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Coming
up!

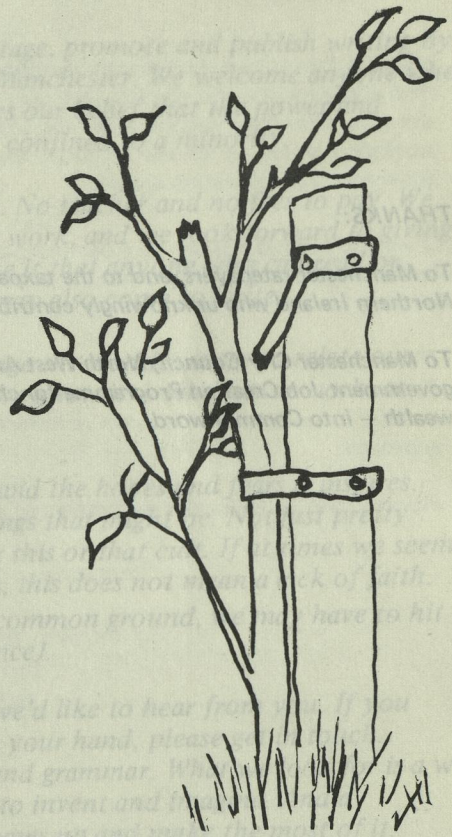


Commonword Workshop ~ Manchester

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Mem 9

Coming up!

stories
poems
memories
and
other words
from working
people



Commonword Workshop ~ Manchester

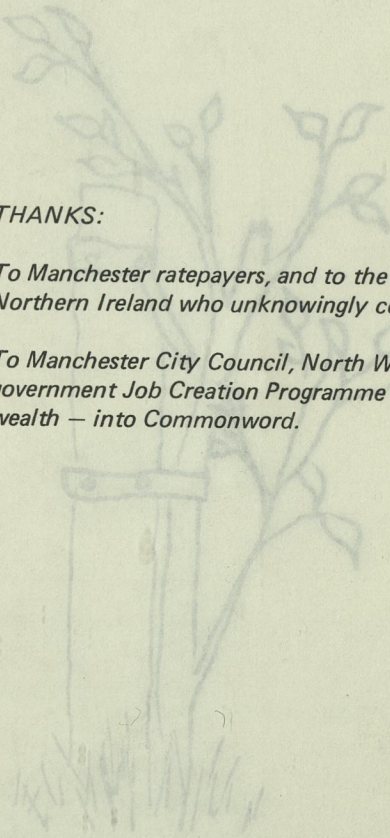
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Commonword
Up!

THANKS:

To Manchester ratepayers, and to the taxpayers of Great Britain and Northern Ireland who unknowingly contributed to publication of this book.

To Manchester City Council, North West Arts Association and the government Job Creation Programme for channelling public money – common wealth – into Commonword.



Commonword
from working
people
other words
and

Commonword Workshop

foreword

The words in this book are the product of working people – employed or unemployed – in Manchester. Most of us met up through the Commonword Workshop, which began with three or four people early in 1977. By Summer there were some dozen of us at the weekly meetings, and more than enough material to fill this book.

Commonword aims to encourage, promote and publish writing by working men and women in Manchester. We welcome anyone who wants to write and who shares our belief that the power and pleasure of words can not be confined to a minority.

The Workshop group is open. No teacher and no fees to pay. We read and discuss each other's work, and we look forward to giving more public readings. We take it that anyone who can read or enjoy listening to our work may also come to write.

Since words alone wont change the world, we try to relate our writing to the rest of life as we know it – whether at work, at home or between.

We're after the facts of life, and the hopes and fears it inspires. Memories, and images of things that might be. Not just pretty pictures, nor propaganda for this or that cult. If at times we seem to paint it all a bit too black, this does not mean a lack of faith. (in the depths we may find common ground, we may have to hit rock-bottom before we bounce).

If this makes sense to you, we'd like to hear from you. If you already write or want to try your hand, please get in touch. Dont worry about spelling and grammar. What we look for is a will to explore and understand, to invent and imagine. And a willingness to share what comes up and make the most of it.

Greg Wilkinson

COMMONWORD WORKSHOP 12A Piccadilly, Manchester 1.
Phone 236-5195

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None of the authors represented in this book are paid for their work. Nor is Rob Stephens who did the full page illustrations. Nor John Koziol who did the cover drawing. Fran Kershner and Greg Wilkinson, who convened the workshop group, edited and organised the production, were paid on government Job Creation wages.

If we had tried to publish on a commercial basis, the book would have cost two or three times as much, and the price would put it out of reach of most working people.

The contents were printed at cost by the Rochdale Alternative Press. Typesetting, cover printing and binding were done commercially, but we are grateful to workers for the extra consideration required by our unprofessional approach.

Proceeds will go to further collective and non-profit ventures on similar lines.

If this makes sense to you, we'd like to hear from you. You already write or want to try your hand, please get in touch. Don't worry about spelling and grammar. What we look for is a will to explore and understand, to invent and imagine. And a willingness to share what comes up and make the most of it.

Greg Wilkinson
COMMONWORD WORKSHOP 12A Piccadilly, Manchester 1
Phone 236-2102

JOINER'S SON

How dare you write
You joiner's son
You would-be joiner of words.
Disjointed
Sawn-off phrases
Nailed to patterns
Made by your 'betters'
Eyes-glued to the shapes
Turned by those
Who would turn us away
From the things that matter
What terrible chatter
Nonsensical patter
A waste of good paper
A waste of good wood
That should have been used
To make a barrel
To carry beer
Or make a chair
Or light a fire . . .

Or is it such a waste of time?
For you who dared to change the world
Green as fresh-cut timber
You may be now
But now has passed
And tomorrow you'll be seasoned
And be beautiful
With your multitude of colours
Brown, white, black, red
You'll write and be read
You joiner's son
Write on.

Sol Garson

Former glass worker, now self-employed joiner. In his 50s, he also paints and carves. Communist, from a Jewish background.

HEROICS AND ANTI-HEROICS

Absent father ever present
In the hero's steady eyes
Gazing from the wartime picture on the wall.
No ordinary man, he single-handed
Daily overcame the swarming Jerry hoards
In Auntie's bedtime epics,
And did all this from Stalag 17.
Immortalised, and yet to come back soon to earth.
The Second Coming was in real khaki,
With bulging kit-bag and hero's welcome.
Father's back and in the flesh.

Post-war austerity begins at home,
Hero-father must cut down the swollen-headed child to size.
The private war begins,
Also to end in unconditional surrender,
Defeat more abject,
With no return to grace.
At best a distant uncommunicating truce that leaves
The childish terror buried unresolved, though not too deep:
It must return to haunt the greybeard child.

Still, in this post-heroic age,
Heroic changes are demanded.
The wartime hero, whose life was wasted
Not just by war,
Will live again and better,
In his bright child
For whom a new salvation is prepared:
Strength through education!

Of all the children, his child is first to pass the test (11-plus)
The best, no equal, he must be loved, his place is sure.
Just for a while:
Lest virtue corrupt, the test must be repeated and repeated
And sometimes shows the child less than perfect.
Nothing is safe, no flaw allowed to be revealed
To father's all-consuming passion.
Excellence is merely adequate.

At last again, the all-too-public test,
This time no childish innocent affair
But nightmare: they will surely know then
How he's fallen to Ordinary Level.

Panic, flight, tearful discovery
And returns, now lulled by less-than-wholesome love
That lets the wound apparently heal over,
Festering within.

And now it seems that that brief panic-stricken flight
Has been repeated like dreadful childish dreams,
A flight from which there's no escape.

TERRY MARTIN

Terry is an 'educated' son of a working class family. In this poem — product of a crisis at work — he tries to locate the roots of his feelings of inadequacy, trace back his escapist tendencies. His thoughts circle round memories of childhood and adolescence, father and education.

RACIST LIES

I think
That I am in love
With a half-caste girl.
My family say
'They must go back.'
I disagree.
They tell me
'They steal our jobs.'
I tell them
'We stole their wealth.'
They tell me
'They steal our houses.'
I tell them
'We stole their country.'
They try to fill me
With their racist lies.
But I,
I never listen.
Instead I close the doors.
My younger brother
I never see.
My father
I hate and never see.
My uncle
I see
But never speak.
To them and everyone,
All I ask is to believe:
One race the human race!
Blood is red!
Red is the colour
of everyone!

Stephen Marland

Steve says 'I'm a communist. I'm 20, unemployed, but working towards revolution. That means a hell of a lot of meetings and some demonstrations. I do English and Creative Writing at evening classes.'

Easter Dreams

by Leslie Wilson

Leslie is in his early 20s' Has done various short-term jobs, including barman. The piece below is one chapter from a novel, 400 pages of schoolbook manuscript. While he was writing, the bulldozers were closing in on the house where he stayed. He felt it was a race to finish before everything collapsed around him. He recently began a course to normalise his spelling and grammar. We've 'corrected' the spelling in the chapter here.

The next morning being an ordinary work day with my new partner, Snowy, we had no choice but relax freely into an easy job of spreading lime onto a small area of land.

'You know, I dont think I'll be able to wait long enough for the next leave,' I said, making one last position of lying comfortable on the ground.

'Yeah, that will be the big Easter leave, wont it. Hear, want a fag?'

Snowy said, opening his new packet of cigarettes.

'Thanks,' I replied. 'You know, I've got to tell you something really strange.'

'Strange about what?'

'Oh, the funny things that happened at home, such as our kid running off from his approovy, then coming across a kind old man who helped him out by giving him money, then actually buying him transport to get around on. It's all really hard to believe.'

'No, not really. Besides, what would you want to make a story like that up for?'

'I could hardly believe it myself at first.'

'He must have plenty of money at the back of him. How did it all

start?' He asked with a slight interest.
'It's a long story,' I replied with a yawn.

On that same day came a time of suddenly dashing out of the door as I suddenly remembered my drama lesson. A few minutes after arriving there came another surprise, when we were told we were all to have our photos taken in our costumes. After quickly slipping on the school blazer and placing the straw hat on my head, I was ready. The cameraman was expected to arrive at any moment, but it was after the break when he arrived with his equipment strapped from each shoulder. The first photo was took of all of us standing in a side-to-side row, and most of the rest were in our acting pairs.

It was all too jittery for me, making efforts on the right position of proposal to my partner, who was sitting on a chair crying, with a handkerchief close to her eyes. Eventually it was over, after the last two or three flashes towards me. I couldn't help but feel a sensation of importance when told that the photos were to come in ideal for the Rochdale press. It wasn't the first time I'd been in the newspapers, but certainly the best and very unexpected. For the rest of the evening we all continued with the usual drama excercises, and sadly deep inside me I knew it was the final end. 'Right, that's all for this week, folks,' called Mrs Radcliff with one sharp clap from her hands.

Walking back up the long winding path towards the Castle, I thought and thought of the photo developments being printed and actually shown to the public. 'I wonder which photo they'll print. I hope there's a lot of words to read,' I thought as I reached the main gates of Dobroyd.

The next four or five days after my home leave left my abilities of good Work Conduct at a sudden halt, as Mr Bradley warned me for the second time to buck my ideas up. 'You seem to be slipping, Wilson. This patch should have been finished long ago, you know,' he said, appearing from behind a nearby wall.

'Err, Sorry Mr Bradley. We were just having five minutes,' I replied in a lost manner of voice.

'That's OK, but dont start making a regular habit of it. You've been here a long time now and got your points and promotions

well enough. But remember you've still got a few months yet,' he said, walking away.

'Just our bloody luck, just our bloody luck!' I said, making one fast effort towards my work.

'Didn't like what he said about Points Meeting,' said my friend.

'No, he wont drop us, not before giving us a stern warning,'

I replied knowingly.

'I just dont like his attitude,' he finished towards his wheelbarrow.

'Well, he never said anything to you, so you've got nothing to worry about,' I said.

'Oh, that's only because I've not been here as long as you. But it worries me about the future.'

'That puts you in an even better position. How many points have you got, Snowy?'

'I got a two, a two and a three, making a total of seven since I've been here.'

'Hey, that's a coincidence. You've started off on my level. Very good!' I said, shovelling another pile of lime from the wheelbarrow.

After quite a while of non-stop work, at a quick pace on the last patches, we walked back towards Mr Bradley, who was usually in his office shed.

'That's more like it boys. Now start on the last two acres on the bottom end. And there's no mad rush, just take your time on the job,' he said, searching for something somewhere near his cupboards.

'Right, Sir,' we both finished towards the shed door.

'First he tells us to hurry the job up, and now he's telling us to take our times. Cant make that geazer out,' spoke Snowy.

'Yes, and before long you wont know whether you're coming or going with that character,' I said, more joking.

Before tea time, my boots were thick with hard soil and lime. That made the teatime clean-up in the yard more difficult than ever. There was a long queue stretching towards the yard tap, and the dangerous time of brushes being thrown at a speed. It was a terrible time to go through, and completely un-necessary. Some boys called it the 'Moment of Flying Brushes,' and the few responsible were only caught on rare occasions by one or two house-masters with a strict discipline. From the mad rush of polishing boots to the time of a splashing strip-wash, then finally

queuing for clean underwear, I can only say there was a neurotic madness about.

After a depressing week of good work, we were already half way through another job of lime-spreading, but this time on surrounding lawns of quite some distance. As the job would obviously take some hard efforts, a temporary partner was sent to give a hand.

He had been at Dobroyd nearly three times as long as me, and obviously had a lot more experience than we did, especially on the right method of pushing the lime truck up and down the lawn. There was only one push-truck. That obviously meant relieving each other, taking turns of five laps backward and forward. It seemed such a coincidence when the Garden Supervisor passed on several different occasions to see me still sitting on the window sill. But after each release from the lime truck, he passed by when I had just finished my turn.

It was at dinner time when the coincidence was brought to Mr Bradley, with suspicion that I was dodging my work.

'I want to see you working on that lime truck after dinner, Wilson,' he said sternly. 'It's Points Meeting soon, you know.'

'That's precisely what I have been doing, Mr Bradley,' I replied in surrimusement.

'Well, the Garden Supervisor tells me differently. Who's the liar? I'm jolly sure he's not.'

'I'm not saying he's a liar. But I am saying he's misunderstood my working, Mr Bradley.'

'Well, how long do you work for? Two minutes while Snowy works ten? Because that's how Mr Cartwright times it, so he can't be far wrong, Wilson?'

'Oh well, it's all one big mistake to me,' I finished drastically throwing my overalls towards the hooks.

'Yes, there better not be any more mistakes after dinner. Points Meetings are not far away, so just start pulling your socks up. And the same goes to your new partner.'

The fact his warning was mostly on Points Meetings left me worried at my lack of abilities in connection with the work. With some effort I just finished my dinner, but I was certainly in no mood for seconds when my name was called from the list. My favourite pudding was left and given to the boy sitting next to me.

Shortly after dinner it was time to change me attention back to the work routine, and try and make better progress. I could only hope for the best about Mr Bradley appearing. I decided to take the first five laps of lime-spreading along another lawn we had just started. Finishing my laps, I started on another five, as there was no sign of Mr Bradley or the Garden Supervisor.

'You can't win, you just can't win,' I said finishing the last lap in some disappointment.

'Well, there's no sense straining yourself on another course,' said Snowy, coming towards the truck.

A while afterwards, Snowy was relieved by our temporary partner. Then came the sudden appearance of the Garden Supervisor. I said nothing but ignored him, waiting in a standing position for my next turn, which wasn't very far away.

'It's not bad going that,' he shouted towards Snowy, in a gratified manner, then walked away and disappeared behind the corner of the school.

'It justs shows you, doesn't it,' I said angrily, walking towards the hand-truck.

Getting to my last corner once again, I was in no mind to give up, and continued another course of a further five laps in hopes of being seen. I was about halfway through when at last Mr Bradley appeared at a near distance from behind some trees. I lowered my eyes and continued working without any change of pace, up and down the lawn. He soon disappeared again after his short inspection, and said nothing.

It was a great relief of my feelings, and I could relax better with the new partner.

'Oh, I'll be glad when bedtime arrives,' he said with a yawn.

'Well, I close my day after that mad rush of Flying Brushes,' I answered with a slight laugh.

That day it was even more of a relief to set out for my evening drama lesson. The photos had been developed, and they were handed to me like a reward by Mrs Radcliff. I was really thankful for her kindness as I was given the full set, and then I read the few words about our performance in the newspaper. After looking at the photos, I placed them neatly in my inside pocket. I was sitting down, then the lesson began with the surprise news of another performance to take place the next week, in connection

with some anniversary celebrations.

'And Leslie, you will be dressed in a knickerbocker suit,' Mrs Radcliffe said.

'Would you know what that looks like?'

'Well, I must say the name sounds very familiar, but I wouldn't be sure of the style,' I said doubtfully.

'It's one of those suits with epaulettes on the jacket, and the trousers come down to your knee-caps. Does that bring you anywhere near it?'

'It sounds like something I've seen on television,' I said.

'Yes, they were designed somewhere around the 1920s...'

'You must have been watching Sherlock Holmes,' said one of the boys jokingly. They all laughed, even more when they saw me change into consciousness of the coincidence, and recognise the costume in question.

The evening lesson was over, and I made a quick decision to take a different way back to Dobroyd. It was very satisfying to me, when I arrived from the slanted woods directly into the school grounds, to have found a new route back.

Having my supper, I was met with congratulations from Mr Albert, the coloured house-master. He looked at the photos and talked with some respect of my talents at College.

'Yes, very good photos. It's a change to see someone with intelligence in this place. Because most of those hooligans haven't any sense. I mean they can't have, the way they carry on.'

'Yes, I can understand what you mean. Anyway, thanks very much for your encouragement,' I said.

'That's alright, Sonny. When I come across a boy with a bit of sense and intelligence, I'm only too glad to encourage them. And your the first one in four years since I've been here, I'll tell you that.' He walked out of the dining hall for his evening duty.

Going up to the dormitories, on this occasion the lights were already switched out. But it was not yet silent, and one or two whispering sounds could be heard from some of the dormitories. When I got to our dormitory I was surprised to hear a pop record. It was our dormitory's turn to have the radio for music, but this night we had a record player, beside a coloured boy's bed.

It was only about three weeks off the Easter leave and I was more than ever forgetful of my responsibilities for good work conduct.

My mind was filled with wonders on a day that was very sunny. I was working on the top garden with my friend Snowy, on a depressing job called Weeding. Points meeting had already gone and the regular two points I'd gained left me with no worries. I counted my future points for granted, neglecting quite a lot of work, and relaxed without a care in the world. Lying on the ground, I can half-remember rolling over towards Snowy in fun, trying to change his mind from the work he was doing. He was soon tempted, then calmly sat down and carried on our conversation about how excited he was.

'Yes, I suppose you're right. It's not really far off . . . Anyway, I'll have a few minutes,' he said weakly.

'A few minutes! I'm having all week if I can manage it,' I said.

'Hey, it's Points Meeting five days after the big leave. Just think, I'll have about 20 points then.'

'Yeah, and I'll have about 12,' he calculated, turning towards me in his way of freedom and happiness. We both shook hands on our achievements.

'Yirroo,' I shouted in a loud voice.

'Yirr-ah, yirroo,' he joined in with pleasure.

'Here! I'd just like to remind you that your leave's not arrived yet,' shouted Mr Bradley, at that moment walking past the large gates below us. 'I don't want any mad carry-on here.'

His sudden appearance was a shock to both of us. It was a good job some of the other boys were working, especially those who mostly dedicated themselves to our fashion. We were expected to set an example.

'Now that was close . . . Whoof!' I said quietly, back to work.

'You're telling me,' said Snowy. 'I never knew he could possibly hear us from this distance. We weren't shouting all that loud was we?'

'It's just our unlucky day, I suppose.' I went on with my work.

It was well gone dinner time that same day, and the sun shining even brighter. The only thing I could still think of was Home Sweet Home, as the real sunshine of freedom was soon to come.

'I wonder what Ken (my brother) is doing now,' I thought. 'I wonder what the conversation will be when I meet him. Will it be bad news or good news, or a surprise like it was last time? I just hope it's not bad news . . .'

'Oh, I can't keep this up all day,' I said, feeling depressed already.

'Ah, don't worry about it, Les. You'll have all the time in the world this time next week.'

'That I just couldn't wait one day for. It's just that every minute seems an hour,' I replied in a tired voice, placing myself in the nearest position of comfort.

'Yes, It's always like that, Les. Well, I mean especially when you want it to hurry,' Snowy consoled.

