



The Tyke Writer

INTERCHANGE NEWSLETTER

Issue 8/ December 2001

EVENTS GUIDE

Interchange @ the Priestley

Weekly workshop that takes place every Tuesday from 8pm at the Priestley Centre for the Arts, Chapel Street, Little Germany.

It provides a friendly and informal gathering where group members can share their work.

Also provides a forum for constructive feedback if requested.

Interchange @ the Melborn

Every last Wednesday of the month on White Abbey Road, Interchange hosts an open microphone event for writers, performers and singer-song-writers.

Singer/song-writers please contact in advance, as slots for musicians are limited.

Be there at 8pm to sign up for an 8.30pm start.

The road on him again

Richard visits us from the big Smoke.

Report by Joe Ogden.

Rainy night, Bradford, the Melborn Pub is not an easy place to walk to or stagger from but I knew there was a spark up at the end of the road, that I could not miss.

I had met Richard Healey, a London based poet, a month earlier at the PIPF, in fact he was one of its organisers.

There, his performances, blows almost every other 'performing poet' out the Grand Union canal about 50 yards from the venue, with his brand of stream of semi-consciousness poetry.

Here, the Melborn gig started with the unusual suspects, notable was Lyn with Christmas poems. Ruth with a 'new' poem, reflections on her recent past, laying a few ghosts? The

welcome return of Su and her rat poems, *don't ask!* Howard and his holiday in Costa Concrete hell the Spain v. Morecambe debate. Karl, up to date as always with a poem about the 'Taliban prisoner revolt' and the first US agent to die in the field. Ed with his wit and dry humour and Rahel with her songs – 'you've grown so tall you can look over the backyard wall and see the city sprawl' wow.

Then the treat of the evening – Richard. As soon as he climbed the 'step' *the Stage*, the fatigue he'd been showing earlier dropped away and turned to a sharp alertness.

He started his set with a poem about his 'herbal' cigarettes habit *allegedly*. It's a matter of head space and 'Where did I put the... What? Mind like

a steel trap or...' this, an insight onto a world I know very little of. I'll just stick to my 10 pints a night, Prozac, multiple sex partners and pain killers, well I don't want to get an addiction, do I?

Richard then went into the world of words. You think he's going down one road then 'he turns into a one way street, grey with lines down his middle and cars parked either side of him.' And how he met a lovelorn judge, who wants him any road up.

The poem jumped from sad to funny and poignant and back.

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Inside This Issue:

Lynette and Seema's poetic adventures down south, how to impress an agent, poetry by Thom.

Five go mad in Dorset

(Well, actually, two go slightly insane in Sussex, but the first title sounds better)



Lynette Shaw McKone (left) explains why she and Seema Gill spent a surreal two days looking for a room in Aldeburgh last month.

Would you like to go to Aldeburgh with me?" she asked.

"Where's Aldeburgh?"

"I don't know."

"Okay."

"I'll pick you up at your house at 9.30 on Saturday."

On the Thursday before Seema Gill and I were due to go to the 13th Aldeburgh Poetry Festival I thought it may be prudent to find out *exactly* where Aldeburgh was; 234 miles away!

"We'll never do that in one day," I said, "should we try and find somewhere to stay?"

"Okay."

So, I spent all day on the phone, but there

wasn't any room at the inn, actually there wasn't any room anywhere; hmm, this story sounds vaguely familiar.

Eventually I did find us a room; true, it was 38 miles away, but that was better than a smack in the face with a stale kipper.

I rang Seema at 9.45 on Saturday morning.

"Where are you?" I asked.

"Sleeping. I was out dancing 'til 2.30 and then went for a meal!"

"Fine," I said.

"I'll be as soon as I can."

She arrived at 11.45.

I phoned the motel to say we would be late, then we set off. We covered 230 miles in record time, then spent an hour and a half looking for the motel.

Every time we stopped to ask for directions we were sent in the

opposite direction to the one we had just come

from.

Quite by chance, I spotted a Travel Inn, not the one we were supposed to be staying in but I thought they would be able to give us clear instructions to find the right one.

The receptionist must have seen the desperation in my eyes because she swiftly and efficiently changed our booking so we could stay at the motel I was presently standing in.

We had a brief rest, then set out to find Aldeburgh, which we boringly did without getting lost once.

The events were mostly taking place in the town's Jubilee Hall, and it was packed to the rafters; there was a long queue of desperate people waiting out in the cold on the off-chance that there may be a couple of seats spare; there weren't.

The performance

began with a reading from Peter Didsbury, an archaeologist from Hull and a fine writer. His poetry was a marriage between the familiar and the strange, with a touch of humour.

Amarjit Chandan, the main reason that we attended the festival; he was a friend of a friend of Seema's, read his work in Punjabi, and each poem was followed by a very fine translation by Stephen Watts, a good poet in his own right.

The session closed with a reading by Grace Nichols, best known for her collections: *'I Is a Long Memored Woman'* and *'the Fat Black Woman's Poems'*. She paints a compelling picture of the slave trade in her native homeland, Guyana and her childhood home in the Caribbean, and the experience of black women in Great Britain. Her poetry was both serious and highly amusing, a difficult trick to pull off but she

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managed it with style.

