Bush Writers

1940 - 2012

A Witness Seminar

Bush House

9th December 2009

Bush Writers
Witness Seminar
9th December 2009

Contents

Cover Image: Voice - the monthly radio magazine programme which broadcasts modern poetry to English-speaking India in the Eastern Service of the BBC. l-r, sitting Venu Chitale, a member of the BBC Indian Section, M.J.Tambimuttu, a Tamil from Ceylon, editor of Poetry (London) T.S. Eliot ; Una Marson, BBC West Indian Programme Organiser, Mulk Raj Anand, Indian novelist, Christopher Pemberton, a member of the BBC staff, Narayana Menon, Indian writer. l-r, standing George Orwell, author and producer of the programme, Nancy Parratt, secretary to George Orwell, William Empson, poet and critic

Bush Writers
Seminar
9th December 2009

Dear Friends and Colleagues,

The purpose of this three-part seminar series is to bring together *Bush Writers* (former and current, published and aspiring) in order to share their experiences of and memories as "secret agents" of literature at Bush House.

This seminar series is part of a larger research project and a unique partnership between The Open University and the BBC World Service.[1] It examines diasporic cultures at Bush House from 1940 to 2012 when the Bush House era will end as staff move out and take up new working premises (see project outline pg. 6)

The 'witness seminar' is a special form of oral history. It brings together those who have shared experience of an event or, as in this case, of working in the same institution. The seminars will simulate and emulate a live feature broadcast. The presentations will be recorded and some of the written, audio and visual material gathered across the research project and seminar series will be featured on BBC and/or Open University websites (see details, pg. 7).

With a few notable exceptions (for example, *Modern Poetry in Translation*, Special Issue, No 22, 2003 edited by Daniel Weissbort) very little work has been done on the subject of Bush Writers. Our project plugs a gap in public and academic knowledge about the remarkably polyglot, cosmopolitan and creative cultures of Bush House which have contributed to making it a globally respected institution that can speak in many tongues to audiences around the world.

This is our last seminar in the series but our research continues. We would like to thank all the writers who have participated in the seminar series as well as our audience participants. It has been a truly delightful and pleasurable experience. The deep and, at times, startling insights and intellectual passion with which 'Bush Writers' have presented their work and talked about their lives bears witness to the creative energy catalysed by Bush House – a home from home for so many but also a place of many contradictions. We hope that the seminars will make a small but lasting contribution to acknowledging the magic of the 'diasporic voices and literary lives' that have made Bush House such a fascinating place to work and to study.

Marie Gillespie and Zinovy Zinik

[1] The seminar is part of a research project entitled 'Tuning In: Diasporic Contact Zones at the BBC World Service'. It is funded by the UK's Arts and Humanities Research Council Programme 'Diasporas Migration and Identities' (Award reference AH/ES58693/1). The project is based at The Open University and led by Prof. Marie Gillespie. The 'Bush Writers' project is directed by Zinovy Zinik and Marie Gillespie. Warm thanks and appreciation to Sophie West, our project researcher and administrator, and to Hugh Saxby, Jessica Macfarlane, Robert Seatter and Alban Webb. If you would like to contribute, please contact: m.gillespie@open.ac.uk

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Timetable

0915-0945 *Refreshments and Welcome*

0945-0950 *Welcome and Introduction* Marie Gillespie, Zinovy Zinik, Hugh Saxby

Chair: *Dr James Procter, (Reader in Modern English and Postcolonial Literature, Newcastle University)*

0950-1005 Bill Schwarz
1005-1015 Daniel Weissbort
1015-1020 Salwa Jarrah
1020-1025 Robin White
1025-1030 Vesna Goldsworthy
1030-1035 Venuste Nshimiyimana
1035-1040 Mick Delap
1040-1045 Gustavo Artiles
1045-1100 Discussion

11.00-11.15 Coffee Break

1115-1120 Svitlana Pyrkalo
1120-1125 Julian May
1125-1130 Annabel Dilke
1130-1135 James Kenneth Jones
1135-1140 Tim Ecott
1140-1145 Isabel Wolff
1145-1150 Andrei Rogatchevski

12.00 - 13.00 Open discussion and closing address by James Procter

13.00-14.00 Lunch

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Seminar Questions

Writers will address one or more of the questions below in their presentation:

Has the cosmopolitan culture of Bush House informed your writing and, if so, how?

How have the themes of translation, migration and mobility (actual and imagined) across national, cultural and linguistic boundaries featured in your work? *(How have experiences of migration affected your writing? How do you translate ideas/stories in your writing? Do you think that a diasporic perspective [being insider and outsider or having ambivalent ties] is important to your writing?)*

Has your work for radio affected your style or practice as a writer or vice versa? *(What's the difference between writing for radio journalism and fiction, poetry and other genres?)*

Have the social, literary and artistic networks in and around Bush House contributed to your literary career if so how?
(Are there regular meeting places at Bush House or outside, such as the Freelance Rooms, pubs and café's where writing is discussed and promoted?)

How and when did you write while working at Bush House? Maybe you even wrote your novel or poems on the night shift?
(Did you write at home at night to relieve the pressures of reporting bad news or on the train or on the night shift?)

Issues for general discussion:
How has Bush House culture changed in your knowledge and experience?
(What have been the key turning points in Bush House culture? How has the working culture changed and how has that affected opportunities to write for radio and other genres? Is Bush working culture cosmopolitan and if so in what sense?)

Bush House career and life trajectories
(What opportunities exist for combining journalistic and literary career at Bush House? Do you know of Bush writers who have been celebrated in their own language/home country and ignored in the Anglophone world or vice versa?)

Bush Writers
1940-2012

Project Outline

Aims of Project

- To document the works of Bush writers via a series of witness seminars aimed at eliciting oral histories/testimonies of working and literary lives at Bush House.
- To collaborate with Bush writers (past and present, famous and aspiring) to create web materials (audio, video, text, image) that bring to public awareness and celebrate the creativity and cosmopolitanism of Bush writers/workers.
- To contribute to BBCWS 'Moving Houses' Heritage Project which aims to document the working cultures of Bush House before departure in 2012.
- To contribute to the BBC History website and document the contribution of the BBC cultures and creative workers to British cultural life.
- To contribute to the broader academic project based at The Open University which examines diasporic cultures at BBC World Service (see below).

Project

This project is funded by the UK's Arts and Humanities Research Council and involves a unique partnership with the BBCWS. It investigates changing cultures at the BBC World Service (1932-2012) with a special emphasis on illuminating the often invisible contributions of diasporic broadcasters to the BBC and to British cultural life more generally. It examines the cultures and politics of cosmopolitanism at Bush House and plugs a gap in public and academic knowledge about the World Service. For more information see:

http://www.open.ac.uk/socialsciences/diasporas/themes/poetries_on_and_off_air.htm

Project Team

Marie Gillespie and Zinovy Zinik (project co-ordinators), Anna Aslanyan (translator and writer), Sophie West (senior research assistant and project administrator), Hugh Saxby (advisor), Robert Seatter (advisor), Jess Macfarlane (advisor), Alban Webb (advisor), Hannah Mills (research Assistant), Jack Latimer (web advisor).

Bush Writers
Contributing to BBC and Open University Websites

A website for Bush writers past and present? Some ideas:

We would welcome your suggestions for developing a Bush Writers website. What materials might be posted there, and what activities and interactions might be fostered?

The material we gather will contribute to one or more of three websites:

a) BBCWS *Moving Houses* Heritage Project (Hugh Saxby)

b) BBC History's *Oral histories of Bush Writers* and their contributions to the BBC and British Culture (Robert Seatter)

c) Open University's academic project on *Diasporic and Cosmopolitan Culture at BBCWS* (Marie Gillespie and Alban Webb)

The materials gathered during the research will be selected for above mentioned aims but the same materials can be presented in different versions for different purposes and audiences.

- An introductory essay by Zinovy Zinik [ZZ] and Marie Gillespie [MG] about the aims and character of the project for both public and for academic audiences

- An interview series (with the audio version attached, moving and/or still images) with the Bush old-timers, such as Nick Rankin and Tony Rudolf about writers and poets' community in Bush House, as seen through their personal experience: communication between different nationalities and ethnicities in Bush House and outside it, as reflected in their lives and works, intellectual and literary and political networks in London.

- Essays and extracts either *from* established names in literature whose careers were connected to Bush House – such as Orwell – or *about* them. Interviews by ZZ and Anna Aslanyan [AA] with those who personally knew writers like George Mikes (Hungarian) or Georgy Markov (Bulgarian).

- Radio Voices/Literary Lives a special feature page dedicated to works of literature with the subject of radio as the main theme of the book – such as *Human Voices* (1980) by Penelope Fitzgerald (about Bush House during the Second World War) – or, indeed, ZZ's *Russian Service*.

- Diaspora Writers @ Bush Contemporary writers or poets famous in Britain but hardly known in their motherland, others are familiar only to their respective audiences in their native countries. Interviews about the doubleness of their existence, who or what guided them through their first years in UK, how the radio style affected their prose writing.

- Web materials to include (among others): George Orwell, Mulk Raj Anand, William Empson, Tayeb Salih, Mahmud Kianush, Hamid Ismailov, Anthony Rudolf, David Caute, Anselm Hollo, Mohammed Hanif, Muriel Spark, Penelope Fitzgerald.

- Website could offer writers today the chance to contribute.

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Biographies and Extracts

Chair: Dr James Procter

James Procter is Reader in Modern English and Postcolonial Literature at Newcastle University. He is the author of Dwelling Places: Postwar Black British Writing (MUP, 2003), *and* Stuart Hall (Routledge, 2004), *the editor of* Writing Black Britain-1948-1998 (2000) *and the co-editor of* Comparing Postcolonial Diasporas (Palgrave, 2008). *He has published numerous articles on related subjects in journals such as New Formations and Interventions and currently sits on the editorial boards of Atlantis and the Journal of Postcolonial Writing. James is currently Principal Investigator on a collaborative AHRC project looking at the relationship between readers, audiences and migration (http://www.devolvingdiasporas.com/<file://localhost/OWA/njrp3@fangorn.ncl.ac.uk/redir.aspx>). He is also working on the BBC Written Archives at Reading as part of an ongoing investigation into West Indian literary production at the BBC during the 1940s, 1950s and 1960s.*

Bill Schwarz

Bill teaches in the School of English and Drama at Queen Mary, University of London. He has recently edited West Indian Intellectuals in Britain; Caribbean Literature after Independence: the case of Earl Lovelace; and The Locations of George Lamming.

Gustavo Artiles

The Venezuelan G Artiles devoted his time from very early to writing about the arts and science. He was a book reviewer for various magazines while working in Radio Nacional in the production of music and literature programmes until the late 70´s, when he came to London as a producer in the BBC Latin American Service. In 1987 he became a freelance translator and interpreter. Previously, he was the translator of Arthur Jacobs´ A Brief History of Music. *In the 90´s he went back home for a while, when he taught history of music in a couple of music schools. Back in London, he investigated the problems surrounding Shakespeare´s identity, "*mainly for the benefit of foreigners who have no access to the sources*". The result, some years later, was a book,* Un enigma llamado Shakespeare, *published by the Fondo de Cultura Económica de México in 2003, followed by a Spanish edition in 2004. The book was prefaced by another ex Bush House producer and writer, the Mexican Fernando del Paso. He has translated the book* The philosophy of Samuel Beckett, *by John Calder. He has also translated into English books of poems by a Venezuelan, Isabel Guevara. He is currently preparing another book on the "*neglected art of listening to music*". He is married and lives in London.*

Salwa Jarrah

Salwa Jarrah was born in Haifa, Palestine in 1946. In 1977 she began her 22 year career with the BBC Arabic Service, after having worked as a translator, writer and programme maker at Iraqi Radio and Television Establishment. Whilst working for the BBC Arabic service she made and presented a large number of programmes including Question and Answer, Oasis (Desert Island Discs), *and* Listeners' Forum. *She was the first Arab broadcaster to produce and present a sex programme for the BBC under UN sponsorship in 1994, which was a huge success. In 1989 she was promoted to senior producer and worked in that role until retiring in 1999. Salwa has three novels published in Arabic*, Rocks on the Shore, Insomnia, *and* The Fifth Season *which is set against the background of her radio work.*

Excerpt translated from *Insomnia (Beirut, Dar Al-Intishar Al-Arabi, 2009)*
By Salwa Jarrah

For years his only identity document was a laissez passer. Today he has a British passport, which enabled him to visit Acre. It felt like a dream come true; he entered a world he thought was only made of dreams. But this time his dream was so real he could touch and smell things and talk to real people. This is the city where his father and grandfather grew. Can he come back to live in it? Can he live in another city in Palestine? He would like to help in the construction of the so-called "Palestinian State."

He recalled what his friend Masood told him once: "You know doctor, we will never let go of this nostalgia for the land and family. Sometimes I say to myself we were born with a special organ for nostalgia; may be an extra liver." He laughed so loud. Masood said calmly: "Listen. Forget for a second all your medical training and tell me how we manage to keep and brew all this love for Palestine. Songs make us cry and we eat olives and thyme just to confirm who we are."

He smiled. He recalled the refugee camp in Lebanon, Burj Al-Brajneh, where he grew up, and what happened once at school. The teacher asked one of the boys: "Where are you from?" The boy said: "From Burj Al-Brajneh Refugee Camp." The teacher raised his hand and hit him hard on his face. The boy looked at him in horror. The teacher repeated his question: "Where are you from boy?" The boy answered in a shaky voice: "From Yafa, from Yafa Sir." "Good" said the teacher "and never forget that."

Robin White

Robin joined the BBC African service in 1967. He was editor of Focus on Africa and Network Africa and founded the Focus on Africa magazine. Since leaving the BBC he has worked on a number of projects, including the relaunch of Star Radio in Liberia which had been closed by Charles Taylor, and helping with a children's radio station in the Moyamba district of Sierra Leone run by PLAN. He has an MBE for services to broadcasting, a Sony award for a special programme on Nelson Mandela's release from jail, and he also won an award at the New York Festival in 2001 for an extended interview with Liberia's Charles Taylor. He writes plays and satirical sketches, and performs in several amateur orchestras.

Pirates

By Robin White

Olushambles	Mr Chiwonki ...did you see that story about the pirates?
Chiwonki	The ones that attacked a cruise ship off the coast of Somalia?
Olushambles	That's it.
Chiwonki	Tragic, Mr Olushambles.
Olushambles	Oh I don't know, Mr Chiwonki, the passengers seemed to have enjoyed it.
Chiwonki	Surely not. They were shot at.
Olushambles	Old, white wrinkly people on cruises like to be shot at. Think how boring it is lying on a deck chair all day. Nothing to see except the sea. Nobody to talk to except the wife. Nothing to to look forward to except dinner with the boring captain. Now they have something to talk about. And boy are they talking – endlessly to any journalist who's got nothing better to report. (Imitating) "Were you scared?" "Of course not". "Has this put you off taking another cruise?" "Oh no, we haven't been put off. We're British".
Chiwonki	But what if one of them had been killed? Yet another incident to give Africa bad name.
Olushambles	Who would care? Their relatives were probably hoping they'd never come back anyway. These tourists on cruise ships are rich. There's compensation to be paid. There's money to inherit. The British extended family does not

extend to grieving for old relatives who get shot at on cruises. The most useful kind of old white cruiser is a dead old white cruiser.

Chiwonki — I see.

Olushambles — Take my word for it, it would be better for everyone if the ship had sunk. Relatives would be pleased. Journalists would be pleased. And the ship owners would be delighted. They could claim on insurance for a rusty old heap manned by Filipinos.

Chiwonki — It was a luxury liner captained by a Scandinavian.

Olushambles — Are you sure?

Chiwonki — Well that's what's been reported.

Olushambles — Reported eh? When did you believe anything you read in the paper or heard on the BBC?

(Pause)

Chiwonki — Who were these pirates anyway. Somalis?

Olushambles — Probably members of the Somali interim government. There are hundreds of them with nothing to do. Can't go home because it's too dangerous. They can't stay in Kenya because the Kenyans are fed up of paying their hotel bills. So what is there for a former self respecting Somali warlord to do apart from becoming a pirate? There's money and adventure in being a pirate. Terrorism pays.

Chiwonki — They could join Al Qaeda

Olushambles — Al Qaeda?

Chiwonki — I think some of them already have. At least so the Americans claim.

Olushambles — Ah - the Americans! They know a thing or two about piracy. Cruise the world. Frighten civilians. Steal. Plunder. Rape. Pillage. It's a great life as long as you don't get caught.

Vesna Goldsworthy

Vesna Goldsworthy, née Bjelogrlic, was born in Belgrade in 1961 and grew up there under Tito. She was already an acclaimed poet when she left Yugoslavia for London at the age of twenty-four. She has since worked in publishing, as a producer with the BBC World Service, and has taught at British and American universities. Her first book in English, Inventing Ruritania (Yale 1998) *was translated into Bulgarian, Greek, Romanian, Serbian, and Spanish. She wrote her acclaimed memoir,* Chernobyl Strawberries (Atlantic, 2005), *upon facing a diagnosis of cancer: she felt moved to describe her life in Yugoslavia for her young son, and record a cultural heritage of the land behind the news bulletins. Chernobyl Strawberries was widely translated and became a bestseller in many European countries. The German edition alone is currently in its fourteenth reprint. Described by the* Observer *as "funny, painful, and brilliant," Chernobyl Strawberries was serialized in* The Times *and read by Goldsworthy herself as 'Book of the Week' on the BBC (Radio Four). Vesna is now Reader in English and Creative Writing at Kingston University.*

Chernobyl Strawberries
God and Books: An Excerpt

When a major misfortune overtakes us, people sometimes assume that – if it offers nothing else in return for the anguish – it might bring some kind of deeper spiritual insight. Suffering makes us better people – or so they say; it enables us to exhibit bravery; it makes us stronger; it brings us closer to God. We use such words of comfort because we have difficulty in accepting that suffering may come without any compensation and we create elaborate narratives of redemption around the pointlessness of pain. I can report nothing of this kind. I didn't learn anything, other than just how much pain I can take. While my cancer was attacked by poison, sword and fire, like a medieval beast, I didn't fear death. If one creates life, one doesn't just abandon the scene when the going gets tough. In a very unexpected way, the desire to be healed turned out to be about motherhood.

I continued to set the alarm clock for seven just in case I overslept, but I never did. I worked, I looked after my son and I kept the house clean. I prepared food even when the thought of eating made my stomach turn. I went from room to room with a red plastic bowl, always ready to throw up cleanly. I left handfuls of hair on the carpet, like a moulting dog. My skull emerged white and smoother than an ostrich egg. My little boy caressed my bald crown and said, 'Mummy, you look like a hatchling.' I felt younger and more vulnerable than him.

When I should have been resting, I wasted time in bookshops as though there was no tomorrow, or, judging by the extraordinary quantities of books I kept buying, as if there was a superabundance of tomorrows. I wasn't really reading anything. I sniffed the fresh smell of print and caressed unbroken spines. I indulged in macabre calculations. If I had a year to live, then, at four books a month, there was enough time to read forty-eight books; five years–240; fifty years–2,400. That finally offered some consolation: even without cancer, I could hardly expect to be alive fifty years from now, and yet 2,400 books seemed barely satisfactory. I already possessed 2,000 books I hadn't read, and was acquiring more each day. I was also devoting my hours to writing, which seemed a

waste of precious time. I resolved to write less and read more. Reader, you are witness to my resolution.

