



Sous Bois by Jane Fairhurst



www.janefairhurst.co.uk

Editorial

Mankind will never be at peace and we humans will always crave flesh. War & Sex. You can pretty much guarantee that while you're reading this those two things are going on somewhere. The two themes emerge from this fourth issue through the medium of poetry, memoirs, illustrations and prose. It is always a challenge to write about the great themes of today's age and in doing so I feel the artists and writers who do should be applauded. They are creating debate, commenting on an instinct that has been embedded deep within us for thousands of years. There will always be war and there will always be sex and there will always be people to write about it.

On a separate note, I'd like to welcome Howard Haigh to the editorial. Howard has been writing for The Mental Virus since the first issue and has always been a constant source of inspiration and information. All for now, hope you enjoy the issue.

John Togher [Editor & Founder]

Woodenhorse@tiscali.co.uk

Sex and death. Love and war. The war of the sexes. The death of love. Add, subtract, multiply and divide. The mathematics of personal conflict, always so difficult to calculate. In contrast and threaded throughout our lives stands an independent constant. A value smaller than 4 yet infinite in length. Useful almost beyond compare yet irrational in nature. Currently computed to 1,241,100,000,000 decimal places, the Guinness-recognized record for remembered digits of this number is an almost unfeasible 67,890 decimal places, held by Lu Chao, a 20-something graduate student from China. In this issue we present a mere block of 4,004 digits. Time to consume and digest a different variety of pi(e).

Howard Haigh [co-editor]

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The Future is a Ghost by Mat Turner

The future is a ghost and we are lost in its castle,
Prey to events we cannot foretell, chased, forever haunted,
By a wandering spectre of infinite possibilities.

Where are we going? What path should we take?
Is there any escape from the clutches of this eerie apparition
Always at our heels as we flag on unwittingly,
Stumbling through the basement of our lives?

Glimmerings and shadows sighted upon battlements
Suggest strange occurrences but trails vanish in a vaporous fog of obscurity.
Doors swing open, slam shut, of their own accord,
Announcing unforeseen opportunities, terminating unfinished business.

Our blood chills as we witness its freakish, outlandish behaviour,
The demented hurly burly of objects sent crashing hither
Or manna floating down from heaven on a tray of silver,
All done with the random carelessness of a juvenile prankster.

Seeking to anticipate its next move, charlatans and soothsayers
Claim to probe the unknown but the hourglass shatters in their hands,
Grains of sand trickle through their bloodied fingers and the future
Returns to its own game marking pawns for the take on a chessboard.

The future is a ghost doomed for a certain term to walk the night
Forbidden respite from its nocturnal perambulations until we,
Its harrowed subjects, embrace the topsy turvy nature of reality,
The bare bones necessity of mystery to infuse life with meaning.

Everyday Roadside Sex Scenes by Paul Blackburn & Nat Clare

It was like having perfect sex, the car and I were one. As I drove my every thought was transformed telepathically into a seamless action from me to the machine, from the machine to me. I was a man-machine. I was a modern day Satyr, half-man, half-Reliant Robin.

The highway whispered, 'Ride me! Ride me!' It was wild and I was born to be it. Slowly, I slipped on my greased leathers; gauntlets, helmet, club colours. I mounted my bike and roared off into the night.

The wet, black road spread out like a tongue and blew words of love into my ears. It was like telephone sex. I was hung up. Just me, the night, the bike and one empty saddle. Half-rebel; half-tandem.

The oil dripped warm and viscous from the broken bike chain. I wanted to finger and lick it, roll in it and fuck it. You know that feeling!

The bike was throbbing but impotent; whilst I had a hard one that was ready to blow and flow, white lava on that oozing, moving black, slack slick. The bike hid its face in embarrassment at this display of sexual perversion. I kicked the fucker over in a sudden, mindless, frustrated rage. It lay there blind and ignorant as I came in violent bursts of holy jism.

It was over, leaving a spent dick, a busted moped and a broken man!

Front cover artwork: 'Forest' by Vicky Scott, design by Sean Doherty.

Back cover artwork: 'Big Alvin' by Ashley Reaks

Coffee-Pop by Sean Stanley

You need the kind of buzz without the syrupy and sugar coated fix of the silver can much beloved of the chav-dancers of small towns. A non-alcoholic kick to the insides and synapses that could spark creativeness or just to get you through the day. Ah, but what a day it is today; the sun is seeping and the sweat is dripping. What are you do drink? How about a Coffee-Pop? Add a zip to the mind and cool your deep heat. I like to make one for friends on a sunny morning the day after a heavy session of booze and cigarettes. Forget the hair of the dog! Try a cooling Coffee-Pop!

Ingredients:

3 tablespoons instant coffee granules or espresso powder
1/2 cup boiling water
2 tablespoons sugar or to taste
1 cup non-fat vanilla ice cream or frozen yogurt
1/2 cup (1 percent) milk
1/2 cup evaporated skim milk
2 tablespoons coffee-flavoured liqueur
12 ice cubes

Directions:

Dissolve the coffee granules in the boiling water and pour into the blender.
Add sugar, ice cream or frozen yogurt, milk, evaporated milk, liqueur (if desired), and ice cubes.
Using the ice-breaker button, whirl for 5 to 10 seconds or until the ice is coarsely crushed.
Taste for sweetness and add more sugar if you like.
Serve immediately.
Store any leftover beverage in the freezer and re-blend as necessary.

Cosmic Pigeon by John Togher



Naked Stu's Curio Guide



The Ten Piece

Where oh where does one get a decent breakfast in Wigan? There was a time when I would sashay over to The Tudor on a Sunday morning with a newspaper under my arm and a pocket full of pennies for the jukebox. However, I rapidly grew weary of the fare on offer, as it was less a Full English than it was a fleet of foodstuffs bobbing around in an oil spill.

I then switched my attention to The Bocket's "Farmhouse Breakfast". Upon arrival of my maiden "Farmhouse" I was struck by its generous portions and lack of fatty liquids. Toast on the side too! "This truly is the breakfast I deserve" I thought to myself as I sank my teeth into the proud saveloy.

Serviceable as the Farmhouse was however, it lacked a certain charm. "This is all very well but where's the love?" I pondered. The meal had

more than a tinge of processed produce about it. Perfectly adequate but seemingly churned out by some cuisine-based binary-processing super computer. Also, I found the atmosphere of the venue clashed somewhat with the booze-powered sunny-side-up outgoing persona which I tend to adopt on a Sunday morn. The abiding mood was solemn and hush hush, with the merest hint of horseplay being greeted by stern glances of disapproval from the other patrons. "On the fire with this!" I seethed.

And so, I was left floundering. Without a viable breakfast alternative on the horizon I abandoned my search and retired to my bed, taking the opportunity to catch up with Sunday morning television. Much to my displeasure I discovered that John "scowler" Craven is still eking out a living on Countryfile and Michaela Strachan has started to sag. But then again she is in her forties, so fair do's.

Then, from nowhere, a new brekky contender leapt into view. It was the morning of Thursday 22nd March 2007. Wigan's "Deathstar" Arcade was opening its doors to the public for the very first time. I was there that historical day, rubbing shoulders with the crème de la crème of the town's shopping fraternity.

At 10am sharp a burly builder stumbled out of the main entrance, lit a fag and strolled off down the street. People exchanged furtive glances for a split second, then realised that the unkempt workman had left the door open behind him. A woman screamed, then people started sprinting toward the entrance. In an attempt to maintain a dignified stance I stood back and looked on as Joe Public flooded into the virginal vagina of consumerism, like so many shrieking sperm.

A couple of minutes passed before I swaggered through the doors with a sceptical scowl on face. "HMV, Waterstones and nowt else", I mumbled to myself. Then, I froze in my tracks.

Squinting through the crowds of whooping idiots, I spotted a beacon of breakfast-based salvation. At the front of the new BHS store was a sign which declared: 'Ten Piece Breakfast - £2.89'. "Stone the crows!" I thought, and studied the sign for a small print catch. None was to be found. And so I sauntered home, scarcely believing the offer I had just encountered.

The following week I weaved my merry way up to The Deathstar, wet with anticipation at the Ten Piece I was about to devour. But what was this? Upon my arrival something seemed awry. The food being served up resembled no breakfast I'd ever seen. I approached a member of staff and vocalised my query. "Breakfast stops at 11.30." was his succinct yet informative response. A glance at my watch told me it was 11.35. Denied! I slouched home with an empty stomach and began plotting attempt number two.

The following week I ventured out on a Friday evening with a few chums and immediately steered the conversation toward the topic of the Ten Piece. "You having a Ten Piece?", "We're having a Ten Piece,", "Let's have a Ten Piece," and so on. By midnight a state of frenzy had been achieved and later that night I tucked myself into bed and drifted off, dizzy with excitement at the forthcoming greasy feast.

And so it was, at 10.50am the following morning, myself and five others set out with one thing on our minds – The Ten Piece. The journey was spent discussing the various combination possibilities. Do you select eight meat-based pieces and two moist or one of everything? My, we skipped up the BHS staircase like a group of giddy schoolgirls, heads swimming with enthusiasm.

Every man jack of us claimed a tray and stood in line, sweaty, nervous and expectant. But what was this? From the front of the line came murmurs of discontent. ALL OUT OF SAUSAGES!?! It was 11.10am, a good twenty minutes before breakfast cut-off. "Just what kind of scam are you trying to pull here BHS?" I for one was now convinced that this so-called "Ultimate British Breakfast" was nothing more than a fiendish employment of smoke and mirrors. A stodgy ruse designed to attract customers into their tawdry shack of tat. "Does this breakfast actually exist?" I pontificated aloud. The situation then deteriorated. The bacon was withdrawn and with that, breakfast was

off. "What the hell does a working man have to do to get an honest breakfast in this town?!" I fumed, stomping out of the store and vowing never to return.

In much the same way that the lumberjack must spend several days crouching midst the redwoods before he may capture a photo of Sasquatch, acute perseverance and dedication are required if one is to come face to face with the Ten Piece. With this in mind I hauled myself out of bed at 10am and slipped discretely into the BHS store. Creeping up the stairway I secreted myself behind a muffin display, lest my presence should trigger the serving staff to withdraw their breakfasty wares.

Then, I pounced. "Ten Piece please," I proudly declared to the lady behind the counter. "Go on then," she replied, visibly peeved by the fact that I had beaten the cut-off time by a good hour and she would now have to part with a selection of her precious breakfast-based produce.

It was at this point that I became involved in a transaction unlike any I'd encountered before. For you see, the various foods are laid out in trays and it is up to you, as the consumer, to make your unique Ten Piece selection from said trays. As one walks along the trays, ear-marking one's ten pieces, the server barks out a running tally. I imagine that the Breakfast Bar on the actual Deathstar was operated in much the same fashion, only manned by a droid, to keep down wage costs.

The ordering process went thus:

Me: "Bacon"

Her: "One"

Me: "Sausage"

Her: "Two"

Me: "Scrambled egg"

Her: "Three"

Me: "Beans"

Her: "Four"

Me: "Black pudding"

Her: "Five"

Me: "Hash brown"

Her: "Six"

Me: "Tomatoes"

Her: "Seven"

Me: "Mushrooms"

Her: "Eight"

Me: "Fried Egg"

Her: "Nine"

Me: Another sausage"

Her: "Ten"

I had done it! The Ten Piece was mine. I sat down and tucked in. The verdict? Bloody rubbish! As the trays are kept under heat lamps to maintain optimum temperature everything had dried out and developed a topline crust. Tough sausage, cut price beans and the mushrooms were a complete waste of my time. I had felt cheated after sitting through "The Phantom Menace" for the first time but this was a new low. Incidentally subsequent viewings of the "Phantom Menace" have led me to revise my opinion slightly, as it does have its moments.

I digress, "What about the eggs?" you ask. Eggs and I have always enjoyed an uneasy, complex, multi-layered relationship. I love nothing more than scrambled eggs on a crisp Christmas morn, complimented by smoked salmon and brown sauce. By the same token, I believe the chunky egg to be the snack of Satan, abhorrent and repulsive in both appearance and odour. Fried eggs are a double-edged sword. For whilst I regularly devour and enjoy the yummy white, I shun the yucky yolk and leave it isolated in the centre of my plate like a shiny yellow farthing. The eggs of the Ten Piece were a wholly unenjoyable experience. The scrambled eggs were inferior to those served up at McDonalds for Christ's sake, whilst the fried egg was unyielding to the knife and possessed the texture of an over-sized Haribo.

On the plus side, I found the plum tomatoes agreeable and the black pudding was a welcome treat which harked back to a more innocent age. But on the whole the Ten Piece was a sub-standard dining experience which I for one shall not be repeating.

The point of this scrawl is of course to highlight the fact that the Ten Piece has failed in its attempt to overthrow the Bocket's Farmhouse. That's all very well but what am I to do? Left floating in something of a



breakfast limbo. I feel I have no option but to wander the streets, shaking my fists at the heavens and cursing the dearth of breakfast options in this pigeon-infested toilet bowl of a town.

The New Debenhams Toilets - Wigan

Not so long ago I documented my infinite love for the toilets in the Wigan branch of Debenhams. World-beaters they were. Off the beaten track, with shiny off-white porcelain as far as the eye could see. Mere moments after posting my toilet tribute I received the earth-shattering news that Debenhams was to be shut and relocated. "Heresy!" I cried. "The site upon which I purchased my first LP (INXS's "Kick") is to be closed forever?! You'll not catch me in the new place!"

Sure enough, the day came when the department store of mammoth proportions shut its doors for the last time and discerning defecators such as I took to soiling our own kitchen-ware, as opposed to being herded into the new Debenhams like so much mindless consumer cattle. Granted, the new Debenhams is a tad bigger than its elderly predecessor. However, its Deathstar location resulted in cynics like myself renouncing it as a backward step void of both style and substance.

Upon the launch of the Deathstar, us Wiganers were promised an HMV. True, it duly arrived, however close inspection reveals its range of records to be patchy at best. As for the much-heralded BHS ten-piece breakfast – do not get me started! Having already been disappointed in such an outrageous fashion, why should we believe that these new Debenhams-based conveniences are anything other than a seemingly awesome assortment of Armitage Shanks which then rapidly tarnish upon the merest splash of usage?

Based upon this assumption I refused to acknowledge their existence. That is until one leisurely weekday morn when I happened to be in BB's Coffee Shop, sipping on a foamy latte whilst absorbing a selection of news material. Much as they do on that show Sir David Frost hosts on Sundays. A show on which, by the way, I would be more than happy to appear should Sir Dave happen to read this. He could look on sagely and nod with approval as Anne Widdicombe and I chewed over the hot topic of chemical castration for paedophiles, whilst going halves on a breakfast bran muffin.

Anyhow, I digress. The coffee drink kick-started a chain reaction of muscular spasms within my workings and the next thing I knew I'm hot-footing it down the escalator. All the time clenching my buttocks in the knowledge that were I to release my rear at that moment, unspeakable molten hell would be vented upon numerous unsuspecting consumers, in a style akin to Mount Fuji spouting its angry innards over hapless village folk.

I waddled into Debenhams and mounted the escalator, frantically scouring my field of vision for directions to the men's room. A sign pointed me towards the Toy Department and I let out an audible squeal of relief as, beyond the mounds of Doctor Who cash-in tat, I spied the toilets.

Inching my way toward them, so as to ensure nothing seeped out, I was immediately struck by the five-star hotel quality décor. "A waiting area equipped with leather seating. Stone the crows!" I declared. Upon entering the lavatories I became entranced by the futuristic furnishings and sensuous mood lighting. "Truly, a pine-fragranced paradise," I gushed. I entered one of the generously proportioned cubicles and, after draping my man bag over a conveniently placed coat hook, defecated massively into the come-hither porcelain beneath me.

Having cleaned the relevant area upon my person I stepped sprightly toward the basins and washed up thoroughly, ensuring every last vestige of filth was rinsed from my dainty fingers. I noted the irreconcilable number of hand driers to sinks to be something of an irksome design flaw, but other than that these truly are some utopian urinals!

I myself can often be found lounging in the waiting area, taking a moment out from the hurly-burly that is modern day Wigan to ponder some of life's deep and meaningful. I find these toilets to be the perfect spot for such a pursuit, as they are well and truly tucked away, hidden from the vacant stares of the town's largely undesirable, indescribably foul population.

The Muffin Man - Wigan

Wigan; a town world-renown for its pie consumption. Us Wigan-folk shall be forever branded "Pie-eaters". And who do you think is pulling all those strings down at the Town Hall? The pykey Mayor? Good luck! It's that filthy pie Mafia, what with their "delivery vans" and "fresh soup".

Ergo, within the borders of this pie-fixated little burg, the title of top pie retailer is, of course, hotly contested. There's a host of bigwigs laying claim to the crown; Greenhalghs, Pooles, Greggs et al. However, I for



one pooh-pooh their boasts and cast my vote in favour of the plucky underdog. Ladies and Gentlemen, I vehemently declare that Wigan's premier pie distributor is none other than.....The Muffin Man.

The Muffin Man's décor alone warrants such lofty praise. Clearly no shop re-fit has taken place since its opening, some thirty years ago. Orange and brown are the order of the day, as opposed to the soulless white tiling and sterile glass surfaces one finds in other pastry dispensaries.

The main attraction, of course, are the meat and potato pies. An enduring northern classic. I challenge those who believe all pies are created equal to go one-on-one with me in a pie-based Pepsi challenge. For I declare The Muffin Man's to be not of this world. Crisp yet yielding pastry gives way to a meat and potato mix containing some secret ingredient that St. Michael of M&S fame would give up his halo for. Truly, Wigan's greatest gift to the world since George Formby.

And it's not just pies at which the Muffin Man excels. On any given day one can find displays of fancies resembling any number of legally copyrighted cartoon characters and a selection of cakes that would make Mr Kipling vanilla cream his slacks.

I'm reliably informed that the nation's bread industry has taken something of a turn for the worst of late, what with



all this chat of carbs being the Devil's work. Well the Muffin Man is taking a stand and churns out acres of piping hot loaves, baps and muffins on a daily basis, so you don't have to. Take that "Dr" Gillian McKeith!

Now, if I may be so bold as to take a slight detour down Memory Lane. Up until some twelve months since, myself and Chicken Jon ran a semi-self-indulgent club night named "Cloth Ears" (www.myspace.com/clotheears). Records would be played and, occasionally, complimentary cakes distributed amongst the throng of pickled revellers. I feel now would be an opportune moment to unburden myself and confess that a tea spoon of my own sweet bodily fluid was poured into every last one of those delectable delicacies. Anyhow, I digress. Such was the runaway success of Cloth Ears, we felt the opportunity had arisen to solicit commercial sponsorship for the event. Naturally, the local retailer most deserving of such an opportunity could only be The Muffin Man. A letter was written outlining an offer of £60.00 for twelve months sponsorship of the glamorous extravaganza. The communiqué was duly despatched to a certain Mr Kennedy who, I was reliably informed, ran things down at The Muffin Man. I also included in the letter five separate methods by which Mr

Kennedy could contact me to accept the generous proposal.

A month passed and not so much as a cough had been heard to pass from Mr Kennedy's pastry-crumbed lips. This was too much and so I, being fond of a feud, vowed never to pass through Kennedy's intoxicatingly odoured threshold again.

