most about the industry?

"The contemporary predilection for "Celeb" books and autobiographies. What are these things meant to be offering people? They pay a fortune for the bloody things then market them like buggery. Anti-education - "the masses like this kind of rubbish" thinking. Drives me nuts."

How did you come across the story of Clara?

"Clara Schumann - as a name and not much else - I first encountered in a music teacher's classroom when I was in Secondary School in Ayrshire. He mentioned her in passing as "the only woman composer" This isn't true, but it was what even informed people believed at the time. Twenty years earlier, Beecham said there were none - it's one of those "givens" that was just taken for granted. I remembered the name, though. Years later I was introduced to the piano music of Robert Schumann by a friend and couldn't believe what I'd been missing. And I found out it had largely been premiered and championed by his wife, who was a very famous pianist when he was largely unknown. I wondered what had "become" of her and deliberately found out. The idea of the novel occurred much later. I've always been motivated by trying to express silence or silent states of being, silent people, or people who are constrained from telling their own story for one reason or another. Or who say it and no-one listens. I'm interested too in watchers - the women and children and servants and seamstresses and the last desk player right at the back of the second-violins - the generally unrecorded voices in all sorts of histories. Clara's story is full of resonances that would appeal to me on that count alone. It's not a music book, not a biography or something for a specialist. Heaven forbid! It's a story, then, about a woman first and foremost - a woman trying to cope with her own near-incompatible ideals, and trying to maintain her own moral imperatives. The book is for a general reader - I'm a great fan of the general reader - who is simply enthused by the human condition."

Where do your ideas come from? Where does that initial spark come from?

"Desperation! Usually a distant memory kindled by a scent, a photograph, an object like an old brooch, a sensation like rain on the eyelids. That kind of thing. And ideas, of course, the provocations of contemporary life - things that irritate to such an extent, they need to be exorcised somehow, and writing is really the only thing I've got to do that with. I'm not a polemicist. And thank goodness for that."

What has been your greatest moment as a writer?

"Jings. Finishing "Clara". It was a BRUTE to write and took what seemed forever."

What are you presently working on?

"I've just completed a project called Rosengarten with a sculptor called Anne Bevan. We have worked together three times in the past, and this was our most ambitious project to date and is on the subject of obstetrics. We chose it because I am fascinated by the idea of human intervention in that most vulnerable of situations - the desire to save life, sometimes at appalling cost, how the machinery that routinely saves lives nowadays grew out of daring and desperation. Birth is the one human experience we all share, yet how we arrived is often so closed, so covered. And obstetrics got a rotten deal from 80s feminism I wanted to look at it fresh, in a more humane way. The exhibition and book, both called Rosengarten, are called after the first major book on obstetrics from the 16th century, another collaboration of words and visual art in that it contained beautiful woodcuts. A great deal of research went into that too, especially for the history side of things. And we visited hospitals of course, though only one would let us in. I wrote pieces somewhere between prose and poetry for the book, while Anne made sculptures based on the shapes of obstetric implements. And now I need a break!"

Can you tell us about the editing process you go through whilst writing?

"I can try, but it's probably going to read as very dull and circular indeed. I fret for ages and get what I loosely call "ideas". These are usually whole sentences or images. I find plots very hard because I find plots alienating. What happens, topography, is the least interesting thing about writing a book for me. Then I do what I call loosely "starting" which means writing paragraphs and leaving them alone, writing another para, usually unrelated to the first, leaving it alone and this for as long as I can stand it. I am a very SLOW writer, the slowest I know. The process of filling a blank page is very difficult for me. Editing is where the interest lies. I edit as I go to keep my spirits up and only write new bits when there's no way to avoid it. I'm not sure why making decisions regarding plot are terrible - should she do this or that questions can leave me started for months, sometimes years - but they are. In many ways, my ideal would be for someone to write a shell then let me at it to do the bit I think of as the "real" writing! It's the editing, the embroidery of psychologies, the detail and rhythms of sentences fitting together that grip me. And things, as you can imagine, go forward at snail's pace in this way till it stops. Then I read what I have and work out whether it wants to go further, in which case it's a novel, or whether it's contained as it is, in which case it's a story. Only with Clara did I know it was a novel before I had started."

If you could give your younger self any advice what would it be?

"It passes."

What do you think makes a great read?

"A book that not only invites you in, but then tells you something you didn't know before, or gives you an insight you didn't have before, or shows you a place on the landscape you couldn't have imagined before, and does it with style, intelligence and fresh language and leaves you feeling you just brushed your brain like you brush your teeth. Then it should ring like a bell in your head for a long, long time."

What do you think makes great Literature?

"See above. On a national scale, literature only exists if it is sustained. Scotland could win prizes at forcing literature into corners, forcing writers to reinvent their own traditions continually, losing focus on words as something it matters to foster. The present so-called renaissance of Scottish writing has been nourished by enough strong individuals turning up at roughly the same time, by mutual contact and support, by a wider interest by European and American publishing houses in the writing coming from this country. We can't rely on that winder interest to continue to flourish or the literature of a whole country depends on being seen as "foreign" and having to explain itself within that context - you know, a compulsion to write on "Scottish" subjects or in "scottish" voices for that ethnic appeal (Brigadoon syndrome, where one becomes a tame member of the tourist industry) and the Executive (Scottish Parliament) has to begin to foster sustained work to exist and not wither as it has for every fresh set of determined writers in the past."

What one thing do you think damages writing and writers the most?

"Loosing hope."

Where do you see yourself in ten years time?

"Happier, I hope. Life gets better. I wouldn't do my twenties again for a pension, or my thirties, come to that, but my forties have been a vast

improvement. Muriel Spark once told me her seventies were the best so I'm hanging in there for that."

Finally, many writers have favourite words or sayings; can you share some of yours with us?

"Picabia. "There is only one way to save your life, destroy your reputation." Quite."

Clara by Janice Galloway is available from Amazon

'A gripping narrative—a deeply moving study of love, loss and solitude'
- Independent on Sunday

Living With Crime: M.Y. Alam
by Katie Fuller, Laura Barker & Barbaranne Clark

M. Y. Alam was born in Bradford and has lived there all his life. He currently works as a researcher and part time lecturer at the University of Bradford, a bastion of enlightenment which pays enough to stop him from resorting to criminal acts in order to survive. He is currently working on writing a third book as well as considering growing a neat but thick Magnum P.I.-style moustache. As yet, however, he is not thinking about growing a beard and blowing himself up in a busy shopping mall although he might just do that in order to boost the sales of his next book.

M.Y. Alam is the author of 'Annie Potts is Dead' and the award winning 'Kilo'. M Y Alam consistently articulates the experience of cultural identity, of being British born with Pakistani heritage and he violently runs this through the mixer with life on the mean streets seasoned with references to hip-hop and American gangster movies.

Who do you get your inspiration from?

I guess I used to be quite inspired by not so much reading books but by film, as well as music, you know and I suppose by just what's going on in the world. You see things and you think there must be something behind that, so you start exploring it through writing. My inspiration is really that I like to emulate certain styles, again not so much literary, but more filmic styles; that is very much my thing. When I go to see a good movie that can inspire me, and also when I hear good song lyrics.

What kind of movies do you like?

Quite a broad range. I've got a big thing about American gangster movies, but then I also watch Charlie Chaplin. It's not something that's particularly on one line if you like. Ealing Comedies, Carry on movies, you name it really. I used to like cartoons and animations, and I still do, but as I've grown. My writing seems to be very much of the gangster, crime or criminality genre, but with a focus on what's underneath the criminal, rather than criminals who just go around shooting people or robbing banks. I'm not so bothered about that but BY criminality I suppose.

What's the best book you've read by someone else?

That's a good question actually, especially as I don't do so much reading. It would probably be 'The Dark Knight Returns'. Although it isn't really a book as such. It's a graphic novel. It's about Batman, written I think by a guy called Frank Miller in the late eighties. Its set in a different time where Batman's an old man now and he decides to get out his mask and cape again but he's not as fit as he used to be and he gets the shit kicked out of him a few times. I think that's really interesting. As I said before I've got a thing about animations and cartoons. I suppose the most

significant kind of literature I read was probably comics and Batman was one of the biggest ones around along with 2000AD. Anyway 'The Dark Knight Returns' and also 'Lord of the Flies' I like. 'Catcher in the Rye' is another book by JD Salinger. They're both about young people, and the trials and tribulations of life. There's probably a few more there, but nothing that comes to mind immediately.

Who do you look up to?

My dad I guess. It never used to be that way but it's strange as you get older the bond between yourself and your parents' becomes narrower - tighter and stronger. When I was a teenager there was nobody in the world who was less like me than my old man. Now as I'm getting a little older, it seems to be not the case. I've got a lot of time for a few people, either because of their talent, because of their power or because of their skill. I like the story of Muhammad Ali, who I think is a sort of inspirational character in himself. I use the word character rather than person. I don't know him, I find it very difficult to look up to somebody I don't know, but the idea of somebody like Mohammad Ali is certainly an interesting one. I also like George Best a lot. I know he's a raving, bloody alcoholic but he's a brilliant footballer and I love football, so every time I see George Best playing football in his earlier days, it's nice: it's something that warms my heart.

How did you start writing, and at what age?

I was probably about four and they made me do it at school or nursery. That's the long and short of it. When you're very young, when you're very fresh and blank, and you start learning this thing called writing there's a brief moment when teachers and everybody else really want you to be creative. The first thing you learn to write for most people is probably your name, then after that it becomes kind of different where you have to start learning rules. You have to start understanding the rules of grammar and expression and so on and the creativity kind of takes a back seat. I think the question is really asking me about creative writing rather than just writing my name. I think for a long time especially within educational systems the creativity is driven out of you, you're expected to regurgitate facts and you're expected to learn things in history, and you're expected to write what other people write in English and it becomes a bit uninspiring to me. I suppose that kind of issue is a part of educational systems; educational systems do sort of induce passivity, mediocrity and obedience. The whole point of being in school is to learn things and to also get you ready for the labour market and get you to think the way employers want you to think. You're pretty much conditioned into being like everyone else that's why schools have school uniforms, even when I was at school. When I was fourteen or fifteen I was very lucky, someone spotted something in my writing and would said look you should develop this, you should look at this and you should think about that, and that's precisely what happened. I had a couple of English teachers probably about four from first school onwards who were really wonderful teachers and equally I had some really sadistic bastards. But the English teachers did spot something. I'm not particularly sure if I had a talent to write but I enjoyed it and they seemed to find meaning in what I wrote so they suggested I continued. It wasn't until I was twenty-seven or twenty-eight when I actually started writing seriously. I also enjoyed writing at school and writing letters and taking the piss out of things, but as a structured thing, the idea of being a writer didn't really kick off until I was around my late twenties. That's when my writing career really kicked off informally.

Does writing make you rich?

No not me, it makes some writers very rich, it hasn't made me rich yet.

Can you tell us something about your next book?

I don't know if I can really. It will be something to do with criminality but I've also tried to move in a few other things. What I really enjoy writing about is this thing we all have called identity. Its not only how our identities form and continually change, day to day, minute to minute, it's really about processes, and the things that happen to us, that end up resulting in what we become. That's where the juice is for me, the actual plot. The plot that I'm working on at the moment is about a dude who used to be a criminal, doesn't want to be a criminal, but he's getting roped back into it. It's a moral dilemma, which is what my last book was about as well.

How do you feel your writing differs from Annie Potts to Kilo?
Kilo's probably a bit more polished, there's a lot more control with Kilo. Annie Potts is very much of a rant, it's about me, through my character, just having a go at anything and everything. It's not just about sticking to the point, which is problematic really, because that's the nature of Ammy, (the central character in the book) that's what he's like. This is a dude who just won't shut up. Where Kilo's slightly more of a disciplined effort, slightly more polished, the language is a bit more articulate.

Where and how do you write? Do you have a routine?
I used to. I used to have an almost military regime, where I'd have to write two thousand words every day, and I'd have to edit another two thousand which I'd written the day before. I don't do that anymore, I kind of saw the light. I believe writing is sort of a con now, if you want to write then it should make you happy, right? I think it's quite a bold thing to believe that other people want to hear what you've got to say, and read what you write. It's almost an arrogant and big headed activity, but that's how I view it. Now my writing regime is much less structured, and I write when I really feel like it, and it's a bit more enjoyable for it. I'm not the machine I used to be. I used to turn round a novel in two months. It just got a bit sad. I didn't really do anything else. The book I'm working on now has been going on for two years, and I don't care. Another year, I don't care. Two or three years ago, it would have been done within a month, two months top.

What did it feel like to win the ACE Writers Award?
It was quite odd actually. I've applied for it before, previous years, and I didn't get it. I didn't think I'd get it this year, so I was all ready to start stomping around and making a face, and telling the Arts Council that they were wankers! Then somebody sent me a letter, or rang me I think, and said congratulations, you've got the award - and the money. It was great because I got to pay off a few debts. It was nothing more than that. It was a bit disconcerting in the sense that I was probably more of a writer before I got the award. Sometimes it feels as if good writing comes through struggle, through poverty, even. I mean being in difficult times can inspire a writer. I seemed to be writing more when I was less successful, not that I'm particularly successful now. The Arts Council thing was great, it helped me get rid of an overdraft, and I bought some clothes and some food.

