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***TheFED Emagination* “Making a difference with words”**

Welcome to the latest E MAG long overdue— looking back, looking forward lots of things to consider and to follow up and another festival to make many of these things fresh and inspiring...if you can't make this years festival this newsletter will give you a taste of what's happening all round the UK and further afield, ideas don't stay still, we can float them off and watch them grow...and rediscover things we had forgotten within us and waiting to ignite around us...Where better to start than a review of a work by one of the founding spirits of community writing and publishing. Over to Dave Chambers from Newham Writers Workshop.

Lightning of Your Eyes Author Chris Searle

Publisher: Smokestack Books, ISBN: 0-9551061-1-7, 124 pages, 58 poems, Price £6.99

I'd heard of Chris Searle, the teacher, in the early seventies without realising he was, is, the poet Chris Searle. The story made headlines in the national dailies. His Eastender working class secondary comprehensive pupils famously went on strike after he lost his job for publishing their poetry in the now iconic anthology "Stepney Words" This is described in 'Strike of Words', which begins "*Anyone can write a poem, I still hold that*". In 'Lil and Bill' we find that the school cleaners were with the pupils, "*they ordered you to rub it off / they told all the cleaners / to rub off the words / You all said no*" so the graffiti stayed. It was this solidarity against the school governors that helped in his eventual return to their classroom.

I attended one of the readings when this book was launched about four years ago. I listened to Chris reading some of the poems and bought a copy. I asked if it would be OK for me to write a review for the Fedmag and he agreed. There's now an eFedMag, EMagination, so this review is later than planned.

The opening poem, CNR (1967) sets the scene as we and the young poet are carried across Canada. The beautiful scenery is described in a few words as the train trundles on but the highlight is meeting the passengers, some soldiers sharing a crate of beer, a nun who says she'll pray he can find work (he gets a job as a teacher), a woman who gives him a lucky dollar, the trainman "*Who came from near me in England, London / Now turned priest of Canada as it whirls past*" and quite a few others. This is not a long poem but we do manage to meet a lot of people. We travel through the US, 'Greyhound' (1968), "*a white soldier / tells me about the Cong... / ...a black soldier / smooths away / with a brown skinned girl / he has just met...*" a visit to 'Skid Row' then on to the Caribbean, 'Boys' (Tobago 1969) "*While kites eclipse the sun...*".

As we travel on through the author's life we meet some of his heroes, some we have heard of, others whom history has tried to forget. 'A Dream of Alfred Linnell' is the longest poem in the book and imagines the thoughts of an unemployed Eastender, Alfred Linnell, after he was fatally injured in a Mounted Police charge on a crowd in 1887.

This brings us to East London in the seventies. Stepney, where Teacher Chris became famous, or infamous if you choose, and during his time there he met another of his heroes, another teacher, Blair Peach. The 'Poem for Blair Peach' is one of the shortest in the book. It is also heartfelt, angry, and determined that we 'never forget', and a recent statement from the Metropolitan Police, twenty five years after his death at the hands of the Met's 'Riot Squad', is testimony to the fact that like Alfred Linnell, Blair Peach is not forgotten.

There follows a mixture of travel and of more heroes (my word, not his). Because the leader of the fight against cruel oppression 'Beloved Bandit' in Grenada is just as big a hero as Sylvia Pankhurst whose grave the author visited in Ethiopia. And the other hero who read her first letter instead of taking it to a reader "*She paid him scarce money / to read out these close words to her / and he would gossip...*". Another oppression defeated.

The Yemeni men who worked in the Sheffield steel mills, who meet the author as English teacher, express their feelings in a new language and become heroes.

Then there is cricket. One of the author's great loves. I don't know much about any sport where you're allowed to hit a moving ball, weird. But, after lots of readings, I found that in 'Third Man' and 'Raising a Sightscreen' there is more understanding of cricket imparted than in a shelfful of Wisdens or rule books.