Now, when I hold a grudge I clasp it firmly to my hairy bosom, as my brother (incommunicado for some thirteen years) will testify. Yet I could go no more than three weeks before the very thought of Kennedy's moist sausage roll became all-consuming and I slinked back into the store, tail between legs, my dignity as shredded as the offer of sponsorship. Yet I can proudly say that the humble pie on which I munched that day still stands up as one of the greatest dining experiences I could care to recall. Such is the greatness of The Muffin Man.

Next time you happen to be in the borough and yearn for a pastry-encased snack treat. I urge you, forgo the pie-by-numbers mush of the so-called "reputable" high street chains and, instead, take a wee jaunt down Park Road. Mr Kennedy may be a short-sighted miser but his mighty Muffin Man is truly the pie-cock of town.



The Tourists Make My City Feel Like A Cat By Emily McPhillips

[Artwork by Vicky Scott]

There are tourists in my city. They are looking at the view I see every day and they are marvelling at it. They are looking at my city with such wonder that it doesn't seem real to them, and they have to document each step they take, they need to have proof. They roam the city in packs, their leader will usually be the one trusted with the expensive camera adorned around their neck, like a bold fashion statement it screams; look at me!

They are a mystery to me. Their faces contort in all manner of expressions. I see awe and surprise and puzzlement, but I have no words to progress upon, they elude me, I do not understand their language. They enjoy my city more than I do and I cannot understand why. I panic a little in my lack of understanding. I follow these tourists. I follow them covertly like a spy. I take my lessons in espionage from all the detective programmes I watched as a child, maybe I could pluck up the courage and approach them like a loveable Columbo, and then they'd reveal their secret wonder of my city to me. If I were Columbo I would never fail. I am buying myself a rain mac.

It is raining now that I am wearing my rain mac. I am hiding behind a tree. I am hearing all sorts of oooohs and aaaaaahs. I see raised hands and they are pointing. They take a long look at a red post box, one of them pretends to post a letter as the leader takes a picture. This is a real hoot for them.

I see businessmen rushing to work, I see people shopping, and then I look back at the tourists; they are like a colourful rainbow decorating the drab grey streets of my city and the drab inhabitants. I live in this city and forget to look up, I look up now and I am pointing and ooohing, I am looking in wonder at amazing buildings, amazing feats of architecture, it all looks so amazing. I can't help but use the word amazing. The tourists act as a torch that illuminates everything around them. My city feels spoilt, it feels like an affectionate cat being stroked and admired, it is purring, it is content.

I let the tourists continue their sightseeing alone. I somehow have grown to like their ridiculous caps. I liked their 'exhibitionist' behaviour. I feel so sensible. I remove my rain mac. It is still raining. It always rains in my city and I am enjoying the rain on my skin. I will ease my walk down to an amble, I have nowhere to be. I spend the day in my city. I spend the day feeling like a tourist. I spend it making up characters; people I could be. I am not from around here, I am bright, I am the full spectrum of a rainbow and people will want to follow me, they will want to find where I end.

I am now feeling like a torch wearing a baseball cap, and I will have ten photo albums full of pictures by the end of today. It continues to rain. My city still purrs like a fat content cat. I can feel its soft fur knead my body as it gives me a hearty welcome home.



Three Poems - Gemma O'Neill

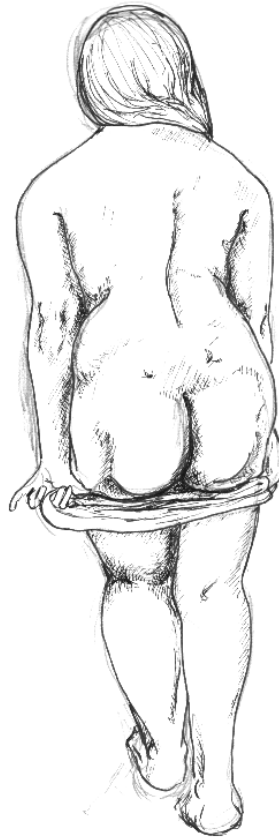
[Illustration by Anna Smith]

Sent To....

I never knew Coventry could get more grey
Than on that Monday morning
When I lay on the settee
Wrapped tightly in blanket
Watching the insomniac's BBC
Headlines ticker-taping across the screen
Too quick for me to read
But I could see the pictures beneath
A city shrouded in a thick fog
Stopped dead
No pigeons clawing
Lady Godiva's naked body
Or the stone horse she rode on in pity
No shoppers or students
No tourists snapping Peeping Tom
Perhaps the sombreness had chased them all away
The camera panned across the Cathedral
Showing a translucent tower
Cast against an impenetrable sky
I hoped they'd stopped the clocks today
And all the kneeling, praying and worship within
How could this city ever dare to stir again?
When I'd stayed still
I'd remain here for hours
Staring at muted bulletins
And doomed weather forecasts
Trying not to picture
The devastating news
They had failed to broadcast
Of smoke curling from peaks of flame
Spitting, crackling, caressing skin
Coating his nostrils on that last breath in

Location, Location, Location

Everyone knows my street
'Cause it's 'round the back of Aldi
In easy reach of the chippy
And the newsie who sells booze gone midnight
Even the cabbies who run red lights
Know they can't get away with clocking up extra miles
'Cause everyone knows my street
And the route that saves you 20p
To put towards your fags and your leccy
Tots with exotic-sounding, fabricated names
Are dragged by wrist or reins
Down my street
"What a shame" the old dears tut
As they fold their handbags into their bust
Then return to discussing the rain
And moaning that the bus is late again
They're waiting to be taken away



Far away from my street
Behind the shelter, lads do brazen business
Buying and selling and smoking
And stubbing their cigs out on the floor
Only stopping to scrawl on the wall
That they woz ere on my street
A pit bull tugs his owner
Past the corner pub
"It cost five ton you know"
That's where the money goes on my street
A middle-aged, mini-skirted lush
Staggers in to beat the breakfast rush
'Cause twenty-four hour drinking
Will never be enough on my street
You always know where you are
From abandoned sofa to jacked-up car
Walking on shit-stained slabs
Barely anchored to the ground
Seeing the sights and hearing the sounds
Of black eyes and not knowing right from wrong
And that endless drum'n'bass that reverberates
Right through the bricks and mortar
And those oblongs of dirt
The Council calls our gardens
You soon learn that's all you're worth
You soon learn that's where you belong
When you live on my street.

My First Funeral

There were no sing-along hits
Painstakingly picked for mix CDs
At the start of this sombre road trip
Just jabbering local radio DJs
Changing accents, same old chatter
As we crackled over each county's boundary
From North West to South East
My boyfriend driving
And me counting junctions
Passing him pop
And squeezing his hand
As he rested it on his knee
At each red light
Travelling three hundred miles
To say goodbye
To a shut up box
With our friend inside

The cool countryside church was packed
With punks, goths and freaks
Drawn to this village from countryside
Disturbing the peace and quiet
Just how he would have liked
I managed not to cry
Until they brought him inside
Everyone was wearing his footy team's sky blue
And once outside it was as if the sky knew
As even it obliged

And sky blue was all I could see for miles
Around the secluded field
Full of grey and white stones
And his box lowered into his hole
Surrounded by mounds of earth
We stood in line
Under that blue sky
To say goodbye
To that shut up box
With our friend inside

After sing-alongs
And dancing down the motorway
We sat in his local
Toasting his memory
And reminiscing the rest of the day away
Drink blurring unreliable memories shared
Showing the slightly more reliable
Memories snapped up
In still-framed longevity
And we said goodbye
To an unlocked box
We could look inside
Any time

The Man Outside by Howard Haigh [Artwork by Ashley Reaks]

Working up on the second floor of a town centre building, my view through the window is interesting if unspectacular. Far on the horizon, which in this part of the world isn't really so very far away, are buildings that to a former colleague were the ideal reason to joke, all Christ like on the cross, 'hey, you can see my house from here'. I don't spend all day looking though the window (honest!) but I do notice people on the street outside, walking from who knows where to who knows where? Maybe they're going for a bus or going for a train. Maybe they've just arrived. Maybe they're killing time and going nowhere fast. Or maybe they don't know where they're going at all. Big life question there – where are you going? I suspect, for most, it's generally unanswerable. I notice the shoppers, clutching bags filled to the brim with goodies to devour. They remind me of leafcutter ants hurrying along a pavement awash with the pheromones of consumerism. But there's one person who doesn't conform. He's there every so often – I haven't noted the times. But I think he does. He always carries a book and a pen and he always stands in the same spot. I think he could be a train spotter, because he'll make a swift, almost surreptitious glance over the high stone wall that separates him from the station, and then he'll make another entry in his mysterious little book. He's certainly recording the activities of someone or something.



I'm tempted to rush out into the street and make a challenge... "What are YOU doing? Are you a fucking weirdo or something?" except I don't. I don't because I start to invent other reasons for him standing and looking and writing. Is he a freelance traffic enumerator who is

there counting how many buses pass by every 10 minutes? Does he note the route number, note how passengers are wearing baseball caps or sat blowing their noses? Does he use these statistics to suggest which Lottery numbers to pick for the Saturday draw? Has he won the BIG ONE and merely returns to congratulate himself on this stroke of utter genius? What if he's a poet? Maybe he comes to stand on the street to gather inspiration. He might be writing about the love of his life, about his love for life or his love for his pet or maybe his pet hate. Perhaps he's sponsored by the Arts Council – a performance artist whose mission is to make his itinerant audience take note of that section of pavement and wall, immovable and constant and discover that there's time enough to stand and stare. What if he's a spy or a private detective whose mission is to track down some undesirable and report on them? Hmmm. And he's outside MY building. Shit what if he's a stalker or an escaped psychopath?! Does that little notebook of his contain the list of those he's planning to line up against the wall and shoot come the revolution? Calm down, he could be a sociologist engaged in research and about to come up with some groundbreaking dissertation called 'The Daily Shopper As Leafcutter Ant - Following The Pheromones Of Consumerism'. Good title that! But after such musings there's work to be getting on with and so I have to drag myself away from the glass and admit that I don't know who he is.

He's just the man outside.

Rambling For Fun by Gillian Forrester

The Wigan nightclub audience has a reputation for being the worst in the world. An old joke has the punchline; they don't have hecklers in Wigan, they have snipers. At a recent event I heard the best heckle ever, perpetrated on an audience member by the act. The act, a performance poet, asked if anyone was a member of the National Trust. Did you say the National Front enquired someone? No, said the poet, although I could write a 2,000 word essay arguing they were one and the same.

As a frequent visitor to National Trust properties and a regular walker across the land they own I thought she had a point. When I am out walking I meet people just like me. We are all white, middle-aged, overweight, rain-loving crackpots. I did see someone black once, up near Rivington. He had on a lovely red waterproof jacket and the correct walking boots but he was a postman.

The whole point about walking though is that real life, politics and other such irritants, can be left behind in the car park. It's difficult to think about much else when you are trying to put on boots the car owner won't let into the car except when covered with a plastic bag, balancing on one leg while clinging to a roof rack with one hand and trying to pull said boots on with the other when you are unable to bend down to reach the laces because of the arthritis in your knees and your eyes are unable to see because they are full of the stinging rain water pouring in them and down your nose because you forget to pack the flat cap you wear when walking which keeps the water off your glasses but can't be worn in public anywhere the public goes.

On our most recent walk, the Sunny Day Strollers (for that is the name printed on our sweatshirts), waded over Red Rock, through a field with a grey welsh pony and a gentle goat sniffing our rucksacks as we passed by them and over a stile. There is meant to be a national standard of stile design, maintained by whichever leisure trust or landowner controls the area. They are both equally uncaring about access and stile design, and the ease of climbing them varies wildly.

After we had left the fields near Haigh we crossed Meadow Pit Lane and followed the map that led us across the busy road, and to a field with a path, which eventually leads down to the canal. We could see the Reebok Stadium and the Norman church at Blackrod in the distance, the footpath keeping parallel with Little Scotland. From the roadside we were meant to cross a stile into the field. I couldn't get over it. It had four very high steps, in the style of a window cleaner's ladder and no platform running in the diagonal direction to balance one leg on while the other is shoved over by who ever is unlucky enough to be standing behind you, nor did it have a taller wooded post on one side to act as a balancing prop. I viewed it with loathing before Tall John put Plan B into action.

He had spied a five-barred gate. Could I get over that? I doubted it very much. The last time I got over a five-barred gate I was twelve years old, going down hill very fast and on a horse. The horse didn't make it. A little further along the road was another gate, tied up with pale blue plastic string. I untied the string, retying it again in a very secure bow, and set off with my group, except now they were on one side of a barbed wire fence and I was on the other. Eventually, as is the way with barbed wire fences, we came to a section that sagged a little. Some of the walkers stood on the bottom wire and the others held up the top part and I crawled through the gap, managing to avoid at least half of the sheep droppings, and then we were all on our way.

This field had a herd of long legged bullocks standing in the opposite corner but as we crossed to the other side, where the gate to the farm was, they started to follow us. In a scene reminiscent of Alfred Hitchcock's 'The Birds', every time we turned round there were ten more of them marching along behind, their heads down, tails swishing and staring at us with a great deal of curiosity. Even shouting our favourite recipes of 'steak o poivre', or plain 'steak and chips' at them had no effect.

We arrived at the farm, climbed over the user-friendly stile and passed a sign that said 'Sod the Dogs, Beware of the Kids'.

Some beautiful sun arrived just in time to eat. A rusting metal contraption served as our lunch stop, it wobbled a bit but with eight thin people on one side and five fat people on the other we managed to stabilise it and all plonked down; it wasn't a ratio I felt entirely comfortable with but needs must. We ate our lunch with two Labradors looking longingly at us from one side of a gate and a herd of bullocks watching from the other. The smell of the country was enchanting.

I used the opportunity to sit quietly and pick off the horseflies which had found a way down the front of my anorak and stuck themselves lovingly to the dry oil body spray on my neck which the Avon catalogue swore was an insect deterrent and wondered why I kept on doing this.

And then I remembered Stone Hall at Parbold with the musket ball marks in the wall, made at the time of the War of the Roses, and the curlews swooping up around Belmont, and the carved totem pole in front of the old schoolhouse at Withnall Village, and the goldfinches we saw darting through the soot coloured ruins of a farmhouse, like sparks flying from a bonfire in the dark.

One day we got to the top of Hunter's Hill and sat with the wild flowers on a ridge high above Wrightington and Skelmersdale and found that all our familiar landmarks were too far over to the east from where we had left them, only the church spires and towers spaced out across the landscape with mathematical regularity, afforded some certainty.

On the Red Rock walk it rained and shards of lightning crashed into the ground seemingly right in front of us. We crowded together under a canal bridge and watched hailstones splatter into the water. Just think, all this fun and completely free to all.

Three Poems - Scot Devon

The Dancing Boy [Illustration by Anna Smith]

See the dancing boy with dancing feet, kicking out a rhythm to an R&B beat. 'Cause this boy's got liquid blood this boys got liquid moves that pumps and pimps and burns to an R&B groove. And this boys gone, this boys lost now in a new world of bass beats kicking out from speaker masked faces that slam home a fever called Friday night, and this boys caught that fever he's caught on the wave of the



sound and he rides it with dancing liquid feet that slam home a two time speed freak beat. And the cocaine's pumping through his system now as he really lets go, as it flows through internal veins, soothing internal pains and then connects with a synapse and the boys feet are set loose, he spins on the moment, turns on a thought wave, skips a gear and sends his feet lightning spark skipping on a dream called Friday. And the colours become sounds and the sounds become scents that kick and lick at the edge of this boys world, but he's lost to it, he's lost to the night, lost to the sound that pounds around his vision. And it keeps coming, it keeps going, it keeps skipping, burning, yearning through the night vision of a dancing boy with dancing feet, slamming old skool rhythms to an R&B beat, cause there is no ending, there is no ending, there is no ending to the sound.

And the people start to notice and the people start to cheer and whoop and clap for a dancing boy with dancing feet. 'Cause he's got what they want, he can do what they dream they can do but never can. They haven't got the dancing feet or liquid dreams that slam home night visions on a Friday night scene, so they start to form a circle, giving him room to move, room to groove, room to skip gears and bring tears to a hypnotised crowd, and the clapping begins and

cheers and the whoops go up for this dancing boy who chases sound scents across a thing called Friday.

And bang.

He comes to. Our dancing boy with dancing feet stops dancing and looks around and he's just a fifteen year old kid in a club surrounded by strangers who seem to love him for a reason he can't quite understand, and he's scared for a moment. But then he sees his friends on the far side and they smile their fourteen year old smiles and they wave their fourteen year old waves. It's OK they say, you're not alone, you were just gone for a minute gone to the sound, gone to the beat, gone to the lightning sparks of those dancing feet. But we didn't leave you, we never leave you.

And that should be the end of this story, but it's not 'cause something's not quite right with our dancing boy. His heart's pumping to fast, way to fast, and the sweat's dripping off him, it's pitt pattering smit smattering, tipp tapping on the floor. And that's not good for our epileptic friend, no that's not good at all. Let's get him outside the friends say, away from the night, away from the beat, away from the mad speaker masked sound that slams home to a deadly beat onto wannabe dancers who wanna be set loose, set free. Everything will be OK outside.

But it's not, it's worse outside, his heart's pumping faster, it's thum jamming, whack stabbing, break dancing on his ribs and the sweat is pouring down him, monsooning a Niagara down his features. And

Rodney Is An Ape (And A Racist) by Peter Kennedy

<p>RODNEY IS PARANOID</p> <p>HE IS SUSPICIOUS OF EVERYONE</p>	<p>DONALD IS SUDDENLY VERY WEALTHY</p> <p>BUT HE WON'T SAY WHY</p>	<p>NATALIE HAS BEEN AVOIDING RODNEY</p> <p>SHE IS KEEPING SCHTUM</p>
<p>RODNEY HASN'T BEEN IN TO WORK</p> <p>HE BELIEVES HIS COMPUTER IS BUGGED</p>	<p>DONALD BOUGHT A GAR</p> <p>BUT LAST WEEK HE COULDN'T AFFORD RENT</p>	<p>NATALIE HASN'T RESPONDED TO RODNEY'S TEXTS</p> <p>AND HIDES WHEN SHE SEES HIM APPROACHING</p>
<p>RODNEY'S INSECURITIES HAVE ESCALATED</p> <p>HE HAS NOT SLEPT FOR SIX DAYS</p>	<p>DONALD INHERITED HIS MONEY AND HIS GAR</p> <p>AND NATALIE DOESN'T LIKE RODNEY ANYMORE</p>	<p>RODNEY STABBED AN ARAB THAT LOOKED AT HIM</p> <p>HIS PARANOIA HAS SUBSIDED</p>

then the bouncer looks over, it's OK the friends say, he's just on a come down, he's just on a come down from the sound he'll soon come around you know how it is, and maybe he does and maybe he doesn't but in that moment when the bouncer looks over and the friends eyes meet with his it happens.

The dancing boy drops.

The ambulance took ages to arrive and then when it did it was too late, the dancing boy with dancing feet, who used to skip out rhythms on an R&B beat, pronounced dead on the spot. And maybe we shouldn't have been in the club at that age, taking the things we were taking doing the things we were doing and saying the things we were, but we were. And no one told us no, no one turned us away. And yes, it could have been worse, and fuck, it could have been me, but it wasn't.