Why do you write crime? Is it something to do with your background?
I don't know, I mean I think about seven out of ten films now have a crime orientation in some way. There's a kind of glamour attached to guns, violence, gangsters, and all the rest of it. What I like about it, is that I think I approach it with a view, that criminals could be me, could be you. It's just about circumstance. I don't really believe that criminals are born. I think it's a lot about choice. I think it's partly because criminality and crime seems to be a bit dodgy, but it's something that we are all fascinated with.

Do you think that writers are born, or that you can learn to write?
 I think that you can learn to write. I have arguments all the time with people about this, because people say being a writer is like being a footballer, you're born with a natural skill or gift. I don't think so; I think you can develop through doing. There's a myth about that. It's a very closed club in a sense. It is kind of an elitist endeavour. And the myth serves a purpose. If you make out that writers are born, then chances are a lot of people who don't write will think that, 'well I'll never write because I'm not a born writer'. So there's a kind of logic there. But I do think that what you need to do, in order to understand that if you like writing, and are good at writing, is to write. Who knows? You won't actually know until you've bothered trying.

 Spalding Gray: The Monster Inside 1941-2004
 Article by Andrew Oldham & Interview by Jeanne Carstensen

The monologue, Monster In A Box begins with the line, "You see in 1967, while I was trying to take my first vacation, my mother killed herself." This is the perfect moment and explosive force in Spalding Gray's life, from this he ran and in the arms of it he created and bore most of his work, and in the end he returned to it. Gray repeated his personal history on a cold New York Winter's night and walked into fiction and speculation. Gray would have revelled in the mystery of his own disappearance, would have loved the run he had in the New York press and those who crept out of his past to tell tales that were an equal mixture of truth and faith. For three months, countless articles dug up his past, his upbringing and the inevitable end. His remaining family, his wife and children became subjects for the press and police. The facts and fears of that cold night manifested themselves in the discovery of a body in the East River three months later. The monster in Gray had finally surfaced; it was the inevitable end for it, suicide.

Spalding Gray was a unique writer, whose brand of neurotic witty monologues revealed an ever-increasing fear of the modern world and his role within it. Gray transformed the drama world and the delivery of the monologue into a modern, open-ended means of self-expression. Even Gray's attempts at suicide, there had been a few dry runs before 2004, had resulted in series of development workshops in late 2002. This touching, hilarious look at his own attempt at suicide, was impinged on more and more by his Mother's suicide, now frequently surfacing in his own life. In Gray's words, about the night he jumped from the Staten Island ferry, he was searching for "the perfect moment". Gray seemed forever to be looking for his Mother and share in the moment he had lost her. His fascination with suicide stemmed from this. In his 1992 book, Impossible Vacation, Gray lists a suicidal moment during his teens, when he considered jumping out of a window. "I figured I'd just break a leg or something, and end up in a cast for the rest of the summer ... Then I also realised that mom wouldn't be able to give me any attention, because she was cracking up and needed all of it for herself."

Spalding Gray was raised in Providence, Rhode Island, as a Christian scientist, he was diagnosed with dyslexia at an early age (he was held back for two years at a boarding school and was further segregated to the edges of his own life). In the sixties he attended the Alley theatre, in Houston; there he learnt and crafted his skills as actor, here he gravitated towards avant-garde theatre of the New York scene. Spalding Gray was a founding member of the Wooster Group. A keen observer of life, he wove monologues out of improvisation, starting with Sex And Death To The Age Of 14 (1979), but his breakthrough as an actor came after a minor role, as the US consul in The Killing Fields (1984), which yielded the monologue Swimming To Cambodia, later filmed by Jonathan Demme. The play focused on the behind the scenes events on the set of The Killing Fields, but ruthlessly explored

USA's responsibility for the ravages in Cambodia. It also showed how Gray saw his life, his failures and his darkest personal secrets, bore out the fact that he was comfortable on the edges of his own life. Other monologues followed, Terrors Of Pleasure (1988), Monster In A Box (1992) and Gray's Anatomy (1996). All of them were made in to films.

Spalding Gray was haunted by his past, hemmed in by his Mother's suicide and his own neurotic fears. Gray he played his life's foibles, pit falls and highs out before audiences, blending fact with fiction, he actively sought out the bizarre underbelly of society, the peripheral groups, the minority fears, the UFO chasers, the Native American rituals, the Thailand Doctors, the quacks and shrinks, the scientists and Christians. Gray created a cut and paste life in his performances, art was life and life was art. He likened his unpleasant experience smoking marijuana in Thailand, to being trapped in "a demented Wallace Stevens poem, with food poisoning". It's a testimony to Gray that he survived his childhood and later life. His personality was constantly raw, childlike and on the edge. His stage style ranged from throwaway to hysteria. And in the end his pasted together existence, his ability to hold back depression and the memory of his mother, just gave way.

The following interview with Spalding Gray was originally published in January 1998 on SFGate.com; the interview was with Jeanne Carstensen. It is kindly reproduced here with the permission of Jeanne Carstensen and SFGate.com

Is it true that you're claustrophobic? I've heard that. So I thought, my god, I'm going to put him in this little room...

"I've had attacks of claustrophobia, but this room wouldn't bring one on. This is still a big room to me. I've probably had two or three of them in my life".

Are you planning on going skiing while you're here?

"I'm leaving from here for Aspen, Colorado, to do a workshop called "The Magic of Skiing." I'm being sent there by Snow Country Magazine to write an article about it. I'm very pleased because I'm being hired as a writer to write about skiing as a result of this monologue, "It's a Slippery Slope." We get up at 7 a.m. and do our centring exercises. It's a six-day workshop. Then we do whatever. I'll find out and write about it. I'll probably try to ski 40 days this year".

So you've really become a big skier.

"I have my moments. If I ski 14 days in a row, on the 7th day I'm skiing well".

Is skiing where you're finding your "perfect moment" now?

"I think looking for the perfect moment is deadly, or craving them, because they're always surprises. But I've had some really great moments on the slopes that keep bringing me back. Moments I'd call getting into the flow that I've never had before in my life. One in particular in Vail, being way out on outer Mongolia and having to get down to ski school to pick up my son or they'd treat him like a delinquent truant. And just getting into one of these flow situations where I was at the top of the mountain at the bottom and I really couldn't tell you how it all happened. Very mystical for me. Skiing is better than sex actually, because for me a good round of sex might be seven minutes. Skiing you can do for seven hours".

I was at the show last night and I loved the line near the end, "I see landscape. No mirror. No story."

"You know, that's one of my favourite lines. It's about the breakdown of the narrative and just taking in the awesomeness of nature. I rarely use

the word "awesome" but I just did. I'm very selective with it because it's overused. But of all the audiences I've played it to, this audience last night responded to that line. I could feel it go through the house. That line is a powerful and threatening line because it's saying I have nothing more to say. I have run out of words because I'm so taken with this moment of being in the landscape. It's a nice moment, both there and in the monologue. You know, I say that I can't make anything up. I think of myself as a collage artist. I'm cutting and pasting memories of my life. And I say, I have to live a life in order to tell a life. I would prefer to tell it because telling you're always in control, you're like God. But that's a tangent"

What are the parts of your life that you won't tell. Obviously you're not telling everything, but you're telling some very intimate things.
 "I'm 56 years old, and the monologues are an hour and a half, so look what's been left out. Here's what happened in the case of "It's a Slippery Slope." It was almost five years ago, I guess, since my son is 5 now ... I didn't think I was going to make it through, whatever that means. I was down to 152 pounds. The therapist that I was seeing was forcing me to see her. I was bouncing between the East Coast and West Coast flying back and forth and involved in all sorts of shenanigans down in Santa Cruz. Going back and trying to see my son and his mom back there and also breaking up with Renee. Also shattering inside and eating a lot of drugs and drinking a lot. I was in therapy in a very touch-and-go way and she really didn't think I'd make it through this summer, which was the summer my mother killed herself at 52 -- and I had just turned 52. I finally settled on the East Coast with my son and his mother to have regular therapy sessions once a week with Martha. Martha was very good to work with because she was a woman my age who I was attracted to but wasn't sleeping with, so we could move that sexual energy in a different way. We always worked together in the office; we never did phoners. We had this rapport and she became my friend and everything was available and we could, or I could, select what might be appropriate as a narrative. So a lot of stuff was left on the cutting room floor of the therapist's office. I'm very grateful for that process. What happened before with Renee, who I was with for 13 years and broke up with, is that everything would be dumped in her lap, which was inappropriate. She'd say, "Save that for your therapist" or "That's guy talk," but at the same time she was saying that she was hearing it. So it was important to break up that relationship and have Kathie be the woman I was with and to have Martha the one I was dumping on. I've gotten better at not dumping. That was a very good process for me, but I have a lot to unload".

What's it like still telling this story five years later? There's some painful stuff here...

"It's very hard. I was so nervous yesterday. I was a mess. I couldn't be around the children. I'm with all three children here: my stepdaughter who is 11, Forrest who is 5, and Theo is almost 1 year. I couldn't rest, I couldn't sleep; I was so agitated. I was trying to listen to an old tape of the monologue: I couldn't stand myself; get out of my body, out of my head. We're staying at a nice suite at the Pan Pacific; I guess they upgraded us: we can go from room to room; it's a joy. I went and hung out with the children. Forrest was watching "Men in Black" on TV and I watched that and then played with Theo, and that really helped me get out of myself because it's a beast to perform. I'm so glad it's almost over. It'll be 4 years old in August and I'm ready to lay it to rest".

Were you a natural-born storyteller?

"No, I wasn't. I was very withdrawn as a child. I can remember when, my mom told me this: My Cocker Spaniel died of distemper when I was maybe 6 years old; my mother said I didn't speak for almost a year. And they were

thinking of taking me to a therapist, which would have been very unusual in Rhode Island at that time. It wasn't until I got to Emerson College that I began using storytelling to shape my day. I was working on a garbage truck and scraping dishes and I would tell stories of my day to the chefs there and other workers, and that continued and got most intense when I moved to NYC in 1967 and was living with Elizabeth LeConte. We had no television and I would come back from walking the streets of New York. I was collecting unemployment from Texas, and I would shape my day at the end of every day and the ritual of that was extremely satisfying. I took a free workshop with the Open Theatre in 1969. Joyce Aaron was running it, and everybody was encouraged to bring in short autobiographic tales and to tell them in a theatrical way; and if you had a moment of blocking, the Open Theatre had a technique called "jamming" in which you'd repeat the word over and over like a musician, like "I fell and I fell and I fell and I fell and I fell and I fell." I stood up and did one day in my life with no jamming. I just flowed. And afterwards Joyce said, "Who wrote that monologue for you?" And then I knew I had something. But that was '69 and that was the big era of Grotowski and theatre of the body and deconstruction of text, so it never occurred to me that would be appropriate to use as an art form until 10 years later. You know, I'm really influenced by the American autobiographic movement. I am more influenced by writers than I am by theatre. I was reading Thomas Wolfe and Allen Ginsberg and Robert Lowell and even Ramblin' Jack Elliot. And Baba Ram Dass, for that matter, when he came back from India and did those first tapes, which were oral reports of his experiences in India, which he later published as a book. I didn't graduate from boarding school until I was 20. I failed 7th grade and 9th grade, and my senior year I was in the senior play and was also writing very well, and I couldn't figure out whether I wanted to write or act, and all my life I think I was trying to figure out how to get the two together and finally I did".

And since you started doing that, of course, this has become a new theatrical genre. Why do you think this kind of autobiographical performance has become so popular in the last two decades?

"I think it's a reaction to the virtual. I think it's the simpleness of it, the presence of it, the minimalness of it in the face of not just the virtual but the extravaganza - Titanic, Speed II, Cats - the huge mega-production of life. And it's going back to a very simple form. I grew up with radio. I didn't see a television in our home until I was 11. And radio allowed me to have my own imagination. So Ozzie and Harriet's house was internalised, personalised. Television stripped that and literalised that and put it outside of me and stole it from me. Now we don't have a television. We have a monitor and the children rent videos. But they're also forced to be within themselves in relationship to reality".

Speaking of virtual, what do you think about the Web?

"First of all, I have an allergy to computer screens. They remind me of electronic jello. The substance of the computer screen doesn't hold my attention or my eye".

You mean the low resolution, the way it flickers?

"The whole composition of the screen. The quality. I just finished working with the singer James Taylor, editing a version of "It's a Slippery Slope" for Mercury Records. And we were doing 12 and 14 hour days in which we were looking at ProTools. And they were literally carving the image on the screen. So you have the sound, a representation of my voice physicalised on the screen, and you're taking the mouse and you're shaving and shaping the sound. Fascinating, but not of any interest to me at all. James really got into it. I didn't. I sat in the back and basically daydreamed and had sex fantasies and waited to be asked to listen to something. I don't type. I'm extremely dyslexic. I write longhand when I write, and I rarely do write. I

compose all of my monologues orally. I refer to myself as an unconscious Luddite, but I'm not against it. I have friends' access information for me. What you get is a lot of opinions. You have to spend a lot of time sorting through it. What I'm worried about is the ecology of information versus feeling. How much information can you feel anything about? I live a very minimal life in Sag Harbor, Long Island. Population in the winter: 2009. I have all I can deal with just in terms of the library. I love to go into the Sag Harbor library and not look at the computer. I can't call up anything on the computer. I like to wander in the shelves and look at the books and actually pull one out and look at it".

The tactile experience.

"Yes, because I'm very disconnected. It takes me a lot to ground. I'm a very airy Gemini. Part of why I live in NYC is that it's a real city. The children help ground me. I have to have that physicalisation for me".