It is fitting that the last poem in the book takes us back to the beginning, but being this book it is a new beginning. We started on the Canadian Pacific Railway and we end at Sheffield Railway station on the bridge over the lines. The author is crossing and meets a group of seven or eight year old schoolchildren who run from side to side watching the trains, excited by the exotic destinations, 'Leeds, Barnsley and Cleethorpes' and he is taken back to his own youth. He is brought back to reality by the last child who smiled as she passed. "*her eyes flashed pathways / her flesh and blood shone / as a moment of forever / she waved her hand / lifting it to a face of beauty / like a flag of the human future*"

It's pocket size makes this book ideal reading on the train. The fifty-eight poems here are a mix of new and selected poems, I've mentioned a few of my favourites, but after rereading so many times even the not so favoured are good, informative and enjoyable. If I'd written this review four years ago it would have been different, all I can say is I still read, and enjoy it, I don't have another book quite like this one.

What the poems appear to have in common is they are all about people. Most are ordinary people, some extraordinary, and others are just folk the author met on his travels through life. The extraordinary people, the heroes (my word again), are those who act when they see an injustice, often they are labelled as rebels, rioters or just plain troublemakers. But all of the rebels in this book have a cause – to correct an injustice, as the Stepney Schoolchildren did, and Sylvia Pankhurst, and Julian Fedon (Beloved Banditi), and Blair Peach, and...

Words are heroes too, in 'Surprised' and 'Banner', the message of clearly written graffiti surprises, wakes us up and makes us think. Even the cover illustration shouts "Long Live The Revo". There is power in those words, but this book tells of the people behind that power. They are just people like us, but they use words boldly.

Chris Searle now has a grey beard and greying hair, but beware, handle this book with care: In the Lightning of Your Eyes there is fire, still.

Dave Chambers—Newham Writers Workshop

Meanwhile down on the South Coast—GROW NEWS-

Grow is not just a writing group they run a series of events including outings, film nights, social evenings including readings and a magician.

WEBSITE DEVELOPMENT— There is a new page in our website called 'GROW Together' which will hopefully make it easier for our members to participate in our group activities. The Writing Submission Form makes it possible for our members to submit their writing through the GROW website. The form can be accessed through the 'Group and Homework Exercises' in the Calendar and also from the 'Gallery.' Membership Application Form. This can be used for both new membership applications and renewals. Skill Sharing Form. Another new feature so our members can let us know of the skills and knowledge that they have and could share with us. We are a very modest lot and often keep our talents hidden when they could be put to good use instead! Order copies of GROW Publications from the 'Books' section of our website!

Join the GROW Mailing List. We finally have a facility so our website visitors can sign up to receive email updates and newsletters. See us at <http://www.grow.btck.co.uk/>

Stevenage Survivor's poetry group

Strange name that...are we survivors of Stevenage? A moot question... or of poetry? Of course it is survivors of what I like to call mental discord, as many people are I suspect, but we gather specifically to write, not only poetry, sometimes prose.

We are a motley group, some well read some non readers. We begin the evening by chatting and drinking tea and munching fruit and biscuits provided by Lucia, then Roy calls us to order and the person chosen at the last meeting begins to "take charge," this is now his/her workshop and the theme belongs to that person. The theme is given, whether described in words or a distribution of written suggestions; sometimes we have had flowers or stones, or some article that will inspire a poem. For the next 20 minutes we write, in silence (except for someone who shall be nameless, munching biscuits). The workshop facilitator then calls time and after a few "wait one more minute Pleases" we begin with that person to read out loud from our scribbling. Sometimes someone will ask for another to read but all receive a pat on the back, always well deserved because the standard of putting words together in a beautiful way is very high.

I have seen people too shy to write for themselves let alone read aloud at first, turn into veritable poets who can't wait to share their thoughts and words. There is something in the way the table is formed and run that brings out a real and structured way of thinking. We have fun and make friends I think the underlying thread is how one person described the meetings "The acceptance of each other is what makes it what it is"

Cynthia Price.



Fed Exec 2010

John Malcolmson, Roy Birch, Louise Glasscoe, Dave Chambers, Lucia Birch

**Missing from this picture:
Sally Flood, Amer Salaam,
Roger Drury.**

The group met through the year alternating meetings in London and Sheffield, debating issues, projects and planning the Festival.