Dead on the floor, dancing no more. On the floor, no more. No more.

Blind Rage

See the boats coming, zoom in and see only one boat, zoom in again and see the men crouched low, now see only one man, now see what he sees the beach up ahead, a Normandy beach, D-day beach. And in that soon to explode cocktail of beach heads and Nazi ideals the man sits waiting, with stomach knotted, heart garrotted he sits and rides the waves. Above the black flack is heart pounding, palpitating the back beat to this making of history. Pounding in a way none of us can ever imagine. The man feels the tide of fear swell up through him and so he begins to mumble with his words, he fumbles with verbs, he tumbles tongue tied over a semantic beat and falls on the only ones he can remember, the only ones he knows, they're automatic, they're ingrained and so he begins, 'Our Father, who art,' and BANG.

Metal meets sand as the front drops away and the man wakes up to a nightmare that screams blue black through the daylight. The shots come in waves, sweeping, strafing, piercing, life taking lung fulls of gunfire, bursts of hot lead squeezed out of the chests of men maddened into a frenzy. And the shots keep coming, keep coming, and the men drop away, drop away, never to move again, dead eyed, empty men with empty lungs. Gun turrets shooting straight, cruel and deadly causing a new fear, a new fear which is hot, hot, hot against the day. But our man is still on his feet, it's a miracle, it's a miracle of prayer that in this explosion of bayonets and swastikas, still on his feet, still moving with the thumping, thumping, punching of the ground pounders boot he goes on. Moving faster, overtaking slower, moving past one, past two and another and another as his feet begin to obey. The bullets ping ping pinging round his form, snipping veins and killing dreams and the background melts into a cocktail of background static and the sound muted by our man, 'cause he doesn't want to hear, he can't hear, he just moves. Keep going man, keep going man, his inner voice is screaming, step over the body, keep moving, don't think, keep moving, keep moving. The wet pack is smack smacking against our man's back, sweat sticking gun to palm, blood sticking hair to face. Almost there, almost there, keep going, just one more, he's gonna make it, gonna make it, he's so close.

And then it happens, a grenade curls into his running path but his feet won't stop, can't stop, won't stop, so he counts and each count is like a prayer one, two, three, four and nothing happens, five, six, seven, eight, still nothing and the hope flares up inside our man. It's a dud, the inner voice screams, it's a dud, it's a dud, feet pounding, heart singing, it's a dud, it must be, it must be, bit it's not. And the explosion ripples through the air moving outwards at a lazy pace as if to say, why should I hurry, you've got nowhere to go, and the slow motion last blast hits our man in the face. White light implodes into red and fades to black, white black, red black, red, red, white, black, black, black and our man gets pulled down, down, down into a Nazi night.

You see this is how my Grandfather, lost his sight and sometimes when he drank he remembered and when he remembered he would talk. A man who came home a hero but never worked again, eventually settling for a life on disability benefits. But he was never angry with his fate, with his life, never, not for all his days, and then in '92 his last day came.

And his pending widow leaned in close and said, 'Don't be angry,' he replied, 'I'm always angry when I'm dying.'

Stars With Stripes

Crosses on lawns, we don't do that no more

'Cause they stopped burning.

But evacuate the building 'cause there's a fuckin' plane comin'.

It's a black blast, smoke smashed back slashed scene,

'Cause they don't make demons of white-skinned teens.

And if you survive this new age Nagasaki blast,

They'll wait for you in Hell on a lake of napalm with a fucking match.

I wonder what it's like to explode a body blow.

I wonder what it's like to be shot.

When the body falls but the soul never keeps up.

We've seen burning flags,

We've seen body parts fly.

We've seen banana boxes with heads inside.

We've seen

The patriot act.

Smoke

Smoke screens

Ignorance

Moral Thrones

Blame

Bones.

Fucked up the towers like we fucked up Saddam,

Don't have to be a Taliban to feel the baton.

Stay with this thought train fool,

Were on a plane fool,

Like TNT to a vein we'll be on the front page fool.

It's a new age, new rave, brand new blaze fool.

It's the end, it'll all change fool.

We trained 'em, we funded 'em, we bombed them.

Peace times, we never got the knack.

Now aggression is refleckateckating back.

All the people come and go,

Talking of Baghdadio.

An Excerpt From ‘Memories of a Soldier’ by Bill Winstanley

REGENT’S PARK BARRACKS

The Holding Batt

We were the finished product and we did everything. We drilled to perfection, to mount guard at Buckingham Palace, St. James’s Palace, Clarence House and Marlborough House. We were drilled by the RSM Britain who has the loudest voice in the army. You used to shake when he opened his mouth. There were rumours about him when you were on guard duty. At any of the Palaces he was watching, if you moved, blinked your eyes and if he wasn’t watching you he sent his wife to watch. I shall never forget when I was first on guard; we were picked in alphabetical order. With my name being Winstanley I got St. James’s Palace.

We marched from Regent’s Park Barracks to Wellington Barracks, then we were lined up there, inspected again and marched to Buckingham Palace. We did all the rigmarole, then we were separated and marched off to St. James’s Palace, which included St. James’s, Clarence House, Marlborough House and The Arches.

My first stint was four hours on, four hours off. There was only one guard on each placement because of the war. They took us out, inspected us and left us with a corporal. It was very dark. He was supposed to take us to our box and change over. He shouted over to leave the box and come over. I was the last man. He told me to go across and he carried on taking the other men away. I crossed the road to Clarence House and went to the first box and spent most of my shift on that box. By this time it started to come light and the next thing a postman came round the corner.

“Hi mate, you’re on the wrong box.” He said in a cockney accent. “You had better go over to the other box before the officer comes round. You’ll be sent to the bloody tower if you are caught.”

I have never told anybody about this since until now. I was on several times and I was always on St. James’s Palace with my initial being ‘W’. The next time was underneath the arches. I had to watch myself with the women as they tried to distract you. One woman got out of the taxi and opened her fur coat. She was naked underneath. Then she nipped back into the taxi. Then there were women with children asking if you wanted a lick of their cornet of ice-cream, trying to make you talk, asking questions. In other words making a nuisance of themselves. The older soldiers would tell you of the Prince of Wales. He would come in drunk as a mop, talk to the sentries, he didn’t care about anything. He offered the sentries a drink out of a bottle of spirits. Later he abdicated himself as King and married a divorced woman.

The Queen and her sister Margaret were only young then. The old soldiers would tell you that the sisters would be skipping, playing in the gardens, running past the sentries so they had to present arms every time they went past.

So the story goes, the soldiers stopped doing it and the sisters reported it. The soldiers got reprimanded for it.

We did plenty of marches of thirty miles or so with full kit on. We did assault courses in Regent’s Park and cross-country running. There we had to cross rivers and ponds etc. After all this with weary feet, blisters and all, we had to clean our boots, all our webbing, gaiters, brasses, cap badges. Everything that night had to be cleaned by lights out. Reveille was at half past six. ‘Amen.’

We were sent to Chequers, that’s the country home of the Prime Minister. He used to come there to relax or for meetings or whatsoever. He mostly came at weekends. He used to fancy doing brickwork and pointing but he wasn’t very good at it at all. If we were on Guard duty at night we would see him come to the door and make water on the garden. I don’t know whether they had toilets downstairs or only upstairs but he found it convenient to do it on the garden. Outside the house was a stone building like an outhouse with no door on. Inside it was stacked with lump coal. It had been covered in whitewash so you could see if any had been taken.

Our Nissan huts were up near a road on top of a hill with a stone in the centre of the hut. We used to get a ration of coal once a week. You had to make it last all week. If it was cold one day it would only last one night. I think we only did two weeks there thank god then we went back to Regent’s Park barracks. That night we were back, the guardroom was bombed. It was bombed out. We had to sleep over the top of some garages. Me and Guardsman Heath made our beds on the floor. There were only two of us up there. I never went on guard at Buckingham Palace or St. James’s again. We were lost off the rolls except the payroll. We walked up to the camp with a brush and a barrow and went in the Naffy for about a week. Then we were asked where we were sleeping. We said over the garage where we were sent. Then we were sent to the barrack room which was for the 6th Army to the Third Battalion Abroad.

After all this we were sent to Northolt, all of the 6th Battalion. We were sent to billets in private houses which were unfurnished only for bunk beds. We did training there on marches on the main road, outside of the Northolt Aerodrome. A funny thing happened there. We were told the sergeant would at any time shout ‘gas’ and we would be timed how long it would take us. But as it happened there was a lonely old woman across the road. She was carrying a little cardboard box with a civilian gas mask in it when our sergeant shouted ‘gas’, the little woman

ripped open her box. She put on her mask. She was panic stricken. We went across the road and told her it was only a practice for the army. It was laughable.

We had all the medical examinations. They tested our feet, looked at our mouths, our teeth etc. We had in charge, a Major Broderick. I will tell you later about the Major. We nicknamed him Rommel because he was brash, didn’t care for anything. But saying that, he was a good bloke, nevertheless.

We never knew where we were heading for. We got on a boat or a ship and it was called the Arawa. We went from Liverpool up to Scotland, got in a convoy of ships, cruisers, battleships around us. We were escorted all the way to Panama down to El Salvadore, then to Durban in South Africa. We had about one week there and we had a wonderful time. We went to see the Zulu dances in the valley of a thousand hills. We met a South African bank manager who took us to his home and gave us tea. He introduced us to his head boy who waited on us hand and foot. He lived in a hut in the garden. We signed a book which had hundreds of names in it.

We landed in Egypt six weeks later. I could not tell you where we landed. I forget the name of the place but there were thousands of tents as far as the eyes could see. We were given a tent to sleep in and we dumped our kit there. We met a Corporal who we knew; he was sent there a month later than us. He came through the Mediterranean on the Queen Mary or the Queen Elizabeth. We went to the pictures that night then we went to the Naffy. That night we came out in a sandstorm. We snuggled together, we couldn’t see a thing. It was impossible to see a thing and impossible to find our tent. We woke up in the morning and all we could see for miles and miles were tents that had been blown down.

We were sent to Syria where our third battalion was resting after they had been in the front line and been beaten back to the Quatroo Depression where they could hold the Germans. Then Montgomery took charge and what a change! They broke through at El Alamein then we chased them straight back out of Africa to Cap Bon. The eighth army was under General Montgomery’s leadership. All through the western desert we travelled and never got hurt or wounded. That was the last of the eighth army. By the third battalion of the Brigade of guards we were joined by the fifth army of the Americans in future years, days or months. We had leave of about a fortnight. A rest at last!

Our next stop was to take the island of Pantaliar because the British and Americans had invaded the island of Sicily. The island of Pantaliar was a small island of vulcanite rocks and lava with a road cut through the rocks. There was a machine gun at the top of the hill unmanned and in working order. The Italians had left it there and vanished to the other side of the island. We walked as far as we could. We found it empty only of lava rocks and makeshift grapevines. We made our way back to the docks where we had come from. We came across an old Italian man in a cave where he lived. The cave was full of fleas. God only knows how he survived. Some of the men took their washing to him and paid with our rations. He should have been moved to the other side of the island. We let him stay for our own reasons. We manned the gun at the top of the hill.

When we went back to the docks there was an empty hotel which was stripped of everything. There was an old wine bar which was serving wine to the Americans. We were told to send anybody across to the other side of the island where the Americans would look after them. We came across another Italian in a cellar. He was drunk and drinking himself to death. The Americans came out of the wine bar. They were of Italian descent. Because we were dragging the man out of the cellar a nasty incident was averted. When he told them he had no food and he was drinking himself to death we put him in a lorry and sent him to the other side of the island. We saw him again after a week. He came when the boats were being unloaded. He found a job with the Americans. He waved us goodbye.

We were guarding the docks when the Americans came in with their trucks. They used to fill the trucks with rations; food, cigs, everything you need. As the roads were cut out, the trucks were on the same level, loaded. They had to drive slowly up the hill. We stood on the banking, jumped on the wagons, tipped off what we wanted and the driver just waved to us.

In the docks were speedboats, and when they invaded Sicily we could see the planes going over. Some of the planes landed in the sea near to the docks, and the speedboats would go out and pick up the pilots who had parachuted out. They were very successful. We saw Americans towing our gliders and the rumours go that as soon as the Germans fired at their planes, they released their ropes meaning the gliders could not make the landing. The saying goes, when the Germans bomb - the Americans and British duck; when the British bomb - the Germans duck; when the Americans bomb - everybody ducks! But there were good soldiers in the American Army, such as the Texas Rangers, just to mention one regiment. We left there as soon as they took Sicily. We sailed back to North Africa. After a couple of days rest we were joining the American 5th Army and we were told that we were going to Italy. The 8th Army were already fighting there in Southern Italy. We set sail for Italy; the troops were happy for a while. We were told that the Italians had packed in, but we had a shock when we were told that the Germans had replaced them. We landed at Salerno.

This is a personal note from a Ruth Ive (The Mirror, December 14, 1999). Wartime leaders Winston Churchill and Franklin Roosevelt kept in touch via a secret telephone hotline. Operator Ruth Ive had a job of monitoring their conversations. Here Ruth, now eighty-one, living in Hampstead, North London tells her story. “I was twenty-two and got the job because I was good at shorthand and could down word for word what they said. It

was my job to transcribe everything they said and monitor it for security breaches. We used to start work at about 4pm and go through until midnight. The first time I listened I got into real trouble. It was so interesting to hear them speak that I didn't write anything down. They both had to be warned about security and not to mention certain matters. That's why I once had to tell Churchill to shut up.

He had started to tell Roosevelt about a rocket attack on Smithfield market in London which had killed a lot of people. I had to interrupt and remind him that they weren't supposed to talk about results of enemy action. Then he began telling the same story all over again, so I had to interrupt a second time. He slammed the phone down in a temper. He often sounded tired and emotional and had bouts of depression. He knew who I was but I never met him and handled all his calls from a bunker under my office. What we didn't know at the time was that the Germans had broken the code and the transcripts were on Hitler's desk within minutes. This had tragic consequences for the Allied war effort in Italy. When our troops landed in Salerno, the Germans were waiting for them." – and us!

We set sail from North Africa on landing craft; Infantry, LCI – I would say about 200-300 soldiers on each. We were happy enough. I met George Littler; I knew him in Civvie Street. We were all Coldstreamers; we were singing, George was playing his mouth organ. We were all happy – that's when we heard the Italians had given up. There was cheering and dancing aboard the boat. Little did we know what was going to happen.

We were run in the shore. These were flat bottom boats and they came to a sudden stop. They had a long ladder from the front of the boat which we went down to the front with full kit on. They were shelling us when we got in the water. The water was up to our necks. I was worried about it because I could not swim. I held my rifle over my head with both hands; it was chaos. I finally got on the beach and ran to the banking where there was a bit of cover. They were still shelling us. I looked back to where the boats were; some had not got as close to the beach as we had. I saw bodies floating on the water. Some of their kitbags were lying about in the water. We went inland and were told to dig in. We made trenches in quick style. We got in them and camouflaged our heads as best we could. We had no sooner done this than a German tank came to the crossroads about twenty yards away from us. "Keep your heads down!" came a whisper from the sergeant. We had two new blokes that had never been in action before and we gave them the Piat gun, because we would not use it. One of them lifted it up as if he was going to use it. The Sergeant said not to use it; we could give our position away. If it was not positioned properly it would have little effect. The Germans lifted the lid off the tank. A German had come out of the top, lifted his binoculars to his eyes and looked all around but saw nothing. He got back in the tank, turned round and went back. 'A sigh of relief'. We found out later that there were tanks in the Tobacco Factory, about 100 yards further back to the crossroads. There were all sorts of rumours; some of them were true. Back to the beaches – one man was shouting. We could hear them firing; we could hear their tanks revving up – we were in disarray.

After several hours of the bedlam we were waiting for the German tanks to come through the woods, but we heard our ships firing their big guns. That put a stop to the Germans attacking. We got our confidence back. We were told that the Scots Guards were having a bad time of it; we were sent to help them. In order to cause a diversion we were sent round to some tobacco plants. When we came out of them there were open fields and an old farmhouse. We took no notice of this. We were the first platoon to cross the open fields and hell broke loose. The shells were exploding among us. We had to run to a little hedgerow about two feet high; it was no cover for us. Our officers could see the trouble we were in. They sent some carriers out, led by Major Broderick, to help us. The shells dropped on them and folded them up – goodbye by Major Broderick! There was an Operation Point directing the shells in the old farmhouse which we didn't know about at the time.

We had to look at our casualties. I had my friend lying next to me behind the hedgerow. It was Douglas Singleton. I asked him if he was alright. He had the Bren gun; I was second to him on the Bren gun. He was like a brother to me. He had been with me all through the Desert Rats. I turned him over to see where he had been hit. I could see his lips had gone blue. He was dead. Then I looked at the other lad. I didn't know his name. He had been hit in the chest; half of his chest had been blown away. I was devastated; one on my right was dead, one on my left was dead – why had I been spared? The Sergeant said to me "Pick up the Bren gun and your rifle, we are getting out of here." There were two more and they crawled out on their bellies. I was the last one out. I had to crawl out along the hedges, with the Bren gun, rifle and the pouches with the ammunition. I had to run the rest of the way back into the tobacco plants with my pants down due to the crawling. The Sergeant took me to the top of the steps. Through that opening we could see the reflection of the OP's in the sun. I said "You fire the Bren gun, I'm in no state to do it with my heavy breathing." But the mortars had the last laugh because they blew him and the farmhouse up!

They then took us to another place near to Battapaglia where we had to defend again. Me and five others were sent on a reconnaissance. This was at night when it was dark. We hadn't to take on the Germans. We passed many Germans and could hear them talking in guttural voices. We had to reccy Battapaglia and went into it – "nothing there". We heard trucks moving in, motorcycles and tanks about to enter the village – the entire village was wrecked. We went into a house with no door on, lied down just inside the door. A motorcycle stopped and two Germans came to the doorway. They leaned on the front wall and started talking. Then they lit up their cigarettes.

We were just inside and could hear ourselves breathing. Then they left, started up their motorbikes and drove away. We made our way back having got what we came for (they only came in at night time). We dodged more Germans as we made our way back and were glad to get back safely.

We were moved again. This time the Germans had attacked our men and had made a mess of them, both wounded and dead. We had to take up their positions and got into the trenches they had dug. It was behind a waterway, about ten feet across. It went down to a bridge which was defended by our troops. They had defended with their lives – successfully; and beaten the Germans back. There was a minefield in front of the waterway. I jumped into an empty trench and was aware of something smouldering in the base of the trench. I got hold of it and threw it out thinking it was a head, but it was just a smouldering sod. We were expecting another attack by the Germans – it came! We were attacked with half track carriers across the bridge. Soldiers came across the minefields and were blown up by the mines. By the road in the water, under the bridge, was Sergeant Major Wright. With his hand grenades, he was lobbing them into the carriers, blowing them up and causing them to crash, blocking the bridge. He got the VC. At first I thought it was for this incident, but later found that it was for other heroics. We were defending the waterway about twenty yards up from the bridge. Pieces of metal from the carriers were flying about our trenches. There were shouts of "Mercy comrades" from the Germans across the water, in the minefield. Our Corporal went into the water and fetched a German across. The Corporal handed him over to an officer. They examined him and found him to be OK – he was an officer. Our officer argued with another officer whether to shoot him for cowardice or not. We never found out what they did with him.