After the first operation, I was told that I had clean, wide margins, like the books I enjoy most. I was given the odds on surviving five years, and they seemed very good, even

though I couldn't really deal with odds. I am temperamentally inclined to believe that one in a thousand is somehow more likely to happen than nine out of ten.
God never spoke to me. It might be that my particular pain did not really stand out in the white noise emanating from the planet like steam from a boiling pot. I certainly wasn't unwilling to get in touch. I lingered in the semi-darkness of churches just before evensong, listening out for the thin, silvery rattle of incense burners. I said prayers in English, Serbian and sometimes even Greek. (This last sounded most likely to get through, perhaps because I understood so little of it.) It felt a bit like praying for a favourable exam result when you'd already submitted the script: comforting but useless. It might simply be that I could never be sufficiently humble. Yellow-faced and radiation-sick, Baldilocks remained her obstinate self.

Nonetheless, only bookshops and churches gave me the feeling that anything might happen. I didn't really believe in God as much as I believed in books, but I loved the

sights and sounds of religion. The Byzantine chant of my ancestral Orthodoxy, curtains of incense and black-clad monks with beards untouched by razors, flocking like ravens on snow-covered forecourts; Anglican cathedrals in which stone seemed as light as ice cream; the sublime, darkened beauty of London's Tractarian churches; the Baroque waxworks of ripe Catholicism – as far as I was concerned, they all provided a vision of humanity at its most endearingly hopeful. And London was the New Jerusalem: there was no religion in the world which didn't have a meeting house in one of its suburban terraces. Being ill in the British capital at the beginning of the twenty-first century was a bit like being a leper in the Holy Land in AD 33: there was never a shortage of volunteers to wash one's feet.

I went to synagogues and mosques. On balance, I preferred domes to arches: building a sphere, a woman's breast, seemed as close as both God and humanity ever came to perfection. Looking at the webs of unfamiliar script, I realized that the vocabulary of my own, non-existent faith was so bound up in the story of Jesus that I couldn't get him out of my mind. I said God and, pop, up came the long bearded face. Although I might have tried to undo such conditioning, it seemed hardly worth the effort. Since it was unlikely that I was ever going to believe, I might as well remain a Serbian Orthodox agnostic. Other religions appealed as stories, Christianity as a storybook with pictures.

If I believed anything, it was that – as the novelist Danilo Kis once said – reading many books could never be as dangerous as reading just one. My literary hoards offered a sense of peace that no single volume has ever been able to provide on its own, but I did begin to wonder what was behind my obsessive book buying. In my family history, building a library has always seemed a bad idea. Books vanished when your house was hit by a bomb or torched, and they were what had to be left behind when you moved abroad. In difficult times, a diamond ring could always be exchanged for a pot of goose fat in one of the villages surrounding Belgrade. All a book can do is burn.

I am a compulsive reader. Quality doesn't really come into this. On crowded underground trains, when there is no room to open a book, I will read safety warnings

and advertisements, breaking the lines in different places to create a poem. Put me into a bare hotel room and I'll go through the phone directories imagining local lives, the way other people may flick through satellite TV channels. On those occasions when I said 'yes' to proposals I'd never intended to accept and was then duty-bound to oblige, it happened because I was reading while pretending to listen. If I travelled anywhere, the safe bet is that I carried more books than clothes, fearing that I might run out of things to read. Even then, I went straight to the airport bookshops to buy more.

Feverishly starting a new volume, reading to page sixty or thereabouts, and then moving on to the next one, so that I always had at least six or seven books on the go, has always been my particular vice. Books gathered by my pillow, in my desk drawers, in bags abandoned at the bottom of my wardrobe, like sweet wrappers in a child's pocket. The space under my bed was known in my family as the Library of Congress. If I woke up in the middle of the night, I'd reach down there and pull out a book to continue to read from where I last left it, the place marked by a bus ticket from Tel Aviv to Acre dated 1988 or a letter I began writing seven years ago. My memories of places became inseparable from the books I first read while visiting them. Sometimes the connections made geographical sense – like discovering André Aciman's Out of Egypt in Alexandria – sometimes not at all. I read Kis's Early Sorrows while staying with a retired colonel in Peshawar, and the book still colours my recollections of the North-West Frontier Province with Central European melancholy.

My fondest memories from abroad are those of standing in bookshops, inhaling the familiar smell of leather, paper and fresh print. On one of my earliest visits to England, I discovered paradise in the shadows of St Paul's Cathedral. It was a bookshop where books could be had for free if you plausibly impersonated a visitor from behind the Iron Curtain. I am not sure which democracy-loving, communist-hating organization funded the enterprise. The little shop was well stocked with the works of dissident East European authors and right-wing economic theory. The former enthralled for hours. Every book ever banned in the East seemed to be there, from the granddaddy of dissidents, my Montenegrin compatriot Milovan Djilas, to the Bulgarian Georgi Markov, who was murdered with a stab from a poisoned umbrella tip on London's Waterloo Bridge. Elegant novels written by Czech rubbish collectors stood next to Albanian essayists, and imprisoned Romanian poets vied for shelf space with Lithuanian philosophers. When you chose your books, an elderly bookseller (or book-giver) produced a form which required your signature and address. For some unaccountable reason, I gave a Bulgarian name, feeling, perhaps, that the provenance was more suitable for a recipient of such literary gifts. It didn't seem like the sort of place where anyone would ask you to produce your documents: that would be too much like home. By the time I settled in London, my paradise had gone.

Chernobyl Strawberries *was published in the UK by Atlantic Books in 2005. This excerpt comes from Chapter 6*, "God and Books", *pp. 158-166*.

Venuste Nshimiyimana

*Venuste has worked in three different language services of the BBC World Services (Great Lakes, Swahili and French for Africa) as a producer, and also across the Africa and Middle East Region in various capacities including the roles of Regional Editorial Coordinator and Digital Production Manager during the migration of World Service from analogue to digital audio production. Venuste has enjoyed several overseas reporting trips, of which perhaps the highlight is the trip he made to the Middle East in 2003 to report on the War in Iraq. When the American–led coalition overthrew Saddam Hussein and when Governor Paul Bremer announced the dismantling of the Iraq armed forces, Venuste was in the Presidential Palace to report the news. Venuste Nshimiyimana begun his carer in journalism in Rwanda in 1990 as a radio and television presenter before joining the Organisation of African Unity (now African Union) as a press attaché for the Neutral Military Observer Group deployed in Rwanda. He was later appointed as Information officer for the United Nations peace-keeping mission. During the first day of the 1994 genocide, he found shelter at a local school, the Ecole Technique Officielle (ETO), where approximately 2000 refugees were abandoned by UN peacekeepers and subsequently killed. His last book is all about the role of the UN and a tribute to those who were killed (*Left to Die: Why Shall I Tell Their Story*). Venuste Nshimiyimana, author of* Prelude du génocide Rwandais (Louvain-la-Neuve: Editions Quorum, 1995) *is also a regular contributor of the* World Agenda, *the International journal of the BBC. He has a Postgraduate Certificate in International Human Rights Law and Practice from the London School of Economics and has completed a Masters in Social Sciences at the Open University. He joined the BBC World Service in 1997.*

Extract from "*Left to Die: Why Shall I Tell Their Story*?"

By Venuste Nshimiyimana

From the summit of the Mount Ibisi, I gaze in contemplation at the distant hills and valleys. What greets me from below is literally the silence of the dead. The sound of the blacksmiths' anvils of my native village of Gishamvu no longer reverberates. The neighbouring village Sheke, formerly full of people, is deserted. The flour mill has ground to a halt. Its owner, François Mukimbili, was assassinated during the first days of the genocide. He had survived a horrible motorcycle crash 15 years earlier, that had left him crippled, but he was a very popular man. Mukimbiri was not originally from Gishamvu, but he had settled there in the '60s and he worked as a tailor for the seminary of Nyakibanda. He was born in Nyarurembo, in the region of Bufundu, about 20 km southeast of Butare. François was a gentleman. For years he was a reference point, the village bread-winner. Since there was no ambulance, he would use his van to drive pregnant women and sick people to the local free health centre of Sheke or the main university hospital of Butare. In addition, he was the first businessman to open a pub, called 'Bon Sejour 'in our local small burg. Anyone visiting Gishamvu would definitely stop there for a pint of Primus, the national brew. I spent many long evenings talking with François. He, who had given me a cow as a sign of our friendship; he, who had entrusted to me his daughter Christine and the bride price that would one day come with her marriage. Now, he is no longer there. Neither is Christine. Neither is my childhood friend Lambert Rugamba.

They are all dead. In a few minutes, I will begin the descent down Mount Ibisi to pray at their tomb.

Farther away, beyond the hill of Muboni, the church spire in Nyakibanda points up from the horizon. The corrugated iron roofs that covered the Grand

Seminary buildings have been painted blue. I recognize the building where I stayed for four years as a student in philosophy and theology. In my mind I can hear the inspirational hymn of Nyakibanda, that beautiful valley chosen by God to train the shepherds of his flock. But the tears that well in my eyes stop me from singing, even in my mind, that tune which was a symbol of our pride. They are tears for the hundreds of innocents who were massacred in the chapel where I recited from my prayer-book every morning when I was a seminarian; for the women raped in this house of God. Women and children thrown into mass graves. A thick black cloud hovered above the church tower, where one of the killers had written his name in letters of blood: "c-y-u-m-a" meaning "the knife". That was the nickname of the infamous commune counsellor of Gishamvu.

As I turn my gaze to the left, I see the hill of Nyumba, my parish building, my primary school and Alexis's bakery, where as a young child I would go to buy bread, especially with my friend Rugamba. Now that I am there, rather than counting the deserted hills that breathe nothing but death despite the presence of survivors, I am going to leave my mountain and descent to touch, for the first time, the soil that covers the graves of my father, my uncles, my brother and my sister, whose children were cruelly murdered at the beginning of the genocide. A Hutu married to a Tutsi, she had survived the tragedy, but died two years later. Now, I am going to her tomb to speak with her, the sister who I played with in the tall grass of my hill, an accomplice and friend who died too young and had a lot to teach me, as she remained in the country when the genocide occurred, while I was in Nairobi where I had been evacuated by the United Nations, powerlessly watching the death of my people.

For me, my homecoming represents a return to my roots and a communion with the enchantment of an eternal Rwanda. … I feel a duty to bear witness to memory, so that no one forgets the thousands of victims and so that their names may be written in golden letters in a new history of a Rwanda that has reconciled with itself.

Mick Delap

*Mick Delap joined the BBC African Service in 1970. He left World Service in 2000, after spending 18 of his 30 years in various parts of the African Service, as a writer, producer and manager. He also headed the Brazilian Section, and served out his final six years as a Commissioning Editor for WS English. Mick began writing poetry in the ten years before he left Bush House. He published his first collection, "*River Turning Tidal*", in 2003 (Lagan Poetry Press, Belfast), and completed an MA in Creative Writing in 2008. His dissertation focussed on recent poetry from or about Nigeria and India. His interest in postcolonial poetry includes a passion for writing from and about the west of Ireland, where he keeps a small traditional sailing boat. Mick has just become chair of trustees for a small broadcasting NGO, "SoundAffects the World". SoundAffects seeks to enhance links between schools in the South and the North by recording and making available on audio the voices of children from a variety of countries as they compare and contrast their life experiences, views and expectations.*

Bush House, London, BBC World Service radio

By Mick Delap, 1999

By day, the official cycles
of despatch, assertion, and denial
chase each other noisily in
for the bulletin's public judgement -
weighed in the newsroom, hurried
from screen to studio, red light:
headlines that bark back out
above tense chatter in the cubicle,
restless waves of traffic washing
down the Strand.

But when day here ebbs, quietens
with these emptying streets,
then faint messages spark
through the dark, pilgrim stories
searching the world for sanctuary:
small cries of love, the weep of hunger -
how in the Gulag this man survived
by watching beady eyed
where tunnelling rats cached
their winter rations. Messages of loss,
of what can be endured –
the black woman in South Africa,
nervous
with her new voice, insisting all the
same
her humbled masters return to her
at least a finger of her abducted son.
One finger - so she could one day hope
to close both their lives in the same
grave.
Stories of wonder - how long carpets
billowed like sails across mud floors
in the earthquake, as a laden donkey
flew up into the air and showered in its
wake
a great tail of dried crocus petals.
And murmurs from the voyagers,
from the frail harbours of the derelict,
calling, recalling home.

Small whispers, from those
who have resisted silence,
always believing they would one day
celebrate their lives again with others.
And here, in the quiet of each Bush night,
their witness is taken up, and amplified,
fused into a banner of sparks

that soars up into a darkness

turning back to noisy day as a red bus
trundles the new dawn in
from Greenwich.

Svitlana Pyrkalo

Svitlana Pyrkalo is a BBC Ukrainian producer and presenter. In her spare time - and, very occasionally, on night shifts - she is also a writer and translator, but it should be pointed out that these activities in no way interfere with her BBC duties! Now that's out of the way, here's a little more. Svitlana was born in 1976 in Poltava, Eastern Ukraine. She studied Ukrainian language and literature in the National Taras Shevchenko University. Her research of Ukrainian youth slang and a resulting dictionary, first published in 1997, was a pioneering work in this branch of research of the modern Ukrainian language and is still widely used by researchers in Ukraine and abroad. She published two books of fiction; the first, Zelena Marharyta, *is about a young Ukrainian female journalist in Kyiv, and the second,* Don't Think About Red, *is about a slighly older, but still young Ukrainian female journalist in London. Due to lack of imagination, according to Ms Pyrkalo, the third book, if it will ever be finished, will tell the story of a young-ish Ukrainian female journalist (location to be confirmed). She has also published a book of culinary/travel/cultural essays, originally written for* Glavred *magazine, under the title* Egoiste's Kitchen. *Some of her columns for* Gazeta po-ukrainsky *were published in a book co-authored by three other columnists. She co-authored a book about the life and death of a TV programme called* Without taboo *about* Without Taboo. *Svitlana is also an administrator of the BBC Ukrainian Book of the Year award, now in its fifth year. This prize, modelled partially after the Booker prize, is growing more influential by the year.*

Remember Gorby, Glasnost and New Thinking?

By Svitlana Pyrkalo

One effect of Perestroika was the emergence of Komsomol Video Salons. It was said that organizing videotape viewings for money in stuffy basements on tiny televisions with smuggled VHS players was somehow a new way forward for the Union of Socialist Youth, or Komsomol (aka, the Young Communist League).

It was, in fact.

Most of those *komsomoltsy* were later involved in business structures of varying legality during the early 90s, in big businesses during the late 90s and, balding but still possessing that Komsomol glint in the eye, in governments and parliaments during the noughties. Sometimes I fantasize about catching a young-ish MP and peeling a few layers off him, to reveal everything all the way back to the brave video salon organizer who first brought the delights of Rambo and Jackie Chan to his neighbourhood. That and oh, so much more.

One summer, Mother went on a Qualification Heightening Course for psychiatrists. They were a regular occurrence, but this time the course was taking place in Crimea, in the summer, a couple of hours away from the sea on a trolleybus. (Yes, a trolleybus. It is the longest route in the world, starting in the city of Simferopol, jerking through the mountains, vomiting new arrivals on the Black Sea coast). So Mother took me with her, and I was even allowed to sit quietly in some lectures. And who, at 14, wouldn't want to know all about sexual neuroses a la Sigmund Freud?

One day after the sessions there was a film viewing scheduled. Nobody knew what film exactly, we knew only that we were to see an American psychiatric movie. Mother went off elsewhere; I stayed, lured by the promise of the weird. The bearded male

psychiatrists, strict female psychiatrists and I filled a room with some assorted chairs and a small imported TV-VCR combo. Then some condescending guy walked in,

(somehow those guys who know how to press more buttons than the rest of us always look condescending), pushed a videocassette into the player and left.

The screen was soon filled with naked people, screaming in German, having violent sex. "Odd choice," I thought. "Not a lot of dialogue. On the other hand, they are all clearly insane." I wondered if any of our doctors would be able to guess what was wrong with them before it was made clear in the film.

We didn't get to hear the diagnosis. The Condescending Guy, sweating and panting, without a trace of his former cockiness, ran in, changed the videocassette, and escaped without a word, skilfully avoiding eye contact. A proper "psychiatric" movie started. "Rain Man" with Dustin Hoffman, an *American* psychiatric movie. The diagnosis was "autism".

I was fourteen. Yet the bearded and strict uncle and auntie psychiatrists sat silently beside me while the porn was on. Why? Maybe they just liked it. Or maybe they had been Soviet for so long they could not remember how to stand up and say: "This is wrong. We've got to stop this show."

Julian May

Julian May worked at Bush House in the early 1980s before, prompted by his experience there, going to China. He returned two years later and worked as a producer and scriptwriter for English by Radio and the Far Eastern Service. He was a producer in the Radio Arts Unit for many years and is now in the Documentaries Unit at Broadcasting House. He writes, but somewhat sporadically, poems, stories and articles. This year he won the Premios Ondas *International Radio Prize for a programme broadcast in the* 'It's My Story' *series on Radio 4.*

On the Air

Written whilst Julian was a studio manager at Bush House, from his collection *The Earlist Memory*, published by Peterloo Poets.

1.
Moscow is yelling down the line
"...the co-operation of Socialism..."
Washington bites back, too loud
"... Capitalism's diversity..."

London reasonably weighs
each consideration,
turning its back, some observers note,
to balance argument.

I balance mere sound,
tired of it all –
quotidian surfeit of events
unfit for human consumption,
analysis, comment, the puke of half-
chewed news.
Goose-stepping endless information
fires language's gaunt crops.

2.
Once upon a time
the voice of truth calmly announced:
"There is no news tonight."
Now the slots must always be filled,
on the hour, every hour.
So at dawn on this thin Monday
the talking-head reads once more
the bulletin he read all night before.

Then, having a few seconds still to fill,
tells me what I need to know –
it is the first day of spring (official)
but here in London there is heavy rain.
I think how beyond these soundproof
walls
its acid digests the stone carvings
of St Mary-le-Strand
and spreads in waves like radio to the
Urals
blighting Europe's trees...

and miss my cue. Silence,
and the red light glows.
I hit a switch then fade
the sig. to time.
Time may come
When again there will be no news:
The producer's recurring nightmare –
dead air, endless dead air.

Annabel Dilke

Annabel is a novelist, journalist and screenwriter who worked at Bush as a scriptwriter (in the Central Talks and Features Department) from l972 until l986. She has published seven novels, one of which, 'The Party Wall', *was a Sunday Times 'pick of the year' and also shortlisted for the Sunday Express Award, and has just completed an eighth. She is also published in America and her books have been translated into German, French and Italian. She's written two screenplays and was shortlisted for the first Dennis Potter Award. She's written for* The Guardian, the Listener, The Sunday Telegraph *and in l990 was Sofia correspondent for the* Evening Standard's *World Cities page. She is the widow of Georgi Markov, whom she met while working at Bush House.*

Extract from *'The Party Wall'*, published by Andre Deutsch, l989.