Roy Birch after sturdy leadership as chairman for last couple of years has resigned.

Member groups - this year

Grass Roots Open Writers-GROW (Sussex), High Peak Writers (Buxton), Stevenage Survivors, Southwark Mind, Basement Writers, Newham Writers Workshop (London), Word For Word (Wakefield), Sharrow Writers, Heeley Writers (Sheffield), Pecketwell, (Halifax), SOUNDWORK (Forest of Dean),

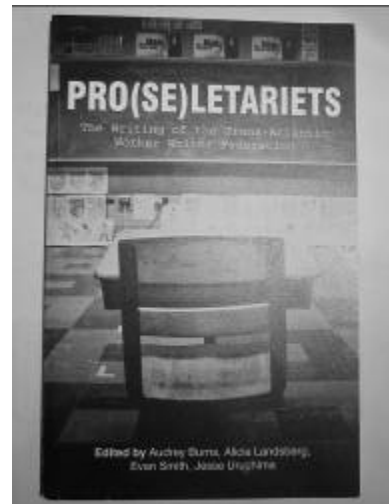
Bread is Rising (New York), Potsville Open Writers-POW (Pensylvania)

PRO(SE)LETARIETS Trans-Atlantic Fed

Following the visit by Steve Parks and his Students from Syracuse University New York to attend the Fed Fest last year we agreed to co-op Steve as Trans-Fed exec member and this latest project really builds on the now several years of exchanges and collaborations.

The *TransFed* Project brought together writers from the FED and writers from Syracuse, NY to talk about their education. These writers quickly moved to talking about how their working class background, representing a diversity of heritages, abilities, and sexualities, impacted their experience as students. The Transfed Project has now completed PRO(SE)LETARIETS an anthology of writing from this project published by New City Community Press

From the introduction- Literature is valued because it captures the variety and depth of the human experience, but does literature value all writers?....to truly understand this point, we as readers must expand and reform what is defined as 'literature and who are respected as 'writers'. We must learn to read and understand writing differently.



Trans fed Manifesto-

1. Education should teach global humanity (not the humanities) based on an alternative sense of history where cooperative values and restorative justice are primary.

2. Education should take place in a safe environment free from other traditional social/economic biases with self respect for each other as individuals as well as members of different classes, heritages and sexualities

And as a proof of the power of words page 112 revisits the poem Ban Fascism by Roger Mills of Basement Writers which closed "Feds under the Bed", the performance of the FED history which toured to the USA in 2001. Here are just a few fragments seek it out and wonder what changes as time passes.

"...It is a white paint daubing on a high brick wall which Shouts BAN FASCISM....."

Its paint is now beginning to fade. I remember seeing it when I had no conception of the word's meaning and I remember not asking my parents in case it was something rude.

....The work of those graffiti artists is as deep and honourable as anything hanging in the national Gallery. Maybe more so. It doesn't belong in a museum though but where it is in the streets. Its audience is you and me. It is a plea and a warning.....

Pray the fading white paint need never be renewed..."

PRO(SE)LETARIETS

ISBN 978-0-9819560-7-7

www.newcitypress.org

Different Media

The FED on TOUR? -How do we spread the words? About our writing and the FED, could we each host an event and promote to a wider audience about our history ? How can we do it? Some

from funding, some using our skills.....

There are now around 200 community radio stations broadcasting in the UK, around the world they have become ways for local voices to be heard. You could record a set of your work as a voice spot-or your views as a soapbox, speakers corner feature.



There are many literary, arts, community festivals where you could take your work to a wider audience. You may also explore linking your group to other projects-words are the oxygen of all culture - short films could be based on a poem or you could animate the words. A box covered in words or filled with words is that a word exhibition or a Sculpture? Postcards, bookmarks, collaboration with music/ as lyrics or performed with a soundtrack. A series of photographs inspired by your words, or pictures that have inspired your writing.