Bill passed away July 2007 aged 87.

The Myth Of Patriotism by Mat Turner

People kill and die for land believing themselves
Inextricably linked, indissolubly connected
To corners and patches of earth but tell me this,
You who foist labels and claims on territories.

Did you raise this land from the sea,
Bid the ocean allay its passage to
Form the watery frame of shore?

Did you husband elements over vast millennia
Creating the climate in which food could grow
Yielding pleasing nourishment to the palate?

Did you split canyons, cleft valleys, gouge crevasses,
Raise rooftops of mountain ranges, all dizzying spectacles to enthrall the eye,
Natural wonders portentously ascribed 'national monuments'?

The eagle soaring above in the parched blue sky,
Emitting a rasping screech from its hooked beak,
Making a nest among crags and splinters of rock,
Does it mount up at your command, feed and die at your behest?

Elected symbol of 'your' country,
What cares the eagle for human folly?

What have you to do with any of this?
Nothing. Well then your patriotism is a myth.
Nothing belongs to us, not even our pain.
We arrive and depart while the world remains.

Two Poems - Darren Thomas

It Was Only A Wall (Try Telling That To Humpty)

As the cold war began to thaw
during the winter months
of snow and beer nearly
twenty years ago.

As the Berlin wall burst its banks
and a river of unfashionable coats
flowed through the heart of my television
prompting a question of would I be home for
Christmas?
Then scarves like drift wood and
flared trousers all sailed past
and a huge moustache
filled the 22 inches of a television,
with nothing but hair and sounds of excitement.
Freedom! someone shouted, perhaps
one of the bearded ladies with legs
like Hoover bags, it was hard to tell
in a foam of laughing faces.

Overhead 300 kilometres away
I heard the sound of
my freedom, your freedom, our freedom.
The Royal Air Force with its concrete arsenal,
Its water pistols of peace held at the temples
of people who wear odd socks and sing in the sleet
and temperatures of minus ten with purple faces
steaming great exclamations into western air.

And I realised then.
There is nothing unfashionable about
freedom.

Making Love To My Breath

I never gave it a thought.
Those laboured thrusting insertions
played out in silhouettes that looked
ridiculous on the silver screen of a magnolia wall.

A romantic dinner that I felt
in a stomach, once filled with the excited butterflies of anxiety,
spreading their chicken wings and stirring my thoughts
about reality and past prematurely.
And a pupae comes to mind as I catch sight
of the evening's drink and its manifestation, and satisfaction
has already ordered its taxi waiting downstairs with its coat.

In the warm nape of adulthood I kiss the scent of
a thousand Mother's and stop momentarily
as the front door opens and out flees satisfaction .
Running along the long straight drive way

never once looking over its shoulder into the upstairs bedroom.
Where a sibling named gratification hides
in the air that we've yet to breath.

You into my silence
my excitable breath into you.

Carrion Crows In The City Park by B. Wilkinson

He stood with his thoughts and listened to the rain's crescendo of rhythm being issued from the skies upon the pavement. In the reflection of the shop window a blur of people, umbrellas and traffic sloshed about trying to hide from it. Nick simply stood, staring, with only a faint smile pointing to any inner feelings. It was at times like this that he experienced the world falling away and with it the responsibility of all its concerns: setting alarms, interacting, meeting, washing, doing, wanting, needing, having to have but not getting. All of these things, to him, were the misplaced glorifications of life and could simply be traced back to ambition. Ambition he had begun to dislike with a vengeance: it was the scourge of the human race; a by-product of the ego's self-driven need to assure itself of its worthiness. So, at times like this he took his time to savour everything about the rain and rest. If he was at home he would sit there for hours on a rainy day with a mug of milky tea, no sugar and simply watch the droplets gather and merge into one another on the window creating an ever-changing work of art. He later noticed the way it had cleaned the streets and leaves on the trees making them greener and healthier looking, how it settled the dirt and made everything droop slightly with the extra weight.

He paid close attention to the Carrion Crows in the city park after a downpour. While people rushed along the pavements with their macs and newspapers over their heads, they didn't care that these crows would be seen in the fields looking for the worms that had surfaced to savour nature's grace. When Time delivered his sermon of illusion this is what Nick remembered...the Crows. For Nick there was nothing better than being caught in a downpour and he often found himself freeze-framed in the reflection of a window gently smiling to himself. Quiet thoughts that nobody else could know would pass like clouds across his mind's eye. Along with the rain falling from the sky, and in between the droplets that formed on the window, was a place of cushioned emotion that was only revealed to him, or so it felt. It did sometimes humour him, however, to think that somewhere in the world it would be raining and another person had just caught *their* reflection in a window, gently smiling in appreciation of the rain. He wondered if they had gone to that same place as he, and then he wondered still at the novel possibility they were having the same thoughts as him, wondering if someone else was thinking the same as them.

Somehow a voice was calling him...from afar but seemingly getting closer...

"Nick!"

Or was it his imagination...

"Nick!"

Whirling around in the middle of the pavement he came face to face with the voice. "Nick man? Jesus! What you doing? Come *on*...people are waiting for you!"

It was his friend and work colleague James and he didn't seem pleased or appreciative of the rain, further enforced when he hunched over into it and sped up. Nick stood, briefcase in hand, and slowly left the place on the pavement he had occupied for the past twenty seconds or so before James had realised he had been talking to himself. Further up the pavement James stopped again, exasperated this time!

"Come on!" he called to Nick.

Nick trudged slowly forth without increasing his speed. Why *should* he have to speed up for the sake of a rude society that's going to crash and burn anyway, he thought to himself. The man asks and simply *gets* does he? No, it's not happening with this one...this one will resist the flow and do things on *his* terms!

He had recently come back from a solitary ramble in the Lake District and, after only encountering a few people over the course of the three days; he was finding it harder to re-adjust to the rules placed on him when he arrived back in society. He longed for the Lakes and their languid waters that soothed mis-guided souls. He had an affinity with water; he liked the way it was able to adapt to any environment, and the way it was able to fill any shape and to become that shape, adaptable to any circumstance. The ability that water had to do this was a far cry from his own uniformed, compartmentalized existence in the city filled with business and commerce.

His appearance gave the impression that he was a man in control of his destiny, but all too often the cover simply covered underlying true currents; he was slowly giving up resistance to the pull that a new lifestyle was beckoning. And anyone astute enough would have seen the signs: he now wore the same tie three days in a row; he gave a solitary

“bye” instead of his usual “goodbye” when on the phone; but everyone is always caught up in dodging the rain and forgetting the Crows to notice.

He trudged on after James who was leading them to another work ‘rendezvous-at-six’ affair where he would sit and more or less just listen to the sound of monotony. Work and everything that went with it did not sit well with Nick. To him the random chance of sparking a good friendship with somebody you had met at work never seemed to strike a chord within him that was sufficiently deep enough to bring such a relationship into fruition. He wasn’t impolite, obviously, but whereas James could talk the talk Nick preferred to just walk. He and James had been gradually growing apart on some indefinable spiritual level that, because of its very nature (i.e. indefinable) he simply put down to fate - so be it. But this was another area of contention within him; he didn’t believe in fate. He saw it as a construction that only held up in retrospect and if it did exist other than a concept then he would have to resign himself to going with the flow, for what else could he do. In the world of business this attitude was regarded with contempt, “Only dead fish go with the flow!” was the general consensus on such a trait but Nick had begun to view it as a guarded blessing.

The bar where his colleagues would be waiting was just around the corner. The rain had slowed down, the clouds had parted a little and just before he walked through the door he had contemplated carrying on to the airport and taking his show off-road. But he didn’t. He walked in, said hello and sat down, thinking all the while about those Carrion Crows in the fields tugging at the freshly emerging worms.

Japanese Quince by Jane Fairhurst



Reversing the Charges by John G. Hall

[Illustration by Anna Smith]

today I rang the phone out
it was wringing with silence
no one calls me for anything
but answers, other peoples
numbers or the banquet for
six or a taxi to take them
to town or all the emergency
services or remote oral sex
today finally I'm X directory
only to be reached by love.



The Dylan Harris Travel Blog



Entry 1: March 2007 ~ Hanging Out With The Sewer Kids

The flight over was awful. Seven hours to New York then another five down to Bogotá. Arrived absolutely fucked. Still recovering from Texas jet lag, topped with this and altitude sickness, lovely stuff.

Got a taxi from the airport and first impressions of Bogotá were good, until we got to the area of our hotel and saw that the only people on the streets were military with machine guns and kids crawling out of sewers and rummaging through bins. Decided against heading out for a night on the town.

The hostel is supposed to be the best in the whole of South America. I wouldn't like to see the worst. A little bathroom lock on the door making us lovely and secure in there, people banging on the

door at all hours, people banging on the floorboards upstairs. A shower that looks like it was nicked from Birkenau, spewing out measly amounts of freezing cold water and a toilet that stinks.

Got up early the next day and headed out around Bogotá. Police everywhere, old women dealing coke on the streets, sewer kids running riot. Got lost down some back streets and spotted a bar so decided to head in for a quick drink. The music did actually stop when we walked in. It was just a room with a jukebox and loads of crates of beer with someone selling them for 20p a pop. Everyone loved us in there, loads of old typical Colombian blokes in there with big taches all having their photos taken with us.

Casino later on: got screwed over by a magnetic roulette wheel. Made it back to the hotel in one piece though which is always a bonus.

Entry 2: March 2007 ~ Struck Down With Malaria

Spent fourteen of the last twenty-four hours in bed. Symptoms suggest its either side effects of my malaria tablets or I've got malaria. Let's hope it's not the latter.

There was a big protest going on yesterday, thousands marching down the streets, riot police everywhere, huge riot van/tanks with water cannons on them and riddled with bullet holes. You're told to keep away from protests in South America but it was too good to stay away from. We got involved, marching and chanting. No idea what about and soon did one when we got a few funny looks.

Headed off and strayed into the wrong part of town. Saw a few blokes strategically stood around eyeballing us. We realized they were up to something so made a sharp right and picked up the pace. Couple of them whistled and two of them started following us. Adrenaline started going but we got into some big crowds and managed to get away.

More random stuff happening on the streets yesterday as always. Bloke peddling dogs, guinea pig races down the main street with people betting on them, woman with one arm and no legs, bloke with what looked like leprosy with his jeans rolled up and picking off skin and putting it in a big pile on the floor in front of him, presumably to gain sympathy. Gave a few of the beggars money but weren't going anywhere near him.

Got up this morning to see a full army platoon with big fuck off machine guns outside our hostel. Just chilling out having a cup of coffee.

Entry 3: March 2007 ~ Street Defecation

Came out of our hostel yesterday to see a lad going about his daily business, strolling down the street then pulling his pants down and having a shit in the middle of the pavement. He had a quick look round for paper, couldn't find any so wiped his arse on his hand, pulled his pants up and rubbed his hands clean over them.

My entire mouth, tongue and throat had been feeling like it had been cleaned with a barbed wire bog brush so went to the chemist and got some dodgy under counter tablets for eight quid which is the equivalent of about fifty back home. Soon did the trick though and I was well again.

Entry 4: March 2007 ~ Police Trouble

So as I'm feeling better we head out onto the streets. Ben gets his shoes polished by a street shoe shiner and warns him "You best not ruin these they cost me eighty quid."

We get a train up a mountain around 10,000 metres high and feel like our skulls are being crushed when we get to the top. Up there, there's loads of kids, presumably from the shanty towns that litter the slopes of the mountain. We become celebrities for the next fifteen minutes until one of the older ones starts gesturing to Ben's Santa Fe shirt and shows him his Medellin tattoo, presumably Santa Fe's rivals. He then heads over to a couple of mates, all I hear is "Gringo" something or other and gesturing long hair, talking about me so we depart quickly.

Meet up with a German lad from the hostel and go to watch Colombia vs Paraguay. Head out right into the suburbs and as soon as we get off the bus we're getting hassled, thankfully the German lad can speak Spanish and we manage to avoid any trouble. People are queuing up to get in the ground three hours before kick-off but we head off to a pub for a few drinks. Around an hour before kick-off we head to the ground. I'm the last one in and I get dragged over to one side by an armed copper. He gestures for me to breath at him so I do and he starts dragging me away. Try telling him I'm English and I don't know what's going on and he just replies "YOU DRUNK. ILLEGAL. YOU MUST COME WITH ME."

I spend a while trying to argue with him but I can see by the reaction of the other coppers that he's just trying to stitch me up so I'm just waiting for him to "fine" me. He tries to take me out of the stadium and the panic's setting in now, visualizing a beating and my wallet being relieved from my possession. Thankfully, just as I'm about to get turfed out the German saves the day again when he spots me and comes over, chats to him for a while and he finally lets me go into the ground with no bribe having to be paid. "OK YOU GO IN BUT I WARN YOU - NO TROUBLE". You really don't need to worry about that mate....

The match was well worth the hassle, all you'd expect from a South American game and more. Get back to the hostel afterwards trouble-free ready to fly out to the Caribbean coast the next day.

Entry 5 April 2007 ~ Brothels And Escaping The Slums

First night in Cartagena and we're walking around hammered at two in the morning trying to find a bar that's open. We find one down a side street and head up the stairs. We're the only people in there and as soon as the drinks are brought over, the doors are closed and a bloke walks in with two girls. The music goes off and the bloke comes and sits on our table.

"I pimp, you wanna eat pussy?"

"Erm, no thanks, just want a drink,"

"No, you eat pussy."

"No, we're not hungry."

"What?"

At this point it looks like we're gonna get royally screwed over and have our credit card accounts emptied but thankfully one more "No" and he walks off, the music comes back on and we're free to finish our drinks and leave. After him offering us coke for £5 a gram.



The next day we head off in a taxi to a secluded beach up the road we've heard about. Five miles out of town and we're into the shanty areas with donkeys tied up in gardens with their ribs hanging out and all other kinds of delights. We end up on a dirt track and two black lads run up to the car gesturing and pointing in the car. The taxi driver starts laughing and follows them. We're getting pretty nervous at this point and things get worse as we reach the beach and the car is now fully surrounded by young skinny black lads in loin cloths pointing and shaking their fists at us while the taxi driver is just laughing. We assume

it's all been a set up and we're gonna get murdered. Ben is in near hysterics, I'm trying to stay calm but not doing

too well when Ben points out one of them is making a throat slitting gesture through the back window. The taxi driver is finding the situation hilarious and it's making us two worse when we keep asking him to go back but he's laughing at the situation more.

"LOCO LOCO!" he laughs as he points to them.

"Yeah we know they're fucking loco, please please take us back to Cartagena we'll pay you really well."

"Cartagena?" he replies **"Si."**

We breathe a sigh of relief as he spins round the car and heads back with all the lads chasing us.

"This beach bad," he tells us somewhat late.

Entry 6: April 2007 ~ Soap Wars, Gangsters And Having Tea With The Locals

So after we'd been taken back from the beach from hell, the taxi driver dropped us off closer to Cartagena at a beach called Bocagrande. **"Much better,"** he said.

As we strolled towards the beach, a big fat Caribbean woman approached me telling me I had **"beautiful eyes,"** *"Nice one,"* I said, as I hot-footed it away from her. She kept pestering me and asking me if I wanted a massage. I refused plenty of times and when she finally got the message she smiled and told me to **"please remember Lucy."**

"Yeah I will do, no probs, bye."

Went over to a beach hut and asked if they had a football we could buy. They only had a football of their own and so we could PAY them to have a game of football with the bar owner. Five minutes later we were knackered so headed over to relax down by the sea. It turned out we weren't allowed to do this and had to hire some chairs to sit on. They ripped us off with the price but "at last" we thought, we could finally relax for a bit.

Within seconds some other big Caribbean woman had come over and started pouring water and oil on Ben's feet and massaging them. He told her to stop but she carried on whilst I sat at the side laughing. Until another one came over and pulled my trainers and socks off and started doing the same to me. Kept telling her to stop but she was having none of it. We both decided the best option was to let them do it for a couple of minutes then give them a few pesos and they'll be on their way not to hassle again. How wrong we were.

The next people over were a couple of blokes offering us delights from the sea. I refused so he just put a crab's leg on my lap. **"It souvenir for you. Gift from me"**. Fair enough, I thought. No need to worry. This happened in Iran and it all turned out ok in the end. He came back a few seconds later with a stone, picked up the crab's leg and broke it open then fed me the insides of it. At the same time the woman had gone round to the back of me and started to put a braid in my hair. I couldn't be arsed any longer so told her to stop. She stopped the braid then whipped my top off. At this point, 'Lucy' arrived on the scene looking extremely pissed off. **"Why you let her do massage, I tell you remember Lucy, you say yes!"** I try and bumble out an excuse about how I don't want anyone to massage me and the next thing I know she grabs my feet and starts doing it anyway. The other woman is trying to massage my back but isn't happy with Lucy joining in so they start kicking off with each other, screaming and catfighting. All the other cons on the beach now become interested and we have a massive crowd around us all kicking off. It's a pretty worrying atmosphere so we look at each other and mutter the words "Do one?"

As we gather our stuff, the noise subsides and they all want their "payment" before we leave. Ben's just left with paying for a foot massage but I'm saddled with a "bill" for two foot massages, a back massage, a braid in my hair and a crabs leg. The prices they come out with are ridiculous but we decide it's probably best to pay most of what they ask and then just do one. We'd probably been able to get away with not paying them at all but your mind thinks differently when you're on a secluded beach in Colombia surrounded by people demanding money.

Night time and we're having a drink in the main square when we're joined by 'Johnny'. Johnny's 'the man' in Cartagena and immediately tells us what we're doing for the rest of our time there and what we've been doing there already.

"I saw you on your first day. You walk down that street with a guy."

We did indeed. The guy was trying to sell us sunglasses, CDs and "anything else we wanted". He told us that he was always on the square and if we ever needed anything just come and find him. He was never to be seen again for the rest of our time there. Stepped on Johnny's patch, got a bullet in the head.

Johnny took us into his emerald shop and regaled us with tales of Bill Clinton, Bill Gates and Donald Trump all visiting. Told us about how the police are his 'boys' and how he can do anything he wants. A couple of hours passed and he took us to a bar. Except he took us into the back which was empty and seemed to have the heating turned up high. We're sat across from him, sweating to fuck, with the door closed to the main bar and starting to worry slightly. Five minutes later and we're conned out of £100, probably three months wages for him.

Looking back at some things now I've no idea how we let them happen but it's hard to describe how different it actually is when you're there. With the reputation of Colombia you try to be nice to people to avoid getting mugged, shot or whatever and then even if you ignore them they won't take no for an answer and keep pestering you.

Luckily they're not all like that and we found a rock bar that became our safe haven for three nights. Met a lad in there called Leonardo who on the third day invited us round to his house for tea. Had no idea what to expect but just thought fuck it and we went for it.

Taxi takes us down out of the tourist area and out into another part of town we've not yet seen. He tells us he has one of the best houses in the area, **"it very big, four bedrooms"**. We arrive and we're taken for a tour. Tin roof, hosepipe outside to wash yourself, couple of beds in each room and that's about it.

"You like my house?"