By Annabel Dilke

Luli was going home. Luli was the only one of the exiles who ever did return home and this was her second trip this year. How could Luli afford it on her meagre earnings as a receptionist at a West London hotel? Luli's situation was - peculiar.

Admittedly, none of the other exiles had ever applied to return home on a visit, being pretty sure what sort of the reception they would get if they did. But every one had tried, some harder than others, to bring out elderly parents or other relatives on visits and none had succeeded.

It was Stefan who voiced widely held suspicions when he called Luli's bedsitter a 'spies' nest'. For to receive such favours, to be allowed to go back and forth, Luli must surely be involved in some sort of a deal. But it was only Stefan who dared to say what the others merely thought, and they put this down to his famous self-destructiveness. They were too afraid Luli might refuse to take messages and gifts for them. Luli's help was essential. A nice sweater or a pure cashmere scarf - so prized in the country of their birth - often vanished if sent in the ordinary way. Once a tube of anti-wrinkle cream Christo sent his sister arrived emptied and entirely flat. 'Squashed in the post,' insisted the authorities when his sister complained.

Luli brought presents back too. Her suitcases would set off so stuffed that they could hardly close with Marks and Spencer's sweaters and tights, bags of coffee beans, economy rolls of cling film, boxes of Brillo pads, packets of Technicolour condoms for brothers and nephews, and other valued Western goods. They would return packed with bottles of home-distilled plum brandy, heavy glass jars of clear syrup studded with whole cherries or strawberries which sometimes burst with sticky consequences on the way, and tiny painted wooden flasks containing plastic phials of sickly sweet attar of roses, which was another local speciality.

The clothes she would wear on the trip were laid on her sofa which, itself, was covered in unbleached linen squares embroidered in red and yellow and orange silk thread by her mother and sister. There was a smart emerald wool suit brought in the last Harrods sale; size four scarlet very high-heeled shoes, also new; and, Luli's pride and joy, a silver fox fur jacket, a present from a rich Arab she had met through her work whom Stefan had nicknamed 'the cash dispenser'. Luli would arrive in splendour but return from the visit wearing old clothes. Her best outfit would remain behind, adorning her unmarried

sister, Ivanka, whose dearest, only wish was to join Luli in the West. It was the special ambition of Luli too, who saw in the much younger Ivanka the daughter she might have wanted, had things been different. She was working on the problem, but it needed the co-operation of the authorities in Britain too.

James Kenneth Jones

Born in 1923 in Leeds I left school at the age of 14 and became an office boy in a firm of oil blenders, rising to the position of junior clerk. I joined The Yorkshire Post as a copy typist and after a couple of years became a junior reporter. When war broke out I volunteered for the Army but was rejected because of a heart murmur so I joined the Home Guard in Leeds and became part of a special demonstration unit. It was through my involvement with the Workers Educational Association that I entered a competition for a place at Ruskin College in Oxford and after two years gained a University Diploma in Politics and Economics. With that, and a grant from the Leeds City Council, I went to Exeter College and after two years gained a second class honours degree in Philosophy, Politics and Economics. I joined the News Chronicle as a reporter and then went to the BBC Newsroom at Bush House as a sub-editor, rising to Chief Sub-editor. At one time I was Father of the Bush House NUJ Chapel and also the BBC chess champion. I retired in 1984. My career as a writer began early. My first effort was Colour Story Reading, *a scheme using coloured letters plus stories to link the sounds with the symbols. After an extensive trial involving some 30 schools, funded by the Government, the scheme was published by Thomas Nelson in 1967. I have had a dozen books published on the subject of simulations in education and training. The first was* Simulations in Language Teaching *published by Cambridge University Press in 1982. Then came* Nine Graded Simulations *published by Max Hueber Verlag, Munich in 1984 and Basil Blackwell, Oxford in 1985 followed by another ten books on the same theme. I gained a prize in a competition by the English Speaking Union and went to Buckingham Palace to receive the sward from the Duke of Edinburgh.*

The Strange School

By James Kenneth Jones

The Green family live in a nice little house. There is Anna Green and there is Emma, Impy, Oddy and Uppy Green. They are very friendly, except perhaps Emma.
The house has a little garden with a big tree in it.
Anna is in the house.
Emma, Impy, Oddy and Uppy are up the tree playing a game of tree pirates. Impy invented the game all by himself.
Emma said crossly 'I don't want to be a pirate princess. I want to be a pirate witch.'
'Pirates don't have witches,' said Oddy.

'Yes they do. Pirates are bad and witches are bad. I bet that all pirates everywhere have witches.'

'Come down from the tree,' called out Anna.
Emma. Impy, Oddy and Uppy climbed down the tree.
'I want to show you something,' said Anna excitedly. 'It's down the road and round the corner.'
down the road and round the corner. And there, in the middle of a field, were some buildings that none of them had ever seen before. They were coloured green and blue and black and red.
Uppy found a notice. 'What does it say?' asked Emma.
'It says School for Letters,' said Uppy. 'There. See. School for Letters.'
'What a strange school,' exclaimed Oddy.

Emma frowned. She said 'Letters don 't need schools. Children need schools. They need schools because they need to be taught. They need to be taught what's what.'

'I expect,' said Anna, 'that letters have to be taught.'
'Taught what?' said Emma.

'Well, taught how to spell. Taught how to line up from left to right. Letters aren't supposed to run around all over the place, are they?'
'Absolutely not' said Uppy, 'that would make things very difficult.'

Tim Ecott

Tim Ecott studied Social Anthropology at Queen's University Belfast and Cambridge University. After a spell in the film industry he joined the World Service in 1988 and worked for the African Service as a Senior Producer in news and current affairs until 1998. He spent two years reporting from Johannesburg (1991-93) and was based in Seychelles from (1996-1997). During his time with Focus on Africa *he contributed to numerous BBC outlets and developed a specialist knowledge of the Indian Ocean states; Madagascar*, *Comoros*, *Mauritius and Seychelles. His journalism has appeared in* The Economist, Daily Telegraph, The Times, The Independent, Evening Standard, The Guardian, Conde Nast Traveller, Harpers, The Observer *etc. He is the author of three books;* Neutral Buoyancy *(Penguin)*, Vanilla *(Grove Atlantic) and a memoir about his experiences in Africa entitle* Stealing Water *(Sceptre).*

From *Stealing Water*

By Tim Ecott

Going in to the Whatnot was like entering a secret universe. The shop was one of twenty in an underground arcade in Hillbrow, the high-rise district of Johannesburg close to the city centre. There were no houses in Hillbrow, just apartment blocks, and Joburgers liked to claim that it was the most densely populated suburb in the world. To anyone who had seen pictures of Hong Kong or Bangkok it was clearly untrue, but it was an urban legend that people repeated. To reach the arcade from street level you went down a stairwell next to Babu's Indian gift shop, following a sign that said "Village Flea Market". It felt like we were hiding from the real world when we went down there.

The good thing about being underground was that noise of the traffic from Pretoria Street didn't penetrate into the arcade, but it could get very cold in winter and stuffy in summer. Ventilation came from a system of metal ducts that snaked around the basement roof space bringing in air from street level, complete with traffic fumes. It was usually dark by the time Pamela shut up shop, and in the afternoons, while it was still light, she sometimes insisted we went upstairs to the Wimpy Bar next door just for a change of scene, or to warm up with a toasted cheese sandwich. In winter Mum lived in her old sheepskin, the only coat she possessed. Back in 1969 it had been an expensive purchase from Moss Bros. in Regent's Street, a great hunk of animal skin and fleece she said she needed to see her through the Irish winters. It was a bulky thing that needed its own seat in the cinema. By the time she ran the shop it was past its best, the matted fleece was squished down to a thin ghost of its original thickness, and the leather exterior was stained and scuffed. I never liked that coat, and as it deteriorated the front hem developed a curl so that it flared outwards above the knees like dried up orange peel. The sheepskin made her look like a down-at-heel bookie, but Mum said she would die without it. It was true that she always felt the cold, and one of the rituals of a visit to a restaurant or the cinema with Mum was that she would complain about the temperature. Inevitably, one of us would have to go and find the manager or a waiter and ask for the air conditioning to be turned down or the heating to be turned up. More often than not we had to change seats several times looking for a place that wasn't "in a draft".

Usually we only bought a cup of tea in the Wimpy, but that was enough to allow us to sit on the stools by the plate glass window and thaw out. She could watch the entrance to the arcade from there, and if she spotted a dealer or a potential customer going

downstairs she could hurry back to the shop using a fire-escape near the rear of the Wimpy. The tea came in indestructibly thick white cups with the Wimpy logo in red on the sides, and the glaze on the saucers was always crackled and stained brown. From inside the restaurant you could still hear lonely big city sounds like the whining of the brakes on the double-decker buses as they stopped at the lights on the corner of Banket Street, and the high pitched buzzing of the messenger boys' mopeds as they weaved in and out of the slower moving cars. Behind the driver's seat the bikes had metal pannier boxes that were painted with company names. The drivers mainly worked for law firms that used them to deliver important documents in thick manila envelopes, or for pharmacies that sent them out with people's medicines in wax-paper bags stapled down to keep the pills inside. On the other side of the Wimpy window we could watch office workers jostling along the pavement, and legions of elderly ladies from the surrounding flats out for their daily stroll. Many of them were escorted by their maids, African women in uniforms who did their shopping and cleaning and acted as their general companions. Often the old dears held onto leads attached to wheezing lap dogs that took their chance to shit beside the scrawny trees struggling to bloom in the shadow of the apartment blocks that made Hillbrow a miniature New York.

"If only the Whatnot was up here", Pamela complained. "Look at all these customers walking past, they don't even notice that there are shops downstairs. More passing trade, that's what we need."

We all knew she couldn't afford to rent a shop up on the street. All of the shopkeepers in the arcade were in the same position. Being constantly short of cash was one their common bonds. Over the years, one or two traders did well enough to move their businesses to street level, but many more went out of business in a matter of weeks. The Whatnot, precarious as it was, became one of the longest survivors.

I hated the Wimpy. There were plenty of other cafés in Hillbrow. The smart ones were the Café Wien and the Café Zurich, both of them modelled on more famous European originals. Their crockery wasn't chipped and they had thick carpets and big comfortable armchairs and waiters in crisp white jackets. They even had white waiters, whereas the Wimpy employed only Africans. Enoch was our favourite; he would refill our teapot with hot water without charging us extra. At Café Zurich there were chess and backgammon sets for the customers to use, and newspapers mounted on those long wooden sticks that allowed them to be hung up on a stand ready for the next reader. But the tea cost four times as much as it did at the Wimpy. Plenty of the shopkeepers in the Market used the Wimpy, and I didn't care about being seen there by people we knew. It was the stranger's eyes I wanted to avoid. I didn't want the office workers in their smart suits or the businessmen in their big cars looking in at Mum and me. They didn't know our names, but they would know we were the kind of people who could only afford to eat at the Wimpy Bar.

Isabel Wolff

Isabel Wolff began her career at Bush House, in 1986, as secretary to Leslie Stone, the then Chief Commentator. She progressed, via the internal attachment system, to producing and reporting for programmes such as 24 Hours, Newshour, Outlook, Omnibus *and* Good Books. *After going freelance in 1989 she continued to work on all these programmes while also reporting for Radio 4 programmes, as well as writing for a variety of newspapers and magazines including* The Daily Telegraph, the Independent on Sunday, the Evening Standard *and* The Spectator. *She was also a regular newspaper reviewer on BBC1's* Breakfast News. *Isabel's first novel, a romantic comedy called* The Trials of Tiffany Trott, *was published in 1998 and was followed by seven further novels*, The Making of Minty Malone, Out of the Blue, Rescuing Rose, Behaving Badly, A Question of Love, Forget me Not *and her latest novel*, A Vintage Affair, *an extract from which is included in this seminar. She is published in 29 languages and believes that the writing skills that she learned at Bush House more than 20 years ago have stood her in excellent stead.*

Extract from *'A Vintage Affair'*

By Isabel Wolff

Introduction: 36 year old textiles expert Phoebe Swift has just opened her own vintage dress shop in Blackheath. At the same time she is struggling with the recent death of her best friend, Emma and the reader will realise that Phoebe feels responsible for this. One day Phoebe goes to meet an elderly French woman, Therese Bell, who has a collection of lovely old clothes to sell. The two women become friends, and Mrs Bell has a sad story of her own to tell, about the death, during the war, of her best friend. Phoebe doesn't yet know it, but Mrs Bell is to have a profound influence on her life. This is from their first meeting in Mrs Bell's flat at The Paragon, a beautiful terrace of Georgian houses close to Black Heath:

****

The room was large, with a big bow window, and was papered in a pale green slubbed silk which was curling up at the seams in places. A small gas fire was alight despite the warmth of the day, with an assortment of porcelain ornaments ranged on the mantelshelf above it. Two snooty looking Staffordshire spaniels sat guard at either end.

As I heard the kettle begin to whistle I went over to the window and looked down onto the communal garden. As a child I'd been unable to appreciate its size. The lawn swept the entire length of the crescent, like a river of grass, and was fringed by a screen of magnificent trees. There was a huge cedar that cascaded to the ground in tiers, like

green petticoats; there were two or three enormous oaks; there were three copper beeches and a sweet chestnut in the throes of a half-hearted second flowering. To the right two young girls were running through the skirts of a weeping willow, shrieking and laughing. I stood there for a few moments, watching them…

'Here we are…' I heard Mrs Bell say. I went to help her with the tray.

'No – thank you,' she said firmly as I tried to take it from her. 'I may be somewhat antique but I can still manage perfectly well. Now, how do you take your tea?' I told her. 'Black with no sugar?' She picked up the silver tea strainer. 'That's easy then…'

She handed me my tea then painfully lowered herself onto a brocade chair by the fire while I sat on the little sofa opposite her.

'Have you lived here long Mrs Bell?'

'Long enough - a quarter of a century.'

'So are you hoping to move to somewhere on the ground floor?' It had crossed my mind that she might be thinking of going into one of the sheltered housing flats just down the road.

'I'm not sure where I'm going,' she replied after a moment. 'I will have a clearer idea next week. But whatever happens I am …how can I put it…?'

'Downsizing?' I suggested after a moment.

'Downsizing?' She smiled ruefully. 'Yes.' There was an odd little silence, which I filled by telling Mrs Bell about my piano lessons. 'I remember Mr Long,' she said as she replaced her cup in its saucer. 'He was blind. A remarkable man.'

'He was.' I decided not to tell her about the ruler.

'And were you a good pianist?'

I shook my head. 'I only got up to Grade 3. I didn't practice enough. I guess I wasn't that interested...' From outside came the cries and laughter of the two girls. 'Unlike my friend Emma,' I heard myself say. 'She was brilliant at the piano.' I picked up my teaspoon. 'She got Grade 8 when she was only 14. With distinction. It was announced in school at assembly.'

'Really?'

I began stirring my tea. 'The headmistress asked Emma to come up on stage and play one of her exam pieces, so she played this lovely piece from Schumann's 'Scenes from Childhood'.' It was called 'Traumerei' – 'Dreaming…'

'What a gifted girl,' said Mrs Bell with a faintly puzzled expression. 'And are you still friends with this… paragon?' she added wryly.

'No.' I suddenly noticed a solitary tea leaf at the bottom of the cup. 'She's dead. She died earlier this year, on the fifteenth of February at about ten to four in the morning. At least that's when they think it happened, although they couldn't be sure but they have to put something down don't they…'

'How terrible,' Mrs Bell murmured. 'What age was she?'

'Thirty three.' I continued to stir my tea, gazing into its topaz depths. 'She would have been thirty four today.' The spoon gently chinked against the cup. 'She was very gifted in other ways too. She was a talented tennis player – although…' I smiled. 'She had this peculiar serve. She looked as though she was tossing pancakes. It worked, mind you - they were unreturnable.'

'Really…'

'She was a terrific swimmer too - and a brilliant artist.'

'What an accomplished young woman.'

'Oh yes. But she wasn't in the least bit conceited. Quite the opposite actually. She was full of self doubt.' I suddenly realised that my tea, being black and sugarless, didn't need stirring. I laid my spoon in the saucer.

'And she was your best friend?'

I nodded. 'She was. Or rather she was my best friend – in the sense that she couldn't have been a better friend to me; but I wasn't really a best friend to her or even a good friend come to that.' The cup had blurred. 'In fact I was a terrible friend.' I was aware of the steady hiss of the gas fire, like an unending exhalation. 'I'm sorry,' I said quietly. I put down my cup. 'I came here to look at your clothes. I think I'll get on with that now if you don't mind, but thank you for the tea – it was just the ticket.'

Dr Andrei Rogatchevski
Dr Andrei Rogatchevski is Senior Lecturer in Russian at the School of Modern Languages and Cultures, University of Glasgow. He has co-edited "Bribery and Blat in Russia: Negiotiating Reciprocity from the Middle Ages to the 1990s" *(Macmillan, 2000) and is the author of* "A Biographical and Critical Study of the Russian Writer Eduard Limonov"
(Edwin Mellen, 2003). His latest book, "Filming the Unfilmable: Casper Wrede's One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich" *(Ibidem Verlag), is coming out early in 2010. For many years he has been a regular contributor to various BBC Russian Service programmes. He has also developed a significant interest in Czech and Ukrainian Studies.*

"The Uncrowned King of Bohemia":
Sir R H Bruce Lockhart and the BBC Czechoslovak Service (the Cold War years)

By Dr Andrei Rogatchevski

At different stages in his life, Sir Robert Hamilton Bruce Lockhart (1887-1970) was a rubber planter, a diplomat, a footballer, a banker, an Evening Standard journalist (1928-37), head of the Political Warfare Executive (1941-5), for which he was awarded a KCMG – and, above all, an author. Lockhart's autobiographical Memoirs of a British Agent (1932), describing, among many other things, his 1918 arrest in Russia on suspicion of his involvement in an attempt to overthrow the Bolshevik government, became an international bestseller, was turned into a successful 1934 Warner Bros. film adaptation and made him a celebrity. Further bestselling books followed, including Retreat from Glory (1934), My Scottish Youth (1937), Comes the Reckoning (1949), My Rod My Comfort (1949), The Marines Were There (1950), Scotch: The Whisky of Scotland in Fact and Story (1951), My Europe (1952) and others.

Lockhart's first BBC broadcast took place on 29 March 1936, when he was invited to talk about his native Scotland and extensive travels abroad, for the Spice of Life series. Although he had already done some broadcasting before (during his visit to the US), he was not quite prepared for a rather overwhelming public response to his Spice of Life appearance. In his April 1936 letter to Moray McLaren, a BBC editor, Lockhart says that, apart from the listeners' letters 'which were sent directly to the BBC, I have had scores which were addressed to me <directly>, from all sorts of people including a Cabinet minister! I have also been asked to speak to God knows how many university societies, to send my photograph to unknown age spinsters who wish to reform me, and even to assume the leadership of a Scottish nationalist revival. It is a curious experience, and, although I receive a huge mail, especially from America in connection with my books, broadcasting obviously establishes a much more intimate connection between speaker and public than between author and public'.

