

# Tyke Writer

The Newsletter For Creative Writers In Bradford & District

## Where to find us...

**Tyke Writer is published on behalf of the Interchange (Bradford Writers' Network).**

The group meets every Tuesday from 8pm at the Irish Democratic League, Rebecca Street, just behind the New Beehive pub on Westgate, Bradford.

No matter what kind of writing you are into, you will find it welcome at Interchange.

Along with poetry, the group also welcomes novelists, short story writers, journalists, singer-songwriters and just about every kind of writing imaginable.

The group is informal, and the emphasis is very much on the words. Critical feedback is available for those who feel the need, but the emphasis is on developing the writing and the writer in a relaxed and friendly environment.

So step out of the garrett and join the

## No Props, Just Poetry

Something Dark, By Lemn Sissay, directed by John E McGrath

*Bruce Barnes got a huge buzz out of Lemn Sissay's performance at the Alhambra. Here he explains why...*

**T**HERE was a buzz of anticipation, (or was it collective stomach rumbling?), from a 200 strong audience at the Bradford Alhambra starved of performance poetry since the Poetry Platform went dark.

Lemn Sissay's reputation warranted the excitement but he could easily have disappointed.

He had chosen a risky subject, his life story, and it might have slipped into parody or gross self promotion.

He hasn't had a quiet life: adoption as a baby, a baptist upbringing, teenage years in care, racism, the discovery of his black heritage and his Ethiopian birth mother.

All that should have been too much to for

an evening. But he jumped the tracks of narrative form, and went for it down the by-ways, using sparse language, startling imagery, and exhausting physical theatre to relate the journey of a soul.

He worked off a bare stage, with a backdrop of black curtains, and used no props. He

might have used the space more fully, at times his voice projection let him down, and after the interval he started to lose the thread of what he was saying, only to pick it up again with a witty ad-lib, but these are minor quibbles in an otherwise exceptional performance.

If Lemn Sissay marks a new beginning for performance poetry in Bradford, then I won't be stopping in much.

## Just Surreal

**SLIPSTREAM Poets are running an open poetry competition for surreal poems, with a first prize of £100.**

Second and third prizes will be £50 and £25 respectively, and all entries should be accompanied by £2 fee (five poems for 7.50). Entrants must place their name and address on a separate sheet and enclose an SAE for the results and the judges report) Judging will be done by Jackie Wills.

Send entries to Slipstream Poets, Open Poetry Competition, 68 Arun Court, Rose Hill, Billingham, West Sussex, RH14 9QQ. Cheques payable to 'Ursula Kiernan'. Closing date: 31 August 2004.

# Fringe Words

**T**HE organisers of the Ilkley Literature Festival have invited groups or individuals to put together fringe events at this year's event.

Fringe events will be included in the Festival's brochure and publicity, though there is no money to fund them. Practical advice and support will be available however.

The Festival runs from 1-17 October 2004.

Last year's fringe events includes 'Women, Mountains, Words' on Ilkley Moor, a National Poetry Day speakeasy and a poetry pub-crawl.

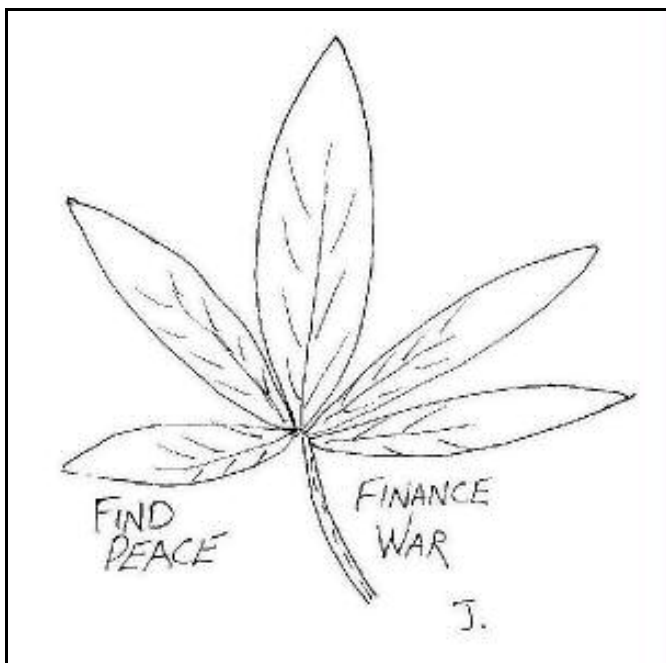
Anyone who wishes to know more or propose an activity should contact Rachel Feldberg with details. Email: [admin@ilkleyliteraturefestival.org.uk](mailto:admin@ilkleyliteraturefestival.org.uk).

## Queer To Write

**A new literary journal for people with 'alternative sexualities' has been launched by the Gay Men's Writing Network.**

*Chroma* wants writing from all queer writers. "We're looking for submissions of prose and poetry from writers of all alternative sexualities. GLBT covers most of them," says editor Shaun Levin.

Read the guidelines at [www.gaymenwriting.co.uk](http://www.gaymenwriting.co.uk). Submissions that fail to meet them will not be read.



## MS-OGENY

Oh why does it have to be,  
why can they not see?  
The life's worth of men  
is no greater than women.

What difference does it make  
where I am in the marriage stake?  
Why should I have to declare  
and have people pity or stare?

If we are not extremely tall  
we're overlooked as small.  
When your face doesn't fit  
the ideal..... forget it.

Look at how they advertise  
we all have to be "that" size.  
"It" can be right for a man at any age  
women, have to be at "that stage".

Don't judge me on my looks  
I have read a few books  
No, not that "Mills and Boon"  
More prehistory... to the moon.