Now in life you're taught to always be honest, but I think this time was a good time to lie. So, *"no, it's crap, my house is miles better,"* was replaced by *"yeah it's really good."*

His dad makes us all tea, coconut rice, banana fritters and some weird looking fish. Ben starts choking on a bone and they all look in horror: **"You not like meal???"**

"Erm yeah it's very good, I'm just not feeling well,"

After the food we're took outside for a stroll around the neighbourhood. It soon becomes clear that we're probably the first "gringos" to ever enter this part of town as we become the main attraction and we're surrounded by locals and kids trying to speak English to us and showing us their pets. Couple of hours later and we say our goodbyes and head off for one last night around Cartagena.

On the way home we manage to get enough time between flights to head into New York for two hours. It was the first time there for both of us and the place looks amazing, well wanna go back there but the usual tourist sights were a bit disappointing.

Outside the Empire State Building:

"Is that it?"

"Yeah, I think so,"

"It's shit."

Heading down Broadway looking for Times Square, we're stood on an island in the middle of the road and a copper approaches. We ask where Times Square is.

"This is it. You're stood right in the middle of it."

"This?? It's shit. And it's a rectangle, not a square."

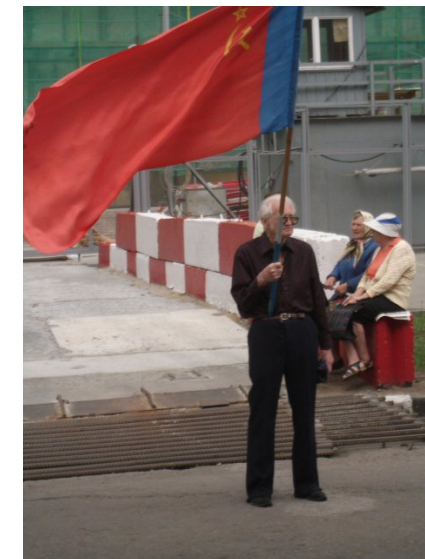
Entry 7: August 2007 ~ Trans Siberian Adventure Begins...

Half way into the trip now and it's passed without any major incidents which has got to be a record for me.

Started off in Latvia before heading up to Estonia. Ended up in our usual haunts and got accosted by a Yank off his head on crystal meth who'd managed to piss off the entire pub. **"So how long did you say you've been into Interpol?"**

"I haven't even mentioned Interpol"

"Wow, where's that accent from, it's really cool."



"Somewhere near Manchester in England,"

"Wow, really? You speak really good English."

The next day we're on the overnight train to Moscow. Jeff and Fiona have problems with their visas and almost don't get let over the border. Several soldiers around their cabin later and they're finally allowed through.

We get to Moscow the next day and head straight down to see Lenin in the Mausoleum in Red Square. We're peering through the glass muttering *"that's not real,"* before the soldier in the corner barks at us and our two seconds are up and on we move to pay our respects to Stalin at his grave around the back.

Next up is the four-day train. Never again will I moan about having to get the "train that takes ages" to Manchester, i.e. the one that takes five mins longer than the other one. On entering the train we wait with baited breath for Jeff and Fiona to report back on who's got the pleasure of sharing their cabin with them for the next four nights.

Fiona soon came back; *"two big fat fucking German grippers."*

The first night we manage to piss everyone off by having a party in our cabin and blasting out Chemical Brothers until six in the morning.

"You very rude people, not nice. Night is for sleep." Not where we come from it's not love...

Our next stop is Lake Baikal in Siberia. We organise to stay at the house of some woman called Olga on an island in the lake. The description of her gaff states *'the accommodation is of the highest quality'* which means no running water.

We arrive there and Olga is every inch the Russian shot putter you imagine her to be. We're soon joined by Turkey's answer to Billy Connolly and head down to the pub, which consists of a hole in the wall selling beer, two benches to sit on and a hole in the floor to piss in.

The next day we're picked up with hangovers and driven across the island in a Russian army jeep. Hours of speeding across country, up and down hills and being thrown from one side of the van to the other and we're finally brought back feeling rather queasy.

We head back to Irkutsk and back to civilisation and somehow manage to find a Subway. Straight up to the counter and order a Steak and Cheese foot long. It's not your usual fare though just a huge slab of steak thrown onto a piece of bread which is still a relief though after eating nothing more than fish, fish and more fish for the past few days. Head off to the train station, next stop Mongolia.

Entry 8: August 2007 ~ Down On The Farm

There are these fucking horrible insects in Siberia and Mongolia that nearly made me jump off a cliff in fright when I first saw one. It's like a flying grasshopper that makes a noise like a Dalek. Horrible things, they've been the scourge of my last week, pray you never encounter one.

We got picked up at Ulaan Bataar station in Mongolia and the driver informed us upon hearing that we were from England; **"I been to Reeds. And Bradford in England. Study Engrish 5 months. But Bradford full of Pakistanis."**

We head out to stay in the mountains in a 'Ger' with a farmer and his family. A Ger is what most Mongolians live in. It's like an igloo made of felt.

We all get given horses to go horse riding through the mountains but I'm left with a fucking Shetland pony with a gammy leg so as everyone else is trotting off into the distance I'm stuck at the back with a horse that can barely hold my weight.

We get back to the farm after and the farmer's grandson comes out with a football. He's about three years old which is about my standard so I head over to have a kick-around with him. As I approach him he starts laughing and putting his fingers around his eyes making circle type shapes. I have no idea what he's doing so show him a few of my silky skills then go back to the tent. It's only when I'm walking off that I realise the racist bastard was calling me a 'round-eyed bastard'.

One of the farm's braver cows wanders over to us later on the lookout for a bit of jackbit. We oblige of course and give it a beef pot noodle and a cup of milk. It enjoyed the pot noodle a little too much and came back and attacked me for more.

Last day in Mongolia and we go to the national opera house. Except instead of opera it's a show of contortionists and possibly the best thing I've ever seen - Throat Singers. Try and find them on You Tube, you won't be disappointed. Next stop China to join the two million people evacuated by floods across the country.

Entry 9: August 2007 ~ Insect Trouble

We thought we could hear a Flymo so we're looking round wondering where it could be coming from before we realised it was pretty unlikely anyone would be using one on top of the Great Wall of China.

The noise kept getting louder and louder until we finally saw one of the bastards sat on the side of the wall. Whereas the last insects looked like flying grasshoppers, these were like flying fucking frogs. An American woman glanced at me as I referred to them as this and ten minutes later, when her young kid asked: "Mom, what are these huge noisy insects?"

"They're called flying frogs,"

"Wow, is that really what they're called?"

"Yeah Brad that's their name."

China is fucking mental. Within minutes of arriving I had a woman within a couple of centimetres of my face gazing at all of it like I was some prize exhibition in the Louvre. The photos soon started to follow. Everyone stares at you and everyone wants a photo. In every different pose, shaking hands with them, arm round them etc. And with every member of their family. Asked this bloke why people do this and he said they love Westerners over here and those lucky enough to meet one take photos of them and frame them above their fireplace. I'm probably hanging above over thirty mantelpieces as I speak...

The pollution is so ridiculous that you can't see the end of any street you're on. Apparently spending a day in Beijing is like the equivalent of smoking seventy fags. Lucky bastards, I pay over twenty quid back home for that privilege.

Wanted to see Mao in his 'Mao-soleum' but apparently they're 'doing him up' for the Olympics, whatever the fuck that can mean?? Tattooing Olympic rings on his chest? Olympic torch coming out of his head?

The Mao memorabilia is fucking ace though. My Hitler alarm clock purchased a few years ago pales in comparison to my newly acquired Mao alarm clock/thermometer combo.

Glancing at it now it's a sweltering 95 degrees in the shade. Heading off to Tiananmen Square in a bit for the year launch for the Olympics. It's apparently going be on all the major world news channels so look out for us acting like knobheads.

Entry 10: August 2007 ~ Fuck A Bamboo Shoot

Insect update: giant cockroaches in the street and worm type creatures in our bathroom that come from under the sink whenever there's splashed water to feed on. They then disappear back under planning their future Tremors style attack once fully grown.

Overheard yank comment: **"The Great Wall of China is like soooo fly. You can see, like, all of it, all the way along from the top."**

No you can't you daft bitch, it runs the full length of China.

The Chinese are still as mental as ever. Went to the Aquarium yesterday and had to leave sharpish before we got put into a tank ourselves. People there were more interested in seeing us, shoving video cameras in our faces and having a million photos taken with us. Some old guy in the street stopped in front of us and saluted. And so he should. Not tried anything too out of the ordinary food wise yet. Jeff had a scorpion, a few of us tried bullfrog. Quite sure I was served dog instead of beef in the restaurant last night though. One item on the menu which I was severely tempted to try was "fuck a bamboo shoot".

Quite getting used to this haggling malarkey now too. Got the price of a watch down from 1800 Yuan to 150. Pissed the woman off no end and she just threw it at me.

Found a back alley today that led to "The Forbidden Underground City" which Mao built to hide from Russian nuclear attacks. Asked if we could take photos and she said **"yes of course, no problem"**. Five minutes later and we were seen by a soldier and she told us to put our cameras away quickly. "You not allowed take photo. They think you spy!"

We were then shown the exit...

Found an indie club to go to tonight. A poster says a band called the Second Hand Roses playing. We can but hope they're a Chinese Stone Roses tribute act...

Entry 11: August 2007 ~ Interesting Cuisine

Ate a donkey's dick on Friday night. Ordered it and planned on just having a taste so I could say "I've tasted donkeys dick," but it was gorgeous so gobbled up the full length. Tasted like prime ham shank.

I was a bit put off by the bell-end with its deep purple colour so I left it but just as they were about to take the plate away decided to try a bit of it. It was even nicer than the shaft so I shoved the rest of it in my gob and savoured every last piece.

I was pissed then though. I've now had three days to reflect on my actions and I start to gag every fucking time I think about it. This is roughly every minute.

The visit to the indie club didn't materialise on Friday. Taxi driver took us to a knocking shop instead that was playing James.

Got the train out of Beijing on Saturday and it was probably the worst fourteen hours of my life. Carried a huge backpack and three other bags in the sweltering heat onto a train that would have been out of place transporting cattle. A nightmare of the worst kind, crammed in with screaming kids, shouting adults, no room to put your bags anywhere. The fourteen hours lasted a lifetime.

We thought Beijing was bad for people staring and taking photos, you want to come out to a one horse town like Dandong that never gets any tourists. Went to a club last night and within half an hour I turned round and they'd only gone and fucking got Ian on stage trying to interview him in Chinese. Hundreds of Chinese screaming and waving their hands at him before he's let of stage with free drinks for us all. Utterly bizarre but the funniest thing I've ever seen.

Been peering over the river today at North Korea and buying shit loads of Kim Il-Sung memorabilia that's been smuggled out the country. Not got our visas yet but we're due to go on Wednesday if all goes according to plan.

Entry 12: August 2007 ~ Preparing For The Hermit Kingdom

Quite frankly I'm getting sick of the toilet situation now. As you can imagine, eating stuff like donkey's cocks, bullfrogs and pigeon chocolate (latest addition to the food roster, ate this morning), it doesn't leave my stomach in the best of conditions and so a good deal of time has been spent redecorating the khazi. The state of them are absolutely appalling though, they're probably improved after I've finished in there. If I'd have known I'd be spending hours living like a pig hovering over cesspits infested with maggots and flies I could have gone to Bolton instead for much cheaper.

The attention we've been getting hasn't let up yet. It's getting fucking annoying now though. It was hilarious at first but now I just feel like telling everyone to piss off. Anyone who shakes your hand does it like the guy off Banzai. But for longer. One bloke only stopped when I paid him 20p. Seriously.

Went to a posh club the other night. Beers are usually 30p but they cost £2 at this place so it was full of the cream of Chinese society. Any club that has a waiter on hand to light up your cig as soon as you put it in your mouth is fine by me.

Had our first taste of North Korea yesterday when we hired a guy to take us down the river in a boat. Dandong and North Korea are separated by a single river about half a kilometre wide. You could hire a normal motor boat or a speedboat but we were told that the armed North Korean soldiers on the other side don't take lightly to having their photos taken and had been known to throw rocks at you. So we opted for the speedboat for a quicker getaway. The driver took us half way across the river then showed us the mark that signified the Chinese/Korean border. Then he carried on going. It was one of the weirdest experiences I've ever had. Riding within two metres of North Korea with



locals sat on the river bank. They know they'll never be able to leave their country and they're just sat there gazing across to China within touching distance of you.

He might not treat his citizens all that well but Kim Jong-Il is defo my favourite world leader. He was number two until the death of Niyazov earlier this year. A guy that builds ice palaces in the desert, bans beards and changes the names of days to names of members of his own family was always going to take top spot. The world has a shortage of crackpot leaders and those left should be cherished. Saddam has gone and Castro has lost his edge but there are still a few left, here's a list of the top five living despots:

- 1. Kim Jong-Il.** Leader of the most agoraphobic country on earth and style guru with his all in one military body suit, huge glasses and shit-hot hairstyle.
- 2. Alexander Lukashenko.** Follows in the path of his idol Stalin and rules Belarus with an iron fist. Keeping Communism real and Eastern Europe dark and grey like it should be.
- 3. Robert Mugabe.** The hardest man in Africa. Still slaughtering Whites left right and centre. Which is no bad thing. Have you ever met a white Zimbabwean? They're worse than South Africans.
- 4. Mahmoud Ahmadinejad.** The Mourinho of world tyrants. Suave as fuck and just doesn't give a shit.
- 5. George W Bush.** The world would be a much more boring place without him.

So anyway, I get to visit the land of my idol tomorrow. Only a handful of tourists are allowed in each year and us four are heading in with an Aussie and Dutch bloke. Every move we make is monitored and we're trailed everywhere by government agents. Our rooms are the only time we're allowed to be on our own but they're bugged and have two-way mirrors. It's gonna be fuckin' ace.

We've been given a list of things we're not allowed to do whilst in the country including "no speaking to the common people" and "no feeding the children from the train". Possession of mobile phones, video cameras and more importantly, telescopes is illegal and results in execution. I'm probably not gonna risk smuggling any in...

Needless to say there's no internet access either. We're there 'til Saturday so if you haven't heard anything from me by Sunday then get worried and report us missing...

Entry 13: August 2007 ~ The North Korean Sham

Imagine being on The Truman Show whilst in jail and you're somewhere near what it's like to visit North Korea. The hilarity began as we crossed the Yalu River from Dandong into North Korea. On the Korean side of the river was a Ferris wheel behind trees that just shouted out **"I'm not actually real, I've just been put here to make outsiders think we lead happy lives in North Korea with fairgrounds and everything."**

Lo and behold we crossed the river and our assumptions were proved correct. Nine o'clock on a Tuesday morning, absolutely pissing down with rain and as the train approaches the "fairground" we see adults rushing to push kids onto the rides. The rides were rusting and had clearly never ever worked but must put on a good appearance to the tourists, hey?

Border control next with the mean looking customs officers stomping down the train scanning people and emptying their bags. Laura was first as the female soldier threw her onto her seat **"SIT!"**

All hell then broke loose when her bag was emptied and travel Scrabble found inside.

"WHAT IS THIS?????" said the increasingly irate soldier as she emptied the letters onto the table causing her eyes almost to bulge out of her head with fury. Explanations ensued to the disbelief of the soldier and it took several minutes before she was able to believe it was just a board game and not the Enigma decrypting machine.

Onwards we headed and it was only a matter of minutes before we were in trouble again. Ian this time for taking photos out of the train window.

"DO NOT TAKE PHOTOS OUT OF MOVING TRAIN WINDOW. IT IS SPECIAL PROBLEM. PUT CAMERA AWAY!"

This was our first encounter with our 'guides'. They allocated four of them to look after just seven of us. And look after us they did. Didn't leave our fucking sides for the entire time we were there.



Check into our hotel later and we find a 'secret' door between our rooms. Convinced it leads to a room in the wall cavities that they're using for surveillance and to watch us through the two-way mirrors I attempt to open it. Within seconds one of our guides appears from a door further down the corridor and just stands there staring at us. I nervously smile and rather pathetically fumble around pretending I'm looking for my door key and shuffle back into my room.

Whilst in China I'd bought a Kim Il-Sung lapel badge to 'impress' our North Korean guides. Everyone in North Korea has to wear one of them. Except impress them I didn't. We're on a coach and the main guide marches straight to the back. **"Can you take that badge off your bag and pass it to me?"**

"Erm, which one?"

"The one of our Dear Great Leader, Kim Il-Sung."

I pass it to him and he gazes at it for a couple of minutes with tears coming to his eyes. He then starts to rant about how much love they have for their dear leader and how they wear it above their heart as a sign of respect, why I have got one when I'm a foreigner, where I've got it from blah blah blah. All I can think is that I couldn't give a flying shit.

He then heads up to the front of the bus again and onto the microphone:

"Can anyone tell me how the Korean War started?"

No one answers so I inform our ever annoying guide that North Korea started the war with help from Stalin.

"WHAT?????" he retorts before bursting into a fit of laughter. **"You really believe the small North Korean army would start a war with the giant imperialist US army??"**

"Well I wouldn't normally believe that but I've studied the war in depth, read many books about it, seen the evidence from wartime letters and papers released in both the US and Russia and I know how mental your leader is. So

comparing that to the evidence that you have. One book written by the North Korean government, not allowed any outside information. I'd probably edge towards my account being more accurate."

Although I bricked it and what I really said was "Ah well, it's good to hear your side of the story for once rather than the side we're told in the west."

This kind of bullshit carried on throughout the visit culminating with a visit to a monument that "celebrated the great victory of our Dear Leader Kim Il-Sung with his guerrilla army over the Japanese in World War Two."

"Oh for fuck's sake. The two nuclear bombs that the US dropped had nothing to do with Japan's defeat then?"

So on top of that and countless visits to see statues, monuments and stadiums all dedicated to and named after the "Dear Great Fucking Leader" it was quite a relief to get out. We even spent one full day looking around the "Friendship Exhibition". A museum of gifts or 'jifts' given to yeah you guessed it, The Dear Leader. Two hundred fucking rooms of them. From plates, TVs, video recorders to cars and fucking trains.

"Do you have museum like this in England. Presents given to your leader?"

"Yeah we've got one full of presents given to John Major, it's amazing, the box office sales have broken all known records."

The food was horrendous too. Dog meat and what tasted like fish food and came straight back out after entering my mouth. Horrible, horrible stuff.

Highlight of the trip had to be the subway. Full of actors. We head down into what is a very grand station similar to the metro in Moscow and everyone coming up the escalator, stands there motionless, gazing into space, pretending to read books etc. Everything that happens down there points to it being just a big sham to show the metro off to tourists. You're only allowed to ride to the next stop, which is also a grand looking station. I doubt there are any more working stops. As if it weren't obvious enough though, as we leave the station, the other passengers, or actors get off the train and get on the train on the opposite track, heading straight back to where they've just fucking come from!!

Glad we went as I'll never experience anything like it again but that place is totally fucked up. Everyone is brainwashed to a ridiculous extent and there's no way you can talk them round. I can just hope the 'Tales From The Lux' CDs I threw from the train window fell into good hands and people are dancing away now in underground North Korean clubs to the driving beats of Moco...

This Is My Diatribe by John G. Hall

This is my diatribe making my space the only place of community

This is my diatribe making American war thought walk my streets

This is my diatribe making paper educated guesses into prejudices

This is my diatribe making Yankee gangster rappers poor people's masters

This is my diatribe making the drug of guns turn our children into toy soldiers

This is my diatribe taking Hollywood's unholy words as their new electro gospels

This is my diatribe making children without wings, making love without peace.