Below a drama written to remember the struggle for working people when land was enclosed in 1831 just as relevant today when the government is threatening to sell off the Forests.

HIGH PEAK Writers have written and recorded ‘The last laugh’ a play for radio.

They have also performed it at local festivals, the process of writing, casting, rehearsing and getting access to help both editing, technical and thinking about how you want it to sound are key parts of the task go on air.

Written by: Paul Rees aka Premraja, Mo Law, Pat Thompson, Louise Glasscoe, Roger Lill, Rob Hanlon. We would like to thank the following for their invaluable help with this project: Alan Ogden, Clare Thompson, Head of Drama at Buxton Community School and pupils, and David Bell of High Peak Community Arts, New Mills.

All the info you need to find out more is at www.high-peak-writers.btck.co.uk.

TONY MAY -TIMELESS

The one good thing about waking up, pulling the curtains and seeing one of those horrid grey skies and wet weather days staring back at you, is that you feel content to sit quietly at a computer and write something. Today is one of those days and thus I am relaxed and itching to tell you all the story of my ‘Timeless’ album.

Like me, however, ‘Timeless’ is an odd beast. With its mixture of classical music, acoustic rock, country and a 60s feel it isn’t an album to fit neatly into one musical genre. Mind you, considering I have a personal record and cd collection of over 5,000 items and over 11,000 songs from all kinds of artists on my ipod that is really no surprise, I suppose? Robert Brandon is a man I have a lot to thank for. At one of the lowest ebbs in my life, it was Robert who took it upon himself to encourage me with my writing and got me to join the ‘Shorelink Community Writers’ club. Joining Shorelink is one of the best things I have ever done and the love, friendship and support I have gained there has enabled me to start to believe in myself and start doing something with all of my creative talents. Since joining in 2004, I have written a novel and recorded 4 albums as well as become your HT reporter and regular you tube buddy! Not bad, eh?



Tony May 'Timeless' -see www.myspace.com/timelessalbum

Alison Smith - A Pesky Person



I am pleased to announce that on Tuesday 21st September I was a finalist in the SMK Foundation 2010 Awards (Consumer Action) sponsored by Which? and presented by patron Jon Snow the broadcaster. This is a great boost to Pesky People campaign for Disabled and Deaf digital access and hot on the back of a major Arts Council England Award of £25,000 from the Digital Content Development programme. OLLI is a digital access project with partners The Workshop (based in Sheffield) and audience research with Disabled people and venues taking place by Black Country Touring and Audiences Central respectively. You can read about the awards ceremony on Pesky People website blog <http://bit.ly/9CiRs5>

What does TheFED mean to you?

It means an opportunity to share ideas; network; find inspiration for our writing, publishing, music and workshops; discover what other groups and individuals are doing all over the UK and abroad; celebrating groups' achievements, most of whom have very limited budgets, i.e. against the odds; exploring common ground with other groups and individuals. To me TheFED is not just concerned with writing but with all aspects of community life, i.e. sharing common values, aims and objectives and giving the community a voice and developing its role by working together. Over the last few years TheFED has been revamped and its development is an ongoing process.

What do you think TheFED achieves?

TheFED achieves all that it means to me through the democratisation of the internet, which is key to its development and success. Publishing is now accessible to all; it is no longer only the domain of the privileged in society. TheFED also provides a physical space, once a year, where people can meet, share ideas, celebrate achievements and mutually benefit each other. Success breeds success.

The next ambition for TheFED would be to have a longer period where we can literally 'see each other' once a year. It could work towards recruiting more groups and individuals and celebrating achievements in different localities in the UK and abroad. It could pool its resources, such as individuals who lead successful workshops, and draw on this expertise and experience to benefit other groups and individuals within TheFED. I hope that my working on TheFED Executive Committee will help to shape this desired future.

Louise Glasscoe

TheFED— what is it good for?