I don't want special treatment  
or to be looked at different.  
Just don't see me flounder  
let me proud of my gender.

When will we be just female  
and not second class male?  
I now need this equality  
to simply live my life as me.

Ann Morgan

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# Taking The Piggy To Market

*Advice on touting a novel to publishers abounds, so Mark Cantrell attempts to further muddy the waters...*

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**S**O, you've finished your novel, satisfied that the hard work is over. It's time to pitch the book to publishers, and your baby's going to sell itself with its sheer brilliance. *Right.*

Wrong.

The hard work is only just beginning.

Thousands of books are finished and touted each year, and only a few are published. And it's not simply the case that the best make it to the shelves. Beyond a certain level of ability and development, achieving publication ceases to have anything but a passing nod and wink to quality.

You need to be able to target and sell the book.

That's a whole different skill and maybe the hardest lesson of all for a writer to learn.

After spending months and years writing the novel to the best of your ability, writers suddenly find themselves in the position of boiling the whole thing -- tens of thousands of words -- into a handful of pages. They need to think hard about the type of people who will read the book, what shelf they might end up on and more.

Yes, it's bewildering.

Yes, it's heart breaking, but the tough business needs doing. Why quit at the last hurdle just because it's the toughest?

Advice on selling a novel naturally varies, so

figuring out where to start and what to do isn't easy. Ask ten people what to do and twice as many different opinions will be expressed.

Many of the points you are about to read should have been swimming in your head the moment the book was conceived. If not already developed in tandem with the book, then now is the time to

really grow them to maturity.

First off, you need to identify where your book might go: that means take a look in bookshops and study those shelves. Can you see any obvious place where you -- or an imaginary other -- might look to find your magic work? That's the place you need to be pitching it; and give some thought as to the whys and wherefores.

It helps also to think of the people who write similar kinds of work to your book, or to have something to compare it too. This doesn't necessarily have to be another book. Something that hooks the reader and gets them reading the rest of your pitch -- and possibly your book -- will do just as well, if not better. Especially, if it is something more widespread in appeal than a work of literature.

Be aware, too, that publishers often specialise. You must know the kinds of book that they publish. There's little point in sending a science fiction book to a publisher of fluffy romance novels.

Marketing is a dirty business, but it all boils down to selling. You are attempting to get someone to read/buy your book against their better judgement. There's no room or doubt, no

*(Continued on page 4)*

## Ponderables...

### *Oh, go on...*

- Do: Sleep with the editor (if he/she is pretty/handsome/likes you/is drunk/iss very verry drrunk)
- Do: Offer an extravagant bribe (if you can afford it)
- Do: Go to the right university (but you probably can't afford it these days)
- Do: Listen to advice, study your target publisher and write a professional businesslike sales pitch.
- Do: Trust in your ability and your work.

### *Don't you dare...*

- Don't: Tear up the letter in a fit of rage
- Don't: Tear up the manuscript after all that time and effort
- Don't: Drink yourself into a stupor (well, maybe a little but don't make it a habit)
- Don't write a snotty letter back saying how hurt and upset you are and that you will never ever consider them again (they really really won't give a shit).
- Don't hire a hitman to kill the person who rejected your precious work
- Don't kill the guy yourself
- Don't kill yourself (unless you're good at faking it, have arranged to live anonymously off your estate and figure it will be an excellent marketing opportunity)
- Don't ever give up.

# Verse With Yorkshire Slant

**What do you do outside writing?**

*I am a medical secretary. In my spare time I create hand-made cards, I sew, cross stitch, crochet and knit.*

**Why do you write?**

*I need to express my feelings quite often in my poetry. I like the English language and enjoy using it.*

**How did you become a writer?**

*I joined a Bradford*

*College night school class in creative writing.*

**What was your greatest literary moment?**

*Doing half an hour live poetry on BCB radio.*

**What was your worst literary moment?**

*Doing an 'open mic' at Bradford library and feeling [that] Joolz Denby didn't like my work.*

**How has writing**

**affected your life?**

*It has given me a wider scope and view on life, because of the new people I meet.*

**What advice can you give fellow scribes?**

*Just keep on doing what comes to you naturally and don't write what you think you ought to write to keep up with the modern trend.*

**What is your involvement in literary**

**activities?**

*I go to Bradford Writers' Circle every two weeks, Interchange every week (if I can) and other literary events when I can. Also 'open mics' if I know about them.*

**Brief bibliography**  
*Nothing to speak of (although I keep hoping).*

**Who or what has influenced your work?**

*No one in particular.*

*(Continued from page 3)*

place for butts and maybes. Your book is the one above all else that people must want – and you need to implant that idea into someone else's head.

The days when the book alone will do that are alas sadly gone. If indeed they ever truly existed.

So ask yourself a series of questions and work hard to thrash out the answers.

- What is the book?
- Why are you so qualified to write it?
- What sets it apart and make it a must read?
- How does it fit themes and resonances already existing?

- How does it build and expand its niche?
- What will the book do?
- Who are the people who will buy it: their likes and dislikes, their interests, their social position? Can you define them? Like everything else publishing is now market driven, and the market cares little for quality and diversity. It wants the quick buck, the bottom line and it wants it now. If profits can publish pap, then pap is what we receive and our work ends up in the drawer. The writer these days has to know how to play the pap game and get something worthwhile out there into the publishing world.

It is depressing for the author, but it doesn't mean we are excluded or defeated. It means we must learn the game to bend and break the rules.

Play the markets, but don't let them play you.

And don't be afraid of the hard work. Just get that piggy out to market – and eat the wolves before they eat you.

*TYKE Writer* welcomes editorial contributions, but such will be edited for space and style restrictions.

All contributions must bear the author's name, which may appear as a byline. Material is also preferred in a type written form.

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