This is my diatribe against old powers making our new imprisonment invisible

This is my diatribe against the cash card manacles of money's all consuming madness

This is my diatribe against the doomed search for human power through violence.

This is my diatribe against the hopelessness of fear and shame and the thirty pieces of silver dollars jingling in my dead soldier boys pockets and the I-pod god hanging from my red neck and the fascist wolf whistles raping my girl friends angelic ear lobes and the evil preacher men preaching against men loving men or women loving women or everybody loving everybody and the rich bashing the ragged of the race and the squeezing of our bones for our marrow and the rich lips sucking out our sweet souls and replacing it with bloody warehouses of bloody things that no true human being ever needs and the white war against the black world going on and on without end.

This is my diatribe and I love them.

A Reverse Bible Code Puzzle by Howard Haigh

The Bible Code theory uses something called Equidistant Letter Sequences where hidden messages are said to be buried within the Bible (choose whichever version you like, 'original' Hebrew flavour or the 'new improved' King James variety, both 'work'). Take the Bible, arrange the words into some handy arrangement of rows and columns and start hunting. It's like your typical word search puzzle but you're looking for the date the world ends. Bible in, garbage out. To redress the balance I'm starting with garbage and you can try to find all of Genesis, Chapter 1.

	01	02	03	04	05	06	07	08	09	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	
01	Y	L	E	S	S	E	R	V	K	K	H	U	J	A	F	M	C	H	C	E	T	G	W	N	H	I	R	T	D	O	
02	M	T	G	E	R	U	T	A	E	R	C	I	R	B	Y	R	T	N	L	I	N	G	L	F	U	T	L	E	A	I	
03	B	R	H	A	G	E	G	Q	M	Z	J	T	M	U	D	A	U	A	J	I	C	A	T	T	L	E	R	L	Y	X	
04	R	Z	U	A	T	A	U	N	E	V	E	R	Y	N	H	I	M	I	P	R	E	T	A	E	R	G	K	U	S	M	
05	I	M	I	P	H	H	T	B	I	A	N	D	G	D	G	E	V	E	T	B	E	G	I	N	N	I	N	G	O	K	
06	N	R	E	T	F	F	E	H	E	R	K	I	O	A	F	G	E	I	C	F	C	G	I	V	E	N	D	D	H	F	
07	G	E	R	I	H	I	O	R	E	A	A	G	O	N	U	R	F	A	D	R	U	M	O	R	F	R	E	A	A	Z	
08	D	A	F	T	I	R	S	D	I	R	S	E	D	T	C	H	L	F	E	E	N	L	B	R	E	H	S	P	D	P	
09	E	T	R	M	E	M	L	W	O	N	E	T	B	L	L	L	I	A	D	O	D	D	N	A	L	Z	S	P	F	J	
10	H	O	A	V	E	A	A	E	G	G	D	C	Y	E	S	T	N	I	T	H	G	U	O	R	B	E	E	L	R		
11	F	G	A	V	S	M	G	N	I	N	E	V	E	D	H	E	I	N	G	T	S	R	I	F	B	B	L	A	E	E	
12	E	H	O	L	S	E	D	A	R	K	N	E	S	S	D	K	I	E	C	A	F	L	U	V	J	H	B	R	S	T	
13	Y	B	V	L	A	N	F	O	W	L	N	W	D	M	H	M	S	V	Y	G	Q	L	G	R	E	E	N	S	T	F	
14	A	R	Y	I	R	T	H	T	E	P	E	E	R	C	O	M	R	O	F	L	O	A	X	J	A	R	V	I	I	A	
15	J	E	D	F	G	Z	R	J	V	F	R	I	P	O	D	D	L	O	H	E	B	F	H	E	A	V	E	N	H	D	Z
16	C	S	N	W	O	M	J	V	M	H	S	C	M	T	E	L	H	L	I	K	E	N	E	S	T	E	T	G	S		
17	R	Y	N	S	T	H	G	I	L	T	U	O	W	D	L	S	S	W	W	Y	T	T	J	L	H	V	U	H	N	E	
18	U	I	U	O	S	N	H	G	V	E	B	R	A	A	I	E	I	H	E	Z	Y	H	H	I	I	O	J	C	I	K	
19	O	E	K	A	S	I	I	R	C	V	D	M	H	N	L	N	O	A	Y	K	L	S	N	E	H	F	O	I	V	A	
20	W	L	X	V	I	A	X	E	V	O	U	S	E	A	G	S	R	R	C	Z	P	G	P	T	I	T	E	H	I	M	
21	Q	D	M	E	A	T	E	T	R	M	E	L	H	E	E	S	G	E	O	G	I	Z	I	I	N	R	R	W	L	O	
22	X	I	D	G	C	V	M	S	H	E	P	W	D	E	X	R	N	D	R	C	T	W	J	U	R	N	I	G	H	T	
23	D	N	J	V	D	J	O	E	L	E	H	T	M	T	E	X	I	N	U	Y	L	E	F	X	Y	I	F	C	S	E	
24	L	G	Y	A	M	I	V	N	R	H	D	W	S	H	T	D	N	U	L	W	U	S	N	G	I	S	T	R	U	R	
25	S	A	Y	I	N	G	I	O	Y	E	P	D	T	D	I	H	R	N	E	M	M	A	G	S	R	E	T	A	W	E	
26	D	E	E	S	V	S	N	P	V	L	R	E	O	A	I	E	O	A	E	T	E	S	M	A	L	E	R	U	M	H	
27	J	P	S	E	G	M	G	O	A	I	G	P	S	T	E	M	M	H	D	N	O	C	E	S	N	V	T	E	O	T	
28	S	A	R	N	T	J	M	C	H	O	E	G	M	R	H	R	T	W	E	R	E	S	A	W	J	O	O	T	V	Y	
29	W	Y	A	O	W	Z	E	T	T	N	D	P	T	X	J	A	V	E	G	K	A	Z	W	N	R	E	P	I	F	O	
30	G	M	P	J	O	B	P	B	V	O	U	R	R	C	E	Q	T	N	Q	P	Y	S	T	A	R	S	J	U	D	C	

A, Above, Abundantly, After, Air, All, Also, And, Appear, Be, Bearing, Beast, Beginning, Behold, Blessed, Bring, Brought, Called, Cattle, Created, Creature, Creepeth, Creeping, Darkness, Day, Days, Deep, Divide, Divided, Dominion, Dry, Earth, Evening, Every, Face, Female, Fifth, Fill, Firmament, First, Fish, Fly, For, Form, Forth, Fourth, Fowl, From, Fruit, Fruitful, Gathered, Gathering, Give, Given, God, Good, Grass, Great, Greater, Green, Had, Hath, Have, He, Heaven, Herb, Him, His, I, Image, In, Is, It, Itself, Kind, Land, Lesser, Let, Life, Light, Lights, Likeness, Living, Made, Make, Male, Man, May, Meat, Midst, Morning, Moved, Moveth, Moving, Multiply, Night, Of, One, Open, Our, Over, Own, Place, Replenish, Rule, Said, Saw, Saying, Sea, Seas, Seasons, Second, Seed, Set, Shall, Signs, Sixth, So, Spirit, Stars, Subdue, That, The, Their, Them, There, Thing, Third, To, Together, Tree, Two, Under, Unto, Upon, Us, Very, Void, Was, Waters, Were, Whales, Wherein, Which, Whose, Winged, Without, Years, Yielding, You

Note: The underlined words in the list above are not separately coded within the puzzle because they form the beginning of, or are contained (sometimes reversed) within, other words.

[solution later on in issue]

He Smote The Phantom by Ashley Reaks

[Illustration by Anna Smith]

The mysterious shadow of suicide snuggles tightly like paper bats flying on the streets where the mansions are.

Limp bodies ache in the basement.

Birds of prey convene under a carcass, between life and nothing.

He pictures blindfolded boys squeezing his balls.

I stroke her soiled body, disrupting her obsession with the morning.

I start puffing out desolation like a fat man's ashes.

She smells like particles of silence.

Executioners in pink shorts slip on a pervert's excrement.

Tomorrow starts awkwardly like anaesthesia retired for the night.

I watch her involve herself with a slack rope.

A woman is giggling half an inch down her leg, leaving a silhouette of the world's bat population stroking their cocks under a mountain.

I taste the rotten sizzle of old-men's dreams.

George's perfect body embraces the splashes jerking on Frank's lawn.

He smote the phantom during a blizzard in the haze.



Why I Hate ITV Or How 'The Mint' Has Killed Late Night TV As We Knew It by Naked Stu

Poking fun at the many deficiencies of ITV's daytime or evening schedules would be akin to slapping a paraplegic toddler round the chops. This being so, I will mercifully ignore the likes of "Loose Women" and draw attention instead to the disgraceful erosion of a national treasure from the analogue age. ITV's night time programming.

At some point towards the end of the 1980s I hoodwinked my parents into believing that I had become responsible enough for the black and white portable television to reside in my room, not as an occasional treat, but on a permanent basis. My faux maturity convinced them that such an arrangement would not impinge upon sleep nor homework and lo, the TV was mine.

This new addition to my room meant I no longer had to spend the nights scouring the radio for nocturnal entertainment and could instead sit back and pick from four whole channels of late night programming. However, this being the late-eighties, both BBC1 & 2 shut down around midnight, leaving me with just two channels from which to choose.

I quickly discerned that Channel 4 didn't have much to offer, other than the occasional nipple, and so it was at ITV where most of my nights were spent.

The channel had just embraced the concept of 24-hour programming and splashed out on several cheap imports with which to fill the newly-opened nook in their schedules.

I was exposed to the grim futility of war via gritty 'Nam-based drama "Tour of Duty". My skills in the kitchen developed at an alarming speed due to the student-aimed budget cuisine show "Get Stuffed". My love of pro-wrestling blossomed thanks to "World Championship Wrestling" with legendary commentator Lance Russell. Indeed, I fondly recall yelping with pre-pubescent glee as Ric Flair overcame Tracey Smothers to retain the World Championship in a twenty minute slobber-knocker.

And of course, lest we forget "Prisoner Cell Block H". I still vividly remember sitting bolt upright in terror as Wentworth Detention Centre's Meg Morris opened her front door to a pair of masked hoodlums, who then proceeded to give her the gang-raping of a lifetime.

In the early nineties a television tuning experiment opened up new avenues of pleasure as I discovered that the Welsh channels HTV and S4C could be received, thus doubling my viewing options. My love affair with the aforementioned shows and others, such as "Coach" and "Night Shift", continued for several years until the arrival of cable in 1994. This box of digital delights appeared to be frothing at the brim with exotic gems and distracted me from the gradual decline in the quality of ITV's late night output. My beloved shows were slowly but surely pushed aside for home-made low-grade garbage, such as "Pop Profile" and re-runs of "The Time, The Place" with GMTV's John Stapleton, whom, interestingly enough, I once drove past on the motorway just outside Birmingham. I believe the incident is still talked about in some circles.

Thus, the dawn of the multi-channel age meant I turned a blind eye to the self-harming scheduling decisions made by those in charge of ITV's night time programming. Had I known then what I know now, a very strong letter would have been winging its way to my MP because just look at the utter detritus ITV is now churning out under the cover of darkness.

The rich televisual tapestry I took for granted has been consigned to the garbage chute in the name of progress. The delightful comedies, informative cookery tips and sweaty grappling are no more. Instead the youth of today is exposed to a vacuous, brain-dead, steaming four hour turd pile of a broadcast.

"The Mint".

It's wrong on every level.

The exorbitant cost to prospective participants.

The dead-eyed stare of the Kat Deeley/Patrick Kielty Wannabe "presenter".

The repetitive drudgery of chimp after chimp attempting to "name something you might find in a woman's handbag".

In a nutshell, "The Mint" is largely responsible for society's rapid moral decline and the main reason today's kids are out slapping Arabs instead of lying in bed engrossed as Australian female felons cat fight in the Laundry Room.

Health Warning by Howard Haigh

[Illustration by Anna Smith]

Wound up tight like a rubber band
Gone round the twist
This faulty thinking of my mental illness
This fragile egg of a mind
A pustule on the flesh of intelligence
Ready to pop like a slug
Under the jackboot of society

How much splintered glass shall this brain
endure?
Whose brittle shards grind incessantly
Like the surfaces of newly broken bone
You cannot see my pain
And indeed I ask for no sympathy
But from time to time
I wish I could wear a plastercast on my head
As a flag to show, I am hurting

How long to heal?
This wound that changes who I am
There is no knitting of flesh
Though at times I harbour a secret desire to
cut
No, this invisible fracture
A self broken into more than two
Looks into the mirror, and asks
Why me?

As a child almost anything seemed possible
But bit by bit
Like a software code assembled by the University Of Hard Knocks
I am programmed to understand more
And expect so much less
I am learning and eventually I know
I cannot have it all

When the list of questions and the list of needs
The list of wants and the list of lists
When all these reach the brim
Of an ever filling bucket
Something tips
This calm demeanor disguises hidden depths
And in a little while
What seemed like a placid lake
Overflows

The world tilts, and in a torrent of thoughts
Each more negative than that which came before
I come to the inescapable conclusion
That life sucks the innocence from the brightest stars
The light is not on, though I am at home
The filament of hope has finally
Finally burned out



An Open Letter To Ronald McDonald by Naked Stu

Dear Mr McDonald,

So it was lunchtime or thereabouts and I popped into the kitchen to select an item on which to dine. As the cupboard was bare I delved into the freezer and happened upon a bag of frozen economy sausages. Twenty minutes later I'd grilled eight and lined them up on my plate in an orderly fashion. No side dish mind. No chips, no Smash, no noodles. Just eight sausages in two rows of four. Let me tell you, it certainly was a sorry looking platter. In an attempt to jazz up proceedings I added two types of dipping sauce on the side. One squeeze of hot pepper sauce and one squeeze of traditional tomato ketchup. I then decamped to the Living Room and tucked into my dip'n'much lunch.

It was around the time of sausage number three that I was struck by an idea. "You know", I thought to myself, "this delicious lunch isn't a million miles away from the Chicken McNuggets concept that McDonalds Restaurants have been successfully serving up for twenty plus years.". And I was right. The only difference between your shaped chicken pieces and my sausage platter is, of course, the type of meat being used. Thus, I believe I may have inadvertently stumbled upon a dish that could help your corporation regain its rightful place at the summit of the fast food chain.

I give you..... The Sausage McDippers.

Try this on for size. It's teatime, you're out on the road and decide to swing by your local McDonalds restaurant for a bite to eat. The idea of a dippable foodstuff appeals, but you had a chicken sandwich at lunch and are all poultryed out. It's in an all too familiar scenario such as this that the Sausage McDipper could save the day!

I took the liberty of drawing up a rough advertisement that could be used to introduce the Sausage McDippers to your customers. (Below) You'll notice I've imbued the McDippers with human characteristics as I feel that marketing them in such a way will successfully deflect criticism from any nay-sayers who may moan that "it's just sausages and Tommy K!"

I feel the McDippers should be served up in portions of four. I base this decision on the lunch I munched whilst conceiving the idea, as by sausage number four I'd had enough. Even though I did plough on and finished sausages five to eight.

With regards to the type of sausage suitable for the venture, may I be so bold as to suggest that a variety of saveloys should be encompassed? Allow me to explain.

The main McDipper in the box should be a regular-sized pork sausage. It's popular with the man on the street, works well with a variety of sauces and extremely cheap to produce. The second sausage should contain beef with a hint of parsley and also be of regular stature. This is a slightly more complex sausage than the first but, again, will work with pretty much whichever sauce the patron selects to dip it into. I envisage the two regular-shaped sausages representing Poppy and Mommy McDipper, which brings us onto the children. For little Billy McDipper I recommend the use of a beef chipolata with a hint of chilli. This leaves little Stacy McDipper. I'm thinking a chipolata filled with a lamb/rosemary blend. Clever, no?

As for the characters themselves; The Simpsons have enjoyed an enduring success of some seventeen years, so why not just 'base' the McDipper clan on them?

I'm seeing Poppy McDipper as a dim-witted everyman with body odour and a heart in the right place. Mommy McDipper is a tightly wound, family-centric nag who's a demon in bed. I've visualised Billy McDipper as a devilishly mischievous schoolboy with a fiendishly money-spinning catchphrase. This leaves Stacy McDipper. I've always found Lisa Simpson to be rather tedious, so let's scrap that character and make Stacy a proper dirty slut, akin to one of those "Bratz" characters that the kids seem to enjoy.

As I'm sure you'll agree, this idea is Dynamite. And all I ask for in return is an opportunity to rewrite your jingle, as that Timberlake-penned "da da da da da.... I'm loving it" shit is really sticking in my craw. Incidentally, I once went toe-to-toe with Timberlake on a jet and emerged victorious. The incident is still talked about in some circles.

I eagerly await your response.



Yours Sincerely,
Naked Stu

Please find below my prototype Sausage McDippers Ad.

Have You Met The Sausage c Dippers?

They're new in town and offer a delicious alternative to their chicken-based counterparts.



The Sausage  c Dipper family are the latest addition to the  c Donald's menu. Why not swing by today and say hello to pork-based Poppy, yummy Mommy, beef-flavoured Billy and succulent Stacy?

Josie Talks Back To Teachers by Ashley Reaks **[Illustration by Anna Smith]**

I walked back to my house aching, my hole-ridden face squirting droplets of gas all over my abdomen. My shattered thighbone was trailing sadly along the ground like a dark damp stench in a pirate's mouth.

Sarah's father smiled for a moment.

He was very damaged.

His future wife had been killed in an automobile accident.

"You're a natural," he said, but then abused Sarah shamefully, his unnamed friend giving Sarah a stuffing inside a caravan.

The abandoned infant inside her started making expressions of innocence as long strands of diseased hair fluttered in the wind.

The reverend Kowalski showered and shaved which startled her father.

A little later a thousand babies got out of a used car onto the violent morning.

A magician with scuffed-up overalls wiped his nose on my knee.

His nipples shivered against my hands.

He'd never been to school.

Sarah's father's granddaughter was hiding in my closet, towelling her soul dry in a vain attempt to heal the ravages of time.

Many weeks later Sarah began to drink at home.

There was a little camera inside her pancreas.

I was mere inches from Sarah's immense lack of purpose before my grandma turned up unannounced and signed the consent form for my execution.

I paused and looked in the mirror only to see a gorilla wrestling Buddha to the ground.

I backed away from the lake.