Between shows we went to the festival restaurant above the cinema, and had a wonderful meal before heading back to the Jubilee Hall for the second show of the evening.

John Agard gave a spellbinding solo performance and captured the hearts and minds of the audience; this was the only occasion on which I have heard a poet applauded so loudly and for so long that he had to re-take to stage for an encore!

The next day, we went back into Aldeburgh on the off-chance that we might be able to get tickets for that afternoon's show. As I hung around in the foyer, while Seema went inside to seek tickets, a woman, I didn't even get to know her name, gave me a ticket she had spare and point blankly refused to let me pay for it.

We obtained a second ticket after queuing for half an hour, during which I saw the ticket woman again. I decided to give her a poetry book or two I had spare, (heaven knows why,

she hadn't done me any harm) and so to the last event of the festival.

The performers were an Irishman living in Czechoslovakia, Justin Quinn, his work was succinct but powerful.

He was followed by Pia Tafdrup, who has won the Nordic Council Prize, the most prestigious literary award in Scandinavia. She used the performance to launch the English translation of her latest collection, *Queen's Gate*.

The final poet was the Chancellor of the Academy of American Poets, Galway Kinnell, who made us laugh at some of his poems and cry at others, a fine performance even though he was suffering from Bronchitis at the time.

We left soon after the show and at speeds only slightly less than the take-off speed of a Lear jet, we made our way back to Yorkshire along the M1, the almost full moon shining over our right shoulders, trailing a double string of pearly headlights in our wake, catching glimpses of extravagant fireworks exploding all around us, and somewhere south of Sheffield I was overwhelmed by a

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Publish me, damn you

Lessons in creative writing: how to impress those who can help you get into print...

Hi Peter,

Many thanks for sending this to me to read.

I did find it initially very intriguing, but I don't think you sustain this intrigue throughout, so I found my mind wandering from the page, which is not a good sign! Also, competing in this market is v. tough unless the writing is outstanding, so I think I would have difficulty selling it. I'm sorry not to be able to offer you representation, and will post back the chapters.

Given the amount of thought you have put into this, I suspect that you will want to press on with it. But if you decide to try something else and find yourself needing some help with direction, brainstorming, etc, give me a call and we can set up some coaching sessions for you.

All the best.

Dear Amanda,

Thank you for your heartwarming advice. When I sent you the manuscript I was hoping you wouldn't be

able to put it down—obviously, you couldn't pick it up.

I think we may have crossed wires here. I wasn't looking for an agent to represent me—I have one already. If this was a piece of superbly written and gripping prose, I wouldn't have sent it to you. You have the words 'support' and 'coaching' in your job description—that is what I was looking for, not a half-baked rejection E-Mail I could score from any publisher's dogsbody, any time.

Every person I've mentioned this story to has said it has major commercial potential—everyone but the priggish, narrow-minded literati you represent.

Just remember this: when you are handling a writer's work, you're dealing with a major commitment, a part of their lives. What you said knocked the shit out of me.

So no, I won't send you anything else.

Best wishes.

Peter Shinglewood

The Tyke Writer

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Each performance of this poem is a one off, 15 minute, hypnotic mix of set words and impro from the far side and no sight reading - *what a mind*.

The last poem looked at the sadness and the lives of street girls with their £100 a day habit, who turned to selling their bodies for sex to feed their addiction – *sad world*.

He returned to his seat leaving the poet behind. I can really recommend you see Richard live, then again, once the government gets its act together,

stoned.

Just joking – *don't do drugs*. Just enjoy his performance.

Next Issue...

Interchange launched its anthology *Love, Sex, Death & Carrots* at Borders Books in Leeds at the end of November. Look out for the full report and review next issue.

Additional: *Tyke Writer* is getting a Christmas present in the form of a redesign and a new masthead designed by Phil Wainman.

If it were not for the weather

I would be with you more often
Would live within your histories
All the stories long forgotten
If I had money, I would be there now
To sit and laugh and let the days go by
I know you are still busy in your life
That is why I am a visitor, sometimes
I drop in and catch-up like knitting
A scarf we all will wear — it is bright
With the colours we show each other — our
selves
And what we feel and care about
Now am I reminiscing about our times together
When I was with you in winter weather
And found my limits in a cold and flu
And having no function, nor any clue
What to do, in a world that really only needed
you
So I will drop in again, and spend time like rain
Until winter comes to remind me again
I can only visit and never live here
Even if I wanted to — the choice is clear
Life is a fragile as our weather patterns
And I am a visitor, and nothing will change

Thom the World Poet,
For the poets of Bradford

Madness in Dorset...

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feeling of peace and happiness; while ever there are poets and poetry I'm sure I can survive the horrors of this world.

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

For further details of the group, or to get involved, either come down to the Priestley Centre for Arts on Tuesdays from 8pm or contact:

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Editorial contributions welcome, but will be edited for space and style. All contributions must bear the author's name, which may appear as a byline. Opinions expressed are not necessarily those of Interchange. Copyright on all work is retained by the original authors.

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