Lockhart's involvement with what is now known as the BBC World Service became regular when he was put in charge of the Political Warfare Executive whose remit included broadcasting to the Nazi-occupied territories. Partial to Czechoslovakia, Lockhart – who spoke Czech, worked for the British Legation in Prague and the Anglo-Czechoslovak Bank in the 1920s, acted as the Foreign Office's liaison officer with the Czechoslovak government-in-exile at the start of World War Two and became a friend of the eminent Czech statesmen Dr Edvard Beneš and Jan Masaryk – personally took part

in the BBC Czechoslovak broadcasts, both during wartime and especially after the 1948 Communist takeover. In 1947-64, Lockhart's weekly comments on current affairs, both Czechoslovak and global, went on air every Friday, reportedly enjoyed by a multi-million audience. His ability to appeal to a wide cross-section of society, evident already in his first ever BBC broadcast (aimed, however, at the listeners at home), stood him in good stead in his Czechoslovak talks. There were obvious difficulties in the exact measuring of

the BBC audience's size in Communist Czechoslovakia. Yet the occasional feedback over the years invariably confirmed that Lockhart's popularity there was just as stable as it was universal. A Listener Competition, held in October 1947, attracted 366 entries. There were 275 favourable against 9 unfavourable mentions of Lockhart, the smaller number probably reflecting a proportion of Communists and/or their sympathisers among his listeners. No other commentator was mentioned. According to the December 1948 estimate of Dr David Rodnick, an American who spent ten months in Czechoslovakia studying the behavioural patterns of the local population, on Friday nights, when Bruce Lockhart was on, three out of every four radio set owners tuned in to

the BBC. In April 1949, the former Czechoslovak ambassador in Dublin Pavel Růžíčka informed Lockhart that he was 'more talked about in Czechoslovakia than <the Communist President of Czechoslovakia> Gottwald'. In 1952, interviews with Czechoslovak refugees indicated that Lockhart's Friday commentaries were the most listened to programme on any foreign radio broadcasting to Czechoslovakia. In 1955, a Hungarian journalist who had lived in Czechoslovakia for years, cliamed that Czechoslovak listeners expected from the BBC not merely an evaluation of events but also warm sympathy, and these requirements were apparently met only by Lockhart. For many Czechoslovaks, Lockhart's charismatic authority was nothing short of a royal status, and he was even nicknamed 'the uncrowned king of Bohemia'. And so it went on, until the record-breaking uninterrupted run of Lockhart's 870 addresses to Czechoslovaks came to an end on 31 March 1964. The date marking the end of a British financial year makes one suspect that Lockhart's departure could have been prompted by financial reasons. The official BBC explanation was that all long runs must end at some time. However, Josef Josten of the London-based Free Czechoslovak Information Service believed that Lockhart's removal should be ascribed to the 'futile attempts during the present period of appeasement to make the Communist bosses of Eastern Europe love the British' and that these attempts were little else but the 'ill-advised electioneering manoeuvres'. Whatever the reason, from that point onwards Lockhart had only been asked to contribute to the BBC Czechoslovak Service on an infrequent basis.

The transcripts of some of Lockhart's weekly broadcasts survive in the Lilly Library (Indiana University, Bloomington). Here is an example:

'I hear from Prague that the new Stalin monument is nearing completion and that Stalin himself has now emerged from the scaffolding. Behind him are three figures in single file who appear to represent the dignity of mining, industrial and agricultural labour. I am also told that Prague wits are now asking: "Why has Stalin such a beautiful smile on his face?" The answer is: "Because he is at the head of the meat queue". This will not be new to you but I send it back to you just to let you know that your stories reach us <from behind the Iron Curtain> and indeed go round the world' (22 October 1954)

Bush Writers Seminar
23rd November 2009
Extracts from writers work

Anwar Hamed

Anwar Hamed is a Palestinian-Hungarian novelist, poet and literary critic, who was born in the West Bank in 1957, and is currently working for the BBC Arabic service. He has published different literary genres, in Budapest, Beirut, Amman and Ramallah, in Arabic and Hungarian. Of this his novels include The Bridge of Babylon, Stones of Pain, Scheherazade Tells Tales No More, The Game of Love and Pride and Other Idiocies, Valse Triste, Seventy-Two Virgins *and* A Confused Lad *(unfinished). He has also published a multilingual collection of poems called* Mind The Gap, *and wrote his master thesis on literary theory which was entitled* An Attempt at the Definition of the Function of Literature.

The Butterfly

By Anwar Hamed

She, who's sick dancing with kings
Wants to fly, but got no wings

She, who dates orchids and tulips
Wants to smile, but finds no true lips

She, who blooms with every new spring
Parted with dance and will never sing

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Once upon an autumn night
When the moon smiled
and her mood was right
She walked the meadows
leap by leap
Leaving behind
all the ghosts asleep

For she was called
for an evening date
And she hates to make
the full moon wait

But, then said a voice,
your leash is tight
"So what?" said she,
I will fight, will fight!

I longed for light
for so long years
But beware, said he,
this will bring tears

For light guides you
its steps never tire
it seduces your soul

it wakens your desire

But never get close
And restrain your desire
For light was born
To a wild, wild fire,
That burns, burns, burns
With flames so rough and dire

She, who yearned for a distant star

****

Has been looming nets so far
But the wind who sniffed the trap
Dropped false fairies in her lap
She welcomed them with a sad, sad eye
And cheered the wind, and thanked the sky

Zuzana Slobodova

Born in Czechoslovakia, Zuzanna studied at Commenius University in Bratislava. She stayed in Britain after the Russian invasion in 1968, and graduated in Psychology and Philosophy from Oxford University in 1972. She worked for the BBC from 1980 to 1998, first at Bush, then at the BBC Monitoring. She has been writing and publishing since childhood.

Velvet Revolution in Reading

By Zuzana Slobodova

"Will you swap shifts with me on Friday?"

What a cheek! To ask for a quiet Friday morning shift in exchange for the drudgery of Friday night, the most enjoyable evening of the week for those who were lucky enough to be off work.

"*Angi Vera* is on at the National Film Theatre", she said pleadingly, "and only for one night."

Angi Vera, a daring Hungarian film with an anticommunist slant, is well worth a visit but the day in question was 17th November 1989 - the fiftieth anniversary of an anti-German demonstration in Prague in 1939, which ended in the Nazis killing a Czech student. The evening was likely to be busy and I wouldn't get home till one in the morning or even later.

On the other hand, I had had free Friday evenings for years, at the expense of the rest of the team, and my conscience was pricking me. The BBC Monitoring Service at Caversham in Reading used the highly unfair system of fixed days off. Some people never had weekends off while others had them all the time. I had fought hard to be in the latter group.

"All right", I said, making sure that my voice reflected the magnitude of my sacrifice.

The afternoon started restfully with the radio churning out the usual worthless stuff: the magnificent achievements of socialist industry and agriculture, speeches by top Party leaders, the intrigues of the capitalist West. Then sometime around mid-afternoon there came a report about minor anti-socialist activity of some kind in Prague. It had been incited by enemies from the other side of the Iron Curtain but the situation was fully under the control of the forces of law and order, the radio said. I went to sit at the computer.

"Are you going to process that rubbish?" asked a Colleague Who Always Knew It All And Was Proud of Always Keeping His Cool Head.

Rubbish? There had been upheavals in many of Czechoslovakia's communist neighbours, but the country itself was suspiciously quiet. Any hint of protest was of interest, especially on a day like this. This stuck-up so and so was a complete political ignoramus if he wanted to spike this piece of news. But to process it in front of him would be tantamount to saying as much to his face. So I smiled sweetly at him and waited until he disappeared into the canteen for a leisurely tea break. Then I quickly produced the report.

"If you have time to waste, suit yourself", he said with barely-concealed rage when he found the transcript on his return.

I spent the rest of the evening imagining him subjected to various tortures in hell and wishing that the event in Prague would become really significant to show him up.

But we heard nothing more that night. In fact it turned out to be a rather quiet evening and I got home before midnight.

On the following Sunday I ran into some friends.

"Have you heard?" they shouted to me from afar. "There was a huge student demonstration in Prague, the police beat them up and killed one."

"You are mixing things up," I said with a knowing air. "That happened 50 years ago."

"No, it happened last Friday! The victim was a maths student at Charles University. How come you don't know? We thought it was your job to listen to the Czech and Slovak news."

"Well... today is my day off..."

And I felt really embarrassed because the BBC paid us extra money to buy the newspapers every day. But it felt heavenly not to have to bother with anything more complicated than *Blind Date* over the weekend.

My friends shoved the newspaper article under my nose. It confirmed what they had said. Were the Czechoslovak communist authorities daft to emulate in 1989 the Nazi crime of 1939?

When I went back to work on Monday afternoon I didn't make a beeline for the canteen to have a gossip over coffee as usual. Instead, I threw myself at the weekend output from all over the world.

An unidentified source had reported that numerous students were badly beaten up and one was murdered by the police in Prague at what on Friday the Czech official broadcast called "minor antisocialist activity". The report was taken over by international press agencies and spread around the world.

So I was right on Friday to report on that demonstration! Would the ignoramus have the decency to apologize?

Czech TV had tried its best to dismiss the news. No corpse of a student had been found, they said. They tracked down not one but two university maths students with the name given in the report and found them at home unharmed. The murder was a canard spread by the enemies of socialism, the TV reporter said triumphantly. But he kept suspiciously quiet about the rumoured beating of the demonstrators. It could have meant only one thing: it must have happened.

But now it was Monday and it all seemed to have died down. In the four o clock news there was not a word out of the ordinary: Achievements of socialism, quotes from speeches of top communist party officials, intrigues of the capitalist West. I yawned and strolled to the canteen.

"Thank you for Friday", said the *Angi Vera* enthusiast, having her fill of food after the morning shift. "*Angi Vera* is trash. How come you liked it?"

That's gratitude for you! In the heat of the following argument I almost forgot to take the five o clock news. And that would have been a pity. I would have missed the moment when the world as I knew it turned on its head.

The presenter sounded like a different man - he might even have been one. No mention of the achievements of socialism, quotes from speeches of top communist party officials and intrigues of the capitalist West. Instead he opened the news bulletin by announcing that an anti-government rally was in progress at Letenska Plain in Prague, attended by thousands and that the radio was going to cover it live. Live cover of a rally held by anti-socialist forces? This couldn't be happening. Maybe there was something wrong with my hearing or my mind? When my shift partner for today came in I would ask to check the recording, just to make sure that I was not dreaming or hallucinating.

How come these broadcasters, who got their jobs because they were willing to dance to the tune of the post-68 neostalinist regime, had suddenly decided to spread the news of the Prague rebellion to the whole country? Were they not afraid of the consequences? Journalists who had made a stand against the regime in 1968 had been working for the last twenty one years as stokers and window cleaners while their children were barred from higher education.

The radio put on air speeches being made by dissidents whose name had been taboo for 21 years. Some had just been freed from prison. The crowd cheered.

“What did they give you for lunch today?" people chanted.

"Bublanina", said the ex-prisoners. Bublanina is a sweet dish served as a main course, which is loved by Czech children but the grown-ups usually frown upon it, as it contains no meat. "Let the top party man in Prague live on that!" jeered the crowd.

My stomach filled with air. I felt bloated and sick. What a prosaic reaction to the event of a lifetime. The world was rapidly somersaulting and I was the only person in Britain to know it.

I realized the effect this event would have on my own life. I might possibly be able to visit my homeland, which I hadn't seen for twenty one years. One day I might even live there. But if things went wrong a lot of people I knew and loved would be in grave trouble. The events of Tiannamen Square had occurred only a few months earlier.

The rally went on and on and every word was worthy of a news flash. There was no way two people on the evening shift could cover even a fraction of it, I told the supervisor on duty. He panicked and sent us a novice from the Russian team who just happened to speak Czech. Incidental knowledge of obscure languages was commonplace in Caversham. However, he had never been trained to work with Czech material.

"We'll do what we can", he said with perfect British, or in his case Scottish, composure, and piled tapes with the hottest news for two decades in front of him, knowing as well as I did that even if we worked day and night we wouldn’t be able to present the British public with more than a minute portion of the material.

But then the rest of the team, who were supposed to be resting at home, turned up. The reception of foreign media broadcasts was so good in the Thames Valley that they had heard Czech radio at home and decided to come in to help.

Under any other circumstances any self-respecting Czech or Slovak or any other former national of a communist country, whether or not he or she had been living abroad for most of his or her adult life, would have sneered at this zeal for work. It would have been seen as bootlicking, trying to gain brownie points from the management. But on that day it felt like the right thing to do.

I worked late into the night, and after a short sleep in BBC accommodation, worked again all next day. I came home the next evening exhausted, wishing fervently for a news-free environment, a hot bath and bed.

The child ran to the door to welcome me. She was dirty, dishevelled and still in her underwear.

"Mama, where have you been?" she cried. "Daddy doesn’t want to play with me. And I’ve had nothing to eat."

The flat looked as though it had been hit by a bomb. In the middle of the mess, there was my Czech-born husband sitting in front of the TV. It was showing the British coverage of the events in Prague.

I quickly sat down next to him and did not move until midnight despite the howls of the neglected offspring.

The month that followed was rather busy. There was one rally after another all over Czechoslovakia, the Party fell, the government fell, the parliament fell. We worked overtime every day. Prague was the number one news story throughout the world.

By December the presidential elections were coming and students in Prague were chanting “Havel to the Castle”. There was no time for Christmas preparations. I took wrapping paper and a sack of presents to wrap on my way to work. I got entangled in the rolls of Christmas paper and covered in cellotape while my fellow travellers, with true British politeness, pretended not to notice.

Christmas came and went and then the Hungarian team became over-excited.

"What’s happening?" I asked with disdain as they ran up and down looking rather important. Nothing of importance could ever happen in Budapest, I reckoned.

They hardly found the time to say: “Ceausescu”.

Of course! Caversham employed no Romanian translators but Hungarian radio was always avid for any gossip about its unloved neighbour and, besides, Romanian radio ran a Hungarian service for its Hungarian minority. And therefore it fell to the Hungarian team to keep the world informed. And they did.

"They’re after him. They got him. He ran away. They’re after him again. They got him again. They shot him and her too. Hooray!"

And suddenly, Czechoslovakia’s bloodless revolution sounded rather boring to everyone and we returned to ordinary everyday life.

Nicholas Rankin

Nick Rankin makes radio and Nicholas Rankin writes books. But they're the same man, born in England and raised in Kenya during the Mau Mau era, the backpacker who worked and wandered in Spain and South America in his twenties. In 1986 he joined what was then BBC External Services as a scriptwriter in Central Talks and Features. The next year Faber published his first book, Dead Man's Chest: travels after Robert Louis Stevenson, *which was praised by Graham Greene. His second, the well-reviewed* Telegram from Guernica: the extraordinary life of George Steer, war-correspondent *(Faber 2003), built on a World Service radio documentary he made about Picasso's 1937 masterpiece. Rankin left the BBC staff in 2006 to complete his third book, the best-selling study of camouflage and propaganda* Churchill's Wizards: the British genius for deception 1914-1945 *(Faber, 2008). However, he still loves working in radio, and his most recent three-part series for BBC World Service were* PIRATES *(2008) and* GOLD *(2009). Rankin is a Fellow of the Royal Society of Literature, a member of the NUJ and the Society of Authors.*

Opening of Chapter 20, *'Radio Propaganda'* from *Churchill's Wizards*

By Nicholas Rankin

'There is no question of propaganda,' Sir Samuel Hoare told the House of Commons in his capacity as Lord Privy Seal on 11 October 1939. 'It will be publicity and by that I mean straight news.' To British ears, the word 'propaganda' is unpleasant. In 1928, Arthur Ponsonby's *Falsehood in War-Time* exposed many myths of WW1, showing how in that war 'propaganda' came to mean misrepresentation and manipulation. The connotations have Remained since mostly negative; except, of course, when you truly believe in what is being propagated or put forward.

The documentary film-makers were one such band of believers. John Grierson first used the word 'documentary' in a 1926 newspaper review he wrote of Robert Flaherty's anthropological film about Western Samoa, *Moana*, saying that it had 'documentary value'. From 1929 'documentary'became the self-defining term for an important group of British film-makers associated with Grierson who were interested in 'the creative treatment of actuality'. Grierson worked closely with a public relations man of genius, a remarkable British civil servant, Sir Stephen Tallents, who had been wounded in the trenches with the

Irish Guards, and worked on social reforms with William Beveridge. In 1926, Tallents became the secretary of the Empire Marketing Board. Playing on Tallents's internationalist vision, John Grierson persuaded him that cinema could help make the British Empire 'come alive'. Accordingly, after getting some ideas from Rudyard Kipling at Burwash, Tallents commissioned a film from Walter Creighton called *One Family*, in which a small boy falls asleep over his geography lesson and dreams a dream of the British Empire. A 1930 review found it 'the most extraordinary picture yet made by a British firm'. What Tallents encouraged in British documentary film-makers was public service propaganda. These non-commercial films looked at the social utilities that linked everybody – electricity, gas, post, railways, shipping, telephones, wireless, and so on – and were the first that allowed ordinary people to speak to the camera. The documentary film-makers were not embarrassed by the word 'propaganda'. John Grierson's epigraph to Paul Rotha's *Documentary Film*, published by Faber in January

1936, 'I look upon cinema as a pulpit, and use it as a propagandist', is confirmed in his introduction to the book: Our own relation to propaganda has been simple enough. We have found our finances in the propaganda service of Government Department and national Organisation . . . Documentary gave to propaganda an instrument it needed and propaganda gave to documentary a perspective it needed. There was therefore virtue in the word 'propaganda', and even pride; and so it would continue for just as long as the service is really public and the reference really social. If however, propaganda takes on its other more political meaning, the sooner documentary is done with it the better.

Most British journalists recoil from the word 'propaganda' as though from a poisonous Snake, yet it is really a pet which sits on their desk. All journalism is propaganda when it presents a case or seeks to persuade, because the estimation of 'news value' and the ordering of an argument is intimately linked to a belief system. The greatest journalists understand this. 'I was a professional recorder of events, a propagandist, not a soldier,' wrote one of WW2's finest reporters, Alan Moorehead, of himself. Purge 'propaganda' of negative associations and see it as a branch of rhetoric, or as information directed to public service, and we may get nearer to the way the British came to see it in WW2. In 1936, Sir Stephen Tallents became controller of public relations at the BBC, where a parallel process to Grierson's 'imaginative interpretation of everyday life' was going on among the first radio documentary feature makers, like John Pudney and Stephen Potter.