Was there anything special about the audience or the performance last night?

"I tried to tell myself: "Don't worry, don't have great expectations," because I played this show in Berkeley as a work in progress. I had always said that the Bay Area was one of my favourite audiences, but after the experience in Berkeley I began to think again about it because I thought I detected a lag in there. They were checking on SC: spiritually correct; and PC, politically correct. Like when they put a lag in a radio broadcast to make sure there's no bad language going out over the air. The audience was thinking if it was proper to laugh at or not, a bit self-conscious. So I tried to prepare myself for that last night, and we started out and there were a few pockets of laughter here and there and I thought, OK, I'm just going to play it for myself and we'll see where it goes. So I got into a real nice neutral place, and right at the beginning when I said, "I did my first monologue in 1979 called 'Sex and Death to the Age 14'; nothing too traumatic, basically masturbation and the death of goldfish." Boom, they were in. Not to say that laughter is the only thing it's about. It's a humorous piece. But it's one of the ways that the audience signals to me about their involvement. It's very erotic. I don't laugh a lot. But if I can make people laugh it's like being a good lover. From then on out it was a great house. And a big house, and hard to play. And it was so good that I gave all my material, so it turned out to be 1 hour and 49 minutes last night. It was supposed to only be an hour and a half".

So it's not totally memorized?

"It's not memorised at all because I don't memorise. It's visualised. So I'm speaking memory. But it's organically memorised because there's no text to memorise. It's what I call "bushwhacking." An actor or an actress memorises lines and then they have to pretend they don't remember them so they're fresh. But there's a track there. I'm running up a different trail every time and eventually one gets set through tramping in the same space so many times".

I understand you're working on a new monologue called "Morning, Noon and Night." How's the development process going?

"It's a very healing, positive piece, not that "It's a Slippery Slope" wasn't, but it's a monologue that reflects the comfort zone and it's still funny and it's still working. It's one day in my life in Sag Harbor in Eastern Long Island from the time I wake up to the time I go to sleep. So it's my "Ulysses," my "Under Milkwood," my "Our Town." In fact, I'm listening to Donald Donaldson read all of "Ulysses" when I have insomnia: it's 42 hours unabridged and that's my meditation for the one day. I'm workshopping it now at PS 122 in New York. I just finished doing Mondays. This works well because the audiences are very used to that process there and come in open. Morning, Noon and Night is one day and I'm up to 3 in the

afternoon and it's already an hour and a half. I will bring it back in the fall and try and develop the whole piece there before I take it out on the road. I'm not in a rush to get it out. I'm not in a rush to turn my children into characters before they're people".

But they will be characters if it's a day in your current life.
 "Forrest is a very central character. The dialogues with him are incredibly funny".

Has fatherhood changed your work at all? You seem to be turning toward the positive, letting go.

"It's not sentimental, but it's extremely human and grounded and less ironic and less cynical and trusting those other emotions to surface in a sincere way that are also fun, and play well. Most of all it changes me as a person and it's going to change me as a performer. It's extremely humbling and a very strong event for me to be in a situation where the other's need is larger than mine and I can accept it. With a woman it would be very hard to do that because of what I went through with my mom. Her need devoured her - it was so big, and I'm sure it smothered me as a child. So suddenly, that I'm able to deal with it with a child is a big surprise. Also, in the relationship with Kathie, who I'm not married to but live with: we're not in that claustrophobic one-on-one thing because the children are an enormous filter system or other point of reference. Maybe we'll have to keep having them. I say in the new monologue: I understood once I held a baby in my arms, why some people have the need to keep having them. Whoa, what an anchor".

 Babel

Article by Eva Salzman

Everything is so dangerous, nothing is really very frightening
 - Gertrude Stein

The last time I was at the top of the twin towers, was for a Thursday jitterbug night, several months back. A few dollars bought a great night out - dancers leaping out to take the floor with that cunningly improvised look they spend years practising. Cameras: Action. Cut.

Also, it was a convenient too, if you live in Brooklyn Heights. Afterwards, we fell into a cab on West Street and were home in minutes.

Starting from teenage high school days at Stuyvesant High School (now located in a building so close to the towers it was temporarily shut down) Manhattan was my turf. Liberal parents meant enough late night cab rides home, sailing and bumping across the Brooklyn Bridge, for me to nearly lose sight of the spectacular views I'd grown up: To your right, there's the Statue of Liberty, Governor's Island, Ellis Island, the Verrazzano Bridge in the distance. The Manhattan Bridge, which runs parallel on your left, was built to carry the traffic no one thought the Brooklyn Bridge could support.

Under your feet runs the white and red necklace of cars on the FDR (Franklin Delano Roosevelt) Drive. With your gaze, follow it northbound for a view of the midtown skyline silhouette.

Up until now, you could chance looking behind you and not turn into a pillar of salt.

You could twist around in your low-slung black plastic seat, imagine the older, almost fictional New York, starring the Gothic Woolworth building -

the city's first true skyscraper, now returned to its superior position in the skyline.

Now you can include in the survey ghost twin towers, and who knows what you will turn into.

Who left the lights on all night? I'd think, having been trained by an environmentalist mother, a Friends of the Earth avenging angel.

Who were all those people? I'd wonder, never thinking that I would someday know, via the photos and potted histories of those workers' lives, printed daily in the newspapers for weeks after September 11th.

Continuing towards Brooklyn, you can now look ahead at the warehouse-type complex, which houses the World Headquarters of the Jehovah's Witnesses. The lettering across the top of the building reads "Watchtower", which puts the fear of the fear of God in me.

Twice a day, the armies of the saved shuttle between dormitories and work buildings. So neat and pressed! So enviably happy! Especially since the Day of Judgment is upon us at last. (Although, they are all competing for a measly 700 heavenly seats.)

The huge blinking lights at the top of the Watchtower alternate between two simple and secular statements of time and temperature, which also tell me that I'll be in bed within five minutes.

"Take the first exit," I'd lean forward in my seat to tell the cabbie: "Stay left when you get on the ramp, then straight ahead and that's it."

When you get out of the taxi on my street, you no longer have to look behind you. The towers would be in view across the river, right ahead of you. The next morning, walking out our front door, the tower lights would be out, but somebody was always home (as they say) - thousands of somebodies! way up there, toiling at their desks. I'd go round the corner to where my grandparents lived - that was my shuttle service, between Middagh and Cranberry Streets - and, always, those towers loomed up in front of you. You couldn't get rid them. Oh yes you could.

Why would anyone want to live in Brooklyn? asks Truman Capote in his essay on just that. His friends inquired: What do you do all day in Brooklyn? Well, aside from the cool but close distance we can effect from the heart of the city, here's a little Brooklyn Heights literary history: Walt Whitman's *Leaves of Grass* was first printed on Cranberry Street. During recessionary post-Second World War, the ship merchants' homes became the boarding houses of a bohemian enclave which I value as my heritage. Norma Mailer lies on Columbia Heights, and his butch memoir of Marilyn Monroe overshadowed that by another Norman - Norman Rosten - a poet and friend of my family's who actually knew her. My street, Middagh (Dutch for midday) Street is even more illustrious than most in this neighbourhood, in my biased opinion. At various times, Salvatore Dali, Carson McCullers, Benjamin Britten and the stripper Gypsy Rose Lee all lived at Number 7. It was where Auden lived - where Auden may well have been living when he wrote the poem "September 1, 1939":
 "...uncertain and afraid..." "...clever hopes expire..." "...low dishonest decade..."
 "...unmentionable odor of death..."

It is, of course, a poetical sort of street.

7 Middagh Street was swept away in the late 50's by the building of the Brooklyn Queens Expressway - aka the BQE - underneath the Heights. Contrary to what Humphrey Carpenter said in his biography of Auden, the remaining two blocks of the street remain, Unless the last time I was there, I only imagined I was sleeping in a solid bed in a solid house. Unless my memories of growing up at Number 29 are but a dream, which feels not unlikely, at this moment.

The BQE, part of the Robert Moses grand city plan of roads and development, was actually due to run through Brooklyn Heights, but local protest diverted its course slightly, and earned the consolation prize of the Promenade - or esplanade - built over the expressway. One of the more recognizable downtown Manhattan views - including that of collapsing skyscrapers - is from this perspective.

A pleasanter promenade entertainment is a stroll at dusk or lunch eaten on a bench facing over the East River and the Wall Street skyline. At night the river is blacker, swifter, the docks below in shadow, as in the etching hanging on my London wall, which features a clutch of swarthy dockyard workers playing cards on upturned barrels under the bridge. On the Waterfront. You know the movie stills.

The night Promenade clientele is quite different, the trysts more forbidden. I could tell you a thing or two. Auden would approve: as I hope he would of my imagined scene of him, slouched in his worn armchair, smoking, offering a lively critique of Gypsy's latest act, about which he could be admirably objective. In my story, I've thrown in all the literary luminaries into that house, all at once, a chronological impossibility, and all the other characters from their nighttime lives.

Mayor Guiliani can sweep it up, tame it, and tone it down, airbrush and sanitise it as much as he likes, but the New York reality is filmic, down to its subway innards, even for us natives. It is sin and frenzy against a backdrop of elegance and old world wealth, the Third World meets the First, the One and Only, the Biggest, the Bestest. Or giving a mean impression of that anyway. Like the twin towers.

On September 11, 2001 I was out on Long Island, sleeping unusually deeply and peacefully, when my partner woke me up, handing me the phone receiver.

"The World Trade Centers are down." Came his son's terse voice. Why was he telling me about computer systems? I wondered groggily. At midday, the local fire station siren wailed once, as usual - a sound both alarming and comforting, since the same siren wails three times to summon the local volunteer fireman.

During the following month, I stayed put, not rushing into the city and our home, now choked with smoke and strange bitter and lasting smells, and thousands of fluttering bits of paper, like a nightmare confetti. Long Island was deserted now of summer people, and so at its most beautiful, the sea at its warmest. It is the time of year you really see the place, notice how exotic the birds are: kingfishers, the snowy egrets, blue jays, crimson cardinals. "There is no purple in it", one painter is alleged to have said of its extraordinary light, trying to explain the regions attraction for generations of artists.

This was the stage-set. Those weeks of perfect blue skies set against a backdrop of ongoing and impending catastrophe, those first moments prolonged. We had stood just outside the back door, listening the kitchen radio: We don't know how many planes are still up there in the sky, where they are and what they're doing, where they're going. It seemed like melodrama, which couldn't be true.

I became a media addict, unable to tear myself away from the radio, buying bundles of newspapers, trying to disentangle conspiracy theory from logical deductions. All that reality television of recent years had been a red herring, - fin de siecle decadence. The curtains had parted, but the performance was over.

The Freedom of Information Act may offer the opportunity for years of digging, if you're so inclined - pardon the verb - but US news sources are frighteningly limited. For broadsheets, we have the New York Times. And...the New York Times. I trip to midtown yields a Washington Post. A few radio stations, like CNN and WBAI (right now fighting for its life against corporate normalisation which passes for good business) give a broader, more internationally literate perspective.

Eventually, I went into the city for a rehearsal of an opera I'd been writing with my father. Unlike on the day of the attack, the weather was grim. It was too rainy to make out the downtown skyline.

During a Pastrami-on-rye run to a deli, I found the traffic stopped, the bagpipes playing. Which meant either it was St. Patrick's Day, or someone in the Fire or Police Department was dead. There seemed to many dead to think much about the one, so this procession brought it home, inching past. On the fire truck, two firemen were standing sentry either side of the flag-draped coffin of William Henry. Nearby were his boots and helmet. In the streets, people stopped, put their hands on their hearts, crossed themselves. It was odd, this public display of religion in a city like New York. Or maybe not. I thought of the effusive, ostentatious Catholicism of the Spanish or Italian - the high drama, the high art.

It was raining harder than ever. The drenched flag clung to the contours of the coffin. They stopped the truck, slid the coffin off and onto a hearse which had pulled up alongside. The hearse and procession past, everybody continued standing in the pouring rain.

Another day, I walked through the Garment district and noticed a storekeeper in a turban behind every counter, flags in every window. Sometimes it was no grander than a picture on a creased plastic bag, a sort of a last resort flag, if you'd run out or never had one in the first place. A flag had been drawn directly onto the sidewalk under my feet. I guess they'd want their flags prominently displayed around these parts.

I looked right, downtown, at an empty space in the sky. Maybe you couldn't see it from here, but it looked like there are empty spaces everywhere. It was strange to know what everybody was thinking, to not have your own thoughts to yourself. On the train, in the bars, on the streets: the same conversation.

Ground Zero. Bucket Brigade. War. Blood donors.

That last was so poignant. Blood has a limited shelf life. They probably threw most of it away. They didn't need it. The Doctors and nurses had nothing to do. The hospitals were empty.

For days, pieces of paper floated down over Brooklyn onto balconies, into yards. Resumes. Accounts. Diaries. Weeks later, disaster had become an institution. There were tee-shirts, into posters for relief funds and agencies. A city within a city had sprung up on Pier 94 to aid the families of victims. Downstairs, on the Penn Station concourse, there hung huge blank mural-size paper, messages of sympathy from visitors: letters, quotes, poems from other states, from Canada, from abroad.

Photos were still posted on the walls, over stairways, around phones. Everyone still stopped to look at them. "Have you seen..." was the usual caption, as if a huge group of people had upped and run away from home en masse! As if the hospitals might be teeming with amnesia patients.