Kiwi And Snowdrops by Jane Fairhurst



A Quick Note About Transgression, My Work And Literature From Anna F C Smith

To my knowledge there are two distinct ways of understanding transgression. The first (in my view inaccurate) distinction is that transgression overcomes a social moral. In this case the transgression gains new ground, redrawing the map lines of morality, and modifying the moral frontier. So the battle between transgression and morality continues, transgression generally being the victor. Though this linear development does take place within society to some extent, it seems to me that this form of transgression has closer links with nihilism as it destroys morals. I see transgression in a different manner, as Bataille claimed, "The transgression does not deny the taboo but transcends and completes it."¹

We cannot deny that society needs regulation to hold its structure (unless we are anarchists). The transgression is a part of the regulatory function of taboo, the tantrum or orgasmic release, which is ultimately calming. The ideal example of this is medieval carnival. Our current society obviously does not work in the same manner as medieval society in terms of imposing morals; there is not so neatly an outward oppressor that maintains them. The majority of moral codes are imposed hegemonically and the individual may feel in some way free to break them whenever. But when do they actually transgress? The Freudian psychoanalytical structure is essential to my theory. The Id, the rebellious, innocent, selfish drive is the force, which necessitates transgression because of its constant needs. If answered fully there would be no society. Instead transgression answers these needs with ritualised fictions of the activities the id seeks. Transgression is safe, structured and temporary. Because morality works more within the individual than the transgression must take place within the individual, and it can manifest as an involuntary physical response (such as laughter or arousal), which The Ego would wish to suppress, and The Super Ego indulgently wishes to make us feel guilt for.

This is the general basis of my practise though it is obviously not a lone crusader for transgression as it has other expressions within society, such as the erotic novel, comedies and horror films. My work is preoccupied in creating a mental space in which the enjoyment of transgression is realised. A lot of my work also has an experimental drive in terms of psychoanalysis, though this is only to test my theories opposed to diagnosing sexual or mental 'perversion'. I am interested in the fictionalisation of visceral acts, making them more pleasurable, or desirable than their reality, just as fantasy and ritual works. Ultimately it is the simple amusement of the viewer which I am interested in, as with the Medieval Carnival, laughter focused on the lower bodily stratum was seen as equally important as serious contemplation².

Through my studies into erotic literature I began to worry that the 'definite' portrayal of objects and people in film does not work in terms of the fictionalised actions of the transgressive individual. The viewer is not as completely absorbed because there is no input asked of them. The response to literature is at least different if not more appropriate than that to film, so I have begun to show my films to writers and have asked them to reiterate what they see in prose. This allows the creation of multiple experiences to one depraved action, so I will eventually get into your mind one way or another! This collaborative work in progress is a new direction for me, I am aiming to accumulate a book worth of writings, one dedicated to each of my more 'erotic' films which will work as art pieces to be experienced outside of the gallery environment. If any writer is interested in getting involved with this, please contact me at thehonanna@aol.com and I can discuss it with you and send you my films to interpret.

White Rose at Seven by John Togher & Anna Smith [with additions by Joy Smith]

He sees her striding across the square, fifty yards away; she looks taller than average height and bounces towards him, turning the odd head as she passes. She sees him elegantly raises her hand, waving with a quick flick of the wrist at the top, in her other she clutches a brown leather overnight bag. He waves back with a white rose and she smiles. She is a natural redhead; flaming; her hair dances as she paces towards him. She takes the flower from his hand and kisses him on the cheek. Her lips are cold, refreshing, have a knowing shape, as if they hold a sweet-sour secret she will never tell. She takes him by the arm and they set off to the hotel chatting idly on the way. Yes, it is cold tonight.

She smells of apples and the scent throws him back to his childhood, picking from the family tree in his grandparents' garden with his sister. Her up the ladder; him holding it as steady. His gaze follows the upward flow of her arched white socks as she balanced, straining to reach higher. He sees straight up her skirt, up to her cotton blue knickers and the smooth dark creases they idly conceal. This peek stirs something unfamiliar inside him, something that carries on through his awakening sexual years. From that moment he noticed things: the blonde down on Donna Foster's arm, year six; the flash of Lisa Harrison's flesh coloured bra in high school as she raised her hand in class; watching the women's tennis on TV, a tease of white with each serve; walking in on his mother in the bath, embarrassment, her black triangle of wavy hair in the water; the pornographic magazine he found in a bin by a bus stop, its multitude of flesh, pinks and reds. He thinks of the first time he masturbated, secretly in his sister's wardrobe, when all feeling was lost in his legs; of being side by side in the cinema with Hannah, his clumsy hands, hot and sweaty finding their way through pubic fuzz to delicate membrane, her small cold hands leading him to discovery; his first time behind the bushes in the garden with Suzanne, tight, wet and quickly over, and now, as these thoughts build their way up inside him, he feels the throb of excitement again.

They arrive at the hotel and she checks them in. Room 317. A sleek room; modernist; basic furniture, abstract painting on the wall, matching the burgundy décor. He doesn't know what to say so approaches to kiss her, to get things going, but as he leans in she moves to take off her coat and he is left standing close to her, uncomfortable.

She speaks in a low husky tone and carries an accent he can't place. Relax; take a seat, then takes out a bottle of Scotch from her bag, pours them both a drink in plastic beakers.

She's wearing a strapless blue dress that exposes freckled shoulders; the pinpoint accuracy and chaos of jazz on her skin. She's fragile without her coat. Despite her tall womanly figure she is slight and looks bruisable; if you squeezed hard enough into her skin you could leave a thumbprint. He wants to both protect and destroy her equally.

She gulps down her whisky and mentions the lack of ice. No matter, he says, as he eyes her soft body wanting to spill out of her dress. She walks into the bathroom with her bag and tells him she'll be back in a while and for him to get undressed. He fishes out a Viagra from his pocket and takes it with his drink, then takes off his shoes, jeans and shirt. He leaves on his underwear, a pair of tight black boxer shorts, and lies on the bed, contemplating whether to stay on top or lie beneath the covers.

She comes from the bathroom naked and stands in the doorway with the white rose in her hand. A great body; long legs leading to a rectangular tuft of dark ginger pubic hair, the kind of hips that could bear children easily and initiate salivation in most men, the way they indent sharply towards the waist and look too wide for the boniness of her face. Her long arms have a fine coating of thin hair which catches the light. He sees now that she is older than him, by a few years at least and she carries herself with confidence, standing naked as she does in front of a stranger. He feels that many men before have shared this sight, but none in the way he sees her now.

She tells him to take off his underwear and joins him on the bed. She takes a few petals from the rose and lays one on each of his nipples, then tickles his erect penis with the head of the flower. She laughs, throws the rose on the floor and takes hold of his penis with her left hand, her head resting on his stomach. She squeezes a little and pulls back his foreskin slowly while he runs a hand over the landscape of her body; from the apex of her shoulder down along the dip of her ribs, that beautiful curved shape leading to her hips and round to the rump of her arse. She turns her head and looks at him with a sugar-spinning smile, a dimple he hadn't noticed earlier, forming on her left cheek, before she turns back to his penis. The tip of her dry tongue trails around his balls, and travels the length of his shaft, gathering saliva and tracing a wet memory of its path, which cools in the air. As she reaches its head the moisture mingles with the leaking of his arousal. She savours the velvety seawater until suddenly she engulfs him. A gushing pulse rushes through his body.

He reaches his hand out and runs his fingers through her fiery, tangled hair. She shifts her position so that she is looking at him and he sees her dark red lipstick has smudged over his penis; he loves it when that happens. He grabs her by the shoulders and pulls her towards him, kissing her full on the mouth, hard, feeling her soft breasts hang down onto his chest, those nipples of hers reaching down and lighting rubbing against his. Her lipstick and

¹ Bataille, Georges *The Accursed Share*

² Bakhtin, Mikhail; *Rabelais and His World*

saliva, the juice from his penis, mix, smeared over his lips; she bites him playfully and he seizes her, jumps up and throws her onto her back and she exhales excitedly in surprise.

He runs a hand from the nape of her neck down to the middle of her breasts and traces the outline of each before stroking the bud of each nipple and giving both a kiss with the threat of his teeth. He carries on with his hand across her stomach, soft, quivering with each breath, slender, the outline of her ribs show through the fine layer of skin protecting them, breakable. He presses a little harder on each curl of bone then moves on to her belly button, circling it with the tip of a finger; further down, her rusty fur, neat and trimmed like the burnt strip of a cricket pitch, and hidden within this and further folds, that glistening swell of her clitoris.

He positions himself between her legs and takes in her warm private scent. She is his, for now, in this moment. Once that smell hits his nostrils, innate lust drives him. He kisses her inner thigh, works his way towards her vagina, pushes his nose in amongst the electric static of her pubic hair and slides his tongue along her dark slit causing her to inch up her hips a little, allowing him to place a hand on one of her buttocks while he takes in her taste. Cunt would make a great flavour of ice cream.

She is under his control. He varies his speed and technique, centring one minute on her clitoris, feeling it grow and pulse to his touch, then darting and pushing his tongue into her vagina as far as he can, bringing round his hand to add fingers and more leverage. She writhes and raises her hips, squeezes his head between her legs until finally she pulls on his hair and drags him to her face where they kiss, catching each other's teeth, not caring, chewing on each other's lips, lost in that moment.

She pulls away and looks at him with half-open eyes. She takes his penis in her hand and guides him slowly towards her vagina, her eyes slowly widening with each inch. He feels the soft muscle and space invite him deeper and they start to move with each other to a gentle rhythm, biting a shoulder, a neck, gripping a breast, and edging towards a faster tempo.

He feels the heat in the room grow. Her chest develops a red flush and spittle escapes from her mouth as she breathes harder through her teeth. A trickle of sweat runs down his back and as he moves to go deeper into her, to push against her internal organs, to touch her womb, to hit the magical unicorn of her pleasure.

He hears the door to their room open, and then shut quietly. The intruder's scent is strong, oaky with a hint of spice and sweat. Minutes pass and the intruder hasn't said a word or moved from the doorway. As if they haven't noticed, they keep on, grinding hips with abandonment, letting out moans of pleasure.

He feels a hand on his shoulder, warm and rough, and turns to see the intruder naked, with a barrel of a chest matted with dark scraggy hair that sweeps to a groin fertile with black curls and purple cock.

"You like fucking my wife?" he asks, dragging him away to the end of the bed. He has neither breath nor answer. The woman, the wife, has retreated from him and is sitting up gently squeezing her right nipple, while her other hand tenderly fingers her clitoris. She watches curiously.

The husband bends him over the bed roughly and grips his buttocks, pulling them apart. He bends down and sticks his thick tongue inside, working up lubrication before he is able to enter. There is difficulty at first; the tip of his penis engages but the rest of the length folds over. He is holding his breath, now, until finally it slides in with a silent pop that widens his eyes. The husband enters into the elastic void, plugging him, filling him, and starts to pump, slowly first, to be sure of staying deep within, then faster and furiously.

He tries to fight back any tears trying to be forced out of him from behind. Instead he looks at the woman, this man's wife who sits there and stares back, mouth half open, gently stroking herself to orgasm. She bites her lip with its tremor then moves in closer to him, sliding beneath them as the men lift themselves. She wraps her legs around both him and her husband and guides his penis back into her. They enter into a rocking rhythm with the husband the main force of penetration and direction. He is just a vessel between the married partners, a perverted link, a feeling loop in this chain of flesh.

The wife writhes and grunts under the force of this penetration, gripping his hair in her helplessness. She contorts with the pressure, curling her feet beneath her husband's arse and allowing the intensity of the rhythm to rub the front wall of her vagina, the slippery friction causing her to arch in unavoidable climax. Her legs fall about him and he feels himself about to cum. His body jerks spasmodically; he holds back as much as he can until it must be let out, there is no control... the final remnants ooze into the wife's pulsing vagina. She slides away from him, pulling her feet up to herself allowing her husband to see fully her reddened, still convulsing sex.

The husband continues to thrust deep inside his bowels then grabs his shoulders with both hands and forces his head back and lets out his climax with a forceful roar. He can feel the husband's warm semen inside him, and, as the flaccid penis slides out, he feels his anus shrink back slowly to almost its original size.

The husband throws himself onto the bed next to his wife and buries his head into her hair. He watches as they fall asleep in each other's arms. After dressing slowly, he takes a pile of notes from the table and walks out, leaving the couple to bask in their completed fantasy. A low evening sun casts the city in a faint colour of amber, with shadows creeping closer to its inhabitants. He feels the blood from his anus stick to his boxer shorts as he wanders back through the streets finding his way home with uncomfortable steps.

Love Rides Out by John G. Hall

[Illustration by Anna Smith]

my brain is nervous with the night, my animal spirits are hunting their prey in my William Morris wallpaper forests, black optics of fantasy spilling into both our dreams, you hold in the dark practicing alchemy and though I know you will never ask me, my manic touch questions your flesh, my fingers ticking every correct answer, you wet me with your soft corrections, we scream through the bedrooms brickwork, two ruddy ghosts full of Easter's Catholic purple, our mouths slipped with cinnamon, two sensitive bloods damned up by the gentle tourniquet of love, my fingers caress your fine fur, you become a painted pony, and while you tattoo my bones with your salmon tongue, and while the black reins of your hair slip from my fingers, my demon heart pounds to a stop, my blue eyes blush and the eiderdown's casual galaxy spirals around us.



'Reverse' Bible Code Puzzle – The Solution

Here's the solution:

01	02	03	04	05	06	07	08	09	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30					
01	_	L	E	S	S	E	R	_	_	H	_	_	A	F	_	_	H	_	E	_	G	_	_	H	_	_	T	D	_					
02	_	_	G	E	R	U	T	A	E	R	C	I	_	B	_	R	T	_	L	_	N	_	_	_	T	_	E	A	_					
03	B	_	_	A	G	_	G	_	_	_	_	_	M	U	D	A	U	A	_	I	C	A	T	T	L	E	R	L	Y	_				
04	R	_	_	A	T	A	_	N	E	V	E	R	Y	N	H	I	M	I	P	R	E	T	A	E	R	G	_	U	S	_				
05	I	_	I	P	H	H	T	B	I	A	N	D	G	D	_	E	V	E	T	B	E	G	I	N	N	I	N	G	O	_				
06	N	R	E	T	F	F	E	H	E	R	_	_	O	A	F	_	E	I	C	F	C	G	I	V	E	N	D	_	H	F				
07	G	E	R	I	H	I	O	R	E	A	A	_	O	N	_	R	_	A	D	R	U	M	O	R	F	_	E	A	A	_				
08	D	A	F	T	I	R	S	D	I	R	S	E	D	T	C	_	L	F	E	E	N	L	B	R	E	H	S	P	D	_				
09	E	T	R	M	E	M	L	_	O	N	E	T	B	L	_	L	I	A	D	O	D	D	N	A	L	_	S	P	F	_				
10	H	O	A	V	E	A	A	_	_	G	G	D	_	Y	E	S	T	N	I	T	H	G	U	O	R	B	E	E	L	R				
11	F	G	A	V	S	M	G	N	I	N	E	V	E	D	H	E	I	N	_	T	S	R	I	F	_	_	L	A	E	E				
12	E	H	O	L	S	E	D	A	R	K	N	E	S	S	D	K	I	E	C	A	F	L	_	_	_	_	B	R	S	T				
13	Y	B	_	L	A	N	F	O	W	L	_	_	_	_	M	_	_	Y	_	_	L	G	R	E	E	N	S	T	F					
14	A	R	_	I	R	T	H	T	E	P	E	E	R	C	O	M	R	O	F	L	_	A	_	_	_	_	_	I	I	A				
15	_	_	D	F	G	_	_	_	_	_	_	_	_	D	D	L	O	H	E	B	F	H	E	A	V	E	N	H	_	_				
16	_	S	N	W	O	_	_	_	H	S	_	_	E	L	H	L	I	K	E	N	E	S	S	T	_	T	G	_	_					
17	R	Y	N	S	T	H	G	I	L	T	U	_	_	D	L	S	S	W	W	Y	_	T	_	L	H	_	U	H	N	E				
18	U	I	_	O	S	N	_	_	E	B	_	A	A	I	E	I	H	E	_	Y	_	H	I	I	O	_	C	I	K					
19	O	E	_	_	S	I	I	_	V	D	M	H	N	L	N	O	A	_	_	L	S	N	E	H	F	O	I	V	A					
20	_	L	_	_	A	X	E	_	O	U	S	E	A	G	S	R	R	_	_	P	G	P	T	I	T	E	H	I	M					
21	_	D	M	E	A	T	E	T	R	M	E	L	H	E	E	S	G	E	_	I	_	I	I	N	R	_	W	L	_					
22	_	I	_	_	_	M	S	H	E	P	W	D	_	_	R	N	D	R	_	T	W	_	U	R	N	I	G	H	T					
23	_	N	_	_	_	O	E	_	E	H	T	_	E	_	I	N	U	_	L	_	_	_	I	_	_	_	_	_	E					
24	_	G	Y	A	M	_	V	N	R	_	D	W	S	H	_	D	N	U	L	_	U	S	N	G	I	S	T	_	_	R				
25	S	A	Y	I	N	G	I	O	_	E	P	D	T	D	I	_	R	_	E	M	M	_	_	S	R	E	T	A	W	E				
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Above (1,14,NE)	Fifth (5,6,SW)	Life (24,17,SE)	Shall (12,20,NE)
Abundantly (14,1,S)	Fill (4,15,N)	Lights (9,17,W)	Signs (26,24,W)
After (30,14,N)	Firmament (6,6,S)	Likeness (18,16,E)	Sixth (5,18,SE)
Air (4,4,SW)	First (24,11,W)	Living (29,21,N)	Spirit (22,19,SE)
All (22,14,N)	Fish (18,8,SW)	Made (12,19,NE)	Stars (22,30,E)
Also (7,10,N)	Fly (21,15,NW)	Make (30,20,N)	Subdue (11,16,S)
And (10,5,E)	Form (19,14,W)	Male (23,26,E)	That (14,27,SE)
Appear (28,7,S)	Forth (1,11,NE)	Man (2,30,NE)	Their (22,17,SE)
Bearing (13,9,NW)	Fourth (30,6,NW)	May (5,24,W)	Them (17,28,NE)
Beast (8,5,SE)	Fowl (7,13,E)	Meat (3,21,E)	There (30,27,N)
Beginning (20,5,E)	From (25,7,W)	Midst (16,27,NW)	Thing (26,16,SW)
Behold (20,15,W)	Fruitful (15,1,SE)	Morning (17,27,N)	Third (8,29,NE)
Blessed (27,12,N)	Gathered (5,3,SE)	Moved (7,28,NE)	Together (9,29,NE)
Bring (1,3,S)	Gathering (3,2,SE)	Moveth (10,21,N)	Tree (13,29,NE)
Brought (26,10,W)	Given (22,6,E)	Moving (7,22,S)	Two (5,28,S)
Called (19,6,SW)	God (10,10,NW)	Multiply (21,25,N)	Under (18,24,N)
Cattle (21,3,E)	Good (13,5,S)	Night (26,22,E)	Unto (24,22,NE)
Created (21,6,SW)	Grass (5,15,N)	One (8,25,N)	Upon (28,30,NW)
Creature (11,2,W)	Greater (26,4,W)	Open (13,26,SW)	Very (5,26,SW)
Creepeth (14,14,W)	Green (23,13,E)	Our (1,19,N)	Void (26,27,SE)
Creeping (15,8,NE)	Had (29,6,S)	Over (30,29,NW)	Was (24,28,W)
Darkness (7,12,E)	Hath (15,4,NE)	Own (5,16,W)	Waters (29,25,W)
Days (29,1,S)	Have (2,12,NE)	Place (11,25,SW)	Were (18,28,E)
Deep (1,8,NE)	Heaven (22,15,E)	Replenish (9,24,NE)	Whales (12,22,NE)
Divided (15,3,SE)	Herb (26,8,W)	Rule (19,22,S)	Wherein
Dominion	Him (11,1,SE)	Said (13,27,NE)	(12,24,NW)
(14,15,NE)	His (28,15,N)	Saw (3,27,SW)	Which (28,21,N)
Dry (3,15,NW)	Image (5,8,SW)	Saying (1,25,E)	Whose (19,17,SW)
Earth (1,9,NE)	Itself (29,14,N)	Seasons (8,22,NW)	Winged (18,17,SW)
Evening (13,11,W)	Kind (16,12,NE)	Second (24,27,W)	Without (22,22,NE)
Every (9,4,E)	Land (25,9,W)	Seed (4,26,W)	Years (20,17,SW)
Face (21,12,W)	Lesser (2,1,E)	Set (22,26,W)	Yielding (2,17,S)
Female (15,6,NE)	Let (28,3,N)		You (30,28,NW)

The table on the following page shows word position by Column and Row Number and Orientation as a compass direction.