Priyath Liyanage

Born in Sri Lanka, Priyath came to Britain in 1984. He is head of the BBC's Sinhalese Service, and has been working for the BBC World Service since 1992. In 1996 he studied for an MA in Drama from Goldsmiths University, London. His screenplay Ira Madiyama [August Sun], *written in 2005, was directed by Prasanna Vithanage and screened in more than twenty international film festivals representing Sri Lanka.* August Sun *has been critically acclaimed and has won numerous awards in Sri Lanka and around the world. It was screened in the London Film Festival and was shown on Channel 4 television. Priyath has translated several of the works of Italian Playwright Dario Fo for production, he also writes poetry.*

Soldier

By Priyath Liyanage

He washed himself
he shaved his face
combed his hair
groomed all over
until he looked the smartest

He polished his shoes
ironed his clothes
shined his buttons
until they are the brightest.

He learned his craft
studied hard
practised every day
until he became the cleverest

When the day arrived
for him to act
with all his will and power
he killed his foes
until he became the nastiest.

He killed, he maimed,
he raped, he looted
he conquered the land
until he had nothing left
Some… called him the bravest.

Achala Sharma

Achala Sharma worked for the BBC for 21 years, joining the BBC Hindi Service in 1987; she was head of the service from 1997 to 2008. In 2003 she was awarded the World Hindi Honour *at the Seventh World Hindi Conference held in Suriname. The award honoured her significant contribution to the development and popularity of the Hindi language in the field of broadcast and literature. Other awards include* Katha UK *(a literary organisation in London) honour in 2004 for the collections of plays, and ABU award for the programme* Rajiv Gandhi Assassinated *in 1991. Achala is a well known name and voice to the listeners of BBC Hindi Service. For almost 18 years she was instrumental in turning BBC Hindi into a leading Hindi-language radio and online service. Among other achievements, she has to her credit two collections of radio plays,* Passport *and* Jaren (Roots) *which were recently released in London. Her published works includes three collections of short stories and two volumes of radio plays.*

An extract from *Rishta (Proposal)*

By Achala Sharma

Context:

This excerpt is from an adaptation of Anton Chekhov's one act play 'The Proposal' which I had written soon after the 50th anniversary of India's independence. The play was staged in London as well as broadcast by the BBC. I adapted the play in the context of India-Pakistan relations. It is based in London where interaction between Indian Muslims and Pakistani Muslims is more likely to take place. There are three characters- Changez Khan (a Muslim from India) and his daughter, Nazia (a spinster). Then we have Liyaqatullah Siddiqi whose family had migrated to Pakistan after the partition of India in 1947.

Liyaqatullah, who is in his early forties and is a hypochondriac, has come to propose to Nazia. Unfortunately, the conversation starts on the wrong footing and before he could muster the courage to propose, they end up arguing about the ownership of a small house in India. A heated argument follows. This is where Changez, Nazia's father enters:

Scene

Changez: What is happening here Nazia? Has England lost the world cup football or there is an India-Pakistan cricket match going on? Why were the two of you making so much noise?
Nazia: Dad, please resolve this. Tell Liyaqat, who owns the Noor Palace in India?
Changez: What sort of silly question is this Nazia? Of course, we do.
Liyaqat: I beg your pardon Changez sahib, how can you make such audacious claim? Please, you are a god fearing person… You should know that my father's father asked your father to look after Noor Palace when they were forced to leave their home in 1947. I guess in the last fifty years or so you have come to think of it as your own property.
Changez: You better get your facts right young man. Your father's father had sold the Noor Palace to us when they packed their bags to go to Pakistan. You have absolutely no idea how my family helped your family to escape in such difficult times. We risked our own lives. Anyway, how could you know all this? You have been fed lies and misinformation all your life. Noor Palace belongs to the Khan family. Everyone in India knows this as a fact.
Liyaqat: I can prove sir that it belongs to us. I have the letters which your father wrote to my father's father.....and…
Changez: Forget it. You can't prove it.

Liyaqat: I certainly can.
Changez: You cannot prove a thing by shouting. Listen Liyaqat, I have no intention of acquiring your land unlawfully, but I refuse to give up what is lawfully mine. However, if you continue to blow this matter out of proportion, I will give Noor palace to a charity organisation, Maybe offer it to Somalian refugees. Yes, that is a damn good idea.
Liyaqat: Changez sahib, how can you give away somebody else's property in charity? Tell me. Is it fair?
Changez: I will do whatever I like. It is mine.
Liyaqat: This is exactly like India's heavy handed attitude. That is not the way how good neighbours behave Changez sahib. You are a dishonest man.
Changez: How dare you! You called me a dishonest man?
Nazia: Dad, don't bother. Listen to me, phone someone in India today and get a new boundary wall built around Noor Palace.
Liyaqat: So you want to draw another LOC Nazia Bano?
Nazia: Sure, if that would open your eyes to the truth that Noor Palace belongs to us.
Liyaqat: Well, don't forget, if you and your father wish to turn this matter into a Kashmir issue, I too can appeal to the United Nations.
Changez: Do as you please. By the way, what did you achieve at the UN in the last fifty years? Have you got Kashmir? Listen, Liyaqatullah Siddiqi, dishonesty is in your blood. Fifty years ago, you wanted to create Pakistan, then you wanted Kashmir and now you also want the small piece of land that belongs to our family. Why did your family leave India in the first place?
Liyaqat: My family didn't want to be treated like second class citizens Changez Khan. It was a matter of honour for them.
Changez: Honour? Fifty years on and you are still called Muhajirs, I mean migrants in Pakistan. What kind of honour is that?
Liyaqat: Oh god! What is happening to me, why should I listen to such crap, these palpitations will kill me, my right leg seems to be paralysed, I must leave...
Changez: Yes, you must and don't ever come back. I do not wish my daughter to marry such a dishonest man.
Nazia: Marriage? What?
Changez: Yes. How could he possibly think of marrying you when he had eyes upon our property?
Nazia: What are you talking about dad?
Changez: Well, he said he wants to propose to you. He must be day dreaming.
Nazia: Oh god dad! How badly we treated him… You should have told me.

And of course Liyaqat returns and the debate goes on shifting to nuclear tests, mangoes and of course cricket.

Khaled al-Berry

Khaled Al-Berry was born in Sohag, Egypt 1972. He has a degree in Medicine from Cairo University. He has published his memoir, Life is More Beautiful than Paradise, *and novel,* Nigatif (Negative). *His latest work,* The Lady of Beauty, *which is colloquial Egyptian poetry, is to be published in Egypt soon. Khaled joined BBC in November 1999; he works as Broadcast Journalist for BBC Arabic Service.*

The Call

By Khaled al-Berry

"The Call" is excerpted from Life Is More Beautiful than Paradise *by Khaled al-Berry, first published in Arabic by Dar al-Nahar as* al-Dunya ajmal min al-janna *in 2001; a revised edition was published by Dar Merit in 2009.* Life Is More Beautiful than Paradise *will be published in November 2009 by the American University in Cairo Press and Arabia Books.*

I descended the mosque steps calmly after the prayer, talking to a friend of mine. The school year had started a few weeks earlier, the university students arriving from their hometowns and the students at the schools returning from their vacations. At the Jam'iya Shar'iya mosque—the Jama'a's main mosque in Asyut—the number of worshipers was huge, larger than any I'd seen throughout the summer vacation. This was my first school year as a committed Muslim with the Jama'a. The atmosphere in the city was tense; the government had decided, as it did on occasion, that Islamist activity had gone too far and had to be stopped. At such times, the mosque would be surrounded by thousands of Central Security troops, who would prevent some preacher or other from giving his sermon or terrorize those who frequented the mosque in the hope that they would decide not to take the risk of going. The huge number of those attending the prayer could act either as a stimulus to the police to interfere or a deterrent.

On this occasion, it was a stimulus. The buzz of people talking, the sound of their footfalls, the cries of the stall keepers, the attentive expression on my friend's face—all froze, and then suddenly everything exploded. Two agitated hands pushed me from behind, feet stepped on the backs of my shoes, dragging them off my feet. Shots were fired in the air and people knocked into one another like bowling pins, moving together this way and that as though by previous agreement. An acrid smoke got into my nostrils and added to the atmosphere's other ingredients. My face burned, my whole body apparently bursting into flame, just as every atom of the air around me had taken fire all at one go.

I yielded to my instincts and ran away from the shooting, but the roaring of the Central Security soldiers and the deafening sound of thousands of feet pounding the ground to an irregular rhythm started coming from all sides and I didn't know which way to turn. I had the feeling that our house existed in a different world, one separated from me by frightful obstacles. I would run like a madman and enter a building, then retreat and flee again when the residents refused to open their doors and give me refuge. There seemed no escape from the police with their thick, electrified batons. I ran from street to street, forgetting that my age and my face, without beard or mustache, would be enough to hide me from notice so long as I walked normally. One brother from the Jama'a was holding high a crutch belonging to another brother, a cripple who sold perfumes in front of the mosque. He was yelling in the face of the fleeing people, "Stand firm! Your religion is under attack! Defend your Islam!" I saved the scene in my memory but wasn't strong

enough to answer his call. I kept running till I reached our house, where the windows were closed tight to stop the tear gas from the grenades. Through the slanting wooden slats of the shutters I could see the final moments of the battle. The security forces dispersed the people and began chasing those who couldn't run fast enough to get away, beating them viciously while herding them toward the security trucks. My tears weren't because of the gas now. I went to my bed and lay down on my back in the darkened room. I remembered the movies I had watched with the brothers, depicting the first Muslims and their confrontations with the tyranny of the unbelievers. I fell asleep before my tears had dried.

I found myself in a dark, deserted place divided equally into narrow paths that all came together at a circle in the middle. Precisely at the centre stood a white dog, which was barking. Dogs had always frightened me, and this dog was barring my return route. I looked all around in the hope of finding a path that would allow me to avoid him. I felt a crippling fear in my legs. I couldn't move. The only light on that dark path was on the other side, but I didn't have the courage to walk past the dog and get to it. Gathering all my strength, I walked on, trembling, impelled only by the certainty that I would perish otherwise. Walking toward the dog, hastening my steps, I said in a loud voice, recalling a song we sang at the mosque, "No, we shall not die cringing for fear of the dogs. No, we shall not die cringing for fear of the dogs."

I woke from my dream still weeping.

Emal Pasarly

Emal Pasarly was born in Kunduz, Afghanistan. After the soviet invasion of Afghanistan during the 1980s Emal took refugee with his family in Peshawar, Pakistan. He has been living in London since 1993 and working with the BBC World Service Pashto section since 1996. Before joining the BBC Emal was editor of a monthly magazine, DEWA, *for Pashto literature in London. Emal has four collections of short stories, two novels and a collection of Dramas in Pashto.*

Time

By Emal Pasarly

I woke up early. It was cold. I performed the dawn prayer. Really enjoyed it. It calmed my soul. I didn't want to wake anybody up. I made a cup of tea myself. Even if I had waked someone, who knows how willing they would have been, and in what mood. They don't say anything, of course, but I know. I know that no one else can wake up that early.

No one else has the prowess to wake up at dawn.

I took the cup with me. Let me go outside and drink it in the lawn, I thought. The lawn was wet with dew. It felt colder than I had estimated. I came back. Sat at large window's mirrors. I looked at the lawn, slowly sipping tea. A little later, I picked up my notebook. It is more fun to read those memories. Not that many books make it here from home these days. Books here are all in English. I don't know why I don't enjoy them anymore. I used to read them with a lot of passion once.

I started reading memories of thirty years ago. I was off. I had got up late and gone to the barber's to have a haircut. I closed the notebook for a moment. I remembered that barber. He was Greek. Where might he be now? Could he even be alive? He was a short man with a large round belly. He felt tired while working. Shortness of breath. He would pull me by the hair. You got such strong hair, young man.

Used to say the same thing every time. I would simply laugh. I loved it.

My tea cup emptied. I was still thirsty. It's strange. After such a long time, I have felt like having a second cup of tea in the morning. I went to the kitchen. Before I could put the kettle on the range, my granddaughter came downstairs. Baabaa, I want some tea too. I took out milk for her from the refrigerator for her.

Her mother used to give her milk every morning before anything else. As I turned around, she had gone into the living room and turned the TV on. Turned it down, my child, I said. You are gono wake others up. She pay me no heed. I brought her the milk and reminded her once more: Turn it down some. Others are sleeping
Let them wake up, she blurted. They can't stay sleeping till Judgment Day. It's getting late.
That made me laugh. I lowered the volume myself. She got mad and turned off the TV. Didn't even take the milk from me. She ran towards my notebook. I was panicked. I thought she wanted to tear the pages off my notebook. But she started flipping its pages

carefully. I stopped in front of her, just watching her. She turned a few more pages,

looked at me, then laid the notebook on the floor.

Can you read this, Baabaa?
"Of course I can, dear," I laughed. "It's Pashto writing."

The girl did not say anything more. Took the milk from my hand, and went upstairs, to her father and mother.

I remembered my tea, but for some reason didn't feel like drinking it anymore. I stood in front of the large window. Saw my image in the mirror. During the past several years, hair had fallen off my head. But above my ears, the hair looked long. I looked at my watch. It was too early. The barber shop was probably still closed. Started exploring my notes again.

I had gone to a dentist, an old Englishman. He would drill my teeth every single time. He would warn me every time: if you keep don't start paying attention Tooth such and such of your upper jaw will decay. And every time he would charge a lot of pounds. That's why I wouldn't see him unless I had to.

I turned another page. I had gone to a barbeque picnic with friends. You know, to make kebab and such. I had got a stomach-ache. The meat must not have been cooked well. I closed the notebook again. I felt hunger. Thinking of kebob made my mouth water. It had been so long I hadn't eaten meat, much less kebob. I can only eat ground beef. Even that I turn over in my mouth a few time. I looked at my watch. Perhaps the barber shop is open now. I put on my overcoat and my hat. Then I walked to the barber shop. He was just opening the shop. He is English, some thirty-odd years old, perhaps. He is a tall youth with thick hair. Dreadlocks, to be exact, like a woman's, hanging on his back. ""Need a shave?" he asked me.

I sat on his chair, touching the greying hair above my ears. "No, I would like to have this hair short."

He was looking at me in the mirrors in front of me. He wrapped a piece of cloth around my neck, held the hair above my ear, and started working his scissors. Soon he was straightening my hair and brushing off hair off the back of my neck. He stood aside: "Ten pounds, please."

The phrase shocked me. I repeated to myself: Ten pounds!

I gave the ten pounds to the barber and left the shop.

I looked at my watch. It was still early. They must still be sleeping, I thought. Started walking very slowly. It was chilly. I was cold. I entered a large department store. Didn't really need anything. I saw a doll. Bought it for my granddaughter. The cashier told me twenty pounds. I was stunned. I said to myself, twenty pounds! and left the store.

I looked at the watch again. It was as if time had stopped. Let me go home, I thought. I could probably read my memoirs. That's usually good for killing time. I could give the doll to grandchild. She will love that.

I hurried home. It was quiet. They were probably sleeping. Where are you, *bachu*? I've

brought you a doll. I did not hear an answer. I laid the doll aside. Grabbed my notebook. I had found a job. I was happy. It paid a pound per hour. My job was to deliver merchandise to a large store in a small truck. I would drive the truck alone.

I heard my son's voice. He had just got up. Still in his pyjamas. Probably had not even washed his face yet. Just like his daughter, he went straight to the living room and

turned on the TV.

"Where did you go?" he asked me, without looking at me.
"Had a haircut."
He looked at me and frowned. "You had one last Friday. You have more trips to the barbershop than hair on your head."

I didn't like what he said, but I chuckled anyway. He had already turned his face towards television. Wasn't laughing.
--I bought a doll for your daughter.
--Why?
--No particular reason. I thought she would play with it.
--You are just wasting money. She has lessons to do. How is she going to find time for dolls?

I did not say anything. Took my notebook and started reading. My son kept saying buy a bike. I tried to talk him out of it because he had studies. He kept crying.

My granddaughter came down. I closed the notebook.
--I have brought a doll for you.
--How much did you pay for it, she asked.
--Twenty pounds.
--Ohooooooooo Baabaa, you don't understand. For twenty pounds I could have bought a computer game.

My son asked, how much was the haircut?
--Ten pounds.
--"The doll is a waste of time," he said as he was leaving the house, "And the haircut a waste of money."
My granddaughter also left with her dad. She did not take the doll. I got up and unwrapped the doll. Turned it around a few times. It wasn't fun. It didn't help me pass time.

Translated from Pashto to English by S.Junaid

Bush Writers Seminar
27th October 2009
Extracts from writers work

Hamid Ismailov

Hamid Ismailov is an Uzbek poet and writer. He was forced to flee Uzbekistan in 1992 and has since been living in the UK whilst working at the BBC World Service. He is a prolific writer of prose and poetry, and his books have been published in Uzbek, Russian, French, German, Turkish and other languages; his work is banned in Uzbekistan. He has also translated Russian and Western classics into Uzbek, and Uzbek and Persian classics into Russian, and some Western languages. His novel The Railway, *written before he left Uzbekistan, was the first translated into English by Robert Chandler and published in 2006.*

Extract from *'The Railway'*

By Hamid Ismailov

And this really was more than the boy could bear, and a kind of whirling inside him, like the whirling of water being poured fast into a large bottle, a whirling that caused utterly unexpected tears to splash out from his eyes, that deafened his ears with its ringing and then snatched up the whole of him, whirled him out through the gates and down the sidestreet, past Huvron-Barber's fortress-like walls and all the way to the railway embankment, and then swept him in the direction of the small bazaar by the station and then from sleeper to sleeper of the railway line, up towards the warehouses. He walked dumbly on and on until he came to a place where there was nothing familiar round about but where at least there was an end to his tears, and to the snot he spat out after every ten of those hateful 'per-nick-et-y-s, and where even that awful word no longer seemed as hurtful as it had done before, although there was still a dry bitterness on his tongue and this bitterness was made still more bitter by a wind blowing from somewhere a long way away, from beyond the thickets of Russian olive and the ploughed-up land by the embankment, from somewhere in the wormwood-filled steppes.

And the boy felt a strange freedom, as if he now were alone on this empty and slowly darkening earth, without hurtful words, without shame and fear, without any need for friends who go away with their parents and spend holidays in the city, without that city, where he too had to go with grandmother – but only to buy lollipops, which they then sold back in Gilas; as if he could now do whatever he felt like, as if he could shout out at the top of his voice 'Mummy, Mummy, I love you!' and be frightened only by his very first shout, when he was frightened by a frightened crow that shot up from behind some clods of ploughed-up earth and cawed crossly as it flew off down the line of telegraph poles; yes, he was able to pick up a stone and throw it at that crow, for no reason at all, simply because he was free to, because he was free to do anything he felt like doing – except that there was nothing to do. The boy was amazed by this emptiness – an emptiness very like the sky, which was getting lower and lower before his very eyes and which seemed to be bringing together the two sides of the boundless earth just as grandmother folds together the two sides of her oilskin cloth when the boy has kneaded the dough a little with his fists – and then she puts the bowl with the dough to one side, so that the boy can cover it with a cloth and a blanket while she folds up her oilskin cloth, tapping it on the underside to make specks of flour sprinkle down from it just as floury stars would soon be sprinkling down on the earth.