Sally –'I think the most important thing is bringing other people in and I've enjoyed every fed festival I've been to 'That's why I'm still here'

Lucia- Just being and interacting with people you learn snippets of this and snippets of that but you really want to be in all of them, you should go away being inspired with all the creativity and enthusiasm you've encountered

Amer- I think the All the Federation Agms have been about meeting new people and new ideas and if you bring new people in your own organisation grows just like a family, sharing workshops and new people is the thing, that is vital.

John- Interaction with other writers there are two aspects of workshops I enjoy running workshops but I also enjoy the inspiration you get from taking part in workshops and this year with an extra session its even better. Even though I've done a lot of writing I still get inspired by attending workshops

Louise- They're always good and I enjoy meeting new people and people I've known over many years

Dave—The Federation gains new members and I gain inspiration,

Jessica-An atmosphere that welcomes and allows people to write and talk about their ideas and the celebratory readings and it works for all ages including myself and my father.

Some thoughts for the Newsletter...I am a Singer/Songwriter by nature and, before my first Fed Fest, was rather apprehensive about spending a long weekend with a load of "Writers". In fact I enjoyed myself so much that I could hardly wait for the next one. I continue to be inspired and encouraged both personally and as a member of Stevenage Survivors. There is so much diversity within the Fed... so many stories and histories...so much creativity in all its forms... some truly amazing work being produced within, and about, local communities. And its the networking and sharing of all this experience which is so vital and inspiring to everyone in the Fed. I have been on the Exec for a while now, and still find it really interesting, challenging and enjoyable. **LUCIA**

I saw the piece from James Bar Bowen about the Raise Your Banners songwriting competition and his winning entry; there was also poetry competition that I and Andy Croft the editor of Smokestack Books judged. The competition was on the theme of 'Living in 21st Century Yorkshire'. The winning poem was from **Steve Ely** (Wakefield) entitled '**Objective One**'

Bruce Barnes

Objective One

By Steve Ely (First Prize)

Through the mists of an April dawn
a crowd flowed along Manvers Way, so many,
I had not thought the dole had undone so many,
sending them herded from the fuming valleys
of Dearne and Dove and Don and Rother
into the bus bays and car parks of Ventura,
Tesco and Next PLC, where they pour
from coaches, minicabs and cabriolets,
lighting cigarettes, adjusting iPods,
pressing mobiles to their ears, striding out
in polished patent, pinstripes breaking
on the buckled instep, tailored skirts
and long coats flaring on the breeze.

Sixty thousand work here, in distribution,
call-centres, light industry and retail,
along the roundabouted blacktop
ribboning from Birdwell to Barnsdale,
the EU funded M1 to A1 link road,
Objective One, bringing light to parochial
darkness,
access, investment, enterprise, jobs;
until sterling collapses, Kolkata undercuts
and the market-zeitgeist lurches,

retrenching capital in gold and gilts
and the provincia flips once more
to wrecking-ball brownfield-bombsite,
the full monty of dole and dereliction,
where brassed-off, hand-to-mouth yokels
are abandoned to dearth and absurdity,
their eh-bah-gum tutu dreams.

Once there were woods and open fields,
fens in the flatland, villages on the hill.
Bullheads in the millstream, polecats
in the warren; red kite, raven, white-tailed eagle,
over the wolf-prowled heath. Danelaw sokeland,
assarted from the wildwood, torp in the langthwaite clays;
the angelcynn muster at Ringstone Hill,
where three wapentakes meet; Oswald's manor
by the holy well - belltower, gatehouse,
carucates for geld. Here, beyond Whitwell
and the five boroughs, beyond Mercia's
clement mid-lands, we beat the bounds
at rogationtide from Bamburgh, Durham
and York; the dragon-prowed river, the waycross
on the roman road, hoar apple tree,
whit's Gospel Thorn, the tumulus on Askern Hill;
these are the roots that clutch, these the sprouting
corpses,
these are the fragments, we shore up against our ruins.