Waiting for my Long Island Railroad train, I walked upstairs to Seventh Avenue to have a cigarette. Cops everywhere. A couple got out of the patrol care in front of me to light up too. (Suddenly, in this No Smoking City, in this No Smoking country, it was all right to smoke again.) I read the word in large print, at the bottom of a glossy poster...I mean I read the word: Redemption. Even if it was just an advertisement it still meant the same thing.

One degree of separation was about the greatest distance you were going to get from Ground Zero, as it turned out. It wasn't that distant from anyone. There were friends of friends. Someone always knows someone.

My partner, an illustrator, had drawn some portraits of executives and the originals had been in the World Trade Center. A relatively small loss, compared to the loss of Rodin artwork owned by the firm Cantor Fitzgerald, who lost more employees than any other: this loss being the biggest of all.

A friend of a friend volunteered for the Bucket Brigade during the early days when people were hoping for the odd miracle. He had no connection with the building, except for his friend who worked there. What he found in the rubble, was rubble. Oh, and he found his own Business Card - like the calling card of the dead, an appointment only deferred.

The last thing you want to find at the scene of destruction: your own card. It sounds like something you'd make up. A bad idea for a poem. (The content's so good, you can skip the artfulness and still win a few prizes.)

"Imagine," one celebrity said, "Last week, the lead story was whether or not Anne Heche was crazy!"

So, next week, will cars into New York City still be restricted, in environmentally friendly fashion?

Will American suddenly clamor for universal health care, or do they think the sole purpose of government is to fight wars?

Will American still be training security guards for third world sweatshops?
 Will Bush sign the Kyoto treaty, along with his newfound pals?
 Will there be any lasting legacy of kindness and compassion?
 Will anything really change?

Months previously I'd written a poem, The Buddhas of Bamiyan, which was loosely part of a series of poems on the subject of twins - I'm a twin myself - and their destructive forces. (Life imitates, as usual.) I'd also a piece of writing set in a downtown dystopian walled circle of towers. A friend remarked that was surrounded by prophets: "Atavistic," he conjectured.

I've often asked myself if I write political poetry. Is not he personal meant politically? But dislike those who feel compelled to vacation among revolution in order to return home with their conscious safely encapsulated in their new book. That reminds me of a description I heard once comparing English and American studies of acting methods. (Guess which one is from the inside out, as opposed to the outside in.) To say your life is poetry - as in, devoted solely to its practice - puts the cart before the horse.

My friend's sons went to help on the bucket brigade. Another friend went to help the animal charities caring for the lately orphaned animals and for those specially trained to work on disaster sites. I felt guilty for wanting to go have a look, guilty for not wanting to go. Something was telling me to atone for my years of professional rubbernecking. I cancelled my flight back to the UK, forgot to re-book. I missed a reading, some work. I felt paralyzed. In Limbo.

Ezra Pound observed that poets like storms and conflagrations. A teenage yearning for drama often had me heading into the eye of hurricanes, if I could manage it. Right then, I had no desire for the hurricane. The awful imperative of work in England meant I has fly, a state of affairs which sounded scarily like the preface to a tale a la Appointment in Samarra, where the man changes the date with death... to the date he was always meant to have. Solipsistic me! I eventually kept my appointment, but not in Samarra, not this time.

It would be nice to emerge from a so-called cynical age, but to hear poetry in the mouths of journalists, who otherwise wouldn't touch it with it with a ten-foot barge pole, just confirms the idea of poems as nothing more than ready captions for disaster. In this civilized culture, art is not necessary, but war is. At which precise comes the poetry, churned out as the brain's equivalent of fast food, the instant route to emotional authenticity. Otherwise, I guess poets are unemployed, unless they take up disaster writing as a full-time occupation. (Just don't use any elephant-shit or profane images of the Holy Virgin; obscenity will be reserved for real life.)

When I worked in prison I saw first-hand how people turn to poetry in extremis. But the newspapers, outside of follow-up disaster coverage, will not be publishing the poems written by victims before they were victims - ordinary and maybe bad poems about ordinary stuff. Fame, it would appear, rests in the hands of our suicidal, religious extremists.

The personal becomes most political when it seems to matter least, not during the excursions into crisis we didn't book or sign on for, but during other banal moments, the lowly, domestic eulogies for, and of, minutiae.

I always used to resent the way the World Trade Center towers seemed to be trying - vainly, in my opinion - to usurp the Empire State Building as head honcho and champion of the New York City skyline. The Chrysler Building, having bowed out of the race soon after its construction began, never similarly threatened, and anyway made up in beauty for its shortfalls in height.

The unloved World Trade Center contained large un-rented spaces for year, until the city stepped in as savior tenant, thanks to some David and Nelson Rockefeller wheelings and dealings which explains why many Port Authority employees were among the dead.

I remember the stories: in winter, it snowed inside the towers. Around the disaster, there sprang up similar urban myths, miracles and conspiracies which all now sound plausible: need-to-know rogue operational cells of different nationalities; the combined agendas of Mossad and a US government's already-made plans for the middle East; intercepted phone-calls and a remarkably obvious trail of evidence, including stolen passports. There ain't no hysteria bandwagon I can't find a place for myself on board of. (Remember, the Bush family was weaned on oil...)

Who would have believed in the crime- and art-bashing Mayor Guiliani as hero of our story? Or that Democrats, brainwashed by anthems - witness the

power of poetry! - and a ripping Bush speech, would turn Republican overnight? Oh strange world.

This is the very same Mayor whose crusade had led to safe streets and an end to the city's edge of danger, that heart-stopping excitement when me and my cabbie (intimate in just a few short minutes race Hell's Angels all the way down Broadway to Chambers Street.

And then we're up the ramp of that somber, grey Gothic church of a bridge, that literary bridge of old New York.

When I return home these days, I seem to pursue this old New York, as depicted in my childhood books. I hit hotel bars like the Chelsea, the St. Regis's King Cole bar (named after the Maxfield Parrish mural hanging there), or the bar overlooking Grand Central Station, with its starry heaven of a ceiling, its gleaming brass ticket counters, its central clock, its air of excitement. (It took years to get round to cleaning all this up, the way it took years for the derelict Ellis Island to be turned into a museum commemorating the hefty proportion of the US population's ancestors who entered through that portal.)

Eventually, the destruction of the old Penn Station led to the creation of a Landmarks commission, to preserve other city monuments from a similar fate. Meanwhile, you can - I can, and do - gaze dreamily at books and photos of the lost New York.

After 17 years living away, that childhood, which is comprised of both the modern city - - growing taller as I grew taller too - and the old city stays fixed in place, like a library of movie stills, and like the Peter Arno cartoons, the old New Yorkers, the Eloise in New York books which are still on my shelves. But even now, I'll find myself in an ordinary Art Deco lobby, in a wood-panelled and brass elevator. On Fifth Avenue, I'll be glancing up at a frieze of winged horses.

It may seem that the old New York skyline - the roof edgings, the gilt and marble inlay, the gargoyles - has been overshadowed by nasty monolithic minimalism. It turns out that the hated blocks of concrete and glass earned their keep equally, through size and magnitude: in good New Yorker fashion. It's easier to forgive, and love, that which is gone.

These modern tower blocks had already slipped out of modernity themselves before September 11th. They are indeed the old New York - it was all old New York. As it turns out, this old New York I never knew precisely constitutes the New York I did know. Even I am old New York. The personal is much too political for me right now.

Eva Salzman's Poetry Book Society Recommended collection, Double Crossing: New and Selected Poems (Bloodaxe) is out now.

Eva Salzman will be interviewed in the October issue of Incorporating Writing.

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I Say Hello To A Man Named Ayala in the Mountains
Column by George Wallace

NY NY July 10 2004 - Just back from a lightning 36 hour trip to the Catskills, upstate New York, went there to do a reading and panel discussion for the Catskill Mountain Foundation in Hunter Mountain - and also to visit with Charley Plymell in Cherry Valley along the way. I didn't expect to say hello to a man named Ayala in the mountains, too - but it

happened anyway. It was that kind of trip.

It was an easy drive going up, left NYC noon Friday ran the usual gauntlet of traffic and by around five I got to Charley's house.

Cherry Valley is of course where Allen Ginsberg and Peter Orlovsky had their great lost beat farm, a tiny out of the way village settled amid the endless westerly ridges and valleys of New York State where the sun begins its 3000 mile trek across America in earnest. Cherry Valley, where 18th century pioneers, in their continental westward flowing way, stopped; and called the place they stopped the frontier; a nation's frontier before the frontier became flatter and wider and further away than this, when the frontier began to change in untold ways; Ohio, Kansas, Colorado, California; as Charley Plymell says, it's only a three and a half hour drive from Manhattan if you don't stop to piss, though how long it took Ginsburg and Orlovsky, who traveled on different wings than angels, to discover their 70 acre farm in Cherry Valley, how far from the mean streets of New York City or the blue smoke of Tangiers, I cannot say.

As for Charley, he landed here after being blown out of the maelstrom of Wichita to San Francisco, by a literary cyclone that tore Michael McClure from his own Kansas roots and planted him down in the Bay area too. For Plymell, it was the Haight Ashbury hippy sixties, where in addition to living with Ginsburg and Neal Cassady on Gough Street he became printer of the infamous and irrepressible Zap Comix which help defined the era. Later Charley associated with the latter-day avante garde art movement, surrealists like Charles Henri Ford, for example, and other descendants of the Pound/Eliot/Stein/Djuna Barnes vortex in Paris, more recently he's been friend to outcasts and beats like Ray Bremser and Dangerous Dan, idolized by alternative young hip musicians like Thurston Moore (Sonic Youth) and Grant Hart (Husker Duu).

"Allen introduced me to Cherry Valley," Charley likes to say, and the sense of the place held sufficient appeal to the midwesterner and his wife Pam that they've been solid Cherry Valley citizens ever since.

Anyhow Charley was on a muddy blue tractor, it was a borrowed thing, he was knocking down weeds in a wet meadow behind the house, bandana around his gray old head, his arthritic overweight yellow labrador retriever Be-Bop was sniffing around, deliriously content in the company of his master. Charley sent me up to his mother in law Mary Beach's place for an hour so he could finish with the tractor, he had to return it by nightfall, he was a man with a job to do on a borrowed tractor, it made perfect sense, it was all right with me.

Mary Beach is related to Sylvia Beach, of Shakespeare & Co fame, she published Eliot, she published Joyce's Ulysses, as for Mary she's been in the center of a lot of avant garde things for decades, an incredible display of her collages appeared - in a show with her recently deceased husband Claude Pelieu - last year at Enderlin Gallery. Mary is getting a bit older now, I think she may have believed I was a relation of hers, not sure, anyhow she sat me right down in a straightback chair and started catching me up with all the family news; then she took out plastic bags filled with recent artwork she'd done, laid each piece shyly in my lap one by one, she smoked nervous cigarettes, pretty, ancient and happy, while I commented on each collage.

After that Pam and I went back to the house where she started to cook up a couple of huge zucchini I had handed her when I first came up to the door - drove up the New York State Thruway with them rolling around in the back of my car, fresh picked from my little Long Island garden, one of them was a bit bruised with all that rolling, but zucchini are survivors. Charley and

I talked poetry awhile, he wanted me to know about some publisher in Glasgow who is doing some good things, I was keen on looking over his new collection "Some Mothers' Sons," just out from Cherry Valley Editions.

I could see Pam at a cutting board cutting up some fresh garlic shoots she picked out of her garden, all that for a pasta dish, oh and she picked some fresh clean lettuce from her garden too and oiled it down in broad leaf for a salad.

And then another thing happened, Charley has an antique pedal organ in his house since last time I visited him, it is a piece of furniture really, I think it's from the 1830s or so, beautiful rosewood finish and ornate iron footpedals, I noticed it out loud so of course then Charley was off, he had to tell me everything about it and show off the insides to me. It had a kind of squeezebox inside, worked fine, but it was missing the bellows, so Charley says, let's take a walk up to the old Morse place (as in Samuel I. Morse, who invented telegraph or the Morse code, you know) and check out theirs. Seems Cherry Valley made bunches of organs in the 1800s, and a descendant of Morse who lives in that house has one of them, in working order.

Now I know something about organs, having played a pipe organ in church as a kid, but a bellow/pedal organ is a different kettle of fish, anyhow we got into that whole wide issue of specs and technicalities at the Morse house, and we had some beers and we swatted some mosquitoes on the back porch, and we talked politics and art some more. Bottom line is we got back to Pam a little later than we were expected, she had already eaten by then, but there was plenty for us - that pasta dish, wow, fresh garlic shoots are good! So I didn't get out of there til 10 or so, drove over dark mountain passes to Hunter where the bed and breakfast was waiting, got in just before they lock up for the night at midnight, whew.

In the morning I got up early, you know me, poked around the mountains a bit, drank big cups of early morning coffee, looked for old shingled silos and washed out bridges, and corn meadows with white tail deer grazing in them. I got to the mountain festival venue on time, anyhow, and the official business of the day began, meaning I met some very good people for the first time.

Who? Tree Swenson (head of Academy of American Poets), a very in touch person and practiced reader of poetry, we went to lunch up the street at a deli, I liked her loads. A poetically brooding, somewhat tortured dude named Engler from Chicago with a flair for creating small sensational moments. The head of the writing seminar at Bennington College, a well spoken theoretician named Liam Rector with a genial exterior and an air of restrained combativeness about him, he spun dreamy transient masculine monologues, each one unraveling like a thin Alleghany road into disappearing mountain air.