After about fifteen minutes of this, I was still sitting on the ground when Mr Bradley caught me in idleness, as I wasn't paying much attention to the gates below. He came towards me with a displeased look on his face that told me I was in for some trouble. I felt anxious, then even worse when I saw him coming nearer with his nasty way of looking. I was on the verge of continuing my work.

'Here, Wilson, I think I'll have a word with you,' he said loudly. I said nothing but directed my hoe normally towards the ground.

'Yes?' I asked.

'Er, how many points have you got, Wilson?'

'Eighteen, Sir.'

'Now, over the past week or so you seem to be slipping, and I'm beginning to think you're taking advantage. Taking everything for granted. If there's any more of this, I think I'll have to take the matter more seriously.' I lowered my head with a tight feeling of anger, standing in quietness.

Surprisingly enough, Mr Bradley sat himself calmly down on the ground, in a falsely relaxed manner.

'I wonder what people would say if I did what you do?' he said, 'Well, I'll tell you this much: I wouldn't get away with as much as you do. I'd soon be out of work, wouldn't I?'

'No sir, but it doesn't go on all the time like you think it does. I do work.'

'You see, Wilson, I don't think you realise the facts of the outside world. Because once you get your next points from here, there will be no more Points Meetings or warnings, you know. And if you go out to work and continue like I'm doing now, I can guarantee you'll be dismissed first day.' He was saying this from almost a lying position. His manner of explanation was joking and gave me quite an effort keeping my face straight from laughing. After the conversation I was left in amazement.

The next two or three days I made much better progress in my work, so I was astonished when Mr Bradley called me from my work to the worse job of digging. To me and Snowy the digging routine itself wasn't all that bad, but the constant working with a line of about a dozen others always gave us a strong dislike. The Garden Supervisor didn't make the job any better, as he walked slowly alongside us his eyes scarcely leaving the few boys who were lacking in their work. When that job was finished, the next was to start a first long seed trench, and it was only after two or three that we had enough room to spread out.

It was about that time I caught a sudden glimpse of Mr Bradley approaching the Garden Supervisor. I continued at my normal speed.

'I'll want to see more improvement from you, Wilson. It's still a few days from Easter Leave, you know,' he shouted.

I stopped work for a few seconds looked towards him in bewilderment, as he continued in conversation with the supervisor. My nerves shook with anger and brought me to the limit, as this time I knew he had gone too far.

'Right, I'll work myself to the bone, then! And maybe that will satisfy you,' I said to myself, turning back to my work in a state of desperation.

At no time did I slow down, working at a great speed of madness in spite of the warmth of the day. Until the Supervisor called Smoke Break. After the break, I had no intention of slowing down and went back to work even faster. Sweat began rolling down my face after the first hour of spade-after-spade, and layer-after-layer, leaving me with a tired feeling of strangeness.

Another half hour went by without a second of relief. My mouth felt dry and my body weaker each moment of constant work. I felt like collapsing to rest, but forced myself through the last few minutes to dinner time. My arms and legs stiffened as I forced all my strength into the last few minutes of sunshine from the light blue sky.

The call for dinner-time came as my breathing panicked and I only just made it. Coming slowly along the long winding path towards the school, I went into a blurry state of mind and sight. After swilling the rolling sweat off my face and slowly drying myself I felt my whole body coming into a recognition of illness, an

illness I used to get quite often in my early teens.

As my effort and determination had brought me into this state, the illness came as no great surprise out of the blurry state. But for the first time at Dobroyd, I finally found myself in the yard Surgery, with not more than ten minutes of waiting for one or two others in front of me. I thought I was on the verge of being sick or fainting, with a dizziness taking over. Then I was sitting in the surgery chair before the above-standing matron.

'Well, what's your trouble, then?' she asked.

'I feel ill, Miss.'

'I'll just take your temperature.' She smiled.

'Your temperature's high. Have you had any dizzy spells, or felt sick?'

'Yes, about once or twice, Miss.'

'And have you any idea of the time you first felt bad?' she asked, with her pen in one hand.

'The first one came about half an hour after the morning break, then a short while after that it got worse and worse.'

'Yes. Well, the next time you ever feel the slightest illness, you ask permission to attend surgery. Straightaway without any delay. Because it could end up very serious.'

'Yes, Miss,' I replied with a nervous shiver.

'Anyway, pop off to bed now, and keep yourself warm. I'll be up to see you after teatime.'

'Right, thank you Miss,' I said, rising slowly from my seat and turning to the door.

The clattering of the dinner things and murmuring voices seemed to echo louder and louder and I walked slowly through the hall entrance. It was a new experience of constant nagging noise until I reached the last corridor on the way to the dormitory, and made it with one last effort to rest and peace. No sooner had I got in bed, than I fell fast asleep.

I was awoken by the gentle voice and nudge of Matron, holding a small glass filled with some kind of liquid.

'Hello. Leslie, do you feel any better yet?' she asked.

'Well, after that rest I can say I feel a little better. I've still got the same headache, though.'

'Yes, well drink this down. You'll feel a lot better.'

'Thank you, Miss,' I said after one quick swallow.

'Do you feel like anything to eat yet?'

'Er, no, not yet, thank you, Matron,' I said, moving further under the blankets.

'I'll be back tomorrow to take your temperature. So if you want something to eat before then, ask one of the Duty Officers.'

'Bye for now.'

'Bye.'

I went almost two days on an empty stomach when Mrs Halliwell, the Matron, came with the breakfast trolley and persuaded me. The meal didn't do me any good. After I had been sick once or twice in the toilet, the village doctor was sent for. After the usual testing, I was given tablets and medicine. He told me I had swollen glands along with an unknown germ

'Have you ever had this kind of illness before,?' the doctor asked.

'Er, yes, I used to get it every year.'

'When did you first get it?'

'It started when I was twelve, then after that I started getting it every year.'

'Looks as if you've got it again. No need to worry now, you'll be alright,' he finished cheerfully.

'Bye, doctor,' I said in a blocked voice.

Minutes later, and I was in a vast worry as my Drama lesson had already passed, which would without any doubt mean a late start in getting ready for the costume performance.

A few days later and it was a time of many boys dashing from place to place in excitement about the Easter leave. That didn't worry me too much, as I knew I would get my leave sooner or later, once the Third Commanding Officer had explained that I had nothing to lose. After the morning excitement, there were only a few left, such as new boys who had only just arrived and had not been at Dobroyd long enough to go on leave. Also one or two others who had no parents to go home to. There were only two boys in my dormitory, which made the room look and feel quite empty. To me it seemed seven times as quiet, making me relax peacefully.

On a certain occasion, I remember I had several mysterious dreams jarring on the warm afternoon sunshine through the windows. I was comfortable until I felt the seat spreading on my chest and face, as I came out fo the first dream. It was only seconds after when I went deeply into the next one: a changed atmosphere of

different coloured shapes and sizes getting larger and larger. I felt myself being dragged into this vision, then appeared to be driving a car at a fast speed, then panicked when I noticed that the car was roaring over open country, hills without any sign of roads. The car was completely out of control. After my foot pressed on the brake, I knew it was useless. I could only try and jump out of the car door, as a horizon of faraway trees drew nearer. But the doors would not open.

I awoke with relief, to find my pyjama jacket wringing with sweat. Before I had time to take it off, I was going back into sleep, this time on the seat of a train, again moving at enormous speed. I looked out of the window and saw we were moving through a forest of wood, in mountains, and there were many different sorts of trees from small to massive. After that moment I was in no mind to think about what it was as the trees could no longer be seen, as the speed of the train gave me only a flickering line going past. Suddenly the train jerked once or twice, and I flung myself on the carriage floor, and curled up tightly with my eyes clenched. It was soon after that time I heard the laughing of voices from a crowd of people surrounding me. I looked towards them, seeing their hands and faces grow visible, along with their voices echoing louder and louder until the last few jerks brought the train flying off the tracks, in mid-air before passing a bridge alongside a continuous steep hill.

My body was thrown towards the other end of the windows, giving the drastic ground look getting nearer and nearer until I woke with a terrible fear, knowing that I was most likely in for another suprisement. From the after-affect of immovable stiffness and spreading sweat, my body went into a normal comfort, giving me enough time to take my jacket off along with it's trousers. Before no time at all I felt myself being driven into enough comfort of position and freely closed my eyes as if magnets jammed them fast.

I was sitting in an aeroplane seat and feeling nervous, this being a completely new experience, when the loudspeaker told us to place our seats belts firmly. After an anxious struggle with the safety belt I was shortly helped by the waitress who gave the safety belt its finished position with one sharp clip.

'We have trouble with the controls and may be due for a crash in

the Atlantic. Will all passengers please beware,' came from the loudspeaker.

I panicked violently in my seat and with great force tried escaping from my locked seatbelt, seeing a pair of parachutes hanging neatly along one side of a stretching rack. Before the next moment I was floating in the sea with a few others at their faraway distance. I saw a ship after its lonely roar of echoing noise and continued floating slowly towards its near view.

Suddenly I was awoken by the blurry appearance of Matron holding my medicine in one hand. For a moment I gave her the look of shock until my mind came to the sense of relief. 'Here we are. Feeling any better?' she asked with a welcoming smile.

'I feel a lot better when I'm awake,' I answered in a quietly ruffled voice. I soon swallowed the medicine, along with two pills, with a glass of cold water.

'Thank you, Miss.'

'I think we'll start you off with something light for teatime. Do you think you'll be able to manage it this time?'

'Yes, I think I'll manage. I hope so anyway.'

'Right then, I'll send one of the boys up,' she replied towards the door.

'Bye, Miss,' I finished gloomily.

Getting up towards the toilets, my legs felt a strong stiffness, then a cold shiver ran down my spine.

When teatime arrived, I felt my first hunger when my tray was set neatly before me and enjoyed every taste of the delicious sandwiches along with a small coated teapot giving me the most precious look, and the first thing was to say a short prayer of thanksgiving after finishing the precious food and drink.

Already I was beginning to feel much better in myself as my stomach finally agreed with the food. By Easter Day I was almost feeling my usual self and was told by the Housemaster that I would soon be on my feet and ready for home.

As it was important to keep in bed for at least one or two days, I dedicated myself to the wierd music being played on a portable record-player that belonged to a boy in the same dormitory. The music seemed everlasting with only three soundings of wierd themes on each side of the L.P. record. When the owner arrived

for the second time he talked and talked of the meanings of each soundings.

'How do you take to the music then?' he asked with a slight grin.

'Well, I think it's very soothing, Jeff,' I said.

'I told you it would be. You've just got to spend a little time with it.'

'No, I took it very well on the first record.'

'Which one do you like best?' he asked.

'Well, there's one on that side I like very well. I don't know the name of it. The tunes more of a deep clattering sound without singing, but I'd like to know it's true meaning if you have any idea.'

'Oh, you mean that one, don't you,' he said placing the needle on the records groove.

'Yeah, that's the one. Good thinking.'

'Well, I hate to say it, Les, but you've got to take a powerful drug to find that one out. You see, most of these records are used for tripping on certain drugs such as micro-dot and other powerful names. But I don't suppose it's much good explaining. I wouldn't think it'll be of much interest.'

'Well I must say, I've got through quite a mystery on my illness, what with sweat spreading all over my body after nightmares. I can barely think of what I've been through myself.'

'No, Les, you don't understand because you've had no experience on drugs. You see a drug wouldn't send you to sleep. You can't even close your eyes on them, let alone dream,' he said knowingly.

'But Jeff, that still doesn't change the continuous nightmares I've been through, awakening for as little as four or five seconds before being driven into the next one. But there you are, I don't suppose you've had any of that experience, have you?'

'Alright, you've got a point, but now let me explain mine. With drugs you go in dreams when you're actually awake, apart from feeling unhuman. And it doesn't just last a few minutes. It goes on for hours at an end, sometimes as long as twelve hours at a time. It's a lot worse than dreams, you go places, and man,' he explained in a joking finish.

'Yes I can understand your point there, but I don't think I would go that far. Drugs are dangerous anyway. I mean obviously. Let's face the fact, they don't do you any good, do they?'

'No, you've got it the wrong way round. There's more to it than what you think,' he said in an impatient voice, and at the same time lying on his bed to share some of the sound of continuous wierd music.

He was in fact the biggest 'problem case' in the whole school and played up the part of his complications more at work than any other time. To the staff and most of all to the Headmaster, his special circumstances made him understood as a typical addict. He was allowed some form of drugs by the Deputy Headmaster each day as there were times when he absconded from the school grounds to get them — only cannabis as he was already being supplied with a quantity of tablets without satisfaction. He always made the best advantage of his illness and in the terms always managed to spend a good deal of time in bed.

Some of the school staff thought strict on the manner as they claimed it wasn't at all fair on behalf of the other boys. To me he seemed a subdued character and in some events I got on very well as his conversation came to some interesting arguments on many 'permissive' questions.

The next morning brought me back on my feet as my temperature was finally normal. For the first few hours I felt strange and it obviously took me a while to walk normal. Altogether there was only about ten boys sitting around the breakfast tables. Surprisingly there were almost as many staff as there were boys. Although I was better, I was to stay at school for a further two days, probably to give me time to get used to a normal routine.

That night was a luxury for the unfortunate ones who were staying behind, as it was a time of setting out to the pictures on a film called One Hundred and One Dalmations. As there were a few spare seats in the school van, the Headmaster said that there was no harm in me going along with them. I was indeed delighted on the event of such luxury. It was a film I most longed to see for the second time, because I was only twelve when I saw it last.

The few boys who started smoking both inside the van and in the picture house left me with a sense of total dislike from the after effects of my illness. The fumes from each cigarette were almost unbearable, as I tried all the more to watch the film with the pleasure of remembering. After the film each boy was granted another luxury of fish and chips by the housemaster who came to a sudden halt near the fish and chip shop. We all raised our voices in delightment when he said, 'Right, fish and chips!'

The next morning when I entered the dining hall for breakfast the

Headmaster seemed satisfied with my normal recovery. His eyes met me before I reached the breakfast table.

'Wilson, you can set yourself off after breakfast. The next train's at nine o'clock, so it's up to you,' he said.

'Err yes, Sir,' I replied courteously.

TEARS

In times of need

Stress or discouragement

I find my only consolation is to weep.

My tears flow easily

Melting away the hurt inside me

The prisoners are released

Rolling down my face

They escape the flood

They achieve nothing

But I am relieved

Left empty

With no need to cry

Any more

Beverley Brookes

IT'S HARD TO BE A POET

People say
write about happiness
love, romance
but how can I
The meaning of the words is unknown to me.

I am but a child
searching for the answer

I tried to write about all those things
but through my words
the pain, well it showed

They found out my weakness
my loss of control
so I write about death
pain and distress
those things are known to me
the truth's always best.

Beverley Brookes has been writing since she was 15. At school, she says, creativity was not important, only grammar and handwriting. After working for two years as a sales assistant — 6½ days a week! — she was unemployed for nine months. During that lonely time, poetry was a relief, 'it's like talking to a mirror.'

She came to Commonword when she'd completed a 13-week course in Office Skills. Then, at 19, got a secretary-telephonist job on a local Jewish paper.

let down

I used to be an activist
But I'm not any more
I used to stand with placards
Outside the Town Hall door.
I took part in a lot of things;
Meetings, demos, squats,
I got a bit of a battering,
but look at the publicity we got.
The councillors didn't like me,
They called me a shit-stirring twat,
Which is highly complimentary
From hypocrite bastards like that.
I even stood for council
I was glad I didn't get in.
For I'd sooner be here with my people
Than in there with those gods made of tin.
Some people did get new houses
That's what we were fighting for.
I was so proud of winning some battles
That I almost lost track of the war . . .

Liam, who wrote this, had not written anything much before. This start was made when he was being put out of a job under the rules of the government Job Creation Programme. After years of voluntary activities, he was employed for a year in a self-managed 'welfare rights centre'. But JCP, which paid the wages, ruled that no worker could be paid for more than 52 weeks — with the exception of a Supervisor. It was left to the workers to decide who should be promoted and who sacked. Which caused some bitterness and a lot of soul-searching. This poem is unfinished, though Liam had several goes at a more optimistic ending. Now he's a crane-driver.

getting out

by Sally G.

Sally is a working mother, with husband and four almost grown-up children in Partington. They live in a newish council house, and she has worked as caretaker, nurse, shop assistant and cleaner over the past few years. In the Lifetimes Book 'Near the Witching Hour' (see slip page for details) she described her childhood in Letterkenny, Ireland. In the passage below, she carries on to the time when she began work and got a bit more freedom to go out, and meet boys.

I went out with several boys from the town. The first one was a boy from up the Glen. Small, bandy-legged, nicely dressed, hair sleeked back he must have used butter, it shone like shite on a hill. Anyway Fancy was his name, he asked to see me home from the pictures and I didn't like to say no. He kissed nice but I wasn't too keen, that shine on his hair put me of. When I told them at work about the lovely fella I got the night before, apparently someone had seen him and nicknamed him Fancy Nancy, I never fucking lived that down.

Lots of lads asked me out but I only went out with them twice. I was always frightened in case Mammy would find out and I wouldn't be let out to the pictures again.

There was two houses at the pictures on a Sunday night. I was allowed to the first house, providing I took the tribe with me. I started to get very conscious of myself, hair in tin curlers, shoes polished, red lipstick, powder on my face and so on. I went one night and the place was packed out. No seats and as I'm not the

sort of person who takes time to walk I just headed down the aisle like there was someone after me. One of my dear friends saw me come dashing and put his foot out. Crash! All the younger generation on top of me. Well I wished the ground had opened up and swallowed me, I was that ashamed, me thinking how lovely I was. The whole cinema heard the thump and everybody was breaking their sides laughing. Luckily Delia never got told or that would have been the end of La Scala.

Jim Gallager was a real good friend of mine, we got on very well together, he seemed to understand a lot without being told. I expect our family were discussed in his house, but this bond we had was to me very precious. He always sat beside me in the pictures if I wasn't with anybody in particular and we'd talk all through the film. There was a gang of us who told dirty jokes and learned to smoke and so on. I never smoked, fear had the upper-hand there, (my mother Delia again: "If I catch you smoking Sally Hegarty I'll break your effing back," she would have too.) I didn't tempt fate and still don't smoke, one up for Delia Blake R.I.P. Jim did ask to take me out once after many years of friendship, but we just didn't know what to do, I'd have loved to know what he kissed like, but it didn't happen, so we were back to our usual.

I met Willie Gibson when I was fifteen, he worked for a fruiterer, drove a lorry, and was always in Letterkenny every Thursday at dinner time. He winked at me and then we got talking. Then our first date. He came all the way from Convoy, sometimes on his bike, other times in a borrowed car. This lasted for over three years, I even got engaged to him, but never took him seriously. He was very good to me, he never took unfair advantage. I wasn't always faithful as I went out with other boys inbetween times and still kept my friendship with Jim. Willie took me to meet his family, even sneaked me to my first dance outside the town and got me back in time. Mammy never found out.

That romance was the best kept secret known, not even Rita knew about it. Daddy was the first to find out after nearly three years, somebody happened to ask when Sally was getting married.

