Bush Writers,

1940 - 2012

Witness Seminar

October 27th 2009
0930-1400

The Open University,
Hawley Crescent, Camden Town, London

Bush Writers
Seminar
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The purpose of this seminar is to bring together *Bush Writers* (former and current, published and aspiring) to share their experiences of and memories as "secret agents" of literature amongst broadcasters in and around Bush House.

The seminar is part of a larger research project and partnership between The Open University and the BBC World Service.[1] It examines cosmopolitan and diasporic cultures at Bush House, 1940 to 2012 which will mark the moving out and end of the Bush House era (see page 10).

Presentations by contributors will be followed by audience participation and discussion. We expect the style of the event to simulate and emulate a live feature broadcast. The presentations will be recorded and the material may be represented on BBC and/or Open University websites (see page 11).

We hope to plug a gap in public and academic knowledge about Bush House and the remarkably polyglot and cosmopolitan cultures that have contributed to making it a globally respected institution that can speak in many tongues to audiences around the world. 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 writers of and at Bush House.

We would like to thank all the writers who have agreed to participate in the seminar and for the time they have dedicated already to our research.

Marie Gillespie and Zinovy Zinik

26.10.09

[1] The seminar is part of interdisciplinary collaborative 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

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Timetable

0930-1000 *Refreshments and Welcome*

1000-1010 *Welcome and Introduction* Marie Gillespie and Zinovy Zinik

Chair: James Panton (St. Johns College, Oxford University)

1010-115

1010-1015 Hamid Ismailov
1015-1020 Hai Le
1020-1025 Zina Rohan
1030 -1035 Colin Grant
1040-1045 Salah Niazi
1045-1050 Anthony Rudolf
1050-1055 Miguel Molina

11.00-11.15 Coffee Break

1120-1125 Humphrey Hawksley
1125-1130 Igor Pomeranzev
1130-1135 Anna Horsbrugh-Porter
1135-1140 Justin Marozzi
1140-1145 Waheed Mirza

12.00 - 13.00 *Open discussion and closing address by James Panton*

13.00-14.00 *Lunch*

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Questions

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?)

A website for Bush writers past and present?
(Do you have any suggestions about what a BBCWS website on literary lives at Bush House would look like, what materials might be posted there, and what activities and interactions might be fostered?)

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Biographies

Chair: James Panton (St Johns College, Oxford)
James is a politics tutor at St John's College, University of Oxford, and co-founder of the radical civil liberties campaigning group the Manifesto Club.

James researches and teaches 20th century intellectual history, political theory and political sociology. His work focuses on ideas of politics, democracy and rights. His doctoral research investigates the transformation of the meaning of politics in relation to public and private life in post World War II British and American politics. He is currently working on a project which looks at the political elites' attitude to political apathy in Britain and America in the 1950s and the 1990s. In July 2009 James was given a Teaching Excellence Award by the Social Sciences Division of the University of Oxford, for 'outstanding teaching and commitment to teaching'.

In 2006 James was a co-founder of PROTest, the pro animal research campaign in support of the Oxford University bio-medical research facility. At the Manifesto Club he organises press and campaigns, and convenes the clubs regular speaker meetings and 'club nights'.

James has written a number of academic articles on politics, education and intellectual culture, and is co-editor of the book *Science versus Superstition: the Case for a New Scientific Enlightenment* (Policy Exchange and the University of Buckingham Press, 2006).

James regularly writes on issues around politics, education, intellectual life and animal rights and civil liberties, and he regularly takes part in television and radio discussions on these and other themes.

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.

Hai Le
Born in Hanoi in 1971, Lê Thanh Hải grew up in Saigon after the end of the Vietnam War. He has lived in Europe since 1991, and has always paid special attention to the diasporic narratives in the places that he lives or visits. His novel *A Dream in Snow* about the Vietnamese Diaspora in Poland after the collapse of communist regime was finally published in Vietnam in 2007. "Writing to keep the diasporic history" is his motto whilst working on current projects, including a PhD thesis on the Vietnamese national identity. He has been working in Bush House as a full-time radio and online producer for the Vietnamese section since 2003.

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.

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 Mystics* 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).

Salah Nizai

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. Since 2003 he has been 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. Published Arabic translation of twelve chapters of *Ulysses* by James Joyce, Shakespeare's *Macbeth* and *Hamlet*, *The Old Capital* by Yasunari Kawabata, and *The Winslow Boy* by Rattigan. He has also written and published his autobiography.

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.

Miguel Molina

Molina 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.

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.

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.

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.

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. He graduated from Cambridge with a Starred Double First in History in 1993, before studying Broadcast Journalism at Cardiff University and winning a scholarship to the University of Pennsylvania to read a Masters in International Relations. 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. During his time in the Far East, he shared a Winnebago with Imelda Marcos, a helicopter with the Philippine president and his mistress, and a curry with Aung San Suu Kyi whilst under house arrest in Rangoon. 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. He is a former member of the International Institute of Strategic Studies, a Fellow of the Royal Geographical Society, where he has also lectured, and an Honorary Travel Member of the Travellers Club.

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.

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
Ideas for Website Materials

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.

'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 it was 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.

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 accident 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 plead 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?'"

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.

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

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.

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.

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

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."

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…"

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.'

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.

100 per cent Proof Cheer

By Gwyneth Williams, 2009

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.