Some older friends were there too - the industrious Maureen Holm from bigcitylit with her inevitable entourage. Phillip Levine and some of the Woodstock poets, a few of whom I met last month at the Dan Propper memorial reading - Phillip's a generous and gentle guy and a fine poet. Anna DiBella of National Pen Women and the organizer Faith Lieberman, they were there, a tandem, what a pair they make. And Donald Lev, that great old bumpy and forlorn Putney Swope of a man, he was there, noticeably without his life partner Enid Dame, she died in the fall of 03. David Axelrod with his young daughter Eileen and his raspy good natured lamentations, and my excellent musician friend Alan Semerdjian, a wonderful young Armenian-American guitarist and poet too, he was just totally digging on the poetry thing like he always seems to do, from to time he stepped up to the mike to sing

and play and create atmosphere.

It was a productive day with plenty of good poetry and relationship building in it for everyone, it went on til well after 6. It took me three and a half hours to get home through the NYC gauntlet but I like night driving alone, that's my time to reflect and no choice about it, so there!

I should mention the sweet soft mountain sun which ruled everything all day in Hunter, and the festival, the weak lovely sun spread out like fine dust over the whole mountain town, a candid uninhibited revelry swinging and swirling outside, all quite primitive and sensuous and pagan and invigorating, mountain music and crafty woodshavings of duck decoys and deer with antlers, old women quilting, young women in pretty flowered headdresses, a llama serenely oblivious to everything under the tent of a petting zoo chewing llama cud, the cascade of a mountain stream behind the theater where the readings were held, skimpy ghost of a river with its dry spots and sudden miniature rapids.

I saw a lot of things, I saw a young couple embracing in a handfilled pocket of resting water in wet bluejeans and long drawling kisses, it was kind of a drunk wrestling embrace, she was tipsy and delirious her knee was chucked deeply and affectionately and off-balance into his crotch, it was painful, you know, to witness, he kept trying to avoid that knee of hers, his one hand in her hair and his loose other hand pushing at her knee, his body arched awkwardly on the rock in the water, he was on his back, she was kissing him, it would've been clear to any man alive that he didn't want to let on that he was uncomfortable, he had to do something about it, he might lose the moment, but he HAD to move that knee of hers.

Lots of other things. Upriver a mother with some small children sunbathing on rocks, they were paying attention to nothing beyond themselves, the children's laughter was crisp. In a grove of trees two musicians I had seen earlier in the day walking up main street with their guitars, they were taking a secluded little break, they were smoking weed in the bushes, there was jazz or blues or rock and roll in their hearts, they were grooving on it all, they were in the music of the moment.

And then there was Ayala.

I saw him on the road that leads up into the western pasture in the foothills, where all the cars and motorcycles and minivans - my car too - were parked in tall grass. Ayala was a solo contemplative man leaning on the bridge railing, his eyes were fixed on blue ridges and peaks, he was not looking down into the muddy water, he wasn't looking out at anything at all, he wasn't part of anything, he was just the parking attendant man, his name was Ayala - I read his nametag - and he was taking a break from attending cars. He was just smoking a cigarette and looking up at the mountains and thinking about nothing and everything at the same time.

'Hello,' I said to Ayala. 'Hello,' he said back, without looking at me. He said it in that businesslike way a working man greets another working man, without much enthusiasm, but with the presumption of respect which a man who believes himself to be honest is willing to offer to another man.

There was nothing else much for me to say to Ayala, or him to me. So I went back to my car and headed out for the highway, and he went back to his cigarette and his undisturbed view of those big blue mountains.

Like I say, I didn't expect to say hello to a man named Ayala in the mountains, but it happened anyway and that was all right with me. It was that kind of trip.

 The Example of Thom Gunn
 Article by Ian Parks

I met Thom Gunn in San Francisco in the summer of 1994 while on a Travelling Fellowship to the United States. After a brief correspondence we'd agreed to meet for lunch in a bar overlooking the Bay. The occasion was - for me - a memorable one: Gunn was urbane, intelligent and engaging; entirely like his poems. We discussed the poetry of W. H. Auden and his reasons for choosing America, Thomas Hardy's indebtedness to the Ballads, and Donald Davie whose criticism and poetry we both admired. My first encounter with Gunn's work came when I was at school in the 1970's through the Faber *Selected* he shared with Ted Hughes. The very nature of the joint collection seemed to invite comparisons, and while I felt that both poets had important things in common (an interest in energy and an idiosyncratic approach to form) Gunn appealed directly to my own sensibility. What struck me most forcibly was the fact that an intelligence was at work behind the poems, and a personality too. Then a friend told me that a recording of Gunn reading his own poems was available from the Marvell Press in Hull. I sent off my postal order and waited. In those pre-CD days recordings came on 12 inch vinyl discs and I remember worrying in case the item would arrive in pieces. Twenty-eight days later I placed it on my turntable and listened. What became apparent was that Gunn wrote his poems to be heard as well as read; that they existed as sound as well as sense. The cover was iconic: in leather jacket and jeans Gunn looked more like a rock star than a poet. He certainly appeared more accessible than his contemporaries. The image was as uncompromising as it was memorable - and it stuck.

I wanted to begin this appreciation of Gunn's poetry with a personal recollection of my experience of his work as it is his example as a poet that I'd like to explore here. More than any other poet since the end of the Second World War (with the exception perhaps of Auden himself) Gunn has demonstrated how formal variety can shape the content and direction of a poem. Following his death in May this year, it's now possible to see that body of work as something no longer in process but as a watertight artefact; something that developed, changed and grew as the poet himself moved through his life. The stages of Gunn's development are so clear that it is possible to divide them, formally speaking, into four distinct yet interrelated phases: metre, syllabics, free verse and a 'late' period, beginning with *The Passages of Joy* in 1982 where all three are utilised to great effect. For Gunn, form was always integral to the poem; so much so that it's impossible to divorce one from the other. What we witness from collection to collection (sometimes from poem to poem) is a gradual loosening of the structures and a move towards increased experimentation. I would argue that the shift from metre to free verse *through* syllabics is significant in that the poet arrives at free verse having written in metre. What characterises good free verse is the poet's awareness of where and how it departs from metre; and Gunn, having written extensively in a wide range of metrical forms, approaches both syllabics and free verse with a full awareness of what the 'looser' forms have to offer. Certainly, a free verse poem like *Touch* allows Gunn all the fluidity he needed in order to make the poem what it is - a hesitant, probing, questioning evocation of perception. It is difficult to imagine the same effect being achieved through metre with its tendency towards statement rather than exploration. Through all the phases of Gunn's career, however, this same overriding sense of an intelligent personality at work behind the poems remains to the forefront. The changes in form allow Gunn to register fine changes in tone and perception. What I'd like to do here is to offer a brief examination of three poems - *The Wound* (metre), *My Sad Captains* (syllabics), and *Autobiography* (free verse) - in an attempt to show how Gunn's poems underwent this transition from metre to free verse and how the form of each poem is entirely appropriate to its content. It has long been recognised

that metrical verse encourages a tendency towards reflection and introspection while free verse acts as a vehicle for expressing the immediate, capturing the sense of the moment as it happens.

Gunn was aware of this throughout his long career as a poet and his early, metrical poems are often meditations on a past event (*The Secret Sharer*) or explorations of a specific psychological condition (*The Wound*) while his free verse poems (*The Cat and the Wind* and *Fennel*) encapsulate the excitement of the moment. For Gunn, syllabics occupy a sort of middle ground, both chronologically - in that they coincide with his move to America - and as a 'bridge' between his work in metre and free verse. In a poem like *Considering the Snail*, for instance, he is able to combine the meditative attributes of metre with the immediacy of free verse.

Most of the poems in Gunn's first collection, *Fighting Terms* are written in strict metrical forms. Even here, however, the sheer variety is impressive. Published in 1954 while Gunn was still an undergraduate, the collection demonstrates his interest in the formal aspects of Elizabethan and Jacobean poetry while developing ideas about energy, intelligence, instinct and the will. The *Cambridge Review* recognised it as 'one of the few volumes of post-war verse that all serious readers of poetry need to possess and study' and it set the tone for subsequent volumes. Unlike Larkin, Jennings, Amis and Davie - poets he came to be associated with as part of the Movement - there was a vigour and youthfulness about Gunn's work that separated him from the rest. As time passed, and the essential differences between the Movement poets became more marked than their similarities, Gunn fared better than his contemporaries with, perhaps, the exception of Larkin who went on to follow an entirely different trajectory. The qualities that made Gunn's poetry so distinctive were in evidence in the early poem, *The Wound* where the injury sustained by the speaker is a purely psychological one. The driving force behind this poem is, of course, the iambic line which Gunn utilises with ease and to great effect in the opening stanza:

'The huge wound in my head began to heal
About the beginning of the seventh week.
Its valleys darkened, its villages became still:
For joy I did not move and dared not speak,
Not doctors would cure it, but time, its patient skill.'

Over a further four stanzas Gunn repeats the same *ababa* rhyme scheme, allowing the natural stress patterns inherent in the speaking voice to foreground the semantically significant words. Like Wordsworth before him, Gunn understood the power of a monosyllabic word, especially when it occurs at the end of a line. Over the remaining stanzas, for instance, Gunn uses rhymed monosyllables with marked regularity: *Troy, turn, joy, burn, boy, said, out, bed, lout, dead, breath, sheath, death, reel, pain, feel, again, heal*. The effect is cumulative, especially when the words have reference to a concrete object or a simple abstract emotion. Even when Gunn employs a run-on line, as he so often does in his metrical poems, the rhymes are full enough for them to be conspicuous. The poet seems to be drawing our attention to the poem as a made thing: an object or an artefact where the content is subsumed into the mode of expression. Gunn departs subtly from his strict iambic base; the lines that adhere most closely to the fixed metrical pattern are the most memorable. The line 'For joy I did not move and dared not speak', for instance, gains much of its power from the interplay between the stressed and unstressed syllables. Therefore *joy, moved, dared* and *speak* (again a series of monosyllables) are forced into a position within the line where their importance is unquestionable. Some poets have displayed a suspicion of rhyme. Milton, after all, chose to write *Paradise Lost* in blank verse because he felt that the crudities of rhyme might impair it. Gunn, however, is a rhyming poet and remains so to the end with many of the poems in his final collection, *Boss Cupid* relying

heavily on rhyme for their effect. Rather than viewing rhyme as restrictive, Gunn sees it as an integral part of the poem and uses it to concentrate and focus the themes in hand. The rhymes in *The Wound*, as in the rest of Gunn's output, are never arbitrary or used merely to 'decorate' the poem; rather, they progress naturally, one rhyme developing from the last while, at the same time, anticipating the next. In the final stanza, where Gunn identifies most closely with Achilles, hero of the Trojan War, *reel, feel, and heal* form part of a logical, almost visual continuum; the alternate rhymes *pain* and *again* are also closely connected to the sequence of injury, recovery, and relapse that form the poem's hard core. At this early stage, Gunn looked as if he might develop into a poet with a pronounced technical gift, bringing it to bear to whatever subject he chose to write about. Nothing prepared the reader for what would happen next.

What did happen next was Gunn's move from England to the West Coast of America and his experiment with syllabics. The two are so intimately connected that it is impossible to separate them. Certainly Gunn's change of environment was liberating and his exposure to American poetry crucial to the direction his work now took. It is easy to see why Gunn was so attracted to syllabics: they offered him an alternative to the metrical base he'd laid down while in England and possessed certain cultural undertones which connected the form with recent developments in American verse. More importantly, syllabics allowed him to appear casual while, at the same time, imposing a hidden structure through which he could explore his ideas. The freedom afforded by the new idiom nudged Gunn's work in a different direction as he discovered the perfect vehicle with which to deal with the content his poems were struggling to express. The tensions that arose out of this struggle between form and content produced some of Gunn's most assured and idiosyncratic work. With the publication of *My Sad Captains* in 1961, Gunn was able to set his metrical poems alongside newer work in syllabics, thereby highlighting the full potential of the freer form. A casual comparison of the opening of the title poem of this collection with the first stanza of *The Wound* makes the difference obvious:

'One by one they appear in
the darkness. A few friends, and
a few with historical
names. How late they start to shine!
but before they fade they stand
perfectly embodied, all

the past lapping them like a
cloak of chaos.'

Not only is the tone more conversational, but the lines are not end-stopped as in the earlier poems. Here the stanzas themselves run into each other rather than acting as watertight units. While Gunn employed strong, full rhymes in *The Wound* the rhymes in his syllabic poems are so subtle that they have to be pointed out. Over three stanzas of six lines each a loose *abcabc* pattern is established. In the first stanza, for example *in* rhymes with *shine*, *and* with *stand*, and *historical* with *all*. Most of the effect, however, is produced by the nature of the syllabic line itself. In the case of *My Sad Captains* and *Considering the Snail* Gunn employs a line of seven syllables. By definition, the iambic line used to such effect by Gunn in his metrical poems is an even one, usually consisting of six, eight, or ten syllables with the stress falling on the second and alternate syllables. The nature of the syllabic line forces semantically 'weak' words to the end of the line. It is difficult to imagine Gunn ending the line of a metrical poem with *in* or *and* the way he does here. However, significant words such as *historical*, *shine*, *convulsion*, *disinterested* and *stars* are effectively foregrounded. What I am suggesting here is that the use of syllabics allowed Gunn to capture the thought process as it happens.