The boy was so entranced by the sky that he felt as startled by the sudden hoot of a train as by the crow, and he jumped down off the embankment even before he understood itwas a train – and that the drivers might just been having a little fun, laughing at him for standing where no one had ever stood before. He was almost certain of this, and still more certain when a light swept over his head and it was only when he looked back that he realized this was the sunset reflected by the glass windows of the locomotive cab, but he still didn't feel like climbing out from behind his mound of earth. Only when another hoot, right beside him, made the earth tremble, only when the locomotive thundered past on its heavy wheels did he climb out from his crow's shelter, meaning to shake his fist at the locomotive just as he had thrown a stone at the departing crow, but he saw it was a passenger train and this brought him up short. It was too late to hide, nor did he wish to, especially since people were looking out of every window at the sunset over the fields and it was impossible for him to stand in front of them as they rushed past – impossible not because he was disturbing them but because they were disturbing him; it was they who had burst into his life, not he into theirs, but as he thought about what he could do to get his own back he saw that there wasn't anyone at all looking at the sunset and that they were all busy with affairs of their own: someone was sorting out her berth, unfolding the sheet just as grandmother unfolds her oilcloth; someone was eating; someone was drinking. And in the restaurant car itself people were busier still…

And when the boy had begun to feel quite cross that there was no one he could get his revenge on, suddenly he saw a girl, standing behind an open door at the end of one of the very last coaches and looking out at the sunset and the fields. There was no one else the boy could get his revenge on – everyone else was safely behind a window – and so the boy began feverishly wondering what he should do: throw some clay at her, undo his flies, or pull his trousers right down… When the coach was level with him, he felt utterly bewildered and, clumsily kissing the ends of his fingers, he threw a kiss in the girl's direction; the girl, taken aback, stood there and smiled and didn't even hold a finger to her temple and rotate it but instead leaned out of the coach, holding onto the handrail and looking in his direction. And this bewildered him still more and even made him blush – and when the train disappeared with its red tail-light round a distant bend, the boy's shame was still humming in the rails, which were warm from the red sun that had been warming them all day long, and this hum passed through his flaming cheeks and into his heart, which was beating out its quick beat just like the train on the rails.

And the boy shouted, 'Girl, I love you,' and this time there wasn't anything he was frightened of, because he knew that in the falling darkness his voice would not carry beyond this ploughed-up earth, beyond these Russian olives, beyond this emptiness which was by now a personal emptiness that he himself had marked and filled, filled so full that he wanted to leave it as quick as he could, like dough that has been so well kneaded it no longer fits in the bowl; and he began to walk quickly back along the sleepers.

Zina Rohan

*Zina Rohan was born in London to parents who were both wartime refugees: her mother was Russian, her father German-Jewish. After university in Edinburgh and the School of Oriental and African Studies, she married an Iranian fellow student, and had two children. She joined the BBC World Service in 1978 as a staff writer, writing talks and features for broadcast and translation. In the late 1980s, having married again - a Czech colleague - and had another child, she became a producer/presenter in Current Affairs and, later, editor of her department's documentary features. Her first novel was published in 1991 (*The Book of Wishes and Complaints*). The second*, The Sandbeetle, *came out in 1993. She did not bring out her third novel*, The Officer's Daughter, *until 2006, by which time she had left the BBC. She now writes part-time, and works part-time for the Citizens' Advice Bureau.*

Extract from, *The Small Book* (not yet published)

By Zina Rohan

1915

"…and they have told me to stand by for an early duty tomorrow. Unlike the others who have been similarly alerted, I know what it is to be, and I quail.

July 15th 1915

This has been a wretched business. They have made a murderer out of me and all of us who were present. If that unfortunate man, Pte. Miller, was innocent of the charge, and indeed even if he was not, I fear I may never again sleep easily in my bed, unsullied by what I witnessed and by what I have been party to. For all that I fell out to one side, and crouched behind some shrubs with, I have to say, the chaplain shaking beside me, I could neither block the sounds from my closed ears nor clear the image from my closed eyes. As we were marching to the designated spot, I tried to distract my mind by casting us as members of some amateur theatricals, each carrying the props suitable for his role. There were the ten men shouldering their rifles, a sergeant shouldering a pair of shovels for filling in the grave; there was the chaplain with his cross, the APM with his maps and pencils, the officer with his revolver, and I with a bandage and a scrap of white cloth in my pocket. Only the charged man walked unencumbered, slipping occasionally, as we all were, for the path was muddy under a gentle drizzle and the light still dim. Not a man spoke as there was nothing to be said, nor was there birdsong since by this time of year nestlings have flown and the dawn chorus is stilled. The fine rain fell directly, no breeze or wind to disturb it, nor shake the leaves on the branches we passed beneath. We heard our own footsteps and beyond, at some distance away, the ordinary sounds of a waking camp, shouts and whistling, and a part of a song.

Someone, I do not know who, had gone ahead, perhaps yesterday, and driven a post into the ground. When we rounded a bend and saw it there, we all faltered, every man of us I am certain, filled with dread. Had there been a lone tree or a sapling to which the accused man might have been tied it would not have struck us so horribly as did this stake, erected for the purpose, the site chosen at a distance someone had measured out from a strip of ground, more or less even, some twenty paces away.

The officer tied Pte. Miller's hands behind his back and led him across the ground to the post and instructed me to follow. I'm told that they often give a man a hefty drink or two beforehand so that his senses are dulled but this fellow, so some of them said afterwards, was a teetotaller. What that meant to me was two things: that his mind will

have been clear and his perceptions sharp, and that the men in the firing party came from among his own unit else how should they have known he was not a drinker?

He was a small man – one of those many that I have seen who are undersized because they are undernourished, and who should not have been found fit for service. The volunteers who should be so proud to be on the King's business with a rifle in their hand have unfortunately among them eager runts, lacking in height, and teeth – and it would seem in wits. The charge was 'casting aside his weapon', which he may indeed have done, or simply dropped it and not then been able to find it again. But if he had intended to leave the field he ought at the least to have tried, as others have done with success as I should know, to create the impression that he was unfit for it. Egg white added to the urine, for instance, has induced me to believe a soldier was suffering from diseased kidneys and to have him discharged. And it was many months and some hundred Rankers declared unfitted for the corps and repatriated before I realised that an irregular heartbeat did not come from any failure in the organ but from ingested cordite. But this man didn't have the intelligence to resort to such ruses and now stood before me, grey in complexion, as well he might be, dry in the mouth and unable to swallow.

The officer asked him if he was ready and, although he can not possibly have been, the poor fellow nodded, which set his helmet wobbling so that without thinking he tried to put his hands up to straighten it again, but could not because they were bound. Then the officer nodded to me to do my part and I bent to pin against Pte Miller's heart the piece of white cloth to act as target. After this I wound round his head, over his eyes, and over the helmet, the blindfold that would shield him from the sight of what was to come, and also shield his executioners from any expression they might see in his eyes. Ultimately, all true expression is in the eyes. My duty done I made my retreat as swiftly as I was able with any dignity, and my place was taken by the chaplain whose murmurings can have been distinct only to the condemned man. When I turned again, there were the chaplain's jaws working over his speech and all that could be seen of Pte Miller's face, his small chin, jutting somewhat as he listened. Rather too soon, I thought, the officer pulled him backwards until his body came to rest against the post, and a rope was passed through his bound arms and around the post several times.

Within a minute the chaplain was again at my side, now mumbling to himself, although I could not say if it was still prayers, or curses for the situation in which he found himself. And indeed, in which I found myself. It could be argued that a chaplain can at least assure himself that he has helped a man's soul to be at peace and ushered him into everlasting life; perhaps the chaplain can console himself that if this man's terror was such that he was prepared to bring his company into disrepute and himself be remembered only as a degenerate coward, then he was best out of this life and into the next one, and the sooner the better. But my concern is with the living, and it is a vile contravention of my professional oath to bring certain death to a healthy man, or at least to one not-diseased, before his time. And while the chaplain's business is to care for the well-being of a human soul, and the commanding officer's to care for the well-being of his platoon, it is mine to give thought not only to the patient before me, but to his dependents as well. Yet in this instance I have no knowledge of this man, whether he has a wife and children, or aged parents, or siblings who rely on him, as so many have. What becomes of them now? No one knows nor considers it their concern for, after all, what becomes of those millions whose sons or husbands or fathers have fallen in the field of battle? But they, at least, may have campaign medals to display, and unsullied reputations to boast of although in fact the man they grieve for may have died in some acident on the battlefield, or drowned, or drank himself to death. So long as there is no document accusing a man of cowardice, then assuredly he was a hero.

I may not have been asked to take aim or pull a trigger, but it was I who pinned the patch of white over Pte. Miller's heart to direct the bullets, and then had to stand by in order afterwards to pronounce him dead, which as a matter fact, he was not, but was slumped over his holding ropes, his legs twitching like a hare's that has been run over by a motorcar. The officer then had to stride up and finish him off with a single shot from his revolver into the back of Miller's drooping head. I suspect this must be the case too often when a man is condemned to be shot and the firing party are detailed from his own company. How they must rail at their sergeant when they are told! How they must pead to be excused! How they must offer to exchange their rations of rum if only he will let them off! But when their pleading comes to nothing, and the ten men are forced to tramp behind their comrade to the execution ground, is it any wonder then that no matter how much it is explained to them that to be merciful they should aim for the heart and shoot true, they cannot. If they themselves rebel and cast away their rifles, in all likelihood they too would face Court Martial and stand condemned. So they fire wildly, some no doubt up into the air, and their target is then wounded like a renegade fox, but not killed until the officer delivers the *coup de grace*. Then all of them return to their bivouacs, vomiting.

And to which of them is it any comfort that they handed their rifles over to the officer so that, behind their turned backs, one of them might be loaded with blanks? There is not a trained serviceman who cannot tell the difference as the shot is fired, for the recoil of the blank is softer. What is more, in order to know, that shot has to be fired, the trigger pulled. Even if a man knows that his weapon carried the blanks, he knows it only after he has fired, so that in his intent, in his obedience – that quality so necessary in a soldier, especially of the ordinary ranks – in his own estimation he is as much a culprit as are his colleagues who fired the real bullets. Now they may think their company is twice disgraced: first by the man's cowardly desertion which has left a gap in the ranks and jeopardised the safety of the men around him, something which of course cannot be tolerated, for as it is said, if a private soldier were shown toleration for declining to face danger, then all the qualities which we would desire in a fighting man would be debased and degraded; but they are also disgraced, I believe, by being made into executioners. I understand that these things should be done, but let those in command who hand down the sentence of death also carry it out. For a commander-in-chief who is accustomed to sending large numbers of men to their deaths, as it is his duty to do and theirs to obey, it may be no great burden to add another name to his list. How different it is for a soldier to have to take aim at one of his own in cold blood. I fear these men will be plagued by nightmares in the weeks ahead, and for myself, as I look at the clock in the light of my candle, I dread giving myself up to sleep.

When it was all over and they had rolled the corpse into the grave they had made ready, the APM noted down the map reference so that, as he put it, there'd be no more scuttling away. Then he turned to me and remarked, with unwonted cheerfulness it seemed, that I should prepare to do this again as there would undoubtedly be the need. 'I thought,' I retorted, 'that these things are done in the interests of discipline and as an example.' 'Did you indeed?' he said, bestowing on me a pitying smile. 'But when a man's in such a funk, do you think he gives a d*** about another man's example?'"

Colin Grant

Colin Grant is the author of the biography Negro with a Hat: The Rise and Fall of Marcus Garvey and His Dream of Mother Africa, *(Jonathan Cape, 2008; Oxford University Press, USA , 2008). Grant is an independent historian and BBC radio producer. He joined the BBC in 1991, and has worked as a TV script editor and radio producer of arts and science programmes on radio 4 and the World Service. Grant has made numerous documentaries on writers and writing, most recently a two-part series on Caribbean Voices, a reflection of the BBC World Service's role in helping to kick-start Caribbean literature fifty years ago. He has written and directed plays including* The Clinic, *based on the lives of the photojournalists, Tim Page and Don McCullin. Grant has also written and produced several radio drama-documentaries including:* African Man of Letters: The Life of Ignatius Sancho, A Fountain of Tears: The Murder of Federico Garcia Lorca *and* Move over Charlie Brown: The Rise of Boondocks. *Grant's next book,* I&I, The Natural Mystic*s is a group biography of the original Wailers: Peter Tosh, Bob Marley and Bunny Wailer. It will be published by Jonathan Cape (UK) and Penguin Press (USA).*

Prologue to *Negro With a Hat*

By Colin Grant

A Premature Death

In death I shall be a terror to the foes of Negro liberty.
Look for me in the whirlwind or the song of the storm.
Look for me all around you.

Marcus Garvey:
Atlanta penitentiary, 1925

At the end of May, 1940, Marcus Garvey sat cold and forgotten in a tall draughty rented house at 53 Talgarth Road in West Kensington, London. Recovering from a stroke which had left him partially paralysed, he was sorting through the newspapers that his secretary, Daisy Whyte, had placed beside his bed when he came across a headline which he knew could not be true: 'Marcus Garvey Dies in London.'1 He scanned the other papers, some of which also carried notices of his death. They were not kind obituaries. It took almost a week for many of the papers to issue corrections. By then wakes and memorials had been held for Marcus Garvey in the Caribbean and the United States. Garvey found himself eulogised by a number of people whom he'd considered enemies and vilified by others had not forgiven him for his alleged exploitation of black people. Miss Whyte tried to shield her boss from some of the more uncharitable news stories but he insisted on seeing them all. Garvey was still weak from the stroke. But more than the distress and embarrassment of his disability, he was deeply upset by his public and private impotence; by his inability to arrest the decline of his mass movement, and by his estrangement from his family: two years previously, his wife had left him and returned to Jamaica with their children; he hadn't seen them since. Even if he'd been physically able to travel; there were few transatlantic passenger ships prepared to run the risk of being sunk by the German U-boats patrolling the high seas.

Marcus Garvey was now, 'faced with clippings of his obituary [and] pictures of himself with deep black borders,' wrote Daisy Whyte, '[and] after the second day of this pile of shocking correspondence; he collapsed in his chair.' Reading through the damning accounts, written by former friends and enemies, Garvey had suffered another massive stroke: he died two weeks later, on 10 June, 1940.

In those last weeks of his life, Garvey might have been caught off guard by the surprisingly balanced coverage of papers such as the New York Times, the Daily Worker and the Chicago Defender. Back in the 1920s the Chicago Defender had led a pack of Negro papers in shrilly denouncing Garvey as a menace and disgrace to the black race. Now, on 10 June 1940, the Defender wrote: 'Endowed with a dynamic personality, with unmatched oratorical gift, Garvey was easily the most colourful figure to have appeared in America since Frederick Douglass and Booker T.Washington. From 1914 to 1921 he dominated the scene with … the powerful Universal Negro Improvement Association. Had Garvey succeeded in his undertakings, he would have been incontestably the greatest figure of the 20th century. Having failed, he is considered a fool.'

A whiff of hypocrisy rose from its pages as it was the Defender's London correspondent, George Padmore, who had initially spread the rumour of Garvey's death. Amongst the small circle of exiled Caribbean intellectuals in 1930s London, the rising stars, George Padmore and C.L.R James, had mounted a running campaign against the older man, heckling him at Speakers' Corner and at political meetings, and seizing every opportunity to harass and pour scorn upon his head. In the 1920s, J. Edgar Hoover had considered Marcus Garvey to be one most dangerous black men in America, but by the time of his death Garvey had retreated from the radicalism and militancy that the FBI boss had so feared. Garvey's critics in London could not forgive his sharp turn to the right, nor his denunciation of Emperor Haile Selassie for fleeing Ethiopia during the Italian invasion of 1935.

If this tiny coterie of black intellectuals in London, including Garvey, had paused to reflect, they would have realised that they shared a commonality of purpose. Instead, they circled round each other in a narcissistic battle of minor differences. Theirs was a mirror of the many skirmishes Garvey had fought with other black leaders in Jamaica and Harlem throughout his unusual career.

C L R James came publicly to regret his role in Marcus Garvey's final demise, but it would take two decades before Garvey's label as a fool was replaced officially with a badge of honour.3 In 1964, Edward Seaga (a future Prime Minister of Jamaica) arranged for Garvey's remains to be returned for a state funeral and for the visionary, the man they called the Black Moses, to be honoured as Jamaica's first national hero and one of the most radical and enigmatic figures in 20th century history.

Salah Niazi

Born in Iraq in July 1935, Salah Niazi worked as a newsreader on Iraqi state radio & T.V, and taught Arabic language & literature at secondary schools in Baghdad. He has been self exiled in the UK since 1964, and from 1965 to 1984 worked as a newsreader and later head of Cultural Talks Unit for the BBC Arabic service in Bush House. He also gave lectures on "the art of Translation" in both the polytechnic of central London & Edinburgh University. Having retired from the BBC, in 1985 he was elected as the head of the Association of the Iraqi Academics in Britain. From 1985 to 2002 he was the editor of Alightirab Al Adabi (a quarterly magazine for Arab writers in exile). His publications include 11 collections of poetry, and 4 books of criticism. He has also written and published his autobiography.

Flat-hunting

By Salah Niazi

I was flat-hunting
The area is tedious with noises that repelled
Long and dark were the tunnels of my headache

Suddenly a young sparrow
Alighted in the middle of the road
The edges of his beak were still yellow
Like undried paint
He was turning, picking up dust, hopping
Perhaps for the first time
His beak and legs, like match sticks, are put on trial
How proud was he with his first self-reliance
His wings were quivering
Like a young plant in cold winter sunlight
Intoxicated by his first experience
He chirps like a bell,

A dark brown car was approaching
In confusion he flew low in front of it
He was sent up into the air
Three metres higher than the height of the car
He fell as if wingless
Like a small and mouthless cotton-wool ball

In my palm, he is stiff
His body is still warm
How soft his feathers
His open eyes are like two sesame seeds.
I can see no proper shroud to wrap him in
No grave to bury him in

Inside a new envelop, I sealed him
With the tip of my tongue, with no address
I put him on the grass solemnly and silently

I was just flat- hunting
The area was tedious, with noises that repelled
Long and dark were the tunnels of my headache

Anthony Rudolf

*Born in London in 1942, Anthony Rudolf has two children and two grandchildren. He is the author of books of literary criticism (*on Primo Levi, Piotr Rawicz *and others), autobiography (*The Arithmetic of Memory*) and poetry* (The Same River Twice and collaborations with artists*), and translator of books of poetry from French (*Bonnefoy, Vigée, Jabès*), Russian (*Vinokourov *and* Tvardovsky*) and other languages. He has edited various anthologies. His essay on R.B. Kitaj was published by the National Gallery in 2001, and he has published essays on other painters. He is the painter Paula Rego's partner and main male model. He has completed a volume of short stories and is now at work on two new memoirs. His reviews, articles, poems, translations, obituaries and interviews with writers have appeared in numerous journals. Rudolf has been an occasional broadcaster on radio and television and founder of Menard Press. After a life time of day jobs (the longest being a twenty year stint in the Bush House newsroom), he became Visiting Lecturer in Arts and Humanities at London Metropolitan University (2000-2003) and Royal Literary Fund fellow at the Universities of Hertfordshire and Westminster (2003-2008). In 2004, he was appointed Chevalier de l'Ordre des Arts et des Lettres and, in 2005, elected Fellow of the Royal Society of Literature. Zigzag, his book of prose/verse sequences, will be published in 2010.*

VILHELM HAMMERSHØI

(In Copenhagen and at the Royal Academy, London, August 2008)

By Anthony Rudolf

For LB, who walked round with me

No one could accuse Hammershøi of being upbeat. And yet the light seen coming through the windows in certain interiors is the equivalent of a smile. And the doors are usually open. The artist, or the picture, is never going to laugh, but if you are a gloomy Dane, a hard won smile is something. On a good day, you might agree to design the sets for *Hedda Gabler*.

