



Interchange Meets @...

Interchange (Bradford Writers' Network) meets every Tuesday from 8pm at the Irish Democratic League, Rebecca St, just behind the New Beehive, Westgate.

The sessions are informal and provide a sounding board for members' work, as well as constructive criticism and feedback should this be required.

Support, encouragement and words are at the forefront of the group's activities, and all kinds of writing is welcomed: poetry, short and long fiction, plays, memoirs, articles and songs.

Inside this issue...

Biasan launches book by asylum seekers, competition winners announced, Thom's last gig and more...

In their own words

Asylum seekers gained a rare chance to put their stories across with the publication of a new book. Mark Cantrell reports

A SYLUM seekers in Bradford got the chance put their side of the refugee story this month, when a book of poetry and prose called *Dispersed* was launched at the Priestley.

The book is written in English and French and is published by Biasan, the Bradford Immigration and Asylum Support and Advice Network.

It features writing by asylum seekers living in Bradford from diverse parts of the world. The contents range from a harrowing account of a young boy's journey to a collection of traditional Kenyan proverbs. There is also fiction.

Dispersed also features a foreword by the Bishop of Bradford and an afterword by Terry Rooney MP.

The book launch took place on the main stage, following a production of Banner Theatre's *Migrant Voices*. Contributors read their work to the

audience.

Contributor Liliya Sazanavets, from Belarus, told *Tyke Writer*:

"All people are human beings so it's very difficult to talk [about the experiences] of groups of people, but I think if someone decides to leave their country then it's a very difficult decision. To understand us, put yourself in our position, then I think it would be easier to understand what happened to us."

The book was co-edited by Richard Hargreaves, a volunteer English teacher with Biasan and Waiharo Gibson, a Kenyan refugee. The book emerged from Hargreaves' classes, when several students began to write about their experiences. The concept of the book developed from there.

Hargreaves said: "I think that some of the asylum seekers are quite depressed, and being able to write might help them. I

hope it will encourage more people to try and express their experiences. It's good to write, and people have stories to tell and so help people to hear and understand."

After the play and book launch, the afternoon ended with a showing of the award winning film *Rights of Passage* by Kurdish Iraqi refugee Dana Jalal. The film won acclaim at the London Independent Film Festival.

The event was organised by Biasan as part of Black History Month.

Deb Collett of Biasan said: "We hope to raise the profile of asylum seekers through the book and plant ourselves firmly in the context of Black History Month and international struggle. This is another expression of people getting together and making their voices heard."

The book can be bought by sending a cheque for £3 (made payable to 'Biasan') to Biasan, 17-21 Chapel Street, Bradford, BD1 5BP. Post and packing is included in the price.

BACK ISSUES FROM: <http://www.tykewriter.supanet.com/tw/>

And the **WINNER** is...

Entrants to the Interchange poetry competition gathered to hear each other's entries and discover who was the winner. Mark Cantrell reports on a successful event...

THREE lucky poets ended up a little richer after winning Interchange's first poetry competition.

The winning poets were announced at a special evening of performance poetry at the Irish Democratic League, which featured many of the poets who entered. They were kept on tenterhooks throughout the first half of the evening, before the winners were finally announced.

Winning the third prize of £25 was Janet Throssell from Undercliffe with *And The Jag'd Scroaching Of The Corbies Oblivion To The Ears Of The Dead*.

It proved a mouthful of a title for a mouthful

of a poem filled with strange and interestingly inventive combinations of words. Unfortunately, Janet wasn't able to be at the event, so it fell to co-organiser Diane Johnson to read the poem.

A difficult task, as she herself did not know the winner until shortly before the evening, and so was unable to practice. "I'm not doing this justice because it is difficult to read," she said, "only the writer could do that."

All the same, she did a good job in getting the poem across, but it would have been nice to hear the author's voice present this intriguing piece of work.

The second prize of

£50 was grabbed by Barbara Klempka from Keighley with her poem *Out of Bounds*.

Top prize was a cool £100 and that was taken by Peter Wyton with his poem *Suicide Bomber*. Peter was another non-attendee, but given that he lives in Gloucester that's hardly surprising, so the cheque is in the post as they say.