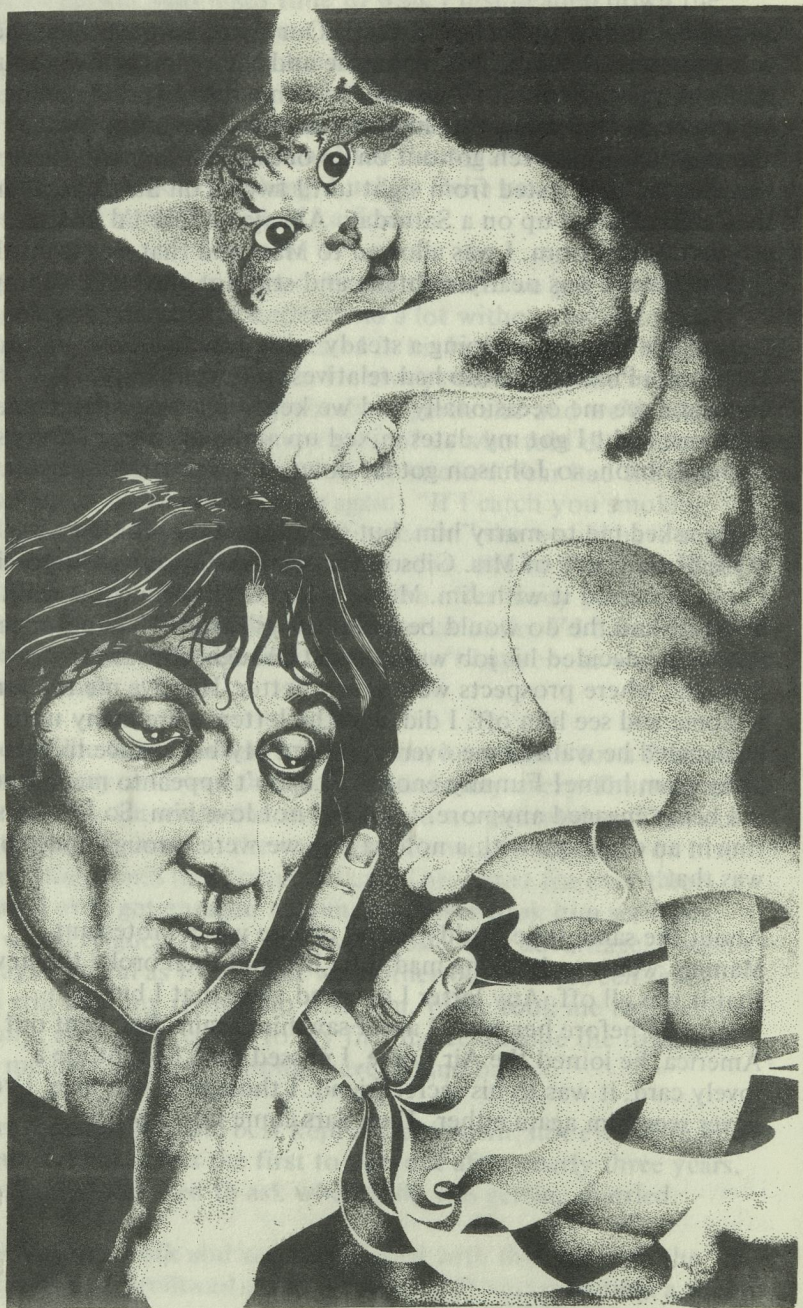
I got in from work and was confronted with this. Imagine the shock when I produced a three diamond 9 carat gold ring, a watch

and some clothes and other trinkets. Our sister Bernadette's face was a picture to behold, all that mine and she didn't know about it. The biggest shock of all was yet to come, but I wasn't telling. Mammy was all for meeting him, he was liked by both. I was allowed out more, even got out on an occasional Sunday, there was a dance that lasted from eight until twelve on Sundays, then they started them up on a Saturday. Always before I'd had to stay in my bedroom, I was allowed to Mass and that was it until cinema time. I was nearly eighteen and still not allowed to a hop.

During this time I was doing a steady with a Belfast boy, Johnny Johnson, a Protestant who had relatives in Letterkenny. He'd come and see me occasionally and we kept up a correspondence, until one night I got my dates mixed up and had to meet him as well as Gibson, so Johnson got let down. I never saw him again.

Willie asked me to marry him, but somehow I just couldn't see myself in the role of Mrs. Gibson. Try as I might, it was impossible I even discussed it with Jim. Mammy had it all planned, it would be white and the do would be in Dohertys Hotel. I had never said yes. Willie decided his job wasn't good enough, so was for Scotland where prospects were much better. He gave me the fare to come and see him off, I did, and the letters were many until he decided he wanted me over with him. My big chance to get away from home! Funnily enough, it didn't appeal to me neither did being engaged anymore. I just did not love him. So I put his ring in an envelope with a note saying we were through and that was that.

About the same time Daddy found out he was a Protestant. Mammy went stark raving mad. I let her and then broke the news that it was all off. Any letter I received after that I burned unopened before her eyes, I never saw him again. Jim went out to America, he joined the Air Force, I missed him, he sent me a lovely card, it was to his secret friend. I thought it was nice. I've never seen him again either. Then Sars came into my life . . .



False Start

by Mike Rowe

I was born in 1944. I am married with two children, and work as an Export Casemaker.

I have been interested in writing for as long as I can remember. To me writing is just an extension of thinking. I find that most people look upon writing as an academic pursuit. Commonword don't see it that way, that's why I joined.

I wrote 'False start' in 1974. It's dedicated to my best friend, Alan Roberts.

I opened my eyes, and glanced over towards the bed where J was screwing Carol for the fourth, or was it the fifth time.

(Where does he get the energy from?)

I shut my eyes again.

Syd Barrett was singing about his scarecrow, and my mind was drifting.

The pin-stripe suited Interviewer-cum-Inquisitor was sitting smugly behind his simulated walnut desk. I took him to be roughly the same age as myself. His hair was fairly long, but immaculately groomed. He absolutely oozed self-confidence.

I fought off the feelings of inferiority, and looked him squarely in the eyes. They were a very dull and uninteresting colour, a murky shade of green. I felt better. He began his questioning.

'Could you tell me your last five employers?'

'The C.I.A., The Communist Party of England (Marxist-Leninist), E.M.I. Records, Associated Confusion (Oldham, England), Manchester United Football Club, and a rock band called 'Malone

Dies’.

‘That’s six!’

‘Some of them overlapped, if you get my meaning.’

‘Oh! Yes, quite. The rock group, ‘Malone Dies’ . . .

I seem to remember an l.p.’

‘Yeah! We made two: the double, ‘Schizophrenic Friends’, and our farewell album, ‘You’ll never take the Arctic’.

‘Emm, they don’t ring a bell. Did they have much success?’

‘No, the double never really took off. And ‘You’ll never take the Arctic’ was banned in most countries, Eastern Europe in particular.’

‘Why was that?’

‘Track three, side two: ‘I ate a dead soldiers’s leg during the Polish food riots.’

‘Sounds very strong stuff!’

‘Meaty!’

‘Yes . . . emm . . . Could you tell me the reason for the termination of your last employment?’

‘Yes, they wanted to put me on a monthly salary, instead of a weekly wage.’

‘Talking of pay, could you tell me what you would expect us to pay you? Providing you get the appointment, that is.’

‘I could.’

‘What would you expect us to pay you?’

‘As little as you could get away with.’

‘Very good! Now, just one more question. Would you be prepared to kill people in the course of your duties with us?’

‘No!’

‘Any particular reason?’

‘I’m a bit of a pacifist.’

‘Very good! Well then, Mister . . . ?’

‘R’

‘Mister R, if you could leave it with me. I can’t make the decision myself, that is a matter for my superior. I, of course, am just the Interviewer. Not that I am without influence. But it is they who have the final say. Just leave it with me. I’ll let you know the outcome shortly, by post.’

(Fuckin’ Hell! I’ve blown it somewhere. It seemed to be going so well too, I wonder what I said wrong.)

'Put 'Band on the run' on Mike.'

Carol and J had stopped fucking, and the Pink Floyd record had finished. I sorted through J's records until I came to 'Band on the run'. I put the title-track side on the stereo, and sat back down in the corner. Carol was sat upon the edge of the bed. Her arms were crossed in front of her, squeezing her breasts together. Her nipples looked as hard as diamonds — red diamonds. The tips were standing out, the pink aureoles slightly wrinkled.

(Perhaps she's cold.)

'Are you cold?'

'Not much.'

I looked at J. He seemed to be asleep, as he was stretched full-out on the bed with the top sheet pulled over him up to his chin. His head was just a mass of blond hair on the pillow.

'Is J asleep?'

'I think so.'

'I'd better go soon.'

'Do you fancy rolling another joint?'

'I've had enough, I think. I just want to come down slowly, I've got to go to work in the morning.'

I closed my eyes again, and drifted away with the music.

The fat sergeant put a coin in the jukebox, and immediately an orchestrated theme from a lavish romantic movie flooded the room. The thin sergeant turned the lamp in my direction, so that the beam was shining directly into my eyes. I instantly put up my hands to shield my eyes from the raw light.

'Get yer hands down Son, or I'll split the other cheek for you!'

My right hand gently glided over the open wound on my face.

The fat sergeant sat down next to the thin one, as I rested my hands back upon my knees. I screwed my eyes up, leaving them open just enough not to further incur the wrath of the thin sergeant.

The fat sergeant spoke in a friendly manner.

'Do you like this kind of music, Mike?'

'I used to do at one time, but I'm not so keen on it now.'

'I know what you mean. It'd sound a lot better if you were sat on a couch in a darkened room with your arms around a beautiful girl.'

I nodded my head in agreement.

The thin sergeant spoke, fast and snappy.

'Have you a bank account?'

'I've got a numbered account at a Swiss bank, and a Special Investment account in the Trustees Savings Bank. I get 7½% interest on my money as I have the qualifying £50 in my ordinary deposit account. I also have an overdraft from the Bank of the Holy Ghost and Commerce.'

'A right little financier, aren't you?'

'I like to keep a tidy balance sheet.'

'Do you still have a physical relationship with your wife?'

'I haven't hit my wife for years.'

'Would you object to swearing allegiance to Her Majesty's democratically elected Government?'

'Yes!'

'Fuckin' Hell, your sort don't half make my job difficult!'

The thin sergeant put his hands to his head in despair.

The fat one looked directly at me, and slowly shook his head.

(Fuckin' Hell, I've done it again!)

'Mike!'

I opened my eyes. Carol was kneeling next to me. She was offering me a freshly rolled joint. I took it slowly from her hand. I felt a slight tingle as our hands touched. She sat down next to me in the corner, as I began to draw on the joint.

'I love you Mike!'

'You're stoned!'

'I love you!'

We were coming off the field at half time. The mud on my boots was forcing me to drag my feet as I made towards the dressing rooms, where our Player-Manager, who had been sent off after quarter of an hour, was waiting for us.

'What a fuckin' shower! What a load of rubbish! What a bunch of wankers!'

He waited until we were all inside the dressing room and then he stormed in after us.

He singled me out first! 'I don't know why you bothered turning out this afternoon Mike, you've not picked your bloody feet up yet! What's the matter Son? Didn't you get any sleep last night?'

'Fuckin' hell, Stewart, I scored didn't I?'

'Argh! I've got a ten year old niece who could've put that one in!'

He whipped around to face Fred: 'And you Fred, What's the matter Son? You're scared stiff of the ball. You're allowed to head it yer know, it's only a piece of leather, it won't damage you. You were at fault for two of the goals. You gave away two stupid goals, in situations that warranted no danger at all!'

'At least I didn't get sent off!' Fred snapped back. 'You know how important this game is to us, yet you still have to go arguing with the Ref. And after all the warnings YOU'VE given US about challenging decisions!'

'That Ref's a fuckin' nutter! Their centre forward was a mile offside when he scored that first goal. I'll be appealing against my sending-off alright! I'll be sending a letter to the League about him, right after the game, don't worry about that! By the time I've finished with him they won't let him referee a dog fight!'

'But that won't get us two points!'

He turned from Fred and glared threateningly at the rest of us.

'Listen you lot, I'll tell you one thing: if you don't win this one I'll wrap the team up, and I'm not kidding you!'

'Well, tell Martin to stick on that fuckin' winger then,' snapped Tony. 'He's having a birthday while Martin's wandering upfield.'

All the three goals have come from that wing. Tell him to stick to his position!'

Stewart turned on Martin: 'You're playing like a clown! What's the matter Son? I keep telling you about moving out of position, but you don't take a blind bit of notice. I'm telling you, stick on that fuckin' winger. And if you move out of position just once, you won't be playing EVER again! Get me?'

Martin looked down at the floor.

Tony continued his moaning: 'There's been no cover at the back for Ray either, since you got sent off. Somebody will have to drop back with me!'

'Mike can drop back,' said Fred. 'It'll keep that centre half off his back.'

'Listen, who's running this team? I'll tell you who drops back. You're 3-1 down, nobody drops back! You need a quick goal. It's all out attack this half. If you can hit 'em with a quick goal, you'll have 'em reeling. I've seen teams like that lot before. All big cunts! Boozers, the lot of em, no stamina! They'll fall to bits like a house of cards when the going's against them. You can run this lot off the park this half. But you've got to get rid of the ball faster when you're coming from the back. Fred, you've got to cut

out the fancy stuff. There's ten other players in the team you know!

'Nine,' whispered Fred under his breath.

'You two full-backs, when you get the ball, get rid of it to Tony in the middle. Tony, you'll have to find more room, there's plenty of space if you go looking for it. And Tony, when you get the ball, don't fuck about with it, get it straight upfield to the front runners. And Mike, listen Mike, stop picking your nose! When you see Tony on the ball, get your head down and run like your arse is on fire, O.K.?'

I nodded. We all got up to go back out.

Tony got hold of Stewart's arm. 'Tell Martin to stick on that winger!'

Martin was on his way out. Stewart raced to the door after him.

He got hold of his hair at the back.

'Don't do that Stu. It fuckin' hurts!'

'I'll hurt you! I'm telling yer, stick on that winger! And if he gets past yer, take his legs from under him! But make sure it's outside the area, alright?'

'Alright, alright, leggo!'

Stewart let go of his hair, and Martin trotted off.

Stewart stayed in the doorway until I, being the last one out, passed him.

'You want to cut down on the shagging Mike. It's sapping all your strength!'

'I'll tell my wife about you!' I grinned.

'I'm not magic!'

'I think you are.'

Without moving, I picked up the television set, and hurled it through the window. I took another draw on the joint.

'Nobody walks on water anymore.'

'That sounds cynical.'

'It's not so much cynical as factual.'

There was a sudden silence as the stereo needle crept over the gap between tracks.

The fatly fed cat came lickin' out of the joint. It made me marvel at my own imagination. I followed its journey upwards towards

the ceiling. It's silly grin made me feel rather uneasy. Yet I knew that I could disperse it by merely wafting a newspaper, or an l.p. cover at it. So I tolerated it a little further. It flicked it's tail around into it's mouth.

(If only he could speak. What boring tales the little bleeder could lay on us.)

Carol hadn't noticed him. I passed the joint back to her.

(I'd better not tell her about him in case he's not really there.)

His tail was going that far down his throat that it was begining to worry me. He seemed to be choking himself. I blew long and hard towards the ceiling. He fluttered for a second, and then fragmented around the room.

'What're you doing?'

'Trying to blow the roof off.'

'I thought you weren't magic!'

I shrugged my shoulders.

Carol ran her hand down my arm. I wriggled a little as her cool fingertips ran over my nerve ends. I slipped my hand behind her, and ran my fingers up her back until they rested on her soft shoulder. She leaned forward, and nibbled at my ear. 'Do you want to fuck me?' She whispered between jabs with her tongue. 'I'd rather just hold you, and see how it goes from there'. She put her arms around my neck. I kissed her softly. She put the half-smoked joint into the ashtray, and kissed me back much harder. I felt the blood pressure rising in my denims.

(This is no good. You'll have to go home. This sort of thing could go on all night.)

McCartney's voice sent my thoughts off on another tangent.

'Do you want to dance?'

(Why not.)

'I want to squeeze your beautiful bum.'

She got up off the floor, and helped to pull me up. She put her arms around my neck. I slid my hands down her back until they were glued to the cheeks of her bum. We started to grind our groins to the music. I could feel myself getting stiffer. Carol could too, judging by the way she was smiling at me. She pressed herself harder against me. I let my fingers drift rythmically across her cheeks. Over her shoulder I could see J turning in his sleep. He looked shagged out.

(He won't be going to work tomorrow.)

The Psychiatrist was looking out of the window. He wasn't taking a blind bit of notice of anything that I had been saying. And there was I rambling on about existence, truth, reality, and how Capitalism throws a veil of bourgeois self-interest across the flux of the cosmos.

(He's not listening, this is a waste of time. He's put the shield up, I'd better give him a little shake.)

'In my last year at school I had this strong fixation on my teacher. She was aged about thirty or so, maybe a little younger. She was incredibly sexy. In retrospect I suppose she wasn't all that attractive. But, I used to have these incredible fantasies about her. When I was in her class she became the sexiest thing on earth. I yearned to be locked in her embraces. I used to fantasise her as teaching us in just her underwear. I can still picture her in a thin nylon see-through bra, her enormous nipples straining to burst through the thin fabric, and a pair of sky blue open crotch panties that revealed masses of jet black pubic hair. And a black lacy suspender-belt holding up a pair of sheer smokey black silk stockings, garnished with a white silk garter band.

It's no wonder that I couldn't concentrate on my lessons, I couldn't wait to rush home from school, and masturbate on her image in the privacy of my own bedroom.'

The Psychiatrist turned abruptly. The shield had been retracted, attention had been won.

'Tell me, how long did this go on for?'

'Until I went to work.'

'Do you still think of her now?'

'Only when I wank.'

'Was it all masturbatory fantasies, or did you ever attempt to make advances towards her?'

'No, I never made any advances. That would've spoiled it. She wasn't really that sexy at all. She used to wear baggy sweaters, so that I never knew what kind of boobs she had. And long tweed skirts down well past her knees, so that you had no chance of seeing up her legs when she was sat at her desk. And worst of all, she always wore sensible shoes. That was the real big downer, sensible shoes!'

He sat down in the chair opposite me, and took the notebook out of his pocket. He sat with it in his hands. He hadn't as yet made a move towards his top pocket, where I knew he kept his biro.

'Tell me, did you fantasise yourself making love to her?'

'You know what, Capitalism has built up a myth around sex to cover up it's own impotencies.'

He ignored my remark and continued his probings. 'Did you ever, in your fantasies, er, to use your own term of reference, fuck her?'

'Funny thing, I used to fuck her by rubbing up against her while she was still fully clothed.'

'Ah! Frottage!' He reached for his top pocket.

'I wonder if anyone's every masturbated upon my image?'

His pen was in his hand, his notebook open at the ready.

'Do you attach any importance to that?'

'I think that it's important that the Tories never get in power again.'

'Had you had any sexual experience at that time?'

'Yes. I'd fucked this one girl. I was fourteen at the time, and she was only thirteen. She was in love with me. Do you want to hear about her?'

'Yes, if you feel like telling me.'

'I bet you do. But just listen to this: it's not the National Front in itself that is important, it's the fact that Capitalism, when in crisis, will continue to throw up fascist muck again and again, as a last desperate measure to keep it's cancer-riddled totality in existence by confusing the Working Class over the real issues. And it will continue to do so until the time that the Working Class unites and rises as the Revolutionary Class in the great struggle of pre-nistory, and smashes Capitalism off the face of the Earth forever.'

His hand went back to his top pocket. His biro went back inside.

'Do you think that it's better in Russia?'

'I know very little about Russia. But, I know enough to realise that Russia is not a Communist country as the Daily Express would have us to believe. There are various excuses put forward by the numerous left factions as to what went wrong in Russia after the Revolution. I, for myself, tend to believe that the trouble was that the Revolution was allowed to fall into the hands of the Communist Party. It's my belief that no Party can ever bring about true Revolution. That is the task of the Working Class themselves. The Class that produces the wealth of nations, should be the Class that controls the forces of production, not some burocratic Party hacks. One day the Workers will rise in Russia, and there will be real Revolution, as one day there will be Revolution in these Isles of ours!'

'Tell me about the thirteen year old girl!'

'Fuck off! Find your own masturbatory images.'

(I'm fed up with this cunt.)

'I'll tell you one thing though, I'd love to fuck your receptionist!'

'Miss Roberts?'

'Yeah, Miss Roberts. Have you ever?'

'Do you see all women as sex objects?'

'What I miss with tight women wear now is the excitement of exploring bare thigh when you put your hand up their skirts.'

'How long has it been since you made love to a girl, as opposed to fucking her?'

'I once dropped some L.S.D. and imagined that I was Chairman Mao's peaked cap.'

'Do you still experience extreme guilt-feelings when you ejaculate?'

'I get immense satisfaction from dressing in my girlfriend's undies, and posing provocatively in front of a full-length mirror.'

'What does your girlfriend think of this practice?'

'Oh, I've no need to practice it, I've got it off perfect now.'

He stood up, and turned his back on me. 'When did you stop going to church?'

'Let's play word-associations, and then I'll tell you about the thirteen-year-old girl. She was so virginal that she didn't even have hairs around her twat.'

He sat down opposite me again.

'Blood'

'Stone'

'Life'

'Torment'

'Accept'

'You!'

The record finished.

'Turn it over Mike.'

I let go of Carol, bent down, and turned the record over. As it started, I picked my shirt up from the floor, where it lay next to the stereo, and put it back on.

I buttoned up the front before I took Carol in my arms again.

Once more we began to shuffle about the room.

'I'd better get going soon.'

'Home?'

'Yeah, home, to my wife!'

'She must be very special!'

'Everyone's special!'

'You're a philosopher.'