The form and content are inextricably linked to capture the immediate, hesitant, faltering nature of a mind at work. In a poem like 'Blackie, the Electric Rembrandt' Gunn captures the moment precisely as the speaker watches the tattooist at work, producing 'ten // stars, hanging in a blue thick / cluster'. Again Gunn uses the seven syllable line to re-enact this immediacy, this time writing in rhyming couplets. The ease with which Gunn inhabits the syllabic form makes it difficult for the reader to appreciate the technical facility he has at his command.

The move from syllabics to free verse is more dramatic than was the move from metre to syllabics. By the time Gunn came to experiment with free verse in the mid-1960's he was looking for a form in which a different mode of experience could be expressed. And it is Gunn's extensive use of free verse during this period that has provoked the fiercest argument among his critics. The poem *Autobiography*, published in *Jack Straw's Castle* in 1976, is typical of Gunn's approach to free verse: unrhymed, unpunctuated, growing naturally out of his interest in syllabics. Apart from being an evocation of youth -

' how it felt
to sit on Parliament
Hill on a May evening
studying for exams skinny
seventeen dissatisfied'

it is also the 'sniff of the real' he wants 'to get' and free verse allows him to do so. For Gunn 'the longing' of the recollected experience 'has become in memory / an inclusion' and that inclusion is somehow embodied in the movement of the poem and in the shape it makes on the page. With both metre and (to a lesser extent) syllabics the poet is following a pre-ordained structure, essentially adapting to their own purposes rules established by someone else. The free verse poet however invents their own set of rules as they go along. Robert Frost famously said that writing free verse is like 'playing tennis with the net down'. Gunn does not abandon completely the things he has learned from writing in metre and syllabics; rather he incorporates this experience into his approach to free verse.

In *Writing a Poem* (reprinted in *The Occasions of Poetry*) Gunn states that the 'act of writing is an exploration, a reaching out' and that poetry has both 'irrational' and 'rational' attributes. Without being too schematic, it appears from Gunn's output that the metrical work deals with the rational side of his poetic imagination; the free verse with the irrational. By the time we reach *The Passages of Joy* the poet is obviously at ease with both metre and free verse - although his interim experiments with syllabics informs both. It is interesting to compare, for instance, the fluidity of *The Menace*

'guard	father
executioner	angel of death
delivering doctor	judge
cop	castrator'

with the strict iambic octosyllabics we find in the second stanza of *June*:

'The month is cool, as if on guard,
High fog holds back the sky for days,
But in their sullen patch of yard
The Oriental Poppies blaze.'

That both poems appear in the same collection is remarkable. What has happened, of course, is that Gunn has come to understand the intrinsic *function* of both approaches and utilised them to great effect, something he

carried forward into *The Man with Night Sweats* where the looser structure of the title poem contrasts strongly with the formal elegies that follow it in the collection. Gunn was still developing along these lines in his last collection, *Boss Cupid* which appeared in 2000. The merest flick through that or the *Collected Poems* will convince even the most casual reader of Gunn's formal variety as poems of different shapes and sizes spring off the page. I hope to have showed that Gunn's approach to form has never been arbitrary; that, in his best work, Gunn has managed to achieve that flawless melding of form and content which allowed him the freedom to explore a wide range of themes with such depth and assurance. I realise, in doing so, that I've run the risk of emphasising form at the expense of other, equally valid, approaches to Gunn's work. What characterises that work thematically - his love of 'risk' - characterises it formally too in his willingness to experiment with a wide range of forms, encompassing metre, syllabics and free verse. Risk is central to his development as a poet. It carries with it the possibility of failure. Aware of this, Gunn was still able to conclude one of his most formally perfect poems, *A Map of the City* with the statement that he 'would not have the risk diminished'.

A New Route

Article by Ian Daley

In October this year route will be launching a new website. Route-online will be replaced by a new site which is focused on distributing books straight to your printer. Asked by Inc Writers to write a few words about the state of route and its current activity, I found the easiest way to try and explain this was by answering a series of questions. I was given the first one as a starter and then found I had to make up my own as I went along.

And how's route then?

I'm pleased to say that Route has now come safely through a period of transition; we've separated successfully from Yorkshire Art Circus and are now fully-fledged independent press. The necessary upheaval has meant that our output has been on hold for a year, but we now find ourselves in a position to pick up from where we left off and move on again.

The publishing programme has restarted, *Jack and Sal*, a second book from Anthony Cropper is just out and *She Is*, a new collection from Michelle Scally Clarke will be out in September. We now have sufficient titles secured to allow us to reintroduce a subscription scheme, starting with the next title in the route series, *Naked City*, which is scheduled for a November release.

A significant boost to our activity recently was the start of a new Arts Council funded programme of work called *Route for Writers*, which provides two further titles in the series of new writers anthologies *Route 15* and *Route 16*. It means new openings for writers and also allows us to take a look at something we've wanted to address for sometime, the functionality of route-online.com.

The functionality of route-online.com?

Route-online.com always wanted to be a magazine site. A new version - version seven - will finally get round to fully accomplishing this and make a distinction between what writing is suitable for the Internet and what is better in books. The new site will exist in its own right as a publishing medium, but rather than use it as a place to display stories in a half-hearted manner, instead we will use it as vehicle to distribute books.

Distribute books?

We have now passed the point of thinking it worth the effort of cutting and pasting short stories into web pages and thinking that that's acceptable. It's difficult, bordering on impossible, to read fiction online if the truth be told. It's better off in a book and read away from a computer. Furthermore, it should not be overlooked that countless people these days have got the capability to make a book sat at their computer, with very little trouble.

To this end we've introduced a function into route-online.com that presents writing in small pre-formatted book files. We'll put up guide information about how to turn these files into books in a matter of minutes, all that is needed is a printer, a pair of scissors and some kind of binder. The kind of physical books we are proposing are the ones we use all the time when working with draft books and they are both sturdy and aesthetically quite pleasing. The files are small, quickly downloaded and compatible with the majority of systems. For a while at least, we'll supply binders and obviously a regular supply of new writing.

New Writing?

We are looking to present new work in chunks of 20-50 book-sized pages on a monthly basis. This will include mini-short story anthologies selected by theme or a series of stories by a single author, each anthology holding perhaps four to six stories. We will also introduce small poetry collections into the mix, novellas and collections of essays. These new slots give writers that previously may have been limited to single stories in anthologies the chance to stretch their legs a little and it also provides the reader with enough material to have a good run with a new author but not too much to be discouraged from taking a chance. For route it gives us more flexibility to become familiar with the work of more writers and help feed our book programme.

These bite-sized chunks allow readers that use the site the ability to select up to three or four sections of their choice and compile their own book. For example one reader might combine *Norwegian Love Stories* with *Down and Out in Coventry and Watford* and *Stories about Brothers*, or any other combination of fictitious collections, turn them into a book to read at their leisure, and then continue to click around the further delights in the magazine.

Further delights of the magazine?

The magazine will feature articles, columns, comment and interviews to dip into and to read online. The site will be designed with the capacity to host streaming audio for performance recordings and also a gallery for exhibiting photographs and artwork. There is capacity within the structure for new magazines to appear within the site, providing more specialist comment and material. Plus this not really a private venture, this is a publicly funded project and this support allows the site the luxury of being publicly spirited, and we hope to include regular work from other small presses and showcase the writers on their lists. So hopefully, we will establish the site as a home for independent thinking and good quality writing.

Route-online.com will become exclusively a magazine site, so a lot of the writers support and technical information you will find on our current site will vanish. All this information will appear on our parent site www.id-publishing.com so writers need to register with that for regular updates on submission news.

Submission news?

All our guidelines are posted on the current website. When new editors become involved in the project, further more detailed submission requests

will be posted, including information on the stories required for books in the route series.

Books in the route series?

The route series is a regular installment of new writing anthologies, the first thirteen issues were newspapers, route 14 was the first in book form, titled *Next Stop Hope* and was published last year. Each of these titles will be themed but will also contain general submissions. The next in the series, route 15, is themed around *Naked City* and will contain stories set in the heart of the regenerated provincial cities, a series of photographs and a general collection of short stories. *Naked City* will be out in November. Currently route 16 is scheduled for a May release.

In addition to the new work being generated through *Route for Writers*, we will be adding to our programme with new books and generally look forward to settling down to a period of sustained publishing and getting the imprint back on track and books in to people's hands.

The Arvon Competition Year 2004
Article by Barbara Lyon, Assistant Director

As I write the London office of the Arvon Foundation is preparing itself for the arrival of 6,000 poems over the next three weeks. That's 2,000 a week or 400 a day in the run up to the close of the competition on August 12th. That's a lot of poetry. We have received about 2,000 since the competition was launched on May 1st and if previous years are anything to go by 70% of the entries come in during the last three weeks of the competition.

The competition takes a lot of planning. First port of call is always our sponsors. The Duncan Lawrie Private Bank has supported the competition for many years by sponsoring elements of the prize money and we are always grateful for their support (they also process all the entry fees!). This year Blackwell's came on board and supported the competition through its website and also by making the entry forms available in branches of Blackwell's. The competition was launched officially in *The Times* Saturday Weekend section and a lot of interest was generated as a result. This year with the support of Blackwell's and *The Times* we have reached a greater audience than we have before.

The judges are also approached in good time as it is a large commitment to make and diaries need to be clear to ensure that there is enough time for all the poems to be read, a short list decided and the winner and runner's up to be finally chosen. This year we are very pleased to have Jamie McKendrick, Jean Sprackland and Tom Paulin as judges. All the judges ask prior to agreeing, whether we think they'll be a repeat of the first legendary year of the competition when an unprecedented 35,000 poems were entered!

Once the sponsors and judges are in place the publicity strategy is formed. As the competition is international, press releases are sent out far and wide, from the *Liverpool Echo* to the *Hindustan Times*. We have been especially pleased to receive support from the *New York Review of Books* who not only mentioned the competition in their hard copy but also sent the information out to their 13,000 e-newsletter subscribers. The British Council have also been publicising the competition on their website and in their offices around the world and we are certain to have found new voices as a result. We have also seen a great response from those mailed by Poetry Ireland. The entry form is also sent out to all previous participants and those who have called into the office to request a copy prior to the launch on May 1st.

May is a quiet month.

From June onwards we begin to see the fruits of our labour as the poems start to come into the office. We have a simple and efficient method of logging all the poems and sending them out to the judges using a team of enthusiastic volunteers to help us. Our meeting room takes on another form as the arch lever files of poetry begin to consume the room.

July has seen the poems starting to arrive daily by the hundreds and we wonder at the richness and the diversity of work we receive. The 12th Arvon International Poetry Competition is well under way.

Ted Hughes started the Arvon International Poetry Competition in 1980. He gathered Charles Causley and Seamus Heaney together and got them to agree to read every single poem that was entered. Most other competitions employ a 'sifter' to create a shortlist, but not Arvon - in that first year 35,000 poems were entered and were all read by Causley, Hughes and Heaney. Philip Larkin was also a judge that year, but with prescience, decided he would only read the final 1,500 short listed by the other judges.

Aside from the fact that the judges read all the poems entered, the other major way the competition differs is that there's no limit on length. Jo Shapcott, one of the 2002 judges, wrote "The Arvon poetry competition is unusual in that there is no restriction on length for poems entered. This gives the competition a seriousness and quality others don't have simply because it recognises that the short lyric poem, however luminous and marvellous, isn't the end of the story".

Most important of all has been the firm rule of anonymity which means that the judges know the authors of each poem only by a number. As a result a completely unknown poet has the opportunity to compete on equal terms with someone who is published and widely read. This helps to attract little known as well as established poets and to ensure that the winning poems reflect the abundance and range of today's poetry.

Arvon is very grateful this year to Jamie McKendrick, Tom Paulin & Jean Sprackland, who have agreed to be our judges. The judging process takes about six months and it's a large commitment. Arvon has been lucky to have the support of the poetry world over the thirty years since Arvon was founded, and we have never had a shortage of well-renowned poets who have agreed to judge the competition. There are two reasons why Arvon continues to receive the support of the poetry community.

Firstly, the competition works as a showcase for new and existing talent on the poetry scene. An anthology of the £5,000 winning poem and the six runners up plus a selection of commended works never fails to see a mix of familiar and not so familiar names side by side.

Secondly, the competition entry fee goes to fund the work of Arvon. This includes bursaries to enable those requiring financial assistance to attend our residential writing courses, maintenance of our beautiful properties in Yorkshire, Shropshire and Devon as well as funding elements of our education programme. This year we hope to raise over £50,000.

Arvon now runs residential creative writing courses at centres in four locations: Devon, Shropshire, Yorkshire and a centre near Inverness which is supported by Arvon but owned by the Moniack Trust. The courses, for people of all ages and backgrounds, provide an inspirational space and dedicated time to practise the art of writing across all genres. Arvon also

runs an education programme for young people as well as running partnership courses with organisations interested in writing.

If you are interested in finding out more about the residential creative writing courses that Arvon runs, please log on to:

www.arvonfoundation.org

The day in the life of...a children's editor
Article by Patris Gordon

It's child's play, really. Get a couple of pages together with more pictures than words; have a comic strip with large speech balloons for story lines and bang, there you have it, your own children's magazine. But if it were that easy, I'm pretty sure that we'd all be doing it, right?