Example: 'Creepeth' is at (14,14,W) so the word starts in column 14 (the numbers along the top) and is in row 14 (the numbers down the side) and orientation W means westward (reversed) so you will see

01	02	03	04	05	06	07	08	09	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	
14	A	R	_	I	R	T	<u>H</u>	<u>T</u>	<u>E</u>	<u>P</u>	<u>E</u>	<u>E</u>	<u>R</u>	C	O	M	R	O	F	L	_	A	_	_	_	_	_	I	I	A

Lost Continents Of The Soul by Neil Francis Brookes

I am me
sober amongst mountains
plucking the unknown wishes
as the bulb moon
illuminates my harmony
the clock howls morning

the clouds are his clothes the wind
is unable to meet the billowing of blueness
wake up smiling

I saw your thoughts wandering night shrine streets
where birds fly away with treasures in their beaks.

Nunraw by Denis Joe O'Driscoll
[Illustration by Anna Smith]

Dedicated with gratitude to Eddy Pirie

... and nobody asks how you are,
though concern is not lacking.
The assumption; away from
the pandemonium
is all is well.

An approximation of nature
resides here.
The Cisterian brothers are not
siblings but co-conspirators
in this peace on war.

The travelogue of the stream
soundtracks inertia and awareness.
God's creation or the architecture of Man?
Much the same in this confrontation.

Ah!
The gothic naturalness
interpreted by murmurs
of continuation – providing a reflection
on screens. Views of the game as
possible fare for the table.

This cruelty of the amity sees
rabbits leaving the shelter of their warrens.
Safety comes from unawareness of their role
in the food chain. Grouse
flutter rain from their feathers,
complaining about the weather.

We could sleep all this
and awake, thinking that the last
twenty-four hours were dreamt.
We could, otherwise, take it all in
as a scent of passing beauty.
To be bottled in a memory
and sanitised by experience.

A blackbird's song has been silenced.
Now just a carcass that litters the step of God's house

Vespers waft from the church
Like oak, carrying the tonelessness.
God had not endowed his messengers
with the voice of the blackbird.

The crippled atheist
genueflects before the alter.
He acknowledges not the faith
but the faithfulness and
the world, well lost,
as the door closes.

... and nobody asks how you are
as you hobble away
from this amorphous calm,
to confront tomorrow again.



Looking Sideways in Drumcroom, Wigan – A Reactionary Piece by John Togher

I don't know how qualified you have to be to 'review' an art show. The knowledge of works through the ages built up through study just so it can be compared to what is in front of you seems dismissive of the intent of today's artist. I can see that it's hard to come up with something 'new' in art or something that appeals to any and all reviewers and viewers; more to the point, I think all any artist can hope for is reaction. There can be nothing worse for an artist whose work is looked at for less than a second by glazed eyes in a gallery. I'd go on to say they'd even wish for someone to violently hate their work rather than ignore it. So, I guess this piece will be reactionary to what I see, feel and am inspired by at this show.

This show is an exhibition celebrating the work of artists working at OK Studios in Standish. 'Looking Sideways' takes its title from what they believe is the purpose of the artist in society, and I can understand this walking through Drumcroom at the work on display. The first piece to catch my eye is by **Kat Button**. 'Untitled' is a dangled mess of wires suspended in mid air from the ceiling, with some drooping to the floor. The wire looks like the type used as washing lines in most gardens, except that the colours, fluorescent yellows, greens, pinks and blues, adds a vibrancy to such a mundane object. My immediate thoughts on the piece are of the artist lifting the dreary, tangled and frustratingly grey chores of most households into another realm of fantasy. There's something organic about the piece, something alien almost, that takes me away from any humdrum thoughts on the materials used.



Almost twinned with the above piece is **Steve Cunliffe's** painting 'Diptych'. It too has the coils and tangles yet it feels jarring; the colours used reminding me of the ugliness of the Sex Pistols 'Never Mind the Bollocks' album cover. It comes across as an angry piece; the black scribble dominant and in your face. But, there is a certain flow to it that allows it to be studied closely, to see if there is a pattern to its apparent random nature, which, I guess, could be how we live our lives day to day, explaining coincidence and chance with superstition and fate.

Jane Fairhurst has used toys to great effect in her art in the past and here with 'Advanced Interrogation Techniques' soft toys stare blankly back from the canvas, hopelessly bound by rope. It's hard not to react with a political mind to this piece. Is it a comment on Iraq, the young soldiers of today's army captured and bound? Or the innocents of Guantanamo Bay visualised? Other reactions I felt were the bounds of childhood. We wrap our children in such a protective way that maybe we are trapping them, stopping them living in freedom. There is something frighteningly funny about them too. Whatever the themes or intent of this work, the real meaning seems deliberately ambiguous and is all the better for it.

'Chemical Factory Triptych' by **Steven Heaton** was one of my favourite pieces on show. Using oil and mixed media on wood, it is a post-apocalyptic vision of nature and its effect on material, with charred wood, rusted metal and wire eroding away. There is an authentic beauty to it, but at the same time a darkness lurks, some kind of futility that nature will have its way no matter what mankind can do, or perhaps even because of mankind and our ways with the Earth.

In one room there is a storm of abstraction on the wall. 'Sunny Sandbar' by **David Stanley** is a blistering painting of deep reds rising to sand tones that is just great to look at. It's as though the canvas is blazing from the heat of the setting. It comes across like a blurring of reality and is a calming yet tempestuous piece and a lot of this has to do with the arresting colours, melting and fizzing with each other.

Drumcroom has a nice fireplace which serves as an ideal setting for **Debra Budenberg's** work. 'Out Of The Hide' is a family chair that displays the closeness and the ugliness of family life. There are figures squashed into the chair, bodies embedded into the fabric. The harsh intimacy of family life is manifest in this piece; battered, off kilter with the rest of the world, a little too snug for comfort and quite frightening to look at. Under such scrutiny, most families have traits, quirks, secrets, malice, drama and these are given physical form in this chair. 'Settle' is the companion piece and is a cot that lies feet away from the chair, again with the bodies stuffed together in a forced intimacy that was commonplace in most homes in the past. Brothers and sisters sharing beds, top-to-toe, a closeness that is uncomfortable yet familiar in a strange and beautiful way compared to today's version of family life. It's hard not to look at these pieces and not be personally affected in some way.

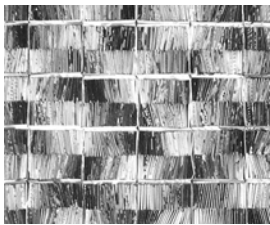
'Bettaware Lady' by **Bernard Georgeson** is a humorous painting, childlike with its primitive scrawl. It's hard to make out much of



the text on the piece. I like the image of the strange stick figure, presumably the lady of the title, going from house to house in this bizarre world created by the artist. I can't remember the last time I ever heard of a Bettaware lady calling round to someone's house. It seems an age away when people were more trusting to open their front door to a stranger, when goods were sold face to face rather than through the internet or even through some bored glassy-eyed teenage robot. This work seems to bring around feelings for much simpler times, long gone. *'One Nil'* again makes this point, of children playing football in the park against the backdrop to some dream-like landscape, innocent to the current state of today and the mega-rich business football has become. It's as if this innocence can only exist in this other world of crudely drawn trees and figures.

Hawys Mather is all about nature. That's the first impression you get from the piece *'Wait'*. The next is the slightly un-Earth like shapes that form from these natural materials of paper and sedge stalks. They are ghost-like, hanging from the ceiling, lit from the incoming light, making them ethereal, delicate, highlighting the magic and beauty of nature itself.

A pink balloon brings a feeling of hope or freedom to each of the four urban digital scene Giclee prints from **Neil Warburton**. There is a desolate and uniform tone to the prints, and this pink balloon (multitudes in one case) offer a release to the drab but sharp contemporary surroundings. His *'Uncomfortable Places and Awkward Situations'* prints feel like stories in themselves; again the anxious urban environment with a female clutching a wall, hiding, anticipating what's to come.



I was struck by a piece that seemed to be the work of a mad person. Hundreds of small pieces of folded paper shoved into slots forming what looked like a pattern of a chess board. The intricacy, detail and compulsion to actually create something like this is astounding. The artist is **Joyce Coulton**, whose speciality is tapestry, of which there were a few examples, again highlighting the complexity and clever use of colour in her work. But those folded bits of paper got inside my head, had my thoughts whirring about recycling, waste, the environment, our squandering society ready to throw away our future, too lazy to re-use or salvage. Weird how much some pieces of folded paper can influence.

To capture the personality of a person in a painting is hard to do, I imagine. **Anthony Barrow's** *'Party Girl'* does this brilliantly. The only thing *real* in the painting is the woman's face and that smile; the way she looks back at you, slightly drunken, as if she's in her element, witty, happy, content with her drink. What I like also is how the background merges with her body; a flat blue environment that has faceless people and shapes around her, yet here she is smiling that smile. She could easily be another one of the anonymous crowd but the artist has found in her some deep human spirit, if you like, that sets her apart and highlights what actually could only be her social personality.



I thought that the films of **Tim Fielding** were a little wasted being set up on three small monitors. I can imagine seeing them in a dark room, giant screen, surround sound, especially with my favourite *'LiebFraumilch'*, which contained apparently random imagery including slow-motion muscles in action, a vomiting man, various nurses and their trussed-up patients and a baby being poked in the cheek with a blunt instrument, all to a disorientating soundtrack that fizzles from ear to ear and throbs with a dull tone inside. I don't know what it is that I love about the film, its imagery and hypnotism totally takes me in, and I'm a willing participant, willing to be sucked into this surreal realm.

I was brought back again to the topic of global warming and the environment by **Tracy Griffin** and her *'Low Tide'* pieces. They looked like cracking polar ice, beautifully lit from behind, highlighting the fragile state of the planet.

Other notably mentions of this show were **Richard Dickinson's** *'Good Hope'*, a photo-realist painting of a shored nicely weathered boat. **Elaine Bennet's** massive *'Mantles of Responsibility'* taking up almost a whole wall; a circular cosmos. **Louise Wilkie** and her 60s pop culture inspired collage, all button flowers and bright psychedelic colour. **Catherine Bryan's** *'Composition 1 & 2'*, are impressive pieces that cleverly combine rich colours creating an abstract landscape full of texture. Tucked away in a corner, close to being missed was *'Facing forward'*, the mysterious and unique glass art of **Tony Roberts**.

Overall, it seems that art shows us images of our internal structures; it helps us see parts of ourselves and the world that we may not realise or that we take for granted. The work of OK Studios has succeeded in this as well as in its intent of *'Looking Sideways'*. It was a vivid experience walking around the show, with enough work there to inspire, provoke thought and rouse a reaction out of the viewer.

For more on the artists featured: www.okstudios.org

Pi

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Simon Clarke – Photography



www.simonrobertclarke.co.uk

Watching You Masturbate In The Style Of The Old Testament by John Togher

[This poem was inspired by a short film by Anna Smith, pictured below]



I admire your capacity of lung,
The way you take in a breath,
Slyly fondle a breast
And tickle a nipple
Into a nub of submission,
While the blood of a sacrificial ox trickles
Across your chest with the
Ease and flow of a biblical river.

The lungs of the ox lie
Mangled, entwined with your body,
Offered up to the God of Fetish

Your red lipstick puckers as a
Finger slips into a dark pubic place.
Plenty, the juices of pleasure
That drip into the void of barren
Dreamscapes as the urban night
Terrors chase you to a place
You find a guilty comfort.

I watch as you writhe
In blood, sinew and flesh,
Twisting your features
Through the ecstasy of a wicked soul,
Lost in a fantasy, alone,
Forever hiding your love

In a desolate sanguine room of lust and perversion.

Oh Jealousy

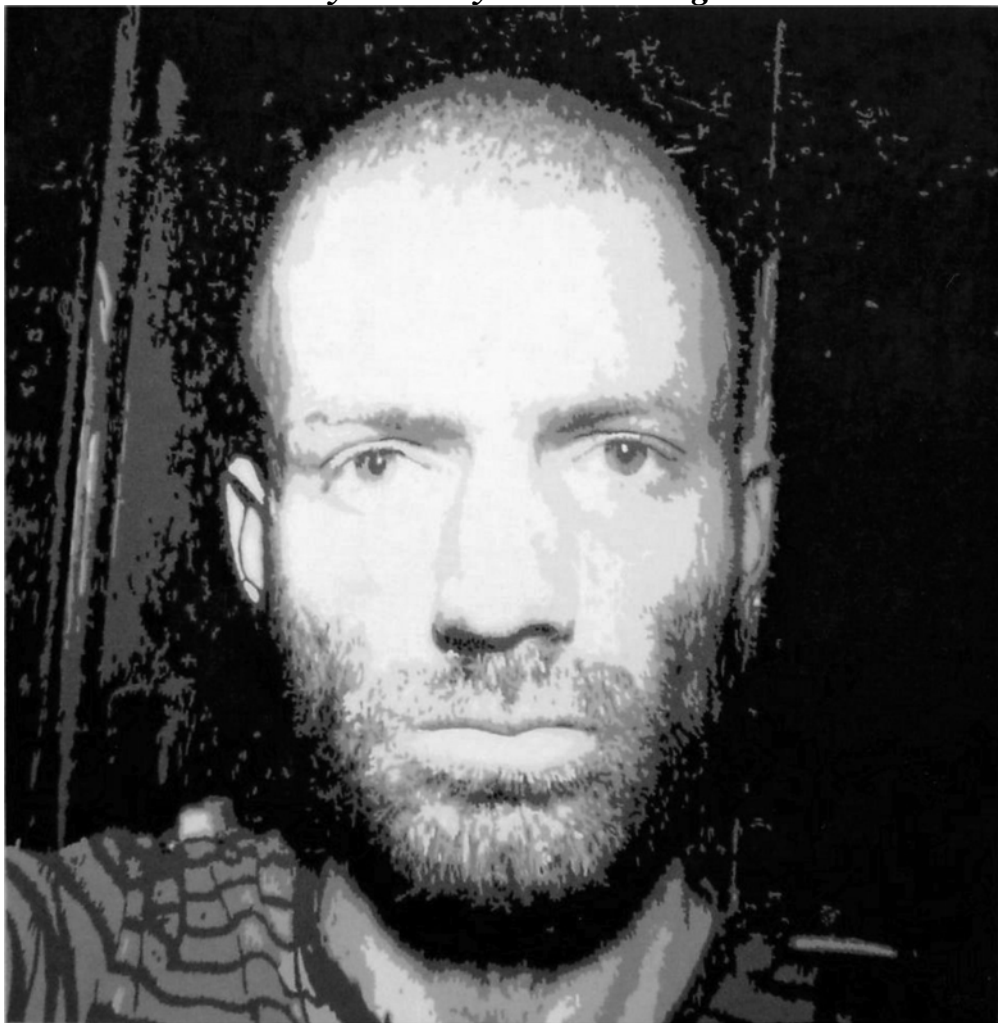
The friendship gasped as the lovers came
The tempered *animal of man*
Enters the room again
He sets the flaming scene
Of the *flying fist feeling machine*
Un-tethered the object of jealousy
As strong for her as her for me
Oh jealousy
you cursed cacophony!
tables and glass
The drinking class
Aghast
A stammering scrum
Stumbling fast
Headlong, the point of elostoplast
Spawning feelings amid half mast
Of hope
Who is loving who, exactly?
And *jealousy* so tangible
Such a steel emotion
Resilient piercing night skies
Bold through crystal in mobile eyes
Of phones
The text message stands stout
Brown ale
speak out, your lover has unfolded
The hope *has scolded your senses*
The false pretences that brought you here
Are transparent tells of feelings clear
To everyone
Oh jealousy you keep fit freak
You understander of feelings bleak
As you twist and turn the lining weak
Of stomachs tight and itching feet
To go
You wish to whisk her out
You hope the pouring spout
Of tears will rust the uncut gears of a man
And steal his attention
From his morbid detention with
She! So lacklustre
Straining he musters up the strength to leave
Blushing, trembling he tries to heave it up
But it all comes out *a mixed up fuck of emotion*
scrubbing shall he try to erase
The image of her as she soulfully plays
Her wicked wand and broomstick slays
The smear of a high, 'neath a sparkling knife
A pubic line, a centre swath of passion
She lays down.
Tired from this feeling
an elevated woman, high
Caged yet so slim to slip the bars
Jealousy rules eternal.

Pete Crompton

3.20 AM

There she lay
in the throws of slumber
and me
my futile counting of numbers
wide awake annoying
fingertips rake
splitting hair
the problems of a day
and you just there
breathing
bedside
your sleeping form
I am the motionless man
I Fidget in a most considerate manner
with thoughts the burdens
and words that stammer
for I fear to share
at This cruel hours lair
In bed, tis surely criminal,
To wake and break,
the breathing beauty rhythm,
sighs of mostly silence.
her hypnotic security
is after all
feeding me, endless
as my inner voice bleats
a restless leg
cotton sheets
barriers
I thread
a focus of thoughts
shifting slowly
but curled, the core, if only
she were awake
a warm mass of more
of her is what I need
so shuffling over, I shape her form
and body warmth
creeping yawns
at daybreak
the lush lawns
semi- illuminate
curtains often open
she is a colour
harmonious
4.13 am
I finally drift
lids sagging shift
a melatonin melt
she the sandman felt
I should finally
Sleep.

Billy Name by Howard Haigh



Photography presents the closest that man has to a time machine - whether still or moving image, it gives a flavour of having been there. I look back on the life of Andy Warhol, his arts laboratory The Factory, the collection of the weird and the wonderful people who drifted through it (and who, like Billy Name, sometimes chose to stay), and wish that I could have been involved. Appropriated imagery gave Warhol subject matter when no sitter could be present (like Marilyn and Elvis). Silk-screened portraits were often created as multiple editions. Emulating Warhol, I decided to create portraits derived from photographs. I copied Warhol's own act of copying but placed my own spin on the format.

Billy Name was Warhol's genuinely resident photographer. The Silver Factory look came from Billy. The original photograph upon which this painting is based is a self-portrait. I transformed it via computer manipulation then slavishly painted the 40 inch square canvas to emulate the mechanical transformation. This painting was created during my Visual Art degree at Salford University. I became aware that I was following a path I'd first navigated at a much younger age. I drew from photographs as a child - they offered a portal on the world that the window of my council house home could never hope to provide. Closing the loop, Billy has seen my photograph of my painting of his photograph of himself. He likes it. "Billy Name". Synthetic polymer paint on canvas. 40"x40". 2002