For Hammershøi, work keeps the soul's night at bay, obviating angst. His melancholy, however, has no truck with the Nordic symbolism of his time. Never pushed to total abstraction, the understated Whistler-influenced tonalities work their obsessional magic and draw us in, between the lines -- those traces of architectonic primacy.

The peculiar intimacy and restraint of his work has affinities to that of Mondrian and, even more so, of Morandi. The artist's compositional template has the great Dutch masters written all over it -- thus the use of a second room beyond the first -- save that, lacking "human" interest, there is an uncanny feel to the intensely imagined interiors, as if Atget had photographed them.

The nearest we get to a self-portrait is in one of the interiors: an easel – and no painting standing on the easel. Metonymy suits this self-effacing master. I prefer the total interiors without the (exclusively female) figures. These figures either distract the viewer or invite unintended meanings. They are no more (but no less) important than the humanoid stove in 'The White Door'.

The life of the pictures does not depend on these figures. The viewer does not speculate about what is going on in their minds. There is no story independent of the artist's compelling vision. The unpeopled interiors allow

one to colonise the space with psychic projections as you do in the empty rooms of the inspired Edgar Allan Poe Museum in Philadelphia.

One projects a structure of one's mind onto the pictures, a structure cognate with the painter's north European darkness of the soul, a darkness almost unredeemed by south European perhaps Catholic lightness of being. I say "almost" because I remember the light smiling in a handful of the pictures. This too is life.

How strange it is, how uncanny, that a picture called 'Street in London' should be of the street by the side of the British Museum where I always park my car during an evening visit there. Perhaps this phenomenon should be called a back projection. Hammershøi stayed in that street when he visited London. The British Museum symbolises nothing.

What or why does it matter that he painted these pictures? It matters because he paid attention. He paid attention to his interior landscapes because had he not done so, he would have had no way to go on living. A painting is art's way of preparing for the next painting. It is life's way of preparing for the next phase of life: to go on, to survive, until this becomes impossible, for whatever reason.

Miguel Molina

Miguel is a Mexican-British journalist who's worked for print, broadcast and online media in several countries – including Mexico, United States, Uruguay and the United Kingdom. Having now left the BBC World Service he now works as a media trainer and consultant. He has been writing poetry since he began working as a journalist in the mid-seventies, and has published several books and collections of poems. The last book he published (Eyes full of Paxil[Seroxat]) was in late 1999, and is part of a series by several important writers of his generation. His works have been included en several national and international anthologies, and he is currently working on a bilingual collection of poems.

Covent Garden

By Miguel Molina

I
Where man and woman have
A charm that was not there before
And will be there no more

When all is said and done, I am.
When every deed is done
And every word is finally said

Am I the question left and ask
Where things went wrong?

I am. There is no more, there is
No charm, no end to a labour´s day.

II
I am, I see, I say. My words
Are here today but will not last
Despite the fact that words

Can help time go slow, slow,
Slow: There is no time nor was,
Neither before nor after, nor meanwhile.

We were who we are, what we will be
Is already: a changing word nobody said

Or wrote nowhere, a silent vow somebody just
Forgot, for nothing lasts, for nothing really lasts.

III
On Mondays I always look for things that were
Once new, so today it must be Monday.
There are as well the crowds, the clowns,

The tenors, the sopranos in Verdi, Vivaldi
And wine and tourists,
Things that were never new, so today

It must be Monday. I see the day

I want to explain with words

I've always longed to say for things
That were and were not new again.

Humphrey Hawksley

Humphrey Hawksley is a leading BBC foreign correspondent, author and commentator on world affairs. For more than twenty years he has reported on key trends, events and conflicts from all over the world. He joined the BBC in 1983 and took up his first BBC foreign posting in 1986 to cover the Tamil civil war in Sri Lanka. He didn't stay long. He was expelled after six months for revealing atrocities against civilians. From there, he specialized in the rapid and often painful growth of Asia: India as it fought religious wars and threw off the shackles of its closed economic system; The Philippines as it was rocked by rebellions; Hong Kong as it prepared to move from British colonialism to Chinese rule; and Beijing where he opened the BBC's first ever television bureau.

Zogorwee, Liberia, June 2009
Extract from *Dancing With The Devil*

In 1935, the writer Graham Greene set off on a journey through Sierra Leone and Liberia. In his book Journey without Maps, Greene asked what were the Europeans doing there? What did the slogans about civilising the natives actually mean? Humphrey Hawksley has been there to retrace Graham Greene's journey.

Shortly after dark as the solitary stilted "devil dancer" walked back into the Liberian forest, we headed off, but soon found the road blocked and in the darkness it was difficult to see why.

My torch beam picked up piles of bananas on the side of the road. I call it a road, but it was more like a farm track.

I then saw sacks of rice, a huddle of people - maybe 20 or 30 - they were passengers from a blue flatbed truck that was skewed across the route, its front wheels trapped in a ditch.

I heard what I thought was a baby's cry and ran forward only to find that four bleating goats were part of the truck's cargo. They were strapped onto the side, hanging and wrapped in brown cotton sheeting.

"We'll have to return to the village," I muttered to my Liberian driver, Mickey.
"No, we'll fix it," he said. "The chief back in the village is happy because we gave him some dash. So the devil is happy. So soon we'll go."

Dash is an old word for gift that the writer Graham Greene handed out to village chiefs when he walked through Liberia in 1935. I was tracing his route to see how much had changed.

Spiritual power

Today, disease is still rampant, although the yellow fever of Greene's day has been overtaken by Aids. Pot-bellied children run around villages that are controlled by paramount chiefs. Christian missionaries still run much of the health service.

That morning, I had stood outside a small, stone church - such as you would find in any English village - at the entrance to the United Methodist Mission in the town of Ganta.

It was far in the northern interior of Liberia, and in Greene's day the inadequate map had simply marked the area as being inhabited by cannibal tribes.

Greene had stayed at this mission station as a guest of a Dr Harley who had built the church, set up a clinic and was an expert in the secret societies and spiritual ways of the devil that Mickey and I had just been discussing with the village chief.

One of Dr Harley's successors was Sue Porter, a quietly spoken and thoughtful American missionary nurse, who explained that many Liberians felt they had one foot in the bush and one in the modern world. And it was the same with their belief in God.

"When you talk about spiritual power here, it's about the power or an ability to do something whether it is good or bad," she said as we sat in the shade of a tree in the mission school grounds.

"Our Western culture doesn't allow us to see it as a dual-sided figure."

"It's our bush society," said Victor, the Liberian mission hospital administrator.

"The secret societies are meant to make you a good citizen, so the devil reminds you that if you are bad you can be punished."

Devil dance

Mickey and I had gone on to the village of Zorgorwee, where a "devil dancer" was to be performing at dusk.

The village chief, dressed in a bright yellow and brown robe, said he was too hungry to speak to me, until Mickey gave him some dash - a packet of biscuits from our car. Then the chief summoned a translator.

"My name is Jacob Kermon," he said in a booming voice that carried above the sound of singing and drums heralding the arrival of the devil. "And Jesus Christ is my personal saviour."

"Then, why are we here worshipping the devil?" I asked, slightly confused.

"When the devil comes out people feel good," he said. "He brings happiness and reconciliation within the community."

As the sun dropped and villagers lit fires, a stilted dancer walked in from the forest.

He stood six metres high. His face was covered with a black mask, his head rimmed with shells. He was dressed in orange pyjamas, his hands sealed within the cotton.

One by one the devil plucked us from the crowd.

I had to stretch up my hands to hold his, staring through wood smoke at the mask and on to a star-filled sky, as he twirled me round and round.

"In the Christian world," wrote Greene, "we have grown accustomed to the idea of a spiritual war, of God and Satan."

But, he added, in this supernatural world there was "neither good nor evil", simply power, a concept that was beyond our "sympathetic comprehension."

But it was not beyond that of Mickey, my driver.

He was a wiry, powerful, young man, expert in making things work when they should not.

He had already used soapy water to replace leaking brake fluid and found petrol hidden in mayonnaise jars in a town where we were told it had run out.

Now he stalked around the hapless flatbed truck, speaking softly to some people, raising his voice to others.

Tree branches went under the wheels. Men lined up to push. The driver waited for a cue, which was delayed while the bleating goats were unhooked from the side.

Then with a heave, the wheels spun and caught. The truck lurched, and to much cheering, it bounced back onto the road.

Mickey gave me a knowing look. "As the chief told us," he said, "if you dance with the devil, the devil will be nice to you."

Igor Pomeranzev

Igor Pomerantsev was born in 1948, on the Volga River, the longest river in Europe. His early years were spent in the Far East of Russia near Lake Baikal, the deepest lake in the world. He was taken by his parents to the Soviet Ukraine, to Czernovitz—the former Austro-Hungarian cultural oasis of the German-speaking world—where he was a representative of the Russian minority and where he learned the most imperial language of modern times which unconsciously catapulted his person in 1979 to London—working for the BBC's Russian Service at Bush House. "I have no interest in describing culture. But to create and blow culture like glass is thrilling. Igor Pomerantsev's works include: Aubades and Serenades, Luxury Items, Wind Instruments, Dry Red, Family Status, Rado "S", *and* Radio Lyrics *recently published in Moscow*. "The people are dead, but their voices are fresh, juicy. I slip them into repeats. They need the exercise." *Igor Pomerantsev lives in Prague, where he broadcasts for Radio Liberty.*

A Life Spent On Short Wave

By Igor Pomeranzev

You have to be totally devoid of common sense not to believe in mystery. Mystery is there every step we take, literally under our noses. This is something every lathe operator who works with metal, every joiner who works with wood, every sculptor who works with hard, granular and liquid materials knows. In the town square of Mainz there is a fountain by the Russian sculptor Vadim Kosmachov. He works with sheet steel and zinc, beech and pine, water and wind. When children play in Kosmachov's elegant creation in the summertime, their voices and the splash of water become an integral part of the sculptural image. That is a miracle. A mystery. One day I made a recording of the fountain, and it's been flowing on air ever since.

I work with voices, sounds and, just like the metal turner or the joiner, I believe in the mystery of the material that I am shaping. I lost interest in "information", "news" and "current affairs" long since. Over a century ago the philosopher Nikolay Fyodorov made his appeal to eliminate the "unbrotherliness", the "unrelatedness" between people. It was he who promoted the idea of "regulating nature" through science and technology. To what end? To resurrect our ancestors. He believed death was an evil and suggested we conquer it by mastering space and controlling the cosmic process. I first understood that this is in fact possible, and that I can play a part in bringing about Fyodorov's ideas, when I read Velemir Khlebnikov's essay "Radio of the Future". ("Radio can be the spiritual sun of our country, a great enchanter and sorcerer… The radio of the future will also be able to function as a healer, curing without drugs… Radio will forge the unbroken chain of the global soul and fuse mankind.") It was as if the scales had fallen from my eyes. I grasped the meaning of death and discovered the means to resist it. Now, many years later, I can confirm that my instinct was right. I have, indeed, learned how to resurrect people with their voice and/or grant them immortality even during their lifetime. Alas, this only applies to people who were recorded by some mechanical means (the first phonograph was produced in August

1877). The essence of my discovery is as follows: I transmit voices with the help of broadcasting equipment into the cosmos, where they remain in perpetuity and settle the virgin ploughland of the astral ecumene.

How did it all begin? In the tenth year of my broadcast career I had to leave London for Munich. As I gathered up my archive of recordings, I noted that my steel cupboard represented a sizable graveyard. Almost a third of the people I had recorded had walked their earthly path, so to speak, to the end. Among them was my old friend, the dissident K. He died in an air crash. (I note in parentheses that many dissidents, once they are at liberty, often find themselves in conflict, not so much with the authorities or security services, as the forces of nature, the spirits of the latest technologies, the fuel and energy complex, and perish as a result.) It would have been my friend's birthday at the time of the move to Munich, and his widow asked me mark the anniversary on air. Naturally, I agreed, and in doing so realized that it was as if I was restoring K. his freedom, giving him a second life. Veterans of the Cold War will understand what I mean. When the Western broadcasters talked about political prisoners, it was as if they had secured them a few minutes' liberty, or at least given them the possibility of exercising in the open air. K. N. Batyushkov wrote, on the very verge of insanity:

I sigh…and my voice, somber

As the harp's soft call,

Dies quiet in the air.

Well, with me it was exactly the opposite. K. inhaled, exhaled and came to life. His widow wrote to me and confirmed it: "You have no idea what you did for me and my incorrigible husband! He is back with me, the same old bore and bastard…" But these are details. The main thing is discovering

the cemetery in the cupboard, a compact cemetery at that, transportable.

Nobody had ever done that: move to a new city, a new country and take a box or container with dozens of the deceased with him. I sometimes have the feeling that they communicate, i.e. converse, but that's a kind of fantastic, Dostoyevskian necromancy. Except… Have I not become a shadow of my own voice? All the big things I have achieved in life are connected with an effort of the throat, the vocal chords, the chest, nasal tract. Neither my height, nor my features, nor the colour of my eyes are of the slightest interest. And only the flow of air, the vibrating chords modulated by lungs and palate can be interesting or attractive. I remember when I was fourteen and my voice began to break, flushed with hormonal juices. It was then I first realized that the voice can lure, enchant. I began all my courtships with a phone call and only when I knew that my voice had reached the innermost recesses of the ear and laid down a thin film of tenderness, did I suggest a date. So as not to frighten off my voice, I did not smoke, did not eat nuts or seeds, and if I caught cold, I drank milk with honey by the litre and raspberry tisanes, stood for hours with a towel over my head breathing in the vapours from a pan of boiling potatoes. Then my voice, and all its charms, would come back. It would come squirming up out of the epiglottis, lent wings by the throat and nasal passages, surge under the cupola of the palate, and my hand would reach for the phone again…

But I digress. I only wanted to say that my dear departed had brought their bodily existence to the absolute.

Nothing, literally nothing, of them remained, except the voice. Yes. Only the voice, its timbre, its pitch.

In Munich I began to work systematically on consolidating my

graveyard. For a start I went to a Russian almshouse on the outskirts of Paris to record the last dozen or so inhabitants. Within a couple of years they had all given up the ghost and become my wards. But I did not stop there. I asked my director for a month's vacation and set off for old people's homes on the Volga. In contrast to the Paris establishment, these places were repositories of the foulest of stenches. As I recorded the old men and women, I literally lost consciousness, like a scuba diver who has exhausted his oxygen. But these stinking relicts paid generous dividends: three years later my graveyard was flourishing. What's more, I developed a special interviewing technique, which often pushed sensitive and frail subjects over the edge. When this happened before my eyes, it would induce an incredible sense of euphoria in me.

I have been in Prague for the last ten and a bit years. I now have two steel cabinets behind me. I am no longer young. I outlived Khlebnikov long ago, and I've almost caught up with Fyodorov. But I am easy. Few mortals have peopled inner and outer space so

thickly, so fundamentally. I am certain that even in this XXI century scientists will begin restoring man to life in his

biological fullness on the basis of the voice. And, of course, they will begin with me. But there is something that troubles me: who will inherit all this acoustic wealth? Who will care for my boneyard during my temporary absence? Who will lay down the pathways and avenues, catalogue and number? Naturally, I will leave instructions on how often my wards should be exercised, at what intervals and for how many minutes. One must not be overgenerous with exercise. Out in the upper atmosphere a voice can shatter, collapse from oxygen starvation. But who should I choose as my heir? My son? Alas, I lost him: he has sold his soul to the devil of television.

One of my colleagues? But they do not believe in mystery, since they are wholly devoid of common sense. I think I know what I must do. I go live on air on Sundays with cultural news. I have only one hundred and eighty seconds. But that is sufficient. I must, I am simply obliged to appeal to the world with words of the truth. I am certain they will be heard, that people will reach out to me.

"Listen, listen all of you! I have come to save you…"

Anna Horsbrugh-Porter

Anna Horsbrugh-Porter came to Bush House in 1989 to work in the Central Talks and Features department of the World Service. She wrote current affairs and arts talks, made packages and features on subjects as varied as James Joyce, Marcel Proust, the legacy of colonialism in Africa and Asia, sturgeon in the Caspian Sea and Tibetan refugees in Ladakh. In 1993 her first book was published by Routledge - 'Memories of Revolution, russian women remember'. *This is an oral history of 10 women who fled Russia shortly after 1917, their memories of the Revolution, their experiences as refugees and their lives since. In Bush House Anna worked on various programmes apart from Central Talks and Features, including* Outlook, Newshour, The World Today *and in the newsroom. In 1999-2000 she was part of a team which produced the oral history series marking the new Millennium - called* My Century. *It was five minutes of radio every day with a first hand account from someone who had made a contribution to the 20th century, or lived through a momentous event. In 2001 Anna moved to Sri Lanka for three years where she freelanced for the BBC. In 2005, Profile Books published her second book, which was the edited letters between the family of a Russian political prisoner and an elderly English bookseller and his wife living in Newbury. Called* 'From Newbury with Love', *it's the story of a relationship which lasted over thirty years between two families living on either side of the Iron Curtain, and still continues today. The book is currently being dramatised and will be performed next year, and the production taken to Chisinau in Moldova, where the daughter of the political prisoner still lives. In September 2009 Anna published her third book called* 'Created Equal' - *it's a history of international women's rights co-published by Amnesty and Palgrave Macmillan. She works in the long form features department of World Service news and current affairs, making features and documentaries, and also freelances for independent production companies making programmes for Radio Four.*

Extract from *'Memories of Revolution'* published in 1993

Princess Sophie Wacznadze

By Anna Horsbrugh-Porter

'When our father put us on a train to get away it was a train full of soldiers, and of course it went along very slowly and stopped at every station. The Bolshevik Red Guards used to come through the train, to see if there were any White officers or any other useless elements there. And you know they used to drag then out of the train and shoot them on the platform. There were my two sisters and I, in a third-class carriage with hard benches and a shelf above. Three little girls sitting on the bench up above, and my younger sister said, 'Now, I think we're coming to a station now all you girls, gather your saliva, as much as you possibly can, full mouth. And then, as the Red Guards pass us, see that you spit right in the middle of their gun, because that way we'll save lives. Because when the gun's all wet inside, it won't shoot properly.
We did our best to save lives. Whether it managed to save them or not I can't say, but we did our best.'