There's a hint of truth to the above statement because kids' publishing does tend to keep the story simple. Children's books and comics are seemingly more visual-led than adult titles and, therefore, require bigger and brighter pictures and text to draw them in (although some adult publications, for example, *Heat* and *Now*, do make you wonder about the mentality of the average audience). But on the whole, it's not wise to underestimate working on children's magazines.

So, where do we start? Working on two prominent kids' cartoon brand names, such as the *Rugrats* and *Beyblade*, hopefully reduces the need for reader enticing, especially as both of these titles appear on terrestrial and satellite television. It takes more than slapping a few images of the main characters onto a profile page when you're struggling for feature ideas but when working with new designers or failing to impress the license holders with anything too creative, doing a brand title helps when forced to compromise.

As with most cartoons, we're not dealing with real time and the characters rarely change over the duration, making it difficult to reinvent them when it comes down to flat-planning and setting the agenda. And this is the tricky part of editing: keeping it fresh. The day usually begins by running over the flat-plan, which has been created on *QuarkXPress*, printed out and is stuck beside me on an empty wall. The pages usually run at a maximum of 36 for our magazines, and having the flat-plan allows me to be fully aware of what has been done, designed, written and confirmed. There are often blank spaces on the pagination as many public relation companies that provide competition prizes or agencies with adverts haven't always given confirmation on the work as implied. So these blank spaces are left with question marks and a secondary feature idea is put in its place, in case nothing comes through later on to fill that page.

As most office jobs, checking the email seems to be one of the first things to do in the mornings, as it allows you catch up on what you may have forgotten to do, or some documents and information you were waiting upon have finally come. I receive most of the images (except the comic strip and the character style guide) by email, in form of a jpeg or a PDF, and the three writers that I commission to produce the text for stories, puzzles and features send their work via cyberspace. Going over the emails will usually lead to using the telephone, putting in calls to get further clarification for the confusing emails. The manager editor will then buzz me on the blower and check whether the two titles I do are running according to schedule.

The designers and product managers will need clarification on what response I have received from the license holders, whether they liked the pages and product packaging that we've done and sent to them.

Getting down to write and sub-edit can become a chore when the phone is ringing and someone is calling for assistance but with making priority decisions, it becomes easier and the passion for writing comes out again after you've managed to negotiate some time for yourself.

There's often word of company changes from the managing director, which via email usually encompasses memos about visitors, titles and recent personal standings. The word on how well the titles are doing often goes amiss until the last moment, and a frantic last ditch effort by the managing editor to urge editors (there are five editors at the company) to step up the games and revitalize the given publication.

Overall, the main premise of working in children's magazines is to manipulate young minds by making them want to buy your title over and over again. Children tend to be fickle and infrequent buyers so the leaning towards sensationalism in terms of larger-than-life captions, headlines and characters are all well used. But like most magazines, adult or children, this is the usual procedure for any title. But the content of kids' comics that consist mostly of puzzles, strip stories, posters and competitions means, unfortunately, it doesn't rely on the judgment of the reader but the creators of the comic, us. So, to be cruel is to be kind, and you'll quickly understand that children appreciate people who can not only give them orders but also, set out challenges. And that's the role we essentially play as children's magazine editors. Who'd have thought it?

 Lake District Poet Comes To New York
 Article by George Wallace

Peter Lewin, a poet from the Lake District of England, debuted in Manhattan at the Bowery Poetry Club last spring, reading from his latest collection of poems, and also helping to provide a 'launch' in New York for the work of "INCWRITERS," a UK poets' organization.

Lewin, whose book "Silverdale" has been described as "intimate connections between person and place explored with delicacy and wit" (Dr Ian Parks) and "A seascape of imagination and words...a writer of refreshment with all the qualities of phosphorous" (The Slab), offered up a range of poems from that collection that were notable not only for their immediacy and language power but for the humanity - and the verve with which he delivered them.

Through the course of a nearly hour-long reading Lewin described intimate details of his origins.

In particular, a father who loomed large as a figure in his life - the impact of the man's drinking, womanizing, and fisticuff-consciousness- was referred to again and again by the poet. So too were school bullies who broke the noses of less pugnacious students. As in this poem:

Liam, drunk with nowhere to go
 sits on a corner bench. On the green
 roses behind him are luminous white.
 Think of Tommy Cooper and laughs:
 "Just like that! he says.
 The quintet has moved on:
 materialised by the mud flats
 trumpet player wears a velvet cloak,
 white spats, floppy purple hat
 stands on a scrubbed white boulder.
 A fox watches from the thicket
 wondering how he got here.

fr. Billy Moon, published in Dreamcatcher

Though Lewin spent most of his childhood in Yealand and Silverdale - two districts of Great Britain's enormously attractive Lake District (N.B. also the location of Wordsworth's Dove Cottage), he currently lives and writes in Preston, Lancashire. In addition to his poetry, he is an author of place, having contributed to a travel and popular geography book depicting the Northumberland Coast and Cheviot Hills in the early 1990s.

His collection, Knightwood, was published by Dog Press, London, in 1997, with a new collection, The Temperature of Stars, forthcoming from Glass Head Press. His poem The Entrepreneurs, was included in Silverdale: collection of narrative poems, released by Kendal Press in 2003.

It is in Silverdale (Kendal Press ISBN 0-964883-0-47) that Lewin demonstrates an ability to create fully dimensional and colorfully rendered characters and situations.

An example of this may be found in this poem from Silverdale, chosen by the National Library for the Blind in 2003 for their salute to National Poetry Day in the United Kingdom:

ENTREPRENEURS

The rub of dock-leaves on our knees.
 woodwell giving forth its
 fruits, frog-spawn-semolina
 minnows, newts, sticklebacks, weeds.
 Here we are, Laurie, Rob, Ian
 Jeanie and I
 Jam-jars
 glittering like jewels:
 Tuppence a Stickleback!
 penny a minnow!
 penny for spawn!
 penny for weeds!
 I've only a haâ€™penny said a small boy.
 Give him that dead un says Jeanie.

Pennine Platform notes how Lewin in "TOO MANY WINTERS" explores how it feels to be rejected by a loved one because of age:

You don't want me:
 a man who's seen
 too many blizzards.
 Fingers burnt to the bone,
 tears freezing as they fall -
 my sun as weak as moonlight
 my bed a slab of marble.

Brian Rosebury, principal lecturer in Literature at UCL says "These poems renew one's faith in the power of contemporary verse to capture exact and poignant memory." And Bixby Monk of incwriters says: "Peter Lewin is a hidden gem in British Poetry. His work touches the heart, soul and body of the reader. He could make John Wayne cry."

Lewin is one of several poets on the Incwriters 'list.' The group is involved in a number of projects in support of member poets, including developing reading venues, doing promotional assistance and publishing various magazines online and in hard copy. The Bowery Poetry Club appearance was the organization's first foray into the American writing and

performance scene.

In introducing Lewin to the Bowery Poetry Club audience in Manhattan, club owner Bob Holman described the book as a wonderful collection that builds on his poetry of the past and memory, to create burgeoning images that are tangible and easy to slip into. "Peter Lewin's poetry is infused with one of the most distinctive and humane voices to be found in British contemporary poetry," noted Holman. "His work displays infectious love for men, humor, lyrical beauty, and music, while rendering the reader with an uncompromisingly realistic portrait of life."

Holman's got it right. Lewin remains, through all the challenges of his personal experience, a deeply appreciative participant in the great dance of human existence. Whether he gives voice to the human struggle or gives voice to his appreciation of the sudden moments of transcendence, his poetry can really soar.

Reviews

Crimewave 7 The Last Sunset (TTA Press, £7.00, ISBN 0 9526947 8 6, 176pp)

Purchase from www.ttapress.com/onlinestore1.html

Beneath the dark exterior of the cover of this book lies a selection of short stories that test your knowledge and experience of any kind of crime related story you may have read before.

Though the back of the book claims "what we do is something entirely different to anything you've read before" I'd have to disagree. That's not to say that what's included inside is not entertaining, or captivating or even a little gut wrenching. At times you may find yourself on the edge of your seat wondering what will happen next, other times, you may find yourself longing to turn the page over early to see if a story will eventually get interesting. However, each and every story included is original in its own way. Ranging from the grotesque lifestyle of a seventies punk rocker (You Can Jump - Mat Coward) to the affluent and well groomed existence of a business man caught up in a web of bribery and deceit (The Missing Man - Gary Couzens).

If you're looking for a story that will keep you clutching the book with your knuckles whitened, then you will find it here. If its sex, gore and the unusual you're after, that's also what you will come across.

Crimewave is successful in piecing together many aspects of life and life events into a short space. In this one magazine you will find just about everything you look for in a novel, from love and devotion, music obsessives and violence. It's all included.

Each story in Crimewave harbours its own personal hold over the reader. There is an intensity that creates a lump in your throat as your eyes follow the lines as well as feeling of curiosity that keeps you turning the page, but as well as the gripping tales of crime and deceit there are the underlying morals of the stories that test us as humans beings and cause us to become judge and jury while reading these tales. Crimewave demonstrates a collection of stories involving people undergoing some sort of suffering and discomfort in their lives. It sponsors the unfortunate and celebrates the decline in a good traditional happy ending. Never a bad thing.

Disappointment when it comes to endings is not a word I would like to use towards this collection. At times there is a want of more information, or a follow up to the story, some feel unfinished, others lack depth. Most are satisfying to the core and left myself as the reader impressed (Foldouts - Steve Mohn).

The best way to judge a book, especially this one, is not by its cover, but to read it yourself. There is something for everyone in here and you will not be disappointed when you find it. KS

Margaret Atwood's "Rape Fantasies"

Through Estelle's non-stop narrative of a working girl (self-sufficient yet in a subservient filing room position), Margaret Atwood uses her short story, *Rape Fantasies*, to expose the inequality in women's "equality," as well as the uncertainty and fear with which women of the time (and even women today) navigated their so-called sexual liberation.

Through Estelle's catty and stereotypical characterization of her co-workers (blonde receptionist, divorcee, etc), and through Estelle's perception of how they, in turn, view her, Atwood attacks the judgment that exists between women [perhaps rising from the women's liberation movement?].

Atwood creates a flippant tone for Estelle who shares her rape fantasies with a stranger who is probably a man at a bar. Estelle's fantasies of easily thwarted rapes in which she humanizes her would be attacker so she feels sorry for him (taking control yet being a nice, caring woman), and the way Atwood reveals Estelle as a woman who goes out drinking alone, betraying the sisterhood of women as she talks down her co-workers in an attempt to elevate herself to a male stranger, is a skillful author's ploy to elicit negative reader judgment toward Estelle.

Readers may initially see Estelle as her co-workers do: as a woman who jokes a lot, a "card," to use co-worker Darlene's word; a woman who gets drunk to the point of dancing beneath desks at office parties, and goes out at night alone, putting herself "in a position." In Estelle's perception, Darlene alludes that going out alone at night invites rape. A negative, judgmental reader response against Estelle proves the double standard about women and sex which exists even today.

However, upon a closer read, one can see that although Estelle's fantasies seem frivolous, Atwood has in fact given Estelle a deep contemplation about rape. For instance, in the opening lines, Estelle tells the reader rape is nothing new. Her rape "fantasies" are far different than the sexual fantasies her co-workers feel the need to mask as "rape" because they aren't liberated enough to admit their interest in sex to one another. Apparently, the magazines they look to for example also hide sexual fantasy behind a reputation-safe "rape" description. Atwood's insertion of these magazines the women turn to characterizes women of the time seeking role models, and questioning just where they fit. Who can they look at to gauge what it is to be a woman, since the girl next door types like Estelle's missed movie actress, June Allyson, don't exactly fit the new liberated woman mold with its sexually free element.

The scrutiny and negative judgment Atwood creates in Estelle toward her female co-workers, coupled with her preoccupation about rape, and her admitted loneliness -- all told to a man at a bar -- makes the reader wonder if she had, in fact, been raped at some point in her life. If Estelle had been raped, one wonders whether she could comfortably tell anyone. Wouldn't her co-workers judge her as inviting it? After all, she shouldn't have been out by herself at night. . . . Even the insertion of Estelle's thoughts about her mother's advice not to dwell on unpleasant things, could be construed as hints about a rape in Estelle's past -- shoved under the rug (or up the coal chute), of course. But this is only speculation. . . .

Regardless of whether Estelle was or was not raped, Atwood's story draws, at least indirectly, a correlation between the underreporting of rape (a fact that persists today) and the judgment of women against women. Atwood's characterization of lonely Estelle and her co-workers who, for the most part, seem unhappy backbiters looking for a way out of the filing room, attacks women's lib and reveals that women want equality, but have a long way to go, perhaps even hanging onto fairy tales -- which is why Estelle is looking for a man. Though Estelle won't admit to agreeing with everything the women's liberation movement does, she does go out alone, navigating her new sexual freedom among judgment, stigma, and fear of the very real possibility of rape. Women today find themselves also on both sides of this issue -- judging and being judged for ideals of sexual freedom they secretly or openly embrace, or covertly or overtly reject. SM (USA)

Cadenza

(Subscription Rates: UK £15.50 per year, Europe £17.00, RoW £20.00)

The name Cadenza, which is a musical term for an elaborate passage featuring a solo instrument or singer, would suggest that this quarterly publication is not one for hiding its light under a bushel. Currently in its eleventh issue, the magazine is edited by John Ravenscroft and Zoe King who recently took over editorship from Jo Good. It is published in the handy A5 format with a nice (though perhaps a little boring) black and white photograph on the cover, and the whole package is generally well presented. My only qualm on that count is with the poetry section. The poems are packed end to end so tightly that reading them is like trying to pee with someone banging on the bathroom door; you feel so crowded you cannot relax or concentrate on the task in hand. Let those poems breathe!