'Yeah!'

I knocked upon the glass panel of the Headmaster's study door.

'Come in.'

I entered, and shut the door behind me.

'Shut the door.' He was looking down at some papers on his desk.

His hands were hidden beneath the desk, probably resting on his knees. He remained in that posture for a good ten seconds.

I couldn't bear the tension. He jumped slightly as I spoke.

'Mr. Hamilton said that you wished to see me, Sir.'

He looked up over his glasses at me. 'Ah! Come closer boy.'

With his index finger he motioned me nearer to his desk.

I edged closer, until I came within two feet of the desk, where

I stood solidly with my feet slightly apart. He raised his hands

to his chest, and pressed them together, his fingers pointing

upwards as if he was about to pray.

'Now then, your form master, Mr. Hamilton, tells me that it is not your intention to stay on with us into the Fifth Form at the end of the term.'

'That's correct, Sir.'

'I've asked you here to give you the chance to reconsider your decision.'

'I want to leave, Sir.'

'Look here R. I've been taking a keen interest in your progress ever since you joined us from Junior School. You must know yourself that you are a boy of exceptional talents. Can't you see the benefits that you would reap by taking advantage of our Fifth Form opportunities?'

I stood silent.

'Look, I thought you'd grown out of your earlier non-cooperative attitude. Mr Hamilton tells me that you are now participating to the full in the activities that we organise both inside and outside the school curriculum. The number of times I had to have you on the carpet in here in your first two years with us! I can tell you, in those days I just couldn't understand what was the matter with you, but you seem to have grown out of that sort of behaviour, I'm glad to say. After all, you're approaching manhood now . . .

I want you to think EXACTLY what you are throwing away by your insistence on terminating your education at fifteen years of age. Just think of the qualifications that you could attain by staying on with us, and taking advantage of our Fifth Form

tutored G.C.E. courses.

'I want to leave at the end of the term, Sir. It's my right to choose, isn't it?'

'Unfortunately, yes. You're a fool, boy! Look, I've got all your form reports in front of me here. You just don't realise what you're throwing away. It might surprise you, but Mr Hamilton tells me that if you were to stay on, and buckle down to your work, and co-operate with the Fifth Form staff, you would stand a damn good chance of getting into University. What have you to say to that?'

'I don't want to go to University. I want to go to work . . . I wish to leave at the end of the term, Sir.'

'What kind of a job do you think you'll get without qualifications? You're throwing away your whole life. A job in a factory for a boy of your talents! A dead-end job, is that what you want?'

'No'

'You don't seem to realise the implications. Do you realise that in the entire history of our school we haven't had one boy who has had the honour to graduate from here to University, and now we at last have the chance to coach one through, and you just don't want to know.'

'There's no honour about it, Sir.'

'Are you a complete fool, boy? Do you know what a place at University would mean for the school, and for a boy of your background?'

'Do you mean because I'm working class, Sir?'

'I'm not talking about class, I'm talking about education. It would be an educational breakthrough!

(He's mad!)

'Education! Universities! They're just a part of the whole corrupt system. Education won't change anything. Not your kind of education. Without economic and social change education only serves to perpetuate the whole stinking mess.'

He looked over his glasses at me. 'Are you sick, boy?'

'Sick? I'm pig sick! Have you ever looked around at what's happening? You talk about dead-end factory fodder! Education? Learn to obey, so that you can slot in nicely at Metros, turning out the same bits of metal day after day, year after year. And what for? The benefit of humanity? Not on your life! Profit! Profit for some big fat Capitalist that hasn't done a stroke of work

in his life!

'Argh! You've been reading that damn Karl Marx, haven't you boy? I told Humphries to take that damn Manifesto out of the school library.'

'So much for education being about truth, Sir?'

'Truth? What do you know about truth boy? You've got a lot to learn, you can't change things overnight. We all know there are a lot of things wrong with this life of ours, but you can't change things overnight. A dream, that's all it is boy. A Utopian dream. You want to wake up to realities! There's no such thing as truth. It's all a matter of balance. A common acceptance! A middle point from where things can be done. People can't afford truth boy. It's a luxury, set apart for scholars of philosophy, people who don't belong in the real world, the world where things get done!'

(I bet he's full of ulcers.)

'I want to leave Sir. I've a lot to do.'

'Look boy, I used to be like you, thought I could change the world overnight.'

(Oh no, I can't stand this, Oh no, I can't stand this.)

Carol's head was on my shoulder, as we moved slowly around the floor.

'Fuck me before you go, please. You can bugger me if you like.' She nibbled my ear. I parted her cheeks, and ran a finger down the length of the valley between. Over her shoulder the television set was trying to crawl back in through the window. For some obscure reason it reminded me of the time.

(What is the time?)

'Much as I'd like to, I've got to be on my way.'

'I can't tempt you with ANYTHING, can I?'

John was drunk, and so was I. I was slouched all over the armchair listening to him rattling on about the necessity of the Communist Party. Most of the words were going over my head, and down into the infinite subconscious.

'I know the Party took a lot of twists and turns in the 'thirties and 'forties, but they were all politically necessary. You realise this when you get to grips with real revolutionary theory. You see, that's the difference between the dialectic and bourgeois

philosophy. You see, we're not just grappling with abstracts, we're moving with realities.

(How can one begin to apologise for Stalin?)

'In the final analysis it all boils down to belief. Theory is our anchor. A concrete base from which to build. Admittedly, at times one feels a little uneasy about certain things that seem to conflict. Take for instance the negation of the negation, at times one has to be prepared to take the Marxist jump into the unknown, even though it means turning a complete somersault. That's the true test of a Revolutionary, whether he is able to set aside self-interest, and take the jump in the interest of the Working Class.'

'It's a very difficult thing to get at absolute Truth.'

'That's not our job, Comrade. We're Revolutionaries, we've too much to do. To us it has to remain just a word.'

'Just a word! But what about existence, subjective existence?'

'Being determines consciousness.'

'Solipsism?'

'A temporary state of mind.'

(A temporary state of mind!)

'Socialism in one country?'

'Exactly!'

The television set sat motionless on the windowsill . . . it seemed content to remain there.

The sun was beaming through the window. The Psychiatrist was in a good mood. He had a pink carnation in his buttonhole. He was smiling at me, as he slowly paced about the room.

'Many of my profession consider it an intellectual stumbling block.'

'What's that?'

'Pacifism.'

'Marx wasn't a pacifist.'

'Marx isn't considered to be a real philosopher. Most of his writings are taken from other works. Adam Smith, Ricardo, You could say he rebuilt Hegel in his own image.'

He laughed at his little joke. I didn't like it.

(He's breaking me down. It's all part of his overall plan. He's trying to break down all my beliefs with his clever word-games, and then when I'm a nervous, insecure wreck he'll rebuild them again, around God. Well, you won't beat me pal!)

'Are you still indulging in foot fetishism?'

'No, I think that I now realise that it was just a passing phase.'

'You say "think", you don't sound all that sure.'

'It's just that there's not so much psychic energy coming from feet at the moment. I seem to be getting more off pricks nowadays.'

'When did you stop believing in God?'

(Here it comes.)

'I'm not sure. It wasn't, "Yesterday he was here, today he's gone." It was more of a gradual process, a kind of slowly attaining the age of reason. I must have been about fourteen.'

'Have you ever thought of God as an adult?'

'Certainly not! Why should I waste valuable time thinking about God, when there's all that juicy pussy that the ladies are carrying about between their legs to think about?'

His smile went. 'You have a very immature attitude towards sex.'

'And towards God.'

He flopped down in the chair.

(He's wobbling. Should I administer the final blow? Should I give him the Zarathustra, right in the bread basket? No, I'd better not tamper with his illusions. That's his game.)

He looked up at me. 'We'll have to finish for today now. I've another patient to see.'

He took his glasses off, and shook his head. 'And if you had his problems . . .!'

(Well you've had a good thrashing today, mate, but you asked for it. "Psychiatrist," he's just a nervous wreck, a wobbling bundle of insecurity. And God's the adhesive tape that's holding him together!)

I got up from my chair. 'Right. I'll be seeing you then.'

'Yes, same time next Saturday, eh? keep taking the tablets. And perhaps you could call in at the lab for another blood test before you come to see me.'

I took my tongue from Carols mouth. 'I've got to go.'

'Why?'

'I cant answer "why" questions.'

It was nice and cool on the street. The sun was full, and there was a nice breeze drifting into our faces.

Pete was marching along. I strode long, with my hands in my

pockets.

'That's a great record, 'Whiter shade of pale'.'

'Yeah, very eerie, very Bach-ish.'

'Do you know what Procul Harum means? It's Latin, I looked it up. It means: "Far out".'

'Have you ever tried L.S.D.?'

'No, have you?'

'No, but I've heard a lot about it. It seems that it does strange things to your mind. It's like living in a dream.'

'Or, maybe a nightmare. No, I'd leave things like that well alone if I were you. The human mind is a funny thing.'

I let go of Carol, and picked my shoes up from the floor.

Carol took the record off the turntable while I was putting them on.

My jacket was hanging on the post at the bottom of the bed.

I walked over and picked it up. I looked at J. He was fast asleep.

(He looks so innocent. I wonder how I look to her, a picture of guilt?)

Carol was watching me from the middle of the floor. I walked over to her, and kissed her gently on the forehead. She looked down at the floor. I put a finger on her chin, and tried to gently lift her face up to me. She resisted for a second, and then lifted her face herself. She looked very sad. Her eyes looked watery. (Oh dear!)

I kissed her on the lips. She didn't respond. I let go of her, and walked towards the door.

I opened it, and stood in the doorway. 'I'll see you then.'

She just nodded.

'Stay nice. Kiss J goodbye for me.'

'Kiss him yourself!'

It was cold and dark out on the streets. Yet a mood of vague optimism hung in the air, like an icicle hanging from a gutter.

(If only I could get rid of the *deja-vu*'s.)

I pondered on whether to turn, to see if Carol was at the window.

But walked straight on towards the bus stop.

I walked into the main part of the factory to call the lads out on strike, and I was nearly knocked down by the rush. They had

beaten me to it. They didn't need to be told that it was "everybody out". Shop Stewards are useful, but they don't decide everything. The Works Manager opened his window, elevated above the shop floor. 'Optimistic bastards!' He roared.

'Did you hear that, Albert?'

'We've got him going Mike. His bottle's gone.'

'He must've seen it coming. They've been asking for it for ages, and this has been the last straw as far as the lads are concerned.'

'They're beat already, and they know it.'

'They're all beat, Albert, they've nothing left — no values, no morality, nothing! Trouble is, they won't lie down on their own. They've dug their own graves, and now it's up to us to push 'em in.'

'A bit at a time, Mike old son, keep gnawing at 'em, a bit at a time.'

'Does it always have to be that way?'

'It's a game of numbers mate. We need the numbers for the final push.'

The Works Manager was staring down at me. I looked back at him over my shoulder, as I walked out of the factory.

(I don't know what you want, Carol, I've nothing to give you anyway. The sex bit is only temporary, we both know that. If it's love that you want, I've no answer.)

We stopped working for a smoke. Tom leaned up against the case that we had been packing. I sat down on an empty Valvoline drum. Ged offered me a Number Six.

(Wish he'd start smoking bigger cigs.)

'Does your wife mind you screwing other women?'

'I'm not sure. We don't talk about it much.'

'Do you mind other guys screwing her?'

'No, I don't own her, just because we're married. She has a right to screw with whoever she wants to.'

'What if it's someone you don't like, say a policeman, or a foreman?'

'I suppose that would be hard to face. I suppose all I can do is hope that she never fancies anyone like that.'

'Yeah, she might as equally dislike some of the girls you screw.'

'Yeah, I'm constantly aware of that. But what can you do, when your shoes let water in?'

'I don't think I'll get married. I don't even like the idea of a steady girlfriend. I don't like being tied down.'

'Ah, but your young yet. Everybody feels that way when they're your age, or they should do. But once you get into your late twenties, you get into the settling-down mood. The system saps all the other energies out of you. You look forward to someone to go home to, after a long hard day at work. And monogamy seems to be the thing that satisfies most people.'

'You find that all married blokes are the ones who are always weighing up the other women though.'

'I don't know about that. Some do, some don't. I suppose it depends on your sex drive.'

'I don't know all that much as yet. I've learned a lot since I left school, but I've got a feeling that I got a lot to learn yet.'

'You and me both, mate!'

'But you seem to know a hell of a lot.'

“Seem” is the operative word. I'm subject to the same confusion as everybody else. Bloody hell, you know more than I did when I was your age. I used to do a lot of reading, but I soon found out that real knowledge comes only from experience. The thing to do is stand back a little when you look at things, broaden the thinking, there's a hell of a lot of cells in the brain that we don't use, and they're there for something, my mate. They're there for something!

'Sometimes, when I get to thinking about things, I get frightened. I can't explain it very well.'

'Join the queue, Comrade!'

I stood impatiently at the bus stop. There was no-one about.

The streets were empty.

(I hope I've not missed the last bus.)

I reached in my pocket for my cigarettes.

(I must be coming down a bit. The images don't seem to be coming so fast now. Must be the fresh air.)

The Psychiatrist had me stretched out full on the divan. He was pacing about the floor, with his head hanging down on his chest.

'Look. for a moment imagine there is a God.' He looked at me for my reaction.

'My imagination's not that strong.'

He got a little ratty. 'Look, just go along with me for a minute.' The whole treatment is going to be of no use if you're not prepared to trust me. I'm not trying to force anything on you. You consider yourself to be fairly objective, don't you?' (I might as well chance it, I might glean something out of it. But I'm watching you pal.)

'O.K., for all intents and purposes, for us two in this room, there is a God.'

'Right, now where does that leave you?'

'It leaves me a fearful sinner, answerable to something other than my own conscience.'

'Precisely!'

(Careful, watch him.)

'But a sinner against God, not against Humanity.'

'But don't you see, God is everything! God is Humanity!'

(That's enough.)

'If God is everything, then God is your receptionist. And as I've told you before I would love to fuck your receptionist, so therefore: I desire to fuck God. Can you help me Doctor?'

'Come off it! You're not getting away with that. Let's keep the argument on a rational plane.'

'You're just a running dog of Capitalism. A balsa wood pillar, helping to prop up the whole stinking cess pit, with your subservient god-shite. God is dead, Long live Man!'

There was a glow of headlights emanating from round the corner. A few seconds later the bus cut around the corner, and drew up at the stop. A nicer looking bus I hadn't seen for many a day. (Home!)

There weren't many people on the bus. It was a one-manner. I paid my fare, and made for the stairs, as I was still smoking. It was empty on the top deck, save for a young couple who were sat at the very front. I flopped down in the seat at the back. The bus set off as I settled in the seat. I stared out of the window as we passed by J's. The light was still on in the bedroom, but I couldn't see anything as the curtains were firmly drawn. The window was in one piece. That at least killed off the television-set episode.

(Why didn't I stay with her? She seemed as if she really needed me. I don't understand her. I need her as much as she needs me, but my need is greater so I dare not show it. No, that doesn't fit . . .

Grammatically wrong. It doesn't fit anyway. Doesn't feel right. Need-to-be-needed stuff, it's just a dead end street.)
I stubbed out my cigarette on the seat-back facing me, and immediately took out another one and lit it up.
(What I need now is some sleep, and a gentle comedown.)
The neon sign on the garage that we passed reminded me of my insomniac problems:

TWENTY FOUR HOUR SERVICE

(Perhaps I could get away with a couple of trancs and still get to work in the morning. I'll have to make sure that I set that bloody alarm clock. Can't afford to keep being late in the mornings.

That's the only thing they can get me for, lates.)

The bus pulled up at another stop. I looked out of the window.

The couple who had been at the front of the bus were alighting.

They must have passed by me without me noticing.

(Carol seemed frightened over something. Everyone gets frightened sometime or other.)

The bus set off again. I came to the end of another cigarette.

I trod on the dimp roughly, squashing it to the floor. I didn't feel like smoking anymore.

I closed my eyes to try and regain contact with reality. The images were getting paler, merely shadows of their former selves.

(How true are yesterday's images, when played back through the mind?)

The Psychiatrist was scribbling away in his notebook, whilst I prattled on, and on, and on.

He stopped writing all of a sudden, looked up at me, and broke my tirade.

'You must learn to differentiate between actuality, and these delusions of grandeur.'

'I used to think that you were a good Psychiatrist. That was a delusion, wasn't it?'

'Now you're just projecting.'

(You wordy bastards have an answer for everything!)

'Why have you stopped taking the tablets?'

'They make me feel de-hydrated, like a shrivelled-up dog's turd.'

'Most anti-depressants make the mouth feel dry. Have you tried sucking sweets? Acid drops, or the likes?'

'I could do with dropping some acid. My mind is full of shit, and

it's constipated. I could do with a good mental clearout!
'I've warned you about drugs. If I find that you've regressed back onto them, I'll terminate the treatment. For good!
(You're a drug, you cunt. One big downer!)

I opened my eyes. The bus was moving so slowly.
(Why's it going so slow. I could walk faster. Wish I was home in bed. Home? Home, home on the road.)
I suddenly felt a huge weight upon my shoulders. Everything seemed black, and threatening.
(Why do yesterday's shadows keep haunting me?)

Carol and I were lying in bed smoking. We had one sheet pulled up over us, the rest of the bedcloths lay scattered on the floor. The curtains were drawn. We had the light on.

Carol said, 'You're very fond of J, aren't you?'

'Yeah!'

'Do you love him?'

'Yeah!'

'But you're not gay?'

'I don't think so.'

'And he's not really bi-sexual?'

'No.'

'I often feel that I don't mean as much to you as J does.'

'J . . . Jack, K . . . Kafka, L . . . Christine, M . . . Mike.'

'You're drifting. You're not listening. You don't want to answer.'

'I've got no answers today.'

'I just want to know where I stand with you, that's all.'

She sat up. 'It's not much to ask, is it? If you just want me as a friend, I could accept that. If you just want me for sex, I suppose I could learn to accept that too. But please tell me where I stand.'

'I don't know. It'd be easy for me to lie, or to make something up on the spur on the moment. But I just don't know. I don't want to impose myself upon you. That's all I know.'

'I should have known better than to expect a straight answer from you.'

'There are no straight answers. Answers are illusions.'

'You're very selfish, d'you know that?'

'But there's only myself who I really know. And I don't know myself all that well either. So how do I know what anybody else wants?'

'I keep telling you what I want.'

'But, you keep changing your mind. One day you want one thing, another day you want something else.'

'I'm not going to let you fuck me anymore.'

'Why?' I propped myself up on my elbow, and stared into her clear blue eyes, whilst awaiting her answer.

'Because it always makes you depressed afterwards.'

'I'd be more depressed if you didn't let me.'

'You bastard, I just can't win!'

My limp cock started to stir again. Under the blankets I ran my hand through her curly pubic hairs.

'It's not the winning, it's what you put into the game.'

She pushed my hand away. 'Don't. I feel depressed now.'

(Checkmate!)

(I could walk faster than this damn bus.)

I lit up another cigarette, and closed the window above my head.

The night air had lost its optimism. Tomorrow was almost upon me.

(I'm not ready for tomorrow. I don't understand today yet.)

It was nearly closing time.

'Do you want another pint before they put the towels up?'

'No, ta. I'd better get off home. Besides it'll take me ages to finish this one. I told Christine that I was only going for a couple of pints. I think she's going out to her Mothers this afternoon.'

'You've no need to go then! Come back to the flat with us.'

We can have a smoke, and get into some sounds.'

Carol leaned across J, and put her hand on my knee. 'We'll play some Led Zeppelin, just for you.'

'That's really tempting.'

J looked me in the eyes. I wanted to look away, but I couldn't.

'Don't go home. Come back with us, just for an hour. I've got some good draw at the flat.'

'Well, I suppose an hour won't make all that much difference.'

But I can't stay much longer.'

'Great, I'll get another round in then.'

(Was that really today? It seems ages ago.)

It was starting to rain. A few drops spattered on the bus window.

I looked down at the street. It was speckled with rain drops.

(This is the best part of it, the patterns that form before the streets become a shiny wet blanket. I hope it stops before we get to Brook's Bar. The time this bus is taking, it could be snowing before we get there.)

In the time that I spent thinking about it, the street had turned into a shiny wet blanket. The glossy tarmac of the road reminded me of a depressive poem that I had wrote over a year ago. I could only clearly remember a few snatches of it. But those few snatches seemed to retain the same psychic energy that they were written around. I felt slightly appeased.