Justin Marozzi

Justin is a travel writer, historian, journalist and political risk and security consultant. He has travelled extensively in the Middle East and Muslim world and in recent years has worked in conflict and post-conflict environments such as Iraq, Afghanistan and Darfur. After working in the BBC World Service on News Hour *and BBC Westminster on* Today in Parliament, *he joined the* Financial Times *as a foreign correspondent in Manila, where he also wrote for* The Economist. *His latest book, published in October 2008, is* The Man Who Invented History: Travels with Herodotus, *based on extensive research in Turkey, Iraq, Egypt and Greece. Apart from a year working for a British security company in Iraq, an encounter with the Grand Mufti of Egypt and an investigation into outwardly religious girls performing oral sex in car-parks in Cairo, one of the many highlights of the Herodotean trail was a retsina-fuelled lunch with the nonagenarian war hero and writer Sir Patrick Leigh Fermor. Justin is a regular contributor to a wide range of national and international publications, and has broadcast for the BBC World Service and Radio Four.*

Extract from *The Man Who Invented History: Travels with Herodotus* (John Murray, 2008)

By Justin Marozzi

"People in your country and in America and the West, think we are all bloodthirsty killers and terrorists. These Al Qaeda leaders are evil men but also very brilliant because they make Jews and Christians hate Muslims more and more and this is exactly what they want. They use mosques to store weapons and plan attacks and then, when American soldiers raid the mosques to catch the terrorists, they tell the people this is a war against Islam."

I asked the professor if he shared this view.

"No, I do not think this at all, of course not, but unfortunately more and more of the people are saying this. They hear about the attacks on mosques, they see pictures of the minarets damaged by the American army in Fallujah, they see innocent Iraqis being killed in Tikrit, Ramadi, Baghdad and Mosul, and they start to believe the propaganda. Sometimes I think the Americans do not understand how dangerous it is to offend our religion."

Herodotus alert, in the heart of America's headquarters in Iraq, over a hamburger with an Iraqi academic. The professor's description of American soldiers raiding mosques and offending Islam, however innocently, recalled one of the most important passages in the *Histories*. It's one which provides us with the clearest indication of Herodotus' passion for religious tolerance.

The context is the Persian Great King Cambyses' invasion and conquest of Egypt in 525 BC. What Herodotus calls his 'maniacal savagery' begins with a calculated assault on the Egyptians' religion when Cambyses sees the city celebrating the appearance of Apis, the sacred bull of Memphis. He calls in the priests and orders them to bring him the bull.

The priests brought the animal and Cambyses, half mad as he was, drew his dagger, aimed a blow at Apis' belly, but missed and struck his thigh. Then he laughed, and said to the priests: 'Do you call that a god, you poor creatures? Are your gods flesh and blood? Do they

feel the prick of steel? No doubt a god like that is good enough for the Egyptians; but you won't get away with trying to make a fool of me.' He then ordered the priests to be whipped by the men whose business it was to carry out such punishments, and any Egyptian who was found still keeping holiday to be put to death. In this way the festival was broken up, the priests punished, and Apis, who lay in the temple for a time wasting away from the wound in his thigh, finally died...

Cambyses now embarks on a killing spree. First of all, he has his brother Smerdis killed. Then, bloodlust up, he kills the younger of the two sisters he has married in defiance of local custom. According to the Egyptian version of the story, Herodotus says, "Cambyses, in a fury, kicked her; and, as she was pregnant at the time, she had a miscarriage and died."

A brother and sister down. The bloodshed is purely familial up to this point. Poor old Prexaspes is next to get it in the neck. Or at least his son, the king's cupbearer, is. Cambyses draws his bow, fells the boy and orders the body to be cut open and examined.

The arrow is found to have pierced the heart. The Persian king laughs hysterically. "Now tell me if you ever saw anyone else shoot so straight," he crows. The mayhem continues with further desecration of sacred sites. According to Herodotus, Cambyses "broke open ancient tombs" and examined the corpses inside, went into the temple of Hephaestus and "jeered at the god's statue", and "entered the temple of the Cabiri, which no one but the priest is allowed to do, made fun of the images there . . . and actually burnt them". Herodotus is astonished. The crime is so awful there can only be one explanation for it. The Persian king must have been unhinged. Why else would he insult another people's religion?

I have absolutely no doubt whatever that Cambyses was completely out of his mind; it is the only possible explanation of his assault upon, and mockery of, everything which ancient law and custom have made sacred in Egypt. For if anyone, no matter who, were given the opportunity of choosing from amongst all the nations in the world the beliefs which he thought best, he would inevitably, after careful consideration of their relative merits, choose those of his own country. Everyone without exception believes his own native customs, and the religion he was brought up in, to be the best; and that being so, it is unlikely that anyone but a madman would mock at such things.

You can see Herodotus on stage, hamming it up and working himself up into a lather of incredulity in front of his transfixed audience. Mocking another religion? Who would do such a thing? His conclusion that Cambyses' insanity is "the only possible explanation" for the outrage strikes the early-twenty-first- century reader as quaintly naive. Today we are inured to religious hatred and persecution across the world. We see zealous and entrenched intolerance on every continent.

Herodotus' message is even more timely and relevant today than it was two-and-a-half millennia ago. But it goes unheeded, as it always has and as it always will, because history teaches us that we do not learn from history, that we fight the same wars against the same enemies for the same reasons in different eras, as though time really stood still and history itself as moving narrative was nothing but an artful illusion.

Waheed Mirza

Waheed Mirza was born and brought up in Srinagar, Kashmir. He moved to Delhi when he was eighteen to study English Literature at the University of Delhi and worked as a journalist in the city for four years. He came to London in 2001 to join the BBC's Urdu Service, where he now works as an editor. Waheed attended the Arvon Foundation in 2007. *In the Valley of Yellow Flowers* is his first novel.

The Valley of Yellow Flowers

Excerpt from the novel In the Valley of Yellow Flowers, to be published by Penguin in 2010.

Captain Kadian takes a large swig from his glass tumbler, closes his eyes momentarily, and smacking his lips, says, "The job's not that hard, you see, you just go down once a week or fifteen days, and the money, the money is not bad at all." He runs his fingers around the rim of the glass and raises an eyebrow towards me.

"But, but Sir, won't it be easier for your men, er, since they know the area very well, and also exactly who fell where…?"

"No-no, no, we don't want any uniforms down there – it's no-man's land, you see. Anything seen walking in any uniform will be fucking dead in less than a minute. And they must know every one of us by face by now. But you, they know you're local, and with so many of you playing fucking tourist guides across the border, they won't really bother."

"But Sir, I'm sure you can …"

"As I said, we just need I-cards and weapons, as many as possible," he raises his voice just enough to tell me who's boss.

The naked, dust-sleeved bulb hanging above us lights up; outside, crickets announce the evening. He leans back in his tall, worn-out, velvety red chair.

"So, we don't want anything to do with the… bodies… then?"

"Look, they are just dead meat and that's how I prefer them. They keep sneaking in and we keep shooting their guts out of them at first sight. That's it."

Another swig, longer, louder. Stench in the breath.

"Some of them fucking still manage to escape, probably too many, eh—that's how you have these jerks playing ball in Srinagar and elsewhere—but when they do fall to those machine guns out there, they just drop off the ridge like dolls, like cardboard fucking soldiers! One after the other, ping, ping… I see it all through these," he gently taps his massive green binoculars that are lying on the over-sized carved walnut-wood desk.

I guess they know I've been there before. Although, it seems such a long, long time ago. Back when we were children, when we were growing up, when we were young. We used to swim in the shallow, emerald-green brook that ambles its way across the meadow, and play cricket on the makeshift pitch next to it. It's a small valley, you know, surrounded by mossy docile-looking hills and a long ridge that connects the two opposite hillsides. Behind the hills are the over-reaching mountains, rows and rows of them, that turn scores of shades during the day and become a sad, disquieting dark at night. These undulating rows of peaks, some shining, some white, some brown, like layers of piled-up fabrics, are to the west and hide in their folds the secret tracks into Azad Kashmir, into Pakistan. The pass into the mainland here, into *Indian* Kashmir, is somewhere near the tapering end of the ridge that runs from the Pakistani side to where the Indian check posts start: *This* is where most of the action takes place.

Valleys are beautiful.

No one bothered us then, probably no one even noticed. It was like our own private patch; during summer vacations we would play cricket and fool around all day in this

secluded playground of ours. You could see army pickets on either side of the valley even then, far off, like outline sketches on a school drawing, but that was all you could see. Anyhow, it's not like the army wants to send me down only because they know I have been there before; they'd do it anyway.

"Baba was saying they will give me …?" I try to keep the conversation going, not really knowing what to make of this weird proposition from the Captain, and someone inside me badly wants to get to the bright side of a situation that is looking frightfully ominous.

"Five hundred per trip and a small bonus for every ID and weapon you bring back. As I said, the money's good, bloody good." Fingers flick, again.

The Captain is young, handsome, north-Indian. A Punjabi perhaps, or Jat probably. He is fit, wheat-ish complexion, clean shaven, short hair with a side parting. Left. His nose and chin shine. His eyes burn. It must be all the drink. He is probably fourteen or fifteen years older than me. I have never asked his first name, it just says Kadian on his uniform tag. He's always nicely turned out – shiny brown belt, shiny steel buckle – and never loses sight of his beast-like binoculars. The office is a large, minimally decorated wood cabin with a big rusted iron bukhari in the middle that often doubles up as a cooker. There is a long window at the back but it's always covered with thick curtains, military blankets perhaps, so you can't see what's behind the office. There is another door inside, in the far left corner, which probably goes to the bathroom and the store, the two small high windows of which I always see from the outside when I go up the two steps to the veranda. The peon – a bent old man who seems to apply half a bottle of cheap hair oil to his sparse scalp every morning – uses the bukhari to heat up food and make endless cups of tea for himself and the Captain's few visitors. I usually go to meet him in the evening, often a day or two after an encounter, skirmish, battle, whatever they choose to call it. He's always drinking.

And he likes to launch into small speeches about his job and the 'operation', especially when I ask something. "I see it miniature style, toy-size, through these... They don't supply them anymore, pure German technology, not the plastic swadeshi shit that every young paramilitary jerk hangs around his neck these days. Anyhow, they are just shadows that drop off my nightly horizon, and the more the merrier, the more, the... mm … Tell me something, have you ever played a computer game? Well, this is not even half the fun. I don't even get to pull the trigger myself anymore. But what to do…it's my job," he mutters an afterthought and pours himself some more whisky. It stinks. Why does every army man have to drink?

"How many, you ask, right? Okay… Let's see, if you have a group of twenty or more crossing over, it's usually preceded by shelling from positions beyond their pickets you see across the valley. Bloody Paki morons, as if if we didn't *see* them do it, we would think it's the fucking chinks. Anyhow, it's obviously cover for your boys to make their run, but our strategy is to wait and let them at least get to the middle of the ruts around the ridge, while we are returning the shelling, and just when they begin to think they are about to make it, the automatics begin to roar. But even then, on an average we only manage to knock down less than half of the group, because, you see, it's very difficult terrain out there, a lot of mounds and ruts, and of course trees, to provide cover. And the bastards will use nothing less than brand new LMGs to return fire. Sisterfucking rookie show-offs!"

"Think of this as employment generation, Kadian style, ha-ha", he tries to joke when I ask a hesitant, barely audible "why me", conveniently avoiding the fact that I am the only young civilian left in the area to do any kind of job for the army, or for anyone, for that matter. When everyone fled for their safety—this was when they started shelling us day-and-night after the Governor's bizarre visit during the crackdown—Baba refused to budge from his seat as headman, he said he needed to look after the village while everyone was away and that he didn't want to sell off his livestock. And, he believed

people would surely be back at some point. No one believed *him*, though. I sometimes suspect he saw a big opportunity in being the sole cattle owner in the area with all the pastures as his exclusive domain. Poor man, my father. Should have known better. He has had to sell every single living thing on four legs we ever owned to the army at dirt cheap rates. And most Indians are vegetarians, huh.

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When I go down the first time after all these months, years, it is with a sense of both pressing nostalgia and fear. The valley looks like a large green sheet hung tenderly from the surrounding foothills, with a singing, humming is more like it, rivulet in the middle. It's still the same—a calm, largely uninhabited, solitary place nestled amidst the rings of our hills and mountains.

In my childhood, it was very easy to ignore the Pakistani and Indian check-posts on either side—you forgot about them the moment you stepped on new, untouched, fresh-from-dried-dew grass and ran downhill for a few minutes before making generous boot marks–*I liked long 8s and floral designs*–all over the place. They were far-off, distant, almost unreal… And by the time we took off our clothes to splash about in the low and languid stream, *it almost didn't flow*, we had assumed full ownership of the place and didn't care who was or wasn't peering at us from some ugly check-post out there on the mountainside. After swimming in the chilly, tingling water, we would lie down on the thick carpet of grass for ages, looking at the really-really blue sky and conjuring up odd names for clouds that hung low over our valley before drifting to another one across the mountains. I spent a long time down there, perhaps all my childhood. I don't have a lot of other memories from those early days. Ma and Baba probably thought it best to let me spend all my time there, not venture out, stay safe inside the valley. So that I wouldn't clamour to move to the city when I grew up and be lost forever. In the years of my growing up, many border lads went to Sopore or Srinagar or other towns to study, and many refused to come back. Some of them ended up as bus conductors or worked as waiters in rickety restaurants on the national highway. Their parents' cattle-herds dwindled with each passing year and brought poverty, loneliness and ill health. I suppose my parents were scared, too. In the years *after* I grew up, some of the boys either became guides to clandestinely scout city boys across the border, into training camps in Pakistan, or became militants themselves to relieve their parents of their yoke of shepherds' lives and give them proper homes when Kashmir would gain its independence. Many disappeared like that from time to time; I guess those who went to the city were luckier. My friends, *all* my friends, went away too, and god only knows if they will ever come back. Not many do, you see, and those who do, don't live very long here. Because the army people, the protectors of the land, have decided that there is only one way of dealing with the boys: Catch and kill. Catch and kill. I therefore ended up staying with my parents and their cattle. I stayed on in the valley, and in the end came to own it all by myself.

I look at the first few corpses and am immediately horrified at the prospects of what my first ever job entails. There are probably six of them ahead of me. Ugly grins, unbelievable, almost inhuman postures, and a grotesque intermingling of broken limbs make me dig my teeth deep, and hard, into my clenched fists. What an elaborate litter! There are bare wounds, holes dark and visceral, and limbless, armless, even headless, torsos. A low moan struggles, screeches inside. Gradually, I approach one of the more intact bodies, gingerly, eyes reduced to hairline slits, and look for a pocket or bag amidst all the dirt and the crusted blood on his clothes. I find the ID card in his back pocket and in some kind of limp involuntary motion throw it into the nylon army rucksack the Captain gave me last week. It's not easy, collecting identity cards and whatever else you

can find on dead bodies. Bodies after bodies – some huddled together, others forlorn and lonesome – in various stages of decay. Wretched human remains lie on the green grass like cracked toys. Teeth, shoes. For god knows how long I just cannot remove my eyes from this landscape, heaps of them, big and small, body parts, belongings littered amidst the rubble of legs and arms... Macabre, horrid ghouls on either side of the green brook watch me from their melancholic, black-hole eye sockets. (I guess whoever ended up in the stream was fortunate to be washed and eroded away.) Carcasses with indefinable expressions on what remains of their faces – I hope I don't recognise anyone. *This is what we get*, they seem to ask. The smell, the smell, the smell! I cannot begin to describe what it is like the first time. You just stop breathing. *That is that*.

The stench is so powerful that your guts begin to pull your throat down, sort of strangle you from within, if you know what I mean.

On the first day, having touched my first ever corpse, I bathe twice in the evening, with scalding hot water and a copious amount of soap, scrubbing and scratching myself into rashes and red nail-slashes all over my chest and arms. I can't eat well, however, owing to the nausea that comes over me for the next few days. It's not easy, picking stuff off dead people.

*

Gwyneth Williams

Gwyneth Williams is Director of the World Service in English responsible for the BBC's international radio programmes broadcasting to 40 million listeners around the world. She was Editor of the BBC Reith Lectures for many years and Head of BBC Radio Current Affairs making documentaries and programmes for all networks. She has published two books, one, co-authored, on Southern Africa and another on Third World political organisations. She grew up in South Africa and was educated at St Hugh's College, Oxford. She says she is a book worm and loves the World Book Club, broadcast each month on the World Service - don't miss it.

100 per cent Proof Cheer (With a cheer for Joseph Roth)

By Gwyneth Williams

He read, he read and he read. The words of the books passed into him, filling him up, pushing him out in ways that made him sometimes feel uncomfortable, as if part of his body were misshapen and contorted. One day his belly seemed distended, another day his foot seemed swollen. He was in truth swollen with words which poured into his head through his eyes and flooded into his body.

James's life was filled with other people's words. He lived their hopes and fears, their loves and despairs. He took his morning coffee with Carl Joseph von Trotte, the young lieutenant in the Kaiser's army. He felt von Trotte's brief spurts of ambition, swiftly lost in weakness of character and 100 per cent proof cheer. He went to work, idly starting the car, to the tune of the Razedsky March.

Gazing at the powdered, rouged and stippled faces of the crowd he parked his car near the underground station and made his way from Chalk Farm via King's Cross to Holborn. A swift walk down Kingsway to the Aldwych and he was in the central lobby of Bush House, home to the BBC World Service, smiling vaguely (though not speaking) to the commissaire on the door, displaying his staff ID and stepping into the building.

Office banter surrounded him amongst the books piled up in CARIS and he gave his order for coffee (black) to Stephanie, the work-experience student from the LSE. His mind was firmly elsewhere, on the Eastern border of te Austrian Empire just before the First World War. He stood, as the young lieutenant, facing the brush workers who, in turn, faced the army with their peasant weapons. Should he give the order to fire? When? Aided by lack of courage and imagination, he issued the order. Men fell under fire. "By accident", he muttered aloud, "a path is forged".

He blinked, looked around his desk, decided to tidy the pile of books next to his chair and knew he would not, not today anyway. He took off his glasses, rubbed his eyes and tried to leave Lieutenant von Trotta, he who died not carrying a gun but two pails, and focus on his day.

Stephanie returned, saw him, elbows on the desk, books surrounding him in uneven piles, raised her eyebrows and eyes, dumped his coffee mug on the Economist and made her way to the heart of the big office and her own corner. James began to go through the papers: the Herald Trib, the FT, the Telegraph, the Rand Daily Mail and the Johannesburg Tribune. He got absorbed in an article by Alex Boraine on funding for the South African workers' union from the Soviet Union. There was, he thought as he

underlined “Kokstad”, enough truth in it to pursue details. He would phone Jannie du Plessis later perhaps to check on the meeting that supposedly had taken place there.

Stephanie was back. “They are waiting for you James”, she said, repeating “James” after a pause with no reply. “Oh, is it eleven o’ clock already?”. He began to scramble together some typed, much amended lists and head for the door, crossing the courtyard and taking the stairs in South East Wing three at a time.

He reached the fourth floor out of breath managing almost to collide with a young woman in black glasses and knee length boots, the latter noticed as he bent to pick up his papers. “Sorry I’m a bit unfit, my bike’s out of commission,” he mumbled. He looked up and won a smile that brought him back in an instant to the present, 1976, the age of superpower rivalry and late Cold War.