

# WRITERS

*December 2022 – January 2023 Newsletter*

Based on: The notion of 'Dancing'

Title: I danced with Vettriano

I danced with Vettriano, the soles of my fine silk shoes ruined in the sand and the wind whipping at my hair, caught in a stiff sea breeze. I danced as if it was