(I used to think I was a poet

I used to think I was a poet

I used to think I was a poet.)

I could feel the depressive energy building up inside me. I began to regret not staying with Carol.

(I should have made love to her. I should've loved her. I love her. She loves me . . . No, it doesn't feel right.)

The bus drew up at another stop. A gang of noisy lads got on the bus. They were full of beer. They were talking loudly as they made their way upstairs. I didn't feel up to listening to their words. I shut my eyes as they passed me. They sat down at the front of the bus. I opened my eyes again. There were six of them, laughing and joking.

(I used to think I was a poet.)

Jane took another bite at the apple, and passed it to me.

I sat with my back against the tree, watching the clouds' shadows move across the hills.

'You're very lucky really, you're a natural poet.'

'I'm a manic-depressive, according to the shrink.'

'The two things tie in. All good poets are a little unbalanced.'

It enables them to see things differently. Charles Dickens was a manic-depressive, you know.'

'But he wasn't a poet, was he?'

'Oh yes, very much so. You want to try reading some of his shorter stories.'

'I don't like reading.'

'Why?'

'Because the only stuff I like is depressive stuff, like Kafka, and Beckett.'

'They don't have to be depressive. It's what you put on them.'

'Right, dead right!'

'Why do you write?'

'Because when I'm writing I'm out of the rest of the mess.'

'Escapism?'

'Escape into reality!'

She smiled patronisingly at me. 'You won't give anything away will you? Do you want another beer?'

'I'd like today to last.'

She pulled the ring top off the larger can. The froth spurted out onto her skirt. She ignored it, and took a drink. She passed the can to me. 'There's lots more days like today.'

'I wish I could believe that.'

'Touch me. It's all real.' I leaned forward and touched her forearm. She reached up and held my hand between hers. I looked towards the hills for an instant. The shadows had gone.

The six lads got up to get off the bus. They were still joking loudly with each other as they passed by me on their way downstairs. We were approaching Princess Road.

(It won't be long now.)

The bus slowed down at Princess Road lights. It didn't come to a full stop, the lights changed to green as we got to them. We slowly turned the corner.

The train began to pull out of the station. Bobby leaned further out of the window.

'I know what you can do Mike, you can become a philosopher.'

'Philosopher, ugh!' I whispered under my breath. And then shouted after the moving train. 'The world's full of fuckin' philosophers.'

I watched the lads get off the bus. They had quietened down a bit, as there was two policemen stood in a shop doorway near the bus stop.

(Two more stops. I could murder a cup of coffee. I wonder if Christine will still be up?)

The bus turned onto Moss Lane. Brook's Bar loomed up in the distance. At the side of the bus the newly sown grass verge looked drenched, in places it was turning to mud.

I walked towards the dressing room, covered in mud. Steward was waiting at the door. He looked funny with his leg in a plaster case.

'Did you see my goal Stew? The goalie didn't even have time to move. You should've seen the look on his face as it flashed past him! What an header, eh?' I made the motion of heading the goal as I spoke.

'Yes, very clever!' He didn't seem all that enthralled about it. Martin was directly behind me.

'And who else scored a goal then?' Stew asked, as he pinched Martin's cheek. 'Cheeky!' . . . What have I told you about moving out of position?'

'But we had it in the bag Stew. We were three up, and I had the winger in my pocket!'

Stewart let go of Martin's cheek. 'O.K. Go and get a shower.' Stewart followed the last of us into the dressing room. I was taking my muddy shirt off.

'What happened to you today Mike?'

'What d'yer mean?'

'Your tackling. You were going in like a bull. Have you been eating raw meat or something?'

'I just felt a bit aggressive today, that's all.'

'I hope you'll be feeling as aggressive for next Wednesday's cup-tie.'

'Yeah!' I grunted. I didn't feel aggressive anymore.

I was first into the showers. Ray followed me in. 'Good goal Mike!'

'Yeah, I was pleased with it myself. Dave made it though, great run down the wing. Then again, we all played well, didn't we?'

'Yeah! Martin had a good game.'

The rest of the lads filed into the showers. They were bustling and barging each other. All full of high spirits at our win. I moved under the shower near the door, away from the hustling. I could hear Stewart talking to Martin in the dressing room.

'Go on, get your shower then.'

'I'm in too much of a hurry Stew.'

'You know the club rules. Everyone gets a shower, even the sub. In you go!'

'I'm not going in there. Not with that lot.'

'Why?'

'The dirty gits keep pissing on me.'

'Tut! It'll wash off!'

My stop came at last. My arse was near numb as I got up from my seat. I hurried downstairs. There was no-one else left on the bus, excepting the driver. He had the lower deck lights turned off. I pressed the button in case he hadn't heard me coming down the stairs.

There was no optimism about as I got off the bus.

(Perhaps the rain's dampened it down.)

There was very little in the way of vibrations about in the air.

(Nothing, empty nothing.)

I felt in a state of neither up nor down. A kind of limbo. I could feel the cold, slightly. The rain had stopped. I felt thankful for that. There was just a few drops about. Very sparse. Blown on the wind. I turned up the collar of my jacket, and set off for home.

(Perhaps it's the cold that's keeping the shadows at bay. Perhaps I'm down already.)

I lit a cigarette as I walked along.

(No I'm not down yet, this ciggy still tastes strange.)

There was no-one about on the streets, I had them all to myself.

(I don't like it.)

A few words came floating up from the subconscious: former self, former self, former self.

Suddenly, the cigarette I was smoking began to taste really foul. I threw it away into the gutter half-smoked.

(A coffee would be nice)

I turned onto my street.

(Another person at last.)

There was a black guy on the opposite side of the road walking towards me.

(He might be a mugger . . . PARANOIA . . . I could do without that at this time of night.)

I was sat down in the chair at the side of the Psychiatrist's desk.

The blinds were half closed, yet the sun still filled the room.

'What are you frightened of?'

'I'm frightened that I might be deluding myself.'

'It is important that you know the truth?'

'At the moment I don't believe there is such a thing.'
'Then what are you worried about?'
'I might be deluding myself.'
'I thought you'd got out of maze thinking.'
'Some of me has, and some of me's still into it.'
'I've told you about thinking like that. You're not schizophrenic!'
'Who are you talking to? Me, or me?'

(It's no use, there's no way out.)

From nowhere a stab or elation ran through my whole body, as I searched in my pockets for my front door key. I felt my whole body chemistry changing instantly.

It was my first day at Ploys. The Foreman, who had took my insurance cards, told me that if I got stuck with the job he'd given me to pack, I was to ask Albert — working over the aisle from me on a similar job — for assistance. I got right into the job, as it was the type of work that I had been used to at my last workplace. I kept looking out of the corner of my eye at Albert. I had been at it about twenty minutes, and Albert hadn't even started his job. I thought I'd better slow down a bit. I put my hammer down, and took a cigarette out. I looked over at Albert. He was looking at me. 'Is it alright to smoke in here mate?'

He came walking over to me. 'Aye, smoke your head off here pal, no mider.'

I offered him a cigarette. He politely refused, telling me that he didn't smoke.

'How's it going then?' He asked, pointing at the job I was packing.

'O.K.! I've done plenty of this work at Blocks.'

'Is that where you're from, Blocks?'

'Yeah! I left on Friday.'

'I used to work there, in the case shop. Is Harry Davies still there?'

'Old Harry . . . Yeah! . . . He'll be there forever, he's part of the woodwork now.'

'Aye, he's a good ol' boy! I was his apprentice years ago.'

'Wow! So was I, I only came out of my time last year.'

'Small world. I'm Albert by the way.'

'I'm Mike.'

'Listen Mike, I'll give you a tip. When you pick up a job here, take your time with it. We're not on bonus. Give it a good coat

of looking at. Know what I mean?’

‘Oh aye, I’m good at that.’

‘So you should be, one of Old Harry’s apprentices. How is the old sod anyway? Still plotting the downfall of Capitalism?’

I was still smiling as I shut the front door. It was pitch black in the hall.

(Deep purple. . . In rock . . . Made in Japan . . . Machine head . . .
MACHINE HEAD.)

Christine was sat watching television.

‘Hello!’

‘Where’ve you been? I thought you’d got run over.’

‘Not today! I went for a pint with J at dinner time, and I got waylaid.’

‘What, until this time?’

‘I’ll make a coffee. eh?’

‘Don’t make me one. I’m going to bed when this film finishes.’

‘Yeah, I’m ready for bed myself. I’m dying for a drink first though.

I’ve got a foul taste in my mouth.’

‘It’s all that beer you’ve been swilling!’

(I don’t fancy work in the morning.)

‘What’s the matter with you? You look drunk.’

‘I’m just a bit screwed up. My minds been on the blink again.’

(Here we go round, we’re not going nowhere.)

‘Take a tranquilizer.’

‘I don’t want to oversleep in the morning. I’ve got to get into work.

There’s a joint Shop Stewards’ meeting.’

‘Take a pill, I’ll wake you up.’

‘With a kiss?’

(Machine head.)

I went into the kitchen to make a cup of coffee.

(Carol? No energy. Tonight I sleep.)

6 an' a bit

by John Koziol

John grew up in Partington, a Manchester overspill sprawl. Left the least comprehensive of 'Comprehensive' schools to get some basic exams at a college of Further Education. He writes:

I left college at 18, proud possessor of three A Levels. But I found the world wasn't that interested, and finally took a job in a margarine factory making lard. Stood that for three years, then left. It was driving me mad.

Writing? After college I had the occasional night's bout, terrible escapist junk. Then I realised that much as I loved science fiction I couldn't write it, so stopped altogether. When Commonword started, I realised that there were more opportunities than being a commercial 'successful' writer. I think writing in a group turns the vice of intro-spection into the virtue of creativity. I need someone to read what I write.

GUEVARA

That death
Did not need dying.
The silent eyed Indians
Filing past the body
Had seen it before.

(excerpt from longer poem)

OLD WOMAN DYING

Our voices
Didn't come in the room with us
And like the flies
My eyes
Danced their shadows
Round the ceiling.

She lay there
Embarassed and silent
And also
Watched the flies
Scramble against their shadows

A SHARING OF FUNCTION

I often wonder who is in control
It is as if we, two separate things,
Have merged to form one whole.
My motion is your motion,
Your function is my function.
Our parts move in a preordered pattern,
And we share a unity of process.
But our parts mesh much too closely
And if my movement touches your movement
There is no underlying sympathy.
My inferior material is damaged
And fools pain.

I stand, quite still, in one place,
Almost as rooted to the floor as you.
I wonder, do we dance with clumsy grace
As unconsciously we complement each other.
But if, given the possibility
Of mobility, I move, neglect your whim,
You vent calamity
Idiotically shrill
Turning still
Churning out
Catastrophe.
Our little order falls apart
And higher powers curse,
Intervene and separate
The pair of us, silence our rattling
Clattering song,
Investigate, corroborate
Find out which one of us
Went wrong.

When I worked in a margarine factory I was attached to a machine called a B.D.R. It looked like a stainless steel rat. I would stand at one end of the production line and wait for it to stop. One night, when I was cleaning the machine, bit my hand nearly off.

THE NEW FASHIONS

The new fashion reveals feet
at the bottom of legs.
They dangle useless
even when they hit the floor

In the new fashion ears are worn
sometimes at jaunty angles.
Above drainpipe necks
They're not too sure why they're there.

The new fashion reveals heads
like balloons on strings.
They are carried floating through the streets
bladders desiring release.

TRUTH

If I say it three times it is true
If I say it three times it is true
If I say it three times it is true
My words like maggots will eat up you
Buzzing flies with nowt better to do
Me and my words outnumber you
If I say it three times it is true.

APPROACHES

He came up to me
and offered his eyes.

'These are useless,'

I said.

'I cannot see through them.

They are cheap coloured glass
marbles you stole from some child.'

He came up to me
and gave me his face.

'This is nothing,'

I said.

'I cannot wear it.

It has no more character
than a crumpled newspaper.'

He came up to me
and gave me his heart.

'This is bleeding,'

I said,

'but though beating,

I know it is dead.'

He went away from me

And left me his self.

As he walked away

I threw it on the ground.

From the back he looked familiar.

I think he was me.

THE UNEMPLOYED WORKERS' MOVEMENT
FISH IN THE GRASS?

by Syd

That garden
is like a bloody jungle
I think weed-killer might do the job

No
the grass will grow back
even if you use a whole can
the grass will grow back

For days
weeks
the planes rained poison
on the jungle
bombs ploughed
technology ate the leaves

The guerrilla was a fish
in the sea of the jungle
destroy the jungle
and he would sprawl naked
easy prey

For months it rained filth
and the trees died

But the guerrilla
did not reel forth
from the dying jungle
he was in his real sea
the people
and the fish
swam over those who would catch them

And the grass grew back

JOHN KOZIOL

What more can you say?

The selection below is from a mass of written material built up over the past couple of years by staff and adult students at the Abraham Moss Centre, North Manchester. Many of the authors represented here began writing in the course of 'adult literacy' classes.

As a change from prescribed texts, students in reading and writing classes are encouraged to produce their own. They write or tape whatever comes to mind, from their own experience and in their own words. Tapes and manuscripts are typed and duplicated, large print excerpts used for basic reading.

In this way, students' own lives and language become the starting point, the subject of the lesson. Everyday life and the language it creates are confirmed as significant in their own right.

This approach to teaching and learning reverses the normal flow of academic instruction: instead of the student getting schooled into the educator's world and value-system, the teacher seeks to get out and identify with the experience and understanding of the student. Of course, there's never a one way traffic, but this change of approach does give a new confidence and freedom to students. It also poses a threat to teaching staff and institutions geared to the printing and moulding of other people in their own image.

At the Abraham Moss Centre, government spending cuts served to cut the Adult Literacy group down to size, or at least to trim back the outreach work that did not fit the established class routine. The issue was contested by teachers and students alike, with a retired trade union branch secretary picking up the challenge on the student side. The fight's not lost. The work below is testimony to the clarity and depth of lives that traditional schooling failed to reach.

THE UNEMPLOYED WORKERS MOVEMENT DEMONSTRATION

by Syd Jenkins

Watching the telly last night, I saw an incident in which fire tenders were used to quell a riot in a prisoner of war camp, brought back memories of my experiences in 1930.

Mass unemployment was the order of the day, similar to the present day, of a million and a half unemployed. After a series of wage cuts in Industry, i.e. the miners, engineers, cotton and wool workers, railwaymen, the government proposed a 10% cut in the 17/- unemployment pay.

Over the years of unemployment, particularly since the general strike of 1926, there had developed an organisation called "National Unemployed Workers' Movement," which held meetings explaining how to claim benefits, make appeals, and generally assist the unemployed.

When the announcement was made about the cuts, huge mass meetings were organised throughout the country. In Manchester a meeting was organised to meet in Ardwick Green. Weeks prior to this big meeting, all the labour exchanges in Manchester, were covered by small meetings, leaflets, chalking slogans on the pavement and walls, around the labour exchanges. The response was excellent, the committee responsible. decided that besides the big meeting, a march from Ardwick Green to the Town Hall, to see the Lord Mayor, should take place. The green in Ardwick was black with people. After a short meeting, the march started. The planned route was Downing Street, London Road, Piccadilly, Market Street, Cross Street and Albert Square.

The Evening News estimated that there was 100,000 people on the March. The police, in consultation with the Authorities banned the march, but on seeing the number of people at the green, the committee decided to ignore the ban and started the march. The police were not prepared for this. Based on previous experience, we had a number of lads on cycles going up and down the route reporting back on any unusual happening. One of the lads, reported that there were Mounted Police across the beginning of London Road.

A short discussion between the stewards of the march, decided to send the three cyclists down Oxford Street, Albert Square, Cross Street, Market Street and London Road, back to the marchers and report on the position, anything unusual, and to keep their eyes open for any trouble. They reported back, that behind the Mounted Police, was a row of lorries across the street, and also the doors of the fire station were wide open. At that time the marchers were about two hundred and fifty yards from the Fairfield Street and London Road crossing.

The police inspector came up to us, and told us that we could not go up London Road, but would have to turn left at the crossing, and go up Fairfield Street and Oxford Road back to All Saints Green. He would allow a small deputation to go onto the Town Hall. A brief discussion, and we decided to go ahead with the original plan, and advised the marchers when they came to the mounted police, to go onto the pavement, and pass them. What we did not realise, was the power and force of the water coming out of the hosepipe. As we got to the cross road, the police tried to turn us to the left, but were unsuccessful. Immediately the police gave the order, we saw streams of water coming between the lorries. We had decided that committee members should march in the front of the marchers. As we came closer the water hit us with a bang. Whilst we were arguing with the Inspector, the marchers had widened the rows of marchers right across the road. The first half dozen rows of marchers were on the floor, they then raised their hoses, and caught the marchers further back. Whilst this was going on, through the open doors of the fire station came dozens of policemen on foot, with battons drawn right into the middle of the marchers, hitting out right, left and centre. The front of the demonstration tried to go back, and the marchers behind were pushing forward. The result was chaos. The marchers could not do anything, but retreat against the police battons and the water.

We later learned how to deal with the water trick. The marchers scattered through the small streets around the area, making their way to All Saints Church.

The Vicar, who was very sympathetic to the unemployed, allowed us to meet in the church, and in the church yard, refusing the police permission to come inside the churchyard. A number of the unemployed were arrested, and many were injured, and had to have hospital treatment.

THE CONCRETE JUNGLE

I look with sorrowful eyes, as the concrete jungle reach the sky.
Where the children played, the concrete cover blacks the sky.
To do the shopping you first must go under the concrete cover,
The wind and the rain clean the streets
now some men with mops and buckets do the same.
To board a bus or train, you must first pass
under the concrete underpass.
No more will you breathe the cold winter air,
No more will you feel the wind and rain.
No more will you see the morning sun and the evening star,
for they cannot pass under the concrete cover.
So life changes, but we do not.

ALL I HAVE SEEN

The day is over
and the evening shadows fall over the city,
as I sit at the table with a pen and some writing paper
to write of the things I see during the day.
Like the young boy going to the shop for an old lady.
Like the butcher giving a dog a bone.
Like the postman on his round.
Like some men playing bowls on a green.
Like the trees in their autumn green.
Like the rain washing
and wind brushing
the sun drying
the streets,
but my eyes slowly close
and my hand will not write
all I have seen.

by Harry Edwards

WINTER JANUARY 1947

by *Victor Swinson*

The air in the bedroom was cold as I lay in bed in a semi-waking state, waiting for the sound of clogs that would bring me awake. Suddenly my mother's voice broke through the air, bringing me fully awake. I sat up in bed and noticed how dark it was and thought I was dreaming. My mother's voice sounded again, calling my sister. As I wasn't dreaming, rubbing my eyes I jumped out of bed onto the cold lino that suddenly brought me to my full senses.

I moved to the window and with a finger rubbed the condensation but my fingers slipped on the ice that had formed on the glass. In the room, next to my bed, was an old rickety chair with various clothes on it. I moved the clothes onto the bed and dragged the chair to the window. I could just about see out and it was snowing. It was so thick that at first my thoughts were of fog. I looked up the street for the light from the gas lamp that was normally burning in the early morning. A small yellow glow was all that could be seen. My thoughts then returned to the day before me.

After dressing, I quickly ran downstairs to where my father and mother were going about the early morning chores. Just then my father opened the back door as he was about to go across the yard to the coal place. As he did, snow had drifted, causing what seemed to me like a mountain. Both my father and myself stood with eyes wide. It seemed like a long time. Suddenly the mountain collapsed, causing the snow to fall into the house. Frantic, efforts were made to clear it away so as to be able to close the door. Then we had an idea, to dig pathways to both the coalplace and outside toilet.

My mother was busying herself in preparing the tables. The gas stove, an old Black Prince, had pans of water being brought to the boil. The kettle was chugging away like a steam engine. The oven door was open, gushing out hot air as this was the only form of heating. After a further calling my sister managed to appear. It was my turn to wash, after disrobing to my woolly vest. The enamel bowl was already in the slop stone. After filling the bowl from a pan and bringing it to a bearable heat with the cold brass

water tap I plunged my hands into the water and a kind of electric shock shot up my arms. My hands were tingling from the cold snow. I stood wallowing in the warm water.

My father decided not to go to work and set about digging a way out from the front door to enable my mother to go to work. She had to be in the factory read to start at 7.30 a.m.

Mother set off to work in hopes of getting there. The snow was still falling fast and my sister and myself set off for school following the paths other people had made in their trek to work.