"It was a wonderful event with a good turnout and some lovely poems. I really enjoyed it," Diane said.

From the 100 entries received by Interchange a shortlist of 30 was produced. Final judging was done by Nick Toczek, who took time out of a busy schedule to determine the winners.

Judging was done blind.

Before the winners were announced by MC Joe Ogden, the audience was treated

to readings from some of those who entered the competition, as well as some Interchange regulars. Joe even kicked the night off with a poem from his new anthology *Love Lost*. Later, Diane was persuaded to read us her poem explaining why she's not chuffed with a certain person from her youth.

Other readers were: Chris Pope who probably summed up many people's feelings when he confessed: "This is the first time I have done this, so excuse the nerves."

It's not an easy task to stand in front of friends, let alone strangers, and read out poems.

After Chris there was Rosie Raju who read *I Couldn't See*. She later read two of her poems that were included in the books *In Natural Harmony* and *Twilight Echoes*, both by Triumph Press.

Graham Cansdale was *Cast Adrift* but Interchange threw him a line. He was followed by Betty Wildsmith, Jack Toothill, Carol Hall, Barbara Klempka, Bruce Barnes, Sylvia Shackleton, Doreen Brook, and last but not least Dennis Stanley.

The competition and the winning night were organised by Diane Johnson and Kevin Flaherty, with assistance from Jean Robinson.

Well done all

Try B4 U Buy

YORKSHIRE-based published Smith/Doorstop Books is offering free samples of a forthcoming anthology through mobile phone text messages.

The poems all fit into standard SMS format (160 characters or less) and those who sign up will receive five poems over five days.

The use of SMS technology is the first time the publisher has tried this approach to allow potential buyers to 'try before they buy'.

The poems come from the forthcoming anthology *Text Messages* by Andrew Wilson.

Participants will receive a 20 per cent discount on the price of the book. To sign up for the five free poems enter YES as a text message and send to 07781 486499.

For more information contact Janet Smith at Smith/Doorstop Books. Tel: 01484 434840. Email: edit@poetrybusiness.co.uk.

Don't Get Mad, Get Even Better

*What have plagiarism, the nature of poetry and Sophie Hannah got to do with each other? Well, **Jeremy Young** revisited his old work and came up with the following suggestions...*

T is a truth universally acknowledged that a writer who does not read, is a writer that writes only about themselves.

There are practical advantages to reading the work of others. Firstly it allows you to gauge the standard of your own work. But, more importantly it allows you the opportunity of plagiarism. Of course, open copying is not to be encouraged but who's to say how much you can borrow?

I use this a starting point.

I have been writing seriously now for 18 months, in that time in the folder marked poetry there are some 200 poems. And recently I have found myself going back to the earlier poems and rereading them.

At the risk of being post-modern, and even slightly Maoist, this reassessment of the work has thrown up some interesting insights.

The most glaringly obvious insight is the

sheer reproduction of ideas and rhythms. We all have tricks that we like to use, even though we may not admit them openly. And we all have keywords. In my case; sun, moon, moth, meat, and various references to monkeys and fish (due to being a Piscean and a Monkey in the Chinese horoscope).

The second observation was the sheer amount of rhyme. Which is perhaps why these poems have been largely unread for so long.

I studied Shakespeare under Judith Gick, who taught at RADA from the 1950s, and one of the things that I remembered her saying was that in general it was possible to tell if the scene was dramatic or comedic by the use of rhyme. If the verse was blank then the intention of the scene was serious and vice versa.

Yet there are those, Sophie Hannah amongst them, who claim poetry has to

rhyme or it isn't poetry. Which is a little silly since this would make the tale of the young woman from Ealing, a poem, but not the 'to be or not to be' soliloquy from Hamlet.

And there is a common misconception that modern poetry does not rhyme. Which is a little silly since this would exclude Sophie Hannah.

Whatever the case, I found myself wondering if the reason for breaking with this early experiment with rhyme was really an attempt to write more serious verse.

Yet, now I find myself in the happy position of thinking that the early stuff offers endless opportunities to plagiarise, sorry rewrite.

A third theme I noticed was that it was possible to see exactly what poets I was reading when the poem was written. And knowing how the poem was written, exactly what chunks I had ripped off. And I don't feel guilty because the people from who I have borrowed rhythms and ideas, got them from somewhere.