THE FED WRITING FESTIVAL 2010

Saturday 6th November—9.30am - 9pm

Faraday House Old Gloucester Street Holborn, London,

Yes we move up a step and extend the day so you can enjoy the full Fed experience. Groups from across the UK, visitors from everywhere The day will include a range of inspiring workshops, talks and meetings. TheFed annual meeting that shapes the year to come and gives everyone a chance to speak up for their ambitions. Followed by the 'Spirit of The FED' reading. The Festival Fee is £10 per head for FED members (£15 non members) and this includes all workshops, a buffet style lunch, materials and refreshments.

Our challenge is to bring all that makes the FED unique and recharge it at the festival and then continue to build its influence of what writing and publishing should offer everyone, a voice, a place to listen to each other, to gain an audience for those who too often fall outside the loud exchanges of headlines or the shadowy passages of power.

We maybe separated by distance and opportunity but what we have is a treasure, the courage to mix words and make them our own, Politicians and Soldiers grasp at poetry to justify their deeds, we must not be feared of our ambitions, to push our view of this clumsy world that has little care for thought that does not earn. RWD.



The poster features the 'TheFED' logo, which is a stylized 'F' with 'TheFED' written inside. Above it is the text 'a network of Writing' and below it 'and Community Publishers'. To the right, a speech bubble says 'Making a difference with words'. Below the logo, there is a list of member groups: 'Surrey Writers, Middlesex - Wakefield Writers, West Yorkshire', 'Buckingham Writers, London 2010 - Word for Word, London 09', 'Wiltshire, Dorset, Yorkshire - High Peak Writers, Sussex, South', 'Alder Well Learning Community, Solihull, West Yorkshire', 'Barnet Writers London 09', 'Great North Open Writers, Seakell, East Sussex - Newham Writers, London 07', 'New Leaf, Manchester - Potlatch Open Writers, Pennsylvania, USA - Southwick Wood, London 07/8'. The main text reads: 'TheFED One Day FEDfest and AGM Saturday 6 November 09.30-21.00 Faraday House (London premises of Syracuse University) 48-51 Old Gloucester Street, Holborn, London WC1N 3AE'. A black box contains the text: '£10.00 for members and £15.00 for non-members for all workshops and refreshments all day'. At the bottom, it says: 'Please visit our website for a timetable where booking forms can be downloaded'. Contact information: 'Phone: Lucie Birch 01438 225377 or 07954 141127 Post: TheFED, c/o 156 Gowerline Crescent, Barnage, Harle 922 9L, York; fed@fedonline.org.uk www.thefed.org.uk or www.fedonline.org.uk'. It also includes: 'if you want to join TheFED as an individual £5.00 p.a. (unwaged); £10.00 p.a. (waged) or as a group £15.00 p.a. (unwaged) or £25.00 p.a. (waged), please phone Louise Glascock, Treasurer and Membership Secretary, on 01296 77823 or email glascock@thefed.co.uk'.

Celebrate 25 years of writing with Newham Writers Workshop

Saturday 21st May 2011 at St John's Church Community Rooms, The Broadway, Stratford E15 1NG

9.30 am – 9.00 pm Admission: £10 for Newham Residents & FED members, £15 others

2011 is the 25th Anniversary of **Newham Writers Workshop**. Our Festival of Writing is to celebrate this milestone. We are planning a full day of workshops covering all aspects of writing: poetry, prose, writing for children, novels, journalism etc. There will be morning sessions, early afternoon and late afternoon sessions. Some workshop leaders we will provide ourselves and some we hope to draw in from our friends in the FED. If you would like to run a workshop on the day, please contact us. In the evening, we will hold an open mic sessions of readings, some of which will have come out of the day.

As part of the day, we will be launching a 25 year anthology, an anthology of anthologies. For the 25 years of its existence we have been publishing yearly anthologies of members work The 25 year anthology consists of some of the best of the over 400 pieces published over that time, from our early days in the 80s to the present day.

Imitation is the best form of flattery, and yes, we love TheFEDfest so much, we couldn't think of anything better for our 25th. More details as we get them, at www.newhamwriters.org.uk.

Newsletter thanks to Exec committee, Ashley, Paul, Dave and all contributors please keep things coming in FED EMAG newsletter –SOUNDWORK@coalway.f9.co.uk