As I neared my school the sounds of other children's voices could be heard. You could only see shapes as you ducked the odd missile. The sound of a loud bell could be heard.

As we went into school the headmistress watched us, dutifully brushing snow off heads and shoulders. She was always dressed in some form of tweed two-piece and highly polished shoes, and she wore a scent that seemed to pervade a room long after she was gone.

The first children to go in were told to stamp the snow off their feet. One teacher was directing the children into the cloakroom where you found your hook and partly disrobed. I remember to this day the mounds of snow and pools of water that had come from the insides of the wellingtons that had been taken off. In this room was a large radiator strewn with various damp socks that gave off a steaming aroma, a smell which I have never come across again to this day.

MY CHILDHOOD DAYS – HAPPY OR OTHERWISE (Excerpt)

by *Ernie Willans*

Money being scarce those days, and being a large family with only mother left to bring us up, meal-times at home were a bit of a lark. Mother did not believe in her brood sitting down at the table till we were fourteen years of age and started work. The result was

mother was the only one sitting and we were standing eating our food. This meant that there were many fights and squabbles amongst us. These were mainly stopped by mother picking up knife, fork or spoon and throwing it at us, but we soon found a way of getting out of the way of these missiles. Against the wall opposite where mother sat was a sideboard, highly polished and with three large mirrors. This sideboard was the apple of her heart as it was a wedding present from her mother and father. So when the utensils came flying across we would crowd in front of the sideboard and then start taunting her. She would not dare throw any thing then, and if she came for us we could make a quick dash through the front door. In time, she got to join in the fun with us.

In fairness to her she must have had a hard life, as she had to bring us all up for quite a number of years on her own on ten shillings a week pension, and what she could earn going out cleaning for two or three days a week as did a lot more mothers who had lost their husbands. Then came the time I was fourteen and left school to start work.

CHILDHOOD IN JAMAICA

by Carlton Campbell (on tape)

When I was a little boy I used to went to the field. I used to cut sugar cane with my parents. We used to use the sugar cane to make sugar, because we was very poor. So what we do, we cut the sugar cane and we take it to a mill. We used the mill to mill the sugar cane with a mule turning right around. They used to crush the juice. They take it and they use it to make sugar. What they do, they get a thing like a copper, big pot and they make sort of a thing like a oven, but it's not a real oven. They pour the sugar juice into these big pots. They had fire underneath it, and it boil and boil for hours until it make sugar. Not the kind of sugar like what you get in the shop. We call it new sugar.

And we used to have good fun when I was a little boy. You have more fun than the kids in England, when I was a little boy. Take it

for instance we used to go cutting bananas. Pick mangoes, I love mangoes. I used to pick oranges. In my country you could go anywhere in anybody field and pick loads of oranges and you eat it. It was good fun when I was a kid. I don't think the kids in this country have the fun what we have when we was a little boy. We was very poor but we was very happy.

I'm sorry for the mistake.

INGRAFTING

by *Hector Samuels*

I still remember in 1944 when I was a lad, I love to go on the farm to watch my father work. On the farm you sit under the tree when the sun is hot. When the sun is going down, you go out from under and start to plant cabbage and corn and peas and potato.

Now this is a different plant, so we going to tell you what we can do with the orange. We can make one orange tree hold a lot of different fruit. It have to ingraft the different plant.

You cut the young springing from the lime tree and open the skin of the orange tree with a sharp knife, put the young springing into the split. Wrap it with dry bark. Let it stay for two week. Then I go back to the lemon tree, cut the young springing from the tree of the bangerine. You do the same with the grapefruit.

If you like to put all of the springing in the same day, you can put all of them in one day — orange and bangerine and tangerine and lime and lemon. If you put the different springing in different branch it don't do nothing to it. If you like you do not need to worry because they do not disturb the others.

You should not ingraft in rainy month. It will die. The rain stop it from joining together so you do it in dry weather.

You do it with one tree in the garden in front of the house, because you do not want to put a lot of tree in the garden to crowd in the house.

FABLES

by Cecil Brown

When I was living in Jamaica you could hear a lot of fables. They are going on for a long time and they will continue for ever.

In every town or district at least once a month the children would gather together, or your parents takes you to their friends and they all tell fables. They always gather together in the moonlight, but I do not know why.

I always prefer to go with kids of my own age because you could get in on the act and tell fables yourself. When you go with your parents you could not speak, and all you got to do was to listen, while they had the fun.

I used to listen to the new ones. If it's interesting, my mind is on it all the time. I would memorise it and when my mates and I gather together I could tell them that I have heard one that no one knows.

Everyone say, "Let's hear it". Sometime they say "I hear that one already". If they do not hear it before they want to know, "Who told you?" And sometimes they would say that you are telling lies. When they saw the person who suppose to tell you, they asked him and if it's a lie, no one would listen to your fables again, because they thought you are telling lies all the time.

Everywhere you go the fables varies. When I used to go on holidays to see my family in different parts, they could tell fables that you never heard of and the ones you told them, they are hearing them for the first time.

Here is one about a cat and a rat. One day this cat saw a rat. He chased the rat and it ran into a hole. The cat lay in wait for the rat, but it would not come out of the hole.

The chasing game went on for months. Every time the rat came up to get some food the cat was waiting

Things got so bad that Rat's wife was so fed up when she could not get no food. She said to him that she and the children were

hungry and they must have something to eat.

Rat said "I am scared if I go out to get food Cat will be waiting".

He was so desperate and hungry that he had to go out and get some food.

Rat tip-toes out of the hole, look all around, but he did not see Cat.

"Well its safe now. Cat forget all about me".

All of a sudden Cat sprang out of the tree and grabs Rat.

Mr Rat Squeaks, and the sound he made when cat got him was, "weeks!"

Then Cat said, "Weeks?. No, it's months I was waiting for you, and now I am going to devour you," which he did. And that was the end of Rat.

Bra Anancy and Bra Duck: Bra Anancy invited Bra Duck to a dance.

Bra Duck said to Bra Anancy "I can't go because you know what ducks are, and I would not like to mess the people up at the dance".

"That's all right", said Bra Anancy. "I will fix you up so that you do not mess no one up".

Anancy got a cork, stop Bra Duck up, and said "This would stop you until we come back from the dance".

Anancy did not know that Bra Duck was a very good dancer. He was so light on his feet that all the girls were fighting to dance with him, and soon Anancy couldn't get a dance.

Anancy said "Right, I am going to put a stop to this. Why should he get all the dance and I can't get any".

All of a sudden when Bra Duck was not looking, Bra Anancy pull the cork out and Bra Duck made a mess on lot of people and no

one wanted to dance with him.

Anancy took over and dance the night away.

The next day Duck saw Anancy. He said to him, "Why did you do that?"

Anancy said "Why should you get all the dance and I couldn't get any?"

From that day Bra Duck did not go anywhere with Bra Anancy.

LEAVING SCHOOL AND STARTING WORK

by Nanette Perry

I have thought about my future and what kind of work would I like to do since I left school nine years ago, in 1968 — a year in which I was very eager to leave school.

My first job was in a cake factory. I didn't like the work. It was very hard. The supervisors were very strict and treated the workers as if they were in prison.

My work started off easy at first. But when I'd been there a few months the supervisors took me off the job I was first given when I started. Even the job they took me off wasn't easy. I was lifting big trays up off a conveyor belt. The trays were full of cakes and very heavy. Big black trays, and I didn't like them.

I had a few friends there, girls I'd known at school. Working with them was alright. The radio was on and we would all sing. But really we were all very tired.

One of my friends said she was doing her exams so she could do nursing. No one believed her. They thought she would just stay there like them. Just because they can't do anything like that they think no one else can.

We had five minutes for tea break. I was so tired that I didn't want to get up off my chair.

The factory itself was very hot because there were lots of ovens there. A friend of mine worked on the ovens, taking cakes out and putting them on big racks. She didn't seem to mind. I don't think I could have worked on the ovens.

One of my friends, Phyllis she's called, was tired of lifting up the big black trays. She started crying. So the supervisor put her on a slightly easier job.

That day in the factory was too hot. With that, and the heavy work I had to do, it was just too much. I thought, "I can't stand it anymore". So then I just walked out. One of the union men who worked there mixing pastry for the cakes saw me, and followed me outside. He said to me that he would take it up with the union, but I said it was alright. And that was the end of my job at Park Cake Bakeries.

NICE PEOPLE

by *Izie Lewis*

The best job I had was when I was working at Trafford Park Kraft cheese factory. I was very happy there. The people at work they was nice and very happy people we were. We start at 8 a.m. in the morning and finish at 4 p.m. What we did was to break the egg on a machine. A woman takes the eggs off a belt and puts it on a table and takes it to us, and then we take it off the table and put it in the machine. The machines what breaks the eggs have some cups what you put the egg in, and two people one put the egg in the machine and one tests the egg. Then we do it in turns, we test the egg and half past four we pull down the machine and wash it. Whenever they have visitors we always have to clean up the place. Why I left because I was going on a holiday but they were a nice people to work with.

FLY BY NIGHT

Is it true you're always looking for something
Changing you job as much as you change your clothes
Spending your wage on a Friday night you go for a drive
And have some fun
Suddenly all your money goes
And you end up back at square one
Fly by night, gallivanting will not change your heart
Fly by night, only your heart will change
Your gallivanting.

MR HAZE

Mr Haze was a wizz kid
At just 19 years old
He'd jump on an idea
Like a rat jumping on a mouse

He is so lonely he gets his competition
From reading the morning paper
And if you put him on the spot
He says 'I'll see ya later.'

And now he is much older
All he has is a private house
A red rose and a sky scraper.

Dave McGowan

Some of the writers in this section have written brief notes about themselves:

SYD JENKINS is a retired electrician and trades unionist. On union business he could get most of the writing done for him. After retiring he went to brush up his English at the Abraham Moss Centre. Began writing at the prompting of teachers there. Helped organise students in support when those same teachers were threatened as result of 'cuts'.

HARRY EDWARDS, a factory cleaner 'I'd say I was a deep thinker, a constant questioner of life with a sincere wish for personal development.'

WORK AS MISTER WHIPPY

by Garry Handley

I worked on an ice cream van as a Mister Whippy salesman. It was a very hard job but it had its advantages and the children were great.

One day on Smith Street one of the kids noticed I had a bad leg. He said "What is wrong with your leg?"

I said "It's pot". Before I could stop him he had run off. A few minutes later he came back with his friend. He said "Mister, show them your leg. They won't believe me." I showed them the leg and they made some crude remarks about Long John Silver. It stuck like glue. The name spread like wildfire around the town. All the kids on the estates began to call me "Big John Silver", or "Silver Leg", which I did not mind.

I remember the day a little boy came to the van. He said to me "What you got, mister?"

"I've got tu'ppenny cornets, ninety-nines, nougat wafers, sombreros with nuts, shell wafers, fruit boats, banana boats, banana splits and lollies."

"What's yer banana split?"

"You got any money?"

"Course I 'ave",

"Right. It's a banana cut in half with three flavours of ice-cream, nuts and chocolate with two fan wafers".

"O.K. I'll 'ave one".

I handed it over.

"Ey!" he says, "Aint you got no spoons?"

"Use your wafers, you cheeky little devil".

So he picked up the concoction, inspected it minutely, said

"Hm, not bad", threw tuppence on the counter and ran like hell down the road.

Two days later I saw his friend. He had a shirt which was very dirty and in rags and a running nose which he was continually wiping on his sleeve. He said "Have you got any broke wafers?"

"Get lost, scruffy!" my companion said.

"Drop dead you. I was talking to Long John. Anyway who rattled your cage, buster?"

WORK

by Cecil Brown

I have had a few jobs in my time, but the one that stood out was when I was working for Pacific Sales Organizations. When I went there to work I was desperate and had no choice. I had just moved into a new house and I needed a few things in a hurry. The terms he gave me were Monday to Friday 8.30 until 5.30 normal week and Saturday 8.30 to 12 overtime compulsory. I said to myself it's a bit hard compulsory Saturday mornings, I never heard of it and to make matters worse it was a Jewish Firm.

Anyway I started working on the packing floor which was not too hard. All of a sudden work began to pile up and people began to leave. I was so tired one Friday night and I didn't go to work the Saturday. On Monday morning when I went to work, I was called into the office and the foreman asked me why I wasn't in on Saturday. I did not answer him. He told me if I have any more Saturday mornings off I would get the sack, I told him I don't care.

When I came out from the office my workmates said that they were pulled up for having a Saturday morning off.

Things got worse and the job became a bore. The directors of the firm used to weed their gardens and brought their rubbish in the boot of their cars, and always got one or two of the employees to empty their rubbish. One day I was told to clean one of the directors cars and I refused to do it, and I was never asked again.

My workmates and I on the packing floor decided that we wanted more money for the job we were doing. There was no union that we could take our case to, so we planned it carefully and confronted the management the first thing on the Monday morning. We said, "we want more pay for the work we are doing", and if we didn't get it we were all going to walk out.

The directors were out of bed so fast when they heard the news that we refused to work until we get better pay.

"Let's compromise", he said. "Go back to work like good lads and then we could sort things out".

We refused and we all walked out. There were other people working in the next department and they walked out too. They said, "If they go we are the ones that is going to do the hard work, and its better late than never".

The next day I got a job which was much better paid and if you didn't go on Saturday you knew that your job was safe. I worked there until I got redundant.

AT THE FRONT END

by Victor Irving

Coming out of the army in '47 I carried on with my trade as a spectacle frame and lens maker. By the early 50s work started to drop off and by late '52 and early '53 work of that type was very short. I decided to pack up and go on the buses. After a medical and two interviews I started at the training school at Hyde Road depot for three weeks. From there I was sent to Parrswood depot as a so-called conductor. I soon learnt that the public is a very hard master to work for, very hard indeed.

After being at Parrswood for a few weeks and talking to other conductors in the canteen I learnt the other side of the job, not at all like Hyde Road. I learnt how to treat people as they treated you e.g. man gets on the bus after having a row with his wife, she's got the better of him so he thinks 'I'll have a go at the guard'. Bus is late, bus is early, don't give people a chance to sit down before the bus is off, and so on. I learnt how to lose my wages at blind brag, how to f- and blind, how to make the price of a couple of pints and a packet of fags each day. I learnt when and where certain passengers would get on, women who were very broad-minded to say the least, men who always invited you to a party at their place after a day's work.

After a guard has been on the back of a bus for a while, people treat him as a walking know-all as regards Manchester, from where the Moravian Meeting Place is to "Hey mate, do you know where I can get fixed up?"

.Then I was asked if I would like to go driving, that is, learning to drive a double-decker bus. A few weeks later I went to the P.S.V. driving school (after another medical). For four hours I messed about on an old banger, no windows no cab door, no seats, no windscreen. In the afternoon of the first day (yes, its quite true) I, with two other scared to death future drivers, was taken on the main road. The P.S.V. driving instructor drove from Hyde Road depot to Ardwick Green.

“Right, who’s first?” The three of us stood there and looked at him.

“You will do,” and he pointed to one of the other trainee drivers. We ended up the far side of Moss side. The P.S.V. Instructor stood at the back of the trainee driver and shouted and raved. He was a man who could curse and swear if you did something wrong, for a full minute without saying the same swear twice. It was awful. We had a smoke to unwind.

“Right, you get mounted, go down Deansgate, turn right into Market Street, through the Dill, up to London Road Station, along Downing Street into Ardwick Green and the depot. He pointed at me “C’mon, get cracking, there’s nothing to it.”

I don’t know to this day how I got back. It was like a nightmare, everyone and everything seemed to get in my way. The instructor stood behind me swearing and cursing, “Keep at ‘em, they will so-and-so move. Don’t dare give way to the cars. Keep going.”

And so it went on and on. This state of affairs went on every day for six weeks non-stop. During that time you had to pass two tests the last one was your P.S.V. in the sixth week. To take your P.S.V. you did one and a half hours in town including Smithfield Market (in and out the vegetable crates); then to another place for three point turns, reversing stopping the bus twelve inches from the bus stop; then back to Hyde Road depot for more tests.

Back at Hyde Road a cup of tea and that smoke as you sit there waiting for P.S.V. Instructor Foulmouth (his nick-name) to come in and point at you. We didn’t have long to wait.

“Right you, c’mon, you’re first,” the finger points at me. I walked at the back of him like a man going to be hung.

The testing area was made like a city, main roads, side streets, traffic lights, fronts of shops, houses, a shell of a car parked here and there outside shops and houses and an old bus (no windows again) at the bus stop. Near the bus are stood two Ministry of Transport men talking.

“Right, get mounted and sit still in the cab” said Foulmouth. I got into the cab and waited. One of the Ministry of Transport men was fixing wires to my head and inside my shirt, to my chest. In front of the steering wheel was three lights painted green and red. The lights and myself were wired up to a control box at the back of me. I had to drive around as if it was a town I had never been in before. As I got to a street or main road the green light would come on, as I was about to cross with the bus the lights very quickly changed. This test went on for a while until going down a main road a child came running from my left, I braked and swung the bus to my right and stopped. I was told to carry on. Another road a little old lady is stood very close to the road, as I was about to pass her she seemed to fall forward in front of me. I braked hard and swung to my right again. As you have guessed by now, the child and old lady were dummies.

The Ministry of Transport men told me to get out of the cab and sit in the bus with them. When the wires were removed I was told they had been timing my reactions – the time it takes to think what you are going to do and how long it takes you to do it.

The last part of the test is to drive a double-decker at 30-35 m.p.h. onto an area walled off by sandbags. This area is more or less round, 100 yards across, the whole place is covered in dirty oil and water. I was told to drive the bus onto it, brake very hard, get the bus to skid, and steer into the skid making the bus spin around three times. Then stop the bus, engine running, out of gear, hand-brake on. I could not explain to anyone how I felt when I came off the skid area. I must have looked like death warmed up, I felt awful.

The following week we spent one full day driving every type of bus on the road which was used each day in Manchester. Towards the end of the day, P.S.V. Instructor Foulmouth asked us to join him in a drink at the Transport Club. Funny thing though, while having a social drink he never swore once.

THE LOST WALLET

by Danny Manning

I think it was on a Monday or a Tuesday. I took my wallet out with me on the Monday because with my Father leaving my Mother a long time ago I didn't want him to get hold of her wedding ring which was inside it. I shouldn't have taken the wallet out, I know now, but with me telling him my Mother died got me all mixed up what to do or what not to do. If I had put the wallet away it would have been safe.

I have not felt like doing anything since I have lost this wallet. I would be better if it turned up. It would make me be happy again. I don't like to be sad. It makes me feel very sicklified in the head. I was nicely getting over losing my Mother when then I lost my wallet. I told Kevin about it and his wife Jennie. I also told Valerie March who is in the reading and writing class that I am in tonight. She has been very kind and tried to help me in getting it back by putting an advertisement in the paper shop window. I told my Mother's cousin and her Auntie. My Mother's cousin didn't say much about it. She may be thinking about it – the ring I mean.

I had this wallet some years and all and I am usually very careful with things like that. The last time I lost something like this was a bike and before that a purse with some money. I don't seem to have any luck in getting things back. If I could get the ring back it would make me feel better again. At the moment I don't feel like doing anything. I am wishing my Mother was here all the time. I have only got my pet cat at home. While I am here tonight she is at the back door waiting for me to come home so she can come in and have something to eat. I think a lot about the cat and all.

I don't know where the wallet will be. I told the Rector of Saint Luke's church. He got in touch with the Police for me. He telephoned for them to come round to see me to ask for a statement. I told them what I could, but if I didn't lose it at Abraham Moss on the Tuesday night maybe this lad I met in town on Monday, 23rd August 1976 might have took it. Whoever's got it I wish I could get it back. Really they could keep the wallet. It is not easy to say what I should say because I have not thought

the words out of how to say it. Whoever's got it I don't know how they feel about it. He or she may feel a bit guilty. I know I would if I took anything like that. It would be on my mind and I would be worrying about it. Maybe it doesn't worry them, perhaps it gives them something else to think about. I told Miss Charlesworth, my old teacher, in a letter about it, thinking she could do something but she could not do anything. There was one thing she wanted to do for me this year. She offered to mind the ring. I refused and I am very sorry now I did not do it because if she had minded it I wouldn't have had to think about it so much.