Moving on to content, as well as the "quality fiction and poetry" it boasts on the cover, Cadenza contains a healthy proportion of articles, reviews, interviews and competitions, plus a regular update on the *Save Our Short Story* campaign, which the magazine supports. Quality of writing spans the whole spectrum, with amateurish, school magazine-type rubbish rubbing shoulders with pieces that take my breath away. I would also question the usefulness of some of the articles. For example, issue 10 features a review of Writing down the Bones by Natalie Goldberg. Though a fairly well written and perfectly valid review, this is a book that was published some eighteen years ago and is so well known I would suspect that many readers would already own a copy, or at least know someone who does. There is also an abundance of reviews for this title elsewhere.

All in all, I'd say this magazine is a bit of a mixed bag, but if you want to make up your own mind then check out the magazine's well thought out website at www.cadenza-magazine.co.uk. Here you can read sample articles, submit your work or even download a PDF copy of the latest edition. JM

Jack and Sal

by Anthony Cropper

(Route ISBN 1 901927 21 0, 160pp £8.95)

Cropper has surpassed his last novel Weatherman, with the creation of a modern monologue detailing the end of a relationship. Narrated by Jack, still lost in life, drifting and dreaming of Sal, Cropper has created a moving modern love tale. Jack and Sal are the anti-couple, forced into the real world, the domestic dead end of an East Yorkshire house, the flat landscape, the gray sky, the dead horizon mirroring the events behind their front door. There is no lust here, no flush of first love, just the uncomfortable fact that this house, this situation, the conversation they

need to have, is just too big for either of them and they are suffocating in the empty space.

The apathetic Jack cannot stem the hemorrhaging, self absorbed and lost within his own world, he details the problems; the domestic chores, the failed DIY skills, the one night stand, the dog and dead birds, the pregnancy as he misses the clues, the counterpoints, the suggestions that he should actually be doing something in this relationship. This is not a kitchen sink drama, Jack and Sal are seem to be bored teenagers playing at adults, and Cropper shows this; they are equally to blame as the novel explores what goes unsaid in relationships, and the secrets and lies we keep. Jack and Sal does not have a car crash ending, as readers, we see the aftermath. Jack catalogues the final months, the fading of love, the end of conversations, the words that try and fill the void between two people who have nothing to say to each other. Instead the novel reflects more about what is expected of both them and not what they should be doing. Jack's narration is overshadowed by what is to come, the breakup comes from his point of view. Though this is atypical male point of view, at no time does Cropper sink in to blaming Sal, this is not a novel about blaming women for the breakdown of relationships - as so many male writers do - Cropper shows his narrators weaknesses and mistakes, and mixes the sense of loss and arrogance with the key awareness that they are both to blame. Jack deserves what he gets, he is lazy and inconsiderate, Sal is stubborn and anal, both of them are unable to speak a word of truth, so the end comes as no surprise, what does is Cropper's ability to weave and lace this heartbreaking story together without a hint of melodrama. AO

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An attractively produced, & inviting, magazine supported by Southern Arts & South East Arts, with photos & b+w drawings. This issue concentrates on the relationship between music + writing.

There's a sharing quality to CONNECTIONS, with an Events & Competition page, and an agents 'literary agony uncle' column, which had sound advice. Patricia Debney shared her thoughts on teaching Creative Writing, but, I wondered, to what end? Would it not have been more educational to have shared transcripts of her work-in-progress, or specific ideas she shares with her students?

Many of the other articles were similarly bland, or simplistic in that most deceptive of guises - an inclusion of weighty assumptions & references, without a true argument & exploration to unite them. Sandy Burnett (musician & Radio 3 presenter) took approx.1,500wds to suggest that practitioners of art, music, & ballet, should perhaps stick to what they know best, & beware of mixing with written forms.

Then there's Michael Conaghan on Kate Bush: 'The cover art for...NEVER FOR EVER with song titles emerging from underneath her skirts left no doubt as to where the source of her inspiration lay.' Only Roderick Watkins conveyed something of the struggle between the 'strange bedfellows' words & music. Watkins, drawn to poetry with 'web-like schemes of related imagery' is currently setting some of the poetry of George Szirtes to music. George Szirtes' article was also assured & elegant.

Most of the poetry in this issue of CONNECTIONS was, in my view, underachieved - mired in the personal/subjective. This, from Denise Bennett's GRADUATION (for her daughter on gaining a 1st class degree) for

instance: 'Today she calls me,/drops in to borrow milk./ Still dazzles me with her brilliance.' In contrast, Anne Stevenson's HEARING WITH MY FINGERS demonstrated perfect pitch: 'Fingering delight in a marriage of true sounds.'

Finally, Nick Holdstock's story FAT was outstanding - a clever handle on the subject of fatness, & thinness. WP

A Rumoured City Revisited: T. F. Griffin and Tony Flynn at the Flux Gallery, Leeds

It was standing room only at the Flux Gallery, Leeds on 12th June. The occasion was a poetry reading by T. F. Griffin and Tony Flynn who hadn't read together for thirty years. It was a real pleasure on my part to introduce them, especially as both poets had been a presence in my life since I first encountered their work in the early 1980's. The Flux Gallery is fast gaining a reputation as one of the north's premier venues for live poetry: intimate, candle-lit, tucked away in a leafy back street just minutes away from the busy Hyde Park thoroughfare with its shops, cafes, and pubs. The walls are hung with atmospheric photographs by Dan Lyons and the welcome is as warm as the poetry is incisive. No wonder that the gallery has become the focus of a great deal of poetic activity in the last six months, both as a venue for poetry readings and as the headquarters for the Flux Gallery Press. My first encounter with the poetry of Griffin and Flynn was through the Bloodaxe anthology, *A Rumoured City* which was published in 1982. Edited by Douglas Dunn, with a Foreword by Philip Larkin, it placed Hull firmly on the poetry map and launched half a dozen poets on their way to public recognition. The Hull days were heady ones, with both poets, as Griffin puts it "living in each others' notebooks". After Hull the poets went their separate ways - poetically and geographically - and both have published fine individual collections in their own right. Both have developed well-deserved reputations as readers of their own work.

T. F. Griffin was first to read. The long association with Tony Flynn made him dig deep into his repertoire, confidently offering a generous selection of poems from *Cider Days*, *The Quest*, and his most recent collection, *Kavita* which appeared last year to wide critical acclaim. Griffin reads with measured passion and gravity, which served him particularly well when he came to three recent elegies which form the bedrock of his significant shift in direction as a poet. These new poems, particularly *For Tony Earnshaw* finally register the complex interplay between public and private realms. Griffin conveyed these subtle nuances while managing to engage the audience. It is easy to see why Griffin's poetry has received recognition in the form of prizes and awards. The most significant praise however came from Larkin himself who emphasised Griffin's grasp of form by drawing attention to the fact that he had 'an understanding of how a poem should be organised'. Listening to Griffin read one is immediately reminded of Herbert Lomas' observation that the poems 'seem poised to take of into ecstasy'.

Most of the audience - including myself - hadn't heard Tony Flynn read before. The reason is obvious: Flynn, who now lives in Brighton, has very rarely read north of London. Expectations were high and Flynn's reputation as a poet of uncompromising gravity and technical delicacy had preceded him. His first collection, *A Strange Routine* had been published before *A Rumoured City* and it had immediately established his idiosyncratic voice as controlled, precise, and full of suppressed yearning. Something of that voice gained a particular physicality in Flynn's reading and in his illuminating introduction to the poems. Like Griffin, Flynn dug deep when making his selection; but I particularly admired the newer, more expansive

poems which seem to be taking off on their own trajectory, leaving the poet to make sense of them as and when he can. All of this of course, made for an exciting reading. When Peter Porter observed that 'the best of Flynn is gaunt and lit by guilt' he was drawing attention to a fundamental feature of the poet's output: his unease with, and constant questioning of, the human condition. As this is a preoccupation he shares with Griffin, it suggested a unity of poetics which made sense of their sharing a platform together.

At a time when poetry appears to be written for the eye and not the ear it was refreshing to hear two first-rate practitioners read from and talk about their work in such a relaxed and unpretentious atmosphere. Both poets have achieved much and I think everyone at this memorable reading came away with the impression that the real challenges thrown up by their work to date still have to be faced and worked out; that their full potential has still to be explored. IP

Contributors:

Jeanne Carstensen

Jeanne Carstensen is Senior Arts and Features Editor for SFGate.com, the website of the San Francisco Chronicle.

Bixby Monk

Bixby Monk his half Scottish and Half Czech, he was born in 1968. Named by his father after the jazz musician, Bix Beiderbecke, he spent a disappointing childhood in the Edinburgh school system before leaving for the army. He splits his time between Edinburgh and Prague. His claims to fame are being the last war correspondent to cover the Gulf War and being the first war correspondent to leave Kuwait. He writes for several press agencies and writes under various pseudonyms in the UK and European Presses. He is the editor of Incorporating Writing (ISSN 1743-0380).

Samantha Morton

Samantha Morton before fleeing the capital worked happily in publishing, the hours were long, the pay was rotten. So in a bid to do what most Londoners do, she left London and set up a gallery and workshop in Cornwall, near St Ives, called Whey Pottery. She has three children and an understanding husband. Next year she hopes to go organic.

Andrew Oldham

Andrew Oldham writes for Stage, Television and Film. His credits include BBC1's Doctors, BBC R4 Go 4 it, Piccadilly Key103 BTCC Christmas Campaign, the short film Divine Blonde and The Charlie Manson Room (showcased by Theatre and Beyond at Brighton Pavilion, part of The International Brighton Festival 2002). He is prior recipient of a Writers Award from the ACE NW (UK), a Peggy Ramsay Award (UK) and a nominee of the Jerwood-Arvon award (UK) and has been nominated for the London International Award.

Publications include the crime story, Spanking The Monkey, in: Next Stop Hope (Route ISBN 1 901927 19 9). Poetry in The Interpreter's House (UK), Gargoyle (USA), Poetry Greece and Poetry Salzburg (Europe), Grain (Canada) and Dream Catcher (UK) to name a few. He is an academic and journalist.

William Park

William Park was born in Hillingdon, West London, in 1962, and grew up in High Wycombe. He now lives in Preston, where his interests include Buddhist philosophy, World Cinema and Jazz. In 1990 he was awarded a major Eric Gregory Award, and in 2003 he gained an MA in Poetry from Liverpool Hope University College. His poems have appeared in Critical Quarterly, Observer, Poetry Review, Stand, and many more. His latest collection Surfacing (Spike ISBN 0 9518978 7 X) is available now.

Ian Parks

Ian Parks is a Hawthornden Fellow 1991, he has travelled through the United States of America on a Fellowship in 1994. His poetry has received accolades and awards, including the Royal Literary Fund 2003, the Oppenheim Award 2001 and 2002 and the John Masefield Award 2001. Ian was a National Poetry Society New Poet in 1996 and was a prior Poetry Editor for *Dream Catcher* (issues 7 -11). His collections include, *Gargoyles in Winter* (Littlewood, 1985), *A Climb Through Altered Landscapes* (Blackwater 1998), *The Angel of the North* (Tarantula CD 2000). *Departures and Rendezvous: Love Poems 1983-2003* is due for publication in 2005. His next collection, *Shell Island*, will be available from Way Wiser (USA) in 2005. He teaches at Leeds University.

Eva Salzman

Eva Salzman grew up in Brooklyn and on Long Island where she was a dancer/choreographer. At Stuyvesant H.S., her teacher was Frank McCourt; she received degrees from Bennington College (BA) and Columbia University (MFA), where she studied with Derek Walcott, Joseph Brodsky, C.K. Williams, Edmund White, Elizabeth Hardwick, Stanley Kunitz, Carolyn Kizer, Josef Skvorecky, Stephen Sandy, Patricia Goedicke, Ben Belitt, Thoms Lux, Stephen Dunn and Jorie Graham. Her books include *Double Crossing: New and Selected Poems* (Bloodaxe), *One Two II* (Wrecking Ball Press), illus. Van Howell, *Bargain with the Watchman* (Oxford), and *The English Earthquake* (Bloodaxe), all Poetry Book Society Recommendations/Special Commendations.

Kat Spathis

Kat Spathis is half Greek and half English. She has led workshops on the York Literature scene for many years before returning to Bolton to take up writing. She is returning to York soon. Kat has been published in the UK and USA and is regular contributor to critical magazines. She has been a guest Editor for Incorporating Writing.

George Wallace

George Wallace, author of eight chapbooks of poetry, is editor of Poetrybay www.poetrybay.com, co-host of his own weekly poetry radio show www.wusb.org, and the first poet laureate of Suffolk County, New York. A regular performer in New York City, he frequently tours America with his poetry. Internationally, his work has been read in Paris, Copenhagen, Vienna, and particularly in Italy and the UK - including Italian appearances in Rome, Parma, Verona and Trento; and in the UK, London, Cardiff, Belfast, Bury St Edmunds, Norwich and the Lake District. His work has been translated into French, Spanish, Italian, German, Korean, Bengali, Russian and Macedonian. Forthcoming collections are Burn My Heart in Wet Sand (Troubador, UK) and Fifty Love Poems (La Finestra Editrice, IT).