I suppose that attending a writers circle does bridge this

gap, offering the opportunity to hear and discuss the work of others but it is still of only limited use when compared to reading the work and considering it in your own time. You will find that even the work of those you can't, stand has a habit of becoming lodged in a part of your brain marked, 'not the stuff I usually write,' or 'where did that come from?'

The other advantage is that it might help to break you out of your tricks and reliance on keywords.

And going back through your work does offer the opportunity for rediscovery. I leave you with this ironic little ditty.

The Bitter Truth

*We might not like it but it's true
poets are not like me
or you:
They have degrees
and poetry voices;
Publishers, readings,
literary choices.*

*We might not like it but it's true
poets are not like me
or you*

Be lucky.

Thom says farewell

AN era of UK — and Bradfordian — poetry has finally come to an end, with the last gig of the last tour of Thom the World Poet.

Thom has been visiting Bradford every year for the last ten years, such is the affection he found for local poets.

But now, the Australian-turned-Texan, better known as Thom Woodruff, has declared that this was it, when he performed at his final two gigs in Bradford.

But, he says that every year, so look out for him again in 2004.

Towards the end of an exhaustive tour, Thom performed at two venues here in the city. The first took place at the Love Apple Cafe. The second took place at the World Café, run by the Hudson Street Community Centre, which was an additional venue organised by Joe Ogden.

Local performance poets, some newcomers and many veterans of the performance scene, joined him for

two excellent gigs. Among these were Anzir Boodoo, Bruce Barnes, Moses Ekebusi, Jeremy Young, and others.

At the World Café gig, Darren Poyzer co-starred along with Thom, and poet Sheila Atkinson read works from her first poetry collection (see item below).

“Poetry is a world language, not just a British language or an African language, it belongs to everyone,” Thom said.

Mark Cantrell

Take a country jaunt

Walk This World magazine is inviting writers to take a literary jaunt to their favourite country in a competition open to both poetry and prose.

Entrants can write as many articles, poems or stories on the theme of their favourite country as they like, subject to the magazine's normal submission guidelines. There is a prize of £20 for the winner of each category, and a year's

subscription to the magazine for runners up.

The closing date is the 1 March 2004.

A £2 entry fee for short stories or articles, and £1 for poetry must accompany each entry. These must relate in some way to the theme of the author's favourite country. Such as what they might like about that country.

Copyright for all submissions will be retained by the author, but originals must not be sent as work cannot be returned.

Articles can be up to 1,000 words in length and 2,000 words for short stories. Poems may be of any length and style.

Send entries to Mark Cope, Editor, *Walk This World*, PO Box 627, York, YO32 2WJ or email walkthisworld@aol.com. Cheques should be payable to 'Mark Cope'.

The Tyke Writer is the monthly newsletter of the Interchange (Bradford Writers' Network).

For further details of the group, or to get involved, come down to the Irish Democratic League, Rebecca Street, behind the New Beehive pub.

Or contact:

Carol Solorz, secretary: 01274 570006

Email: interchange@brad.communigate.co.uk

Web: <http://www.communigate.co.uk/brad/interchange>

Editorial contributions are welcome, but will be edited for space and style.

All contributions must bear the author's name, which may appear as a byline. Contributions are also preferably received in type written form.

Opinions expressed in this publication are not necessarily those of the Interchange (Bradford Writers' Network).

Copyright on all work is retained by the original authors.

Editor: Mark Cantrell
Contact:

Tel: 07986 234372
Fax: 0870 1643314
Email: tykewriter@supanet.com

**Copyright (C)
November 2003**

Invite to walk

POET Sheila Atkinson has published her first collection of poetry, *writes Mark Cantrell*

Walk This Way combines 31 pieces of work for the generous sum of £4. The work is separated into separate themes, with graphic illustrations.

The full-time worker and mother has performed at a variety of poetry events, such as those organised by Hear4Words. Most recently, she performed at Poetry on the Estate, the penultimate gig in Thom the World Poet's tour.

“I thought it was time I pulled my work teth-er,” she said. “So you're invited to *Walk This Way*, but not the way I do, 'cos you'd get some funny looks.”