It was today last year that my Mother went into hospital to have a skin graft on her neck. She did not come out again, she died in hospital. If my Mother was here now I would feel happy I would. I get lonely at times. Nobody comes to see me. The only friends I seem to have are at Abraham Moss. One or two's alright but everybody has their troubles I know. I can't keep it to myself all that's going on in my mind. I have to tell somebody, I don't like telling the neighbours where I live as they are not the kind of people I like to mix with. In 1971 my Mother and I had an offer of a house in Collyhurst. I am sorry I did not take it but at the time I looked at it I thought it was too big for us. Since then I have been in one, I have seen inside and they are very nice, better than these flats I am living in now.

I don't know what to say now. I keep thinking what to say but I can't say it.

FRIENDSHIP

by Harry "O"

"Stupid lot of Bastards. Fancy getting so bloody upset at a bloody funeral. Daft lot of Get's. Dave had been a great bloke to work with always ready to help out if he thought you were getting behind. Christ, he was a good man, a bloody good man, but he lived his life to the full, and like us all he knew that he would have to go sometime. If ever a man was ready to go and not be afraid to go then that man was Dave."

I had known Dave for the last thirty years. We were twelve the first time we laid eyes on each other. I do not know to this day what started us off fighting, but whatever it was, the fight was one of the best I ever had. At least it is the best that I can remember. From that day on Dave and I were inseparable.

One year, we would spend our holiday with Dave's folks, the next with mine. God, we had some great times. We were more alike than brothers, we dressed alike, fancied the same girls, and even the motor bikes we had only had one difference, and that was the number. We would often argue as to which bike was the faster, but we never had a race. Dave had more sense. He knew it might spoil our friendship.

Ten years to the day that we met, Dave and I married two of the most beautiful girls you ever saw. Twin sisters. Just three months younger than me and four younger than Dave. They were one hundred per cent identical. I did not know one from the other until they spoke, then, by God, Sue's voice did things to my inside that was indescribable. My God, what a voice. Jill was the older of the two girls, older by three minutes, But Sue never let her forget it, for the next twenty years. This was to be a great source of fun for Dave and I. Jill and Sue were so very different to Dave and I. Maybe this is why we made a bloody good go of marriage. They say that two opposites make a pair; it was very true in our case.

Beautiful women. Dave and I had married two very beautiful women, and we never forgot it. We are physically very much alike. Middle height, 5 foot 8 inches. Definitely over-weight at fourteen-and-a-half stone and well rounded, Dave had taken to the job we did. Me, all I wanted from the job was my pay packet with as much money as I could earn. It was a bit on the dirty side but the pay was good. Sometimes I worked with leather, sometimes with plastic or fibre glass. Dave, showing a damn sight more interest than I, got the foreman's job and I the chargehand's.

Trouble started for Dave two years ago. We had a fire at the factory and Dave was there from start to finish, breathing in all the smoke and shit that the fire threw at him. That started the trouble in his lungs. He had not smoked a cigarette in his life, so, for my money it could only be the shit and the smoke that he

breathed in at the bloody fire that started the cancer in his lungs.

Cancer is a terrible thing to have. If it had been me, I think I would have gone out of my tiny little mind. Dave took it all very calmly, at least outwardly he did. It took him one and a half years to tell me. To say the word 'cancer' made me shiver, but Dave made me promise not to tell Jill or Sue. He knew that death was very close, and he took it in his stride. Christ, what a man.

Jill and Dave, Sue and I — four people that were as close as four people could possibly be, but Dave had one burning ambition. He just had to be the best at whatever he put his hand to. He had an insatiable desire to prove himself. I think that I, and I alone, knew Dave this well. I was the only one that Dave could relax with.

Larry, the soft sod, is still sat at my side on the sofa parroting on and on about the things he had done with Dave. Tony is sat at the far side of Larry and the two of them are like bloody old women.

First one and then the bloody other: "Don't you think Jill is being very brave, isn't she talking it so very calmly. Didn't Dave look at peace with the world as he lay in his coffin, how nice the funeral service had been."

Tom has come up at the back of me. Christ can't he talk of any other thing than Dave and the bloody fire. My God if they don't stop I think I will scream.

You stupid lot of bastards, fancy getting so bloody upset at a funeral. Daft lot of Gets. Dave had been a great bloke to work with, always ready to help out, if he thought you were getting behind. Christ, he was a good man, a bloody good man. He had lived his life to the full. Like us all, Dave knew that he had to go sometime, and if ever a man was ready to go, and not be afraid to go, then it was Dave. My best pal, Dave.

WITHOUT LOVE

Without love there is no one
Without love there is no you or me
Without love is night with no moon
Without love
Without love is like going swimming
And there is no water . . .
It does not cost anything to love
With love there is you and me.

Hannah Phillips

VICTOR SWINSON, now working in a park, says: 'I'm 37, of average education. My interest in writing was brought out whilst attending a basic skills course at the Abraham Moss Centre.'

HECTOR SAMUELS, who works for British Rail, says: 'I came from Jamaica to this country to gain more experience of working in a factory. I was thinking of home when I wrote the piece printed here.'

IZZIE LEWIS wanted to be a nurse. 'I describe myself as not very educated, because I am still struggling with my English. I started to write under a year ago when I started at the Abraham Moss Centre.'

VICTOR IRVING 'All my life I have believed that a person must live their life to the full. When the day came that I could no longer lead an active life, I decided that I must come to terms with my handicap, which is blindness. Rather than sit at home and become a vegetable completely dependent on others, I started writing.'

HANNAH PHILLIPS, nursery worker: 'I am 17, born in the West Indies. When I was in primary school I came to write poems to describe things, I like to put words together.'

the Indian wars

The quotes in this poem are from Red Cloud, Sioux leader in the Indian Wars. He was speaking in the 1870's, during a lull in the fighting.

We said to the old savage
'We civilised people could make
Better use
Of this land than you.
Can we buy it?
It would prosper
Under our ownership.'

'Own land?' he said.
'How can you own land?
Can you own the sky?
Can you own the birds?
Can you own its beasts?
How can you own land?'

Despite us offering
All our civilisation had to give
In the way of beads,
Blankets,
Guns and alcohol,
He wouldn't sell.
So we shot him

The Indian tribes were grouped in several confederations or nations. The Sioux, or Dakota Confederacy, numbered Red Cloud and Sitting Bull among their outstanding leaders. The rival Comanche grouping included Setanta, Crazy Horse and Young Man Afraid of his Horses.

The Tribal groupings united in reaction to the white encroachment. In 1876, General Crook set out to catch the Indian forces in one decisive engagement, to put an end to their hit-and-run harrasment. Crook sent out two columns to locate the massed forces of the tribes. In the Indian campment, Sitting Bull had a vision of white men riding upside-down, interpreted this as many whites to be killed. Crazy Horse painted a lightning stroke on his chest.

George Armstrong Custer, former civil war general, had been involved in some political embarrassment and needed a victory to restore credibility. Custer, at the head of one of the two columns, was first to come on the Indian gathering. Without waiting for the other column, he attacked this city of tents with half his force. Custer was among the 250 whites who died. His body was later recovered, unmarked. The victory marked the peak of Indian power — they'd spent all their ammuniton.

Crazy Horse died, for breaking taboos, it was said. Sitting Bull ended up as a sideshow attraction for Buffalo Bill.

NOTHING LIVES LONG

'Nothing lives long but the earth and the Sky . . . !'

The air is charged with your song.

The lead will eat your hair, your eyes, your heart.

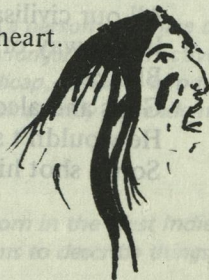
Nothing lives long but the earth and sky.

Nothing lives long but the Earth and Sky.

Even the bones are gone from the grass.

A horse falls, then a man.

Nothing lives long but the Earth and Sky.



Nothing lives long but the Earth and Sky . . .
Have you Counted Coup? The song dies on your lips.
You had many horses, 'Hoka hey . . .'
Nothing lives long but the Earth and Sky.'

That poem is dedicated to two young Comanches who charged a line of 500 troopers, singing as they went. 'Counting Coup' was a traditional gesture in face of an enemy: the rider sought to close in and touch – not wound – the body of his opponent. Instead of a weapon, the attacking rider carried a feathered pole. On this occasion the two indians sang as they charged 'Hoka hey . . . Nothing lives long'. The troopers did not have feathers in their guns.

SONG FOR A SOUR OLD MAN

Your piss dries in the sand
Your hands smell
The white man is hunting ghosts
He will string them on strings
And their husks will rattle in the wind.

Old were the words in your head
They come from other voices
Heavy with the sense of being spoken
But the words will not hurt the air
Old words like old skins
Do not hold out the winter.

Across the cuts and climbs
Of your memory
The white man is hunting ghosts.

Dedicated to several Indian chiefs – Geronimo, Sitting Bull, Chief Joseph – who survived the battles to die on reservations.

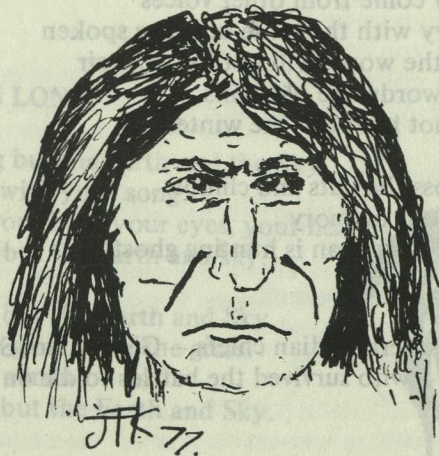
GREASY GRASS

(to the tune of General Custer's rousing marching song, Gary Owen, which had recently served as theme tune for the Light Brigade)

Instead of water
The hills drink blood
It mixes with
The churned up mud
The killing outgrows
The killer's good
George Armstrong, be glad
They left you your curls.



JOHN KOZIOL, APRIL '77



In for a lifetime?

These pieces are taken from tape-recordings made by members of the Mental Patients Union — some in, some out of hospital.

The MPU is trying to make it possible for homeless people in mental hospitals to live outside in the community, with support. This means getting alternative accommodation. We also demand rights for people in mental hospitals: the right to refuse treatment, information on treatments available, the right to hold union meetings, the right to leave when you want, to train and work outside.

In these conversations, patients speak for themselves.

FRANK

BILL Could you tell us about when you came in in the first place, when did it happen?

FRANK Taking the front wheel of a bicycle Bill and I hadn't took it.

The Police with a loud speaker on called me on this spare ground.

BILL And you had a wheel?

FRANK A wheel, a bicycle wheel, a front wheel of a bicycle, yes, Billy.

BILL What were you doing with it Frank?

FRANK Well I had it with me. I found it. Detectives comes and I give em one wheel. Just stood on back door to go in yard.

BILL They stopped you?

FRANK The wrong one Billy.

GREG Yes, and what did they do?

FRANK Took my fingerprints and photograph.

GREG And then what?

FRANK They took me to Magistrates.

GREG What did they say to you at the court?

FRANK Well they brought me to Prestwich hospital.

GREG When you went into hospital, could you go out if you wanted to?

FRANK No.

GREG They locked you up?

FRANK They locked me up Greg.

GREG For how long?

FRANK Eleven years and six years, how many's that? How many's that then Greg?

GREG Eleven and six is seventeen.

FRANK Seventeen years at Prestwich.

GREG Did you ever have to do any kind of work?

FRANK Well, hand-cart, cart-load, all . . . leaf-mould, fork into, plough into, turning ground over, fields.

GREG Did you work at that every day or what?

FRANK Well I worked in boiler house for seven years at Prestwich.

GREG Was that from Monday to Friday?

FRANK Monday to Friday, yes.

GREG What time did you start in the morning?

FRANK 9 o'clock.

GREG And what time did you knock off in the afternoon?

FRANK 4 o'clock.

GREG Did they pay you for that?

FRANK Well er, they gave me sixpence, them coloured ones.

GREG Tokens?

FRANK There's red ones and all colours isn't there?

BILL Different coloured tokens.

FRANK Tokens. I . . . Yeah, Billy, sixpence, sixpence.

BILL How long were you in that Frank?

FRANK Seven years in the boiler house.

BILL All the time, and what were you getting at the end of that?

FRANK Sixpence.

BILL At the end, still at the end of seven years, sixpence?

FRANK Sixpence.

BILL Sixpence a week?

FRANK Sixpence a week, Billy.

BILL Did you work anywhere else?

FRANK Ya, making firelighters out of firewood. Firelighters with Joe Thomason in yard. I got a pound but my mother got it, I gave it my mother.

BILL Was it before the hospital?

FRANK When I was at home I used to work at Slipper works.

BILL What about in hospital, you were earning sixpence a week, did you get another job after that?

FRANK Yeah, Slipper works, sawing. First week I caught me elbow, Billy, on electric drill. I bent it like that. Mr. Baxter told me to take my jacket off and go home. Then there is a pump house that has petrol for motor cars.

GREG Petrol pump attendant?

FRANK Yeah, aye, a lot of pumps here. Boxes at the boiler-house full, filling em up and emptying it and filling service and boxes and that, and I got sixpence.

BILL Did you want to do it?

FRANK No, I didn't want to do it Billy.

BILL You got the sixpence, did you get anything as well like tokens?

FRANK No I went to canteen and got some toffee, got some toffee Billy.

BILL How did you buy cigarettes and things like that?

FRANK I couldn't Billy, I couldn't.

BILL How much do they pay now for doing them onions in the kitchens?

FRANK It must be a lot. Alan Bells he got, first week, five pound eighty one, its gone up now, new money. Well I got four seventy five, new money Billy. Got a lot of money.

BILL Have you ever complained about anything in the hospital?

FRANK Nothing, Billy, nothing.

BILL Does that mean you like the hospital?

FRANK No, I don't like it Billy. I'd sooner like hostel, hostels best Billy, hostel.

GREG Did you tell them that, do they know, does the hospital know that you'd like to move out?

FRANK No, they don't know Greg.

GREG You never told them?

FRANK No, I never told em Greg.

GREG Did they ever ask you?

FRANK They've never asked me.

BILL The interesting thing is that you don't like the hospital yet you don't complain.

FRANK I don't like it Billy.

BILL And yet you don't complain at all.

FRANK Well, I don't complain Billy, I was in cafe today and May Charlesworth wouldn't eat her meal and they shoved it down her and broke her wristwatch, broke it.

BILL Where did they do that?

FRANK In the ward Billy.

GREG In the ward?

FRANK Everybody around.

GREG How did you find out?

FRANK She told me, she told me Greg.

GREG Who told you?

FRANK May, May.

BILL Frank, do any other people complain?

FRANK They don't complain Billy, no.

BILL Why not?

FRANK I don't know, Billy, I don't know.

BILL Why do you think it is, Elizabeth, that Frank has never complained to anybody about this.

ELIZ Well he should have done.

GREG Did you complain?

ELIZ I did, yes. I went to see the Matron over it when I was in and she said the wages, the money will go up to £1, she said. So it went up to £1.

GREG Great . . .

ELIZ Yes, sitting down, just letting them rub it in on you, it's awful isn't it.

FRANK I was making the bed, there's a square window on door of the room and I was making the bed and it was white, whitewash in the room and there was a big cockroach or blackjack climbing up and I get my white sheets and there's this great big earwig on it . . . I peed, and I was wiping it up when the nurse in the dormitory banged my head. I had to have two stitches.

BILL Where did he bang your head?

FRANK There, on the wood of the bed – bang my head, right here.

GREG Why did he do that?

FRANK Because I'd peed, and I was wiping it all over.

GREG So he banged your head?

FRANK Banged my head. One morning they had kippers and they left me, my father come visiting me and I told him.

GREG Your father?

FRANK Me father come and I told him.

BILL What did he do?

FRANK Couldn't do nowt.

GREG Did he try to do something?

FRANK No, couldn't do nowt. Get me out, get me out. I was on leave a weekend. — At Reinhill all the patients pockets full of cockroaches, red uns too, aye. On top of dormitory when they had to go into rooms all their pockets were full of cockroaches.

GREG How long ago was that?

FRANK Oh be a long while now. I'd be 25 Billy.

GREG How old are you now?

FRANK Fifty, fifty-one in June — 15th coming.

TERRY Did you ever swallow razor blades?

FRANK Never swallowed razor blades Terry.

TERRY What is it you've swallowed then?

FRANK A needle, a big curve in it about 6 inches long.

BILL Why did you do that Frank?

FRANK I wanted to get away Billy, I wanted to get out of hospital.

ELIZABETH NEELON

BILL Can you tell us how it was you got into hospital in the first place?

ELIZ. Well I was coming home from work and I had my wages on me. I had been working all the week and on this Thursday night with the wages on me I was picked up, just outside near Stock Street near St. Chads and there was two men in a car and they said "Come on", they got out of the car and said "We want you, you're going to Prestwich Hospital". Anyway I went with them. I asked them why the whys and the whens of what it was for but they just said you're going there and they took me, and I was in for about twelve month. Just about twelve month. Anyway I had visitors while I was in. My married brothers came to see me, my sisters in law and my auntie and my cousins came to see me and they said "You won't be very long in this place, you'll be going out".

I had my wages on me. I had to give my front door key up, hand my wages in, me earrings, they took the earrings off me and a necklace of pearls I had around my neck, they took them.

BILL Who took them?

ELIZ. The nurse and she made me take my own clothes off and put hospital clothes on.

BILL Did you go into hospital of your own free will – did you want to go in?

ELIZ. No not really, no because I wasn't really ill.

BILL Can you tell us about the ward, what were your first impressions?

ELIZ. The ward they first put me on was where the old ladies were – the old ladies that were ill and confined to bed, you know, that couldn't get up.

BILL What did you think of that ward?

ELIZ. Well I was really sorry seeing the old ladies, the patients that

were ill and ailing, but I mean to say for myself I didn't think very much.

BILL How much freedom did you have?

ELIZ. Well Dr. McGuinness said I could have village parole for the four years I was in hospital so I was given village parole. I was able to go out to the village, go out and go to town if I wanted to or go out shopping, anything like that.

BILL That was as soon as you got into hospital — straight away?

ELIZ. No not straight away, I was in about, as I say, I was in about two or three years when they made me voluntary and it was only when they made me voluntary that I was able to go out.

BILL And during those years you didn't go out at all.

ELIZ. No, no.

BILL Not even into the village?

ELIZ. No, not even into the village.

BILL Did you ever try during that time to get out?

ELIZ Well I tried my utmost to get out, and then Dr McGuinness said "Oh" he said "Do you want to go home or do you want to go to a hostel or a group home". Well I put my hand up and said a group home I'd like to go to.

BILL This was after four years?

ELIZ. I'll say this much, its very nice to have your freedom in the finish after being a certain amount of time in the hospital like that And I don't think it's good enough if some of the patients in there are fit and well now, and maybe they wasn't so well when they first went in but they are fit and well now. They shouldn't be in there now, but in hostels or group homes.

BILL Do you think there are a lot of people that you know who are in that position?

ELIZ. Well there could be, yes. Well I'd like to see more people leaving the hospital and going to group homes or hostels, when they're ready to go, than having them stuck in hospital all the rest of their life. I mean it's not good enough, some of them have been in there donkey's years, about 20 to 30 years. It's a life time to be in one of those places you know.

PETER PRICE

PETER I first came into hospital with a nervous breakdown when my mother died.

BILL When was that?

PETER About 12 month ago. I've been in hospital about 8 month this time, it's done me no good like you know.

BILL Maybe you can tell us exactly what happened. How did you get into hospital in the first place?

PETER Well, started out with a split personality, imagining I was somebody else. I was running round from town to town. I was going from here to London, London to Paris, Paris to Barcelona. I was going all over the place. My family, my brother thought it was best to be hospitalised so they put me on a section, section 30.

BILL Who took you in?

PETER Prestwich hospital.

GREG Did you want to come?

PETER No, not really, no. But I had nowhere else to go, I had nowhere to live.

GREG Where were you living at the time?

PETER I was living on the road.

SONYA Is this after your mother died?

PETER Yes, see my father sold the house, left me on the street, my stepfather.

BILL So there was no family house to go back to?

PETER No, there were nothing.

GREG But you were brought in as a voluntary patient.

PETER Yes. I started playing up as soon as I got in, saying I would discharge myself and the doctor thought I was a bit irrational you know, so he put me on a section.

GREG That was the section 30.

PETER Yes.

BILL What did that mean?

PETER It means they can keep you for up to 12 month.

GREG Well thats actually another section, that's 26.

PETER Yes, that's what they put me on a 26.

BILL During the year you've been here how have they treated you, what has been your treatment?

PETER I had it rough when I first came, they were giving me injections and everything against me will, I didn't want em but they were giving them me. I was in a locked room, they locked me up.

BILL Why Peter?

PETER They thought I was irrational, thought I was barmy, and I wasn't, I know I wasn't Bill, I knew I was alright you know.

BILL So what sort of treatment did they give you while you were there?

PETER Largactyl

GREG That's what they injected you with?

PETER Yes.

GREG And you told them you didn't want it?

PETER Yes.

GREG And what did they say?

PETER They said you've got to have it, the Psychiatrist had wrote it down.

BILL Did you resist?

PETER I fought like a lion.

BILL What did they do when you fought?

PETER They fought me back.

BILL Tell us about that.

PETER Beat me up.

GREG How did they do that?

PETER Two hold me and two kicked me.

GREG Was anyone else there?

PETER They wouldn't do it on their own. I'd batter them on their own, do you know what I mean. Oh there was loads of them there.

GREG Were there other patients there?

PETER No they couldn't see the other patients, had me in a side room Greg. They had to hold me down to give me the injections, I was struggling.

GREG How many times did they do that, just once?

PETER About 3 times a day.

GREG Did they fight with you each time?

PETER No, I was that dopey you know.

GREG Yes.

SONYA How did you feel after they'd injected you with this?

PETER You don't feel anything, you just go to sleep. It's to calm you down really, that's what they say it's all about to calm you down.

BILL Was there any other kind of treatment at the same time?

PETER Only Largaotte, they said I just needed calming down, there was nothing mentally wrong with me, I was just a bit high. I got discharged and went to live in Whalley Range, but I couldn't cope. I went to a boarding house, £13.50 a week full board and that you know.

BILL Tell us about how you got on there.

PETER Well, I couldn't cope Bill, I used to get £17 a week and that left me £3 to spend, £3.50 a week to spend, so I didn't have much money and the people were very nice. Mr. and Mrs. Langley, 73 Russell Road.

BILL Had the hospital given you any help in finding a place?

PETER Well, I came back once and I told them I was living on the road and they sent me to Salford House which is a doss house in Salford underneath the arches.

GREG Chapel Street?

PETER Yes.

BILL You came back from where?

PETER I came back from the boarding house and I was living

nowhere and I had nowhere to live so I was on the road. So the Social worker didn't give me no money or anything, just gave me an address.

GREG Did you want to go when they discharged you?

PETER Yes, I wanted to go but I didn't know what place I'd be going to. They start finding your clothes some of the lads that lived there you know, so I hit one of them.

GREG At the boarding house?

PETER Yes.

BILL So what happened then?

PETER I just left.

BILL And that's when you went on the road for a week?

PETER Yes for a week. I used to get wet through every night.

BILL And during that time were you in touch with the hospital or with anybody?

PETER I used to come back every day and get my meals. I used to walk it every day from Manchester to here (Prestwich).

GREG So why didn't you stay here then?

PETER They wouldn't admit me for a week.

BILL Did they know where you were living?

PETER Yes, they knew I was on the road . . . Until Sister phoned the psychiatrist, Dr Tarsh, until sister phoned him they couldn't do anything. Well Tarsh let me come back in, I see him a week after and he let me stay, so I've been lucky!!

Lifetimes

One book in seven parts, in which a group of working people tell their own stories in their own words.

The 13 authors of the Lifetimes series all live in Partington, in ill-conceived "overspill" development outside Manchester. They are not a random sample. They are people who for various reasons could not accept the non-community in which they found themselves. And in one way or another they have tried to do something about it. That is how they net

n a sense the book is a by-product of their other activities. Meeting up in a town-without-a-history, they've taken the time to start composing their own history

Through the Lifetimes booklets, they pool the sources and resources of their own experience, from widely-scattered childhoods to the present day. Issues are discussed as they arise. The Partington authors are speaking for themselves, to each other first of all. In speaking out and publishing, they may also speak for others.

Here's a list of the authors, against the numbers of their books.

Jack and Elsie He's a salesman, she works in the Partington People's Rights Office (an informal advice and aid centre). The two went out together as teenagers in post-war Manchester, split up and reunited some 20 years later. They've a young son and two foster children at home.

Frank and Dolly Frank's a Russian, an operator for Co-op Margarine and an active trades unionist. Dolly's from Manchester, works in the People's Rights Office, helps out with pensioners and keeps house for grown up family.

Eric and Betty Both work in People's Rights Office, after raising eight children. Eric's been off work sick for much of his life, then helped found Claimants Union and the Rights Office. He's from Runcorn, she from the Isle of Man.

John Barbados-born, he came to England as a welder, moved into youth work via TA, Judo and his own eight children

5 Sarse and Sally Both Irish, one from either side of the border. He drives a tanker, she's nursing. Communists, but more for community than commissars. Four children, teenage up.

6 Mick and Val From Durham mining families, but well-travelled before coming to Partington. He's a cable engineer, who helped campaign for adventure playground. She's secretary to Community Association.

7 Ron and Hazel Ron's a teacher who went from Barrow to the London School of Economics and stopped half way back. Hazel, from Manchester, has one son and runs a playgroup. Between them they've made a home for several teenagers.

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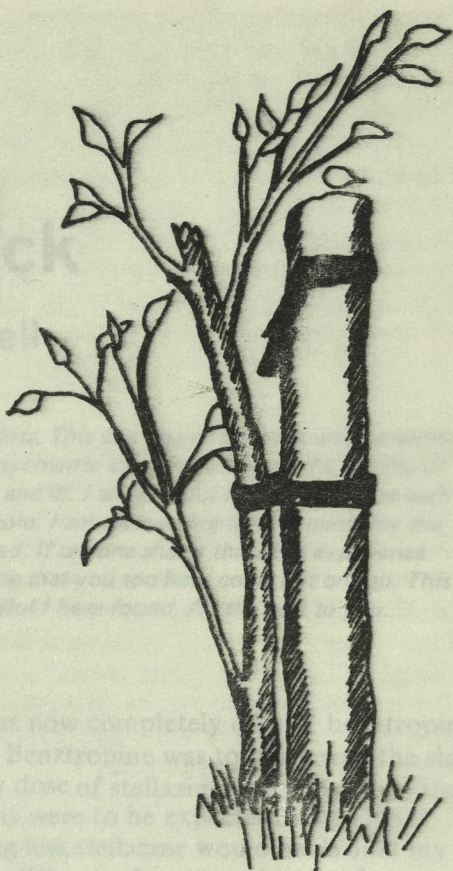
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Lifetimes

Down back in seven years, with a grain of sand and a pinch of rain words.

The 13 authors of this book are all young people, and their stories are not a random selection of events. They are the stories of their lives, the stories of their families, the stories of their friends, the stories of their dreams, the stories of their hopes, the stories of their fears, the stories of their loves, the stories of their lives.

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John - He is now a professional writer and has two children.

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Coming back

by Andrew Mitchell

Everybody has high and low points. This was one of my lows when attending hospital being treated. I was a psychiatric day patient. Since the writing of this story I have been both well and ill. I am grateful for both because each time I learn to see and accept more. I am discovering what should stay the same and what should be changed. If anyone shares this same experience which I had I am happy and hope that you too have come out on top. This life is strange and terribly beautiful I have found. All the best to you.

It was Friday morning. I was now completely off the benzotropine I was very pleased by that. Benzotropine was to take away the side-effects of the stellazine. My dose of stellazine was reduced to the level at which no side-effects were to be expected. I wondered what the result of my taking less stellazine would be. Would my illness re-assert itself? I was sitting in the orange lounge. I was feeling a bit anxious. It was warm in the room. The meaningless burble of the hospital radio faded and crackled in and out. It was very warm in the room. Margaret came slowly through dragging her pale blue dressing gown around her. She was looking for someone to cadge a cigarette off. I felt hot. The sunlight poured in through the smoke. I began to sweat. 'Oh, no!' I thought, 'What's this?' I was not hot all over. The heat was in little thin trickles below my skin. It was not pain. It was ache. I was burning inside. The hair under my arms was sticking. I wanted to think about something, anything. I was shaking. It was as if I was afraid of something. I could not feel the fear but my body seemed to be doing the fear. Each muscle was stretching and unstretching without any control from my consciousness. Tiny stresses and relaxes were moving my feet and my arms and my hands. I put my

feet on the carpet and they would not stay still. I was dry and glowing inside with water leaking through my skin, to escape the pressure building up inside.

'You look awful. What's the matter?' Jenny said plonking herself down on the seat beside me. 'You look all sort of pasty white. Hey did you know that you're shaking? You want the doctor. Are you alright?'

'I don't know. I feel all hot and I can't stop shaking. I can't. I've tried. I'm sweating all over and I can't stop shaking.'

'Hey calm down, for me. Come on calm down for little old me. It's not like you. It must be bad. I'll go and get Sylvia if she's around. She's your nurse isn't she?'

'Yes'

While Jenny was gone I had time to try to get some sort of control but I could not. There was a whole mass of uncoordinated action happening in my body. I could not think. My brain was rapidly becoming one of the warmest spots in my body. It was all occupied with the aching and moving. Little tremors of heat continuously passed through me. Was this my illness again? Or what's going on? Jenny came back with Sylvia.

'Alright, young man, what seems to be the matter?'

'I'm hot all over and I'm sweating and shaking and I can't stop shaking.' She held my wrist and estimated my pulse.

'Have you taken your tablets?'

'Yes, but Dr. Johnson took me off the benztropine and reduced the stellazine.'

'When was that?'

'Yesterday, for last night.'

'And how long have you been like this?'

'Well it started earlier on this morning and its been gradually getting worse.'

'Has it happened before?'

'No, it's just this morning.'

'Do you want the doctor? Is it that bad?'

Jenny interrupted: 'Andrew's not like this normally. He wouldn't be putting it on, now, would he? He looks awful.'

'Do you want the doctor, Andrew? O.K. I'll get the doctor,

It's Dr. Warrington isn't it? I'll give her a bleep.' Sylvia went away. Jenny looked very worried.

Minute spasms ran through me. I knew what it felt like to be an egg in a frying pan. Jenny was talking quietly and soothingly to me but I could not listen. My shoes felt tight. My clothes were irritating. I was getting worried. I was not in control of my body. How long would this last? And I had been so glad to get rid of the benzotropene thinking that I had been making progress. And did I need that drug to keep me going normally now? I did not want that. How destroying that would be to always need the drug. I was getting frightened. Jenny kept on talking and it was good in some way. Every so often I would hear what she was saying and then drift back into ache. People moved round me and nothing mattered but the aching and the shaking.

BERT

"I wish I was as clever as you are, Celis"

And you say to me

Always speak in the right key

But you who hardly went to school

I'd love to sound the right note when I talk

A simple shepherd who sings love songs to his sheep

It is a melody.

"Do you know where the songbirds are, Celis?"

Even when you ask daily questions such as

Of poetic tone or prosaic things

I love to hear the rise and fall

Long after you are gone

And the tune lingers

It is music

When your slow sure words come

finding the note

by Celia Roberts

LOOK BEFORE YOU SPEAK

"Sorry", she said turning to me.

"I wasn't listening".

"That's a pity", I said,

"I haven't listened to myself for years

I rely on the people I speak to to do it for me."

"Jesus!" she said bumping into me.

"I can't see because of my eyes."

"It's a good job", I said.

"Some people can't see

Because their mouths get in the way."

BERT

When your slow, sure words come

It is music

And the tune lingers

Long after you are gone

I love to hear the rise and fall

Of poetic tone on prosaic things

Even when you ask daft questions such as

"Do you know where the gents toilets are, Celia?"

It is a melody.

A simple shepherd who sings love songs to his sheep.

I'd love to sound the right note when I talk

But you who hardly went to school

Always speak in the right key

And you say to me

"I wish I was as clever as you are, Celia"

CARBON COPIES

She walked in with high hopes
She was over the blues
At getting the sack
And getting evicted.
She was picking herself up
And starting again.
She walked in with high hopes
To meet her boss.
There smoking his pipe
Telling of his divorce
Treating her as a friend.

Her day came to make the tea for the man.
With what loving care she brewed
Wiping spills from the tray
Saving the chipped cup for herself
But Horrors!
She had given Mr. Smythe's mug
To Mr. Wagtail.
And Mr. Wagtail's to Mr. Beacon.
Women's voices were heard
Mumbling behind half-closed doors.

Her boss would talk for hours
Telling intimate details
Of his boring love life
Trying to find out if she had a steady
But she only noticed the pile of tapes
And only smiled and nodded
Saying "Oh yes"
When he paused for breath.

She sat in a room
So large she could hardly see the opposite wall
And there was no door
But a 10 foot hole gaping onto the corridor.
She put her headphones on
And typed the last remaining tape
The report gleaming after the 11th attempt

One hand took the work
The other gave her her cards
And a week's pay in lieu of notice
"But why?" was all she could say
"Why," he snapped, "There's no question of why."
She said no more. This was the fourth time
She went to cover her typewriter
And slipped away

The body was stiff
With blue-blotched skin and purple lips
From too many pills.
Beside it lay a note.
And attached (with errors neatly erased)
Was a carbon copy.

Celia Roberts

Celia is 23 and has mostly worked as a secretary. Now she's just packed in a job at Kendals department store to begin a degree course in Bolton. She has no time for Politics – by which she seems to mean people arguing and fighting over abstractions.

THE SCULPTOR

You're my creation and, though very good,
You are carved from a piece of wood.

A piece of wood, or fading ember
Born to die last September.

September's gone, how can you die?
My view is clear, no need to cry.

You've given me shelter and kept me warm
Protected my body from the storm . . .

Your use is such . . . I cant explain.
In circles I repeat myself again.

I've watched you grow and cut you down
Hoard you as you struck the ground.

Until then you'd purified the air
And helped us breathe the atmosphere.
Now you're my creation, piece of wood.
I've seen it all and understood.

JOHN BEST

John was born in Barbados and came to England as a welder. He tells about his childhood in the Lifetimes Book 'Once there was a way'. His wife is from a neighbouring village, but they have raised their nine children in this country, mainly in Partington. John taught judo part-time, then moved into youth work and eventually gave up his factory job. Got on a Polytechnic course and is now a community worker. Wrote this poem during a typing class.

WORKERS' LAMENT 1977

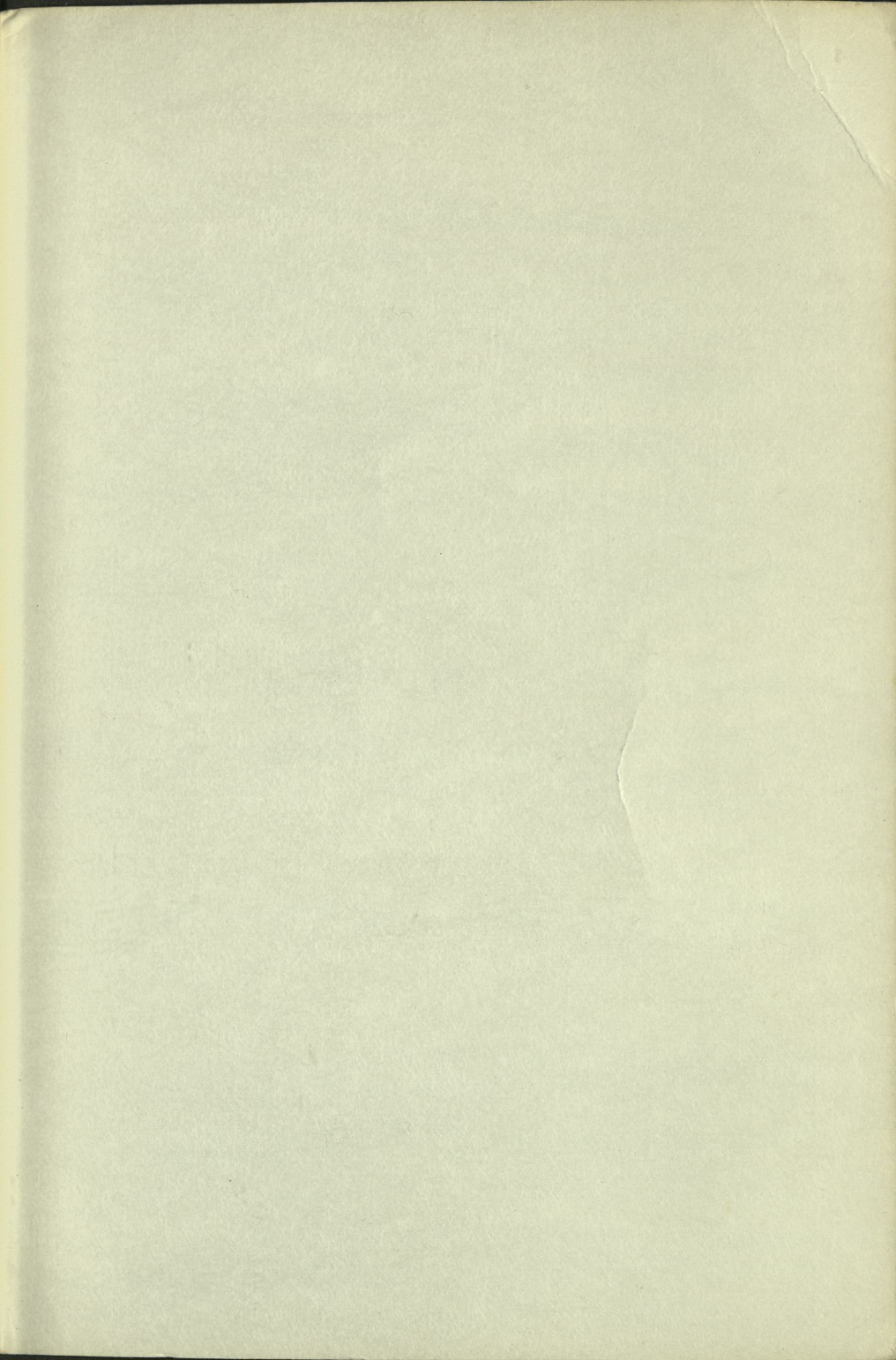
We the willing
Led by the unknowing
Have been doing
So much
For so little
For so long
We are now qualified
To do anything
For nothing.*

Phyllis Maunsell

**What we can do for nothing includes writing in books like this, and in groups like Commonword. Maybe we have to begin doing what we want in the little time and space left to us; begin working in our own ways with other people who share an interest or feeling.*

Working together in our 'free time' – or on the dole – we gain a vantage point. We see more clearly the time and space that has been stolen from our lives. We begin to build a bridgehead, to feel our way towards reclaiming the right to live and work as human beings.

Getting something done, with a bit of help from our friends, we realise that work is enjoyable – and inseparable from friendship. We realise that what passes for 'normal working' is sheer bloody tyranny.



What's in it :

Pages

- 3 FOREWORD by Greg Wilkinson. What this book's about.
- 5 JOINERS SON by Sol Garson. Now he's joining words, half ashamed, half proud of it.
- 6 HEROICS AND ANTI-HEROICS by Terry Martin. Another son, this time running from the weight of his father's expectations.
- 7 RACIST LIES by Steve Marland, who loves to smash the colour bar.
- 9 EASTER DREAMS by Leslie Wilson. In the 'approovy' the going gets tough as Easter leave approaches.
- 24 TEARS AND HARD TO BE A POET by Beverley Brookes. A teenager who turned to poetry when she was lonely and unemployed.
- 26 LET DOWN by Liam. A working-class neighbourhood worker who wonders what the struggle's all for.
- 27 GETTING OUT by Sally G. How an Irish Catholic girl got out to meet the boys.
- 31 FALSE START by Mike Rowe. An attempted novel packed with music, football, sex, psychiatry, politics and even work, by a packing-case maker.
- 59 SIX AN' A BIT by John Koziol. More or less serious feelings about everyday life, and death.
- 65 WHAT MORE CAN YOU SAY? A set of short pieces, mostly by grown ups just learning to read and write.
- 87 THE INDIAN WARS by John Koziol again — how the West was won, and lost to humanity.
- 91 IN FOR A LIFE TIME? Longterm mental patients talk about why they're still inside, tape recordings by Mental Patients' Union.
- 105 COMING BACK by Andrew Mitchell. How it feels to come off a drug you never really chose to take.
- 108 FINDING THE NOTE by Celia Roberts. Three poems, one tough, one tender, the other with something to be bitter about.
- 111 THE SCULPTOR by John Best. A black one-time welder ponders in a typing class: the tree can die, but some thing comes of it.
- 112 WORKER'S LAMENT 1977 by Phyllis Maunsell. Work — and unemployment — in a nutshell.
- 112 FOOTNOTE — but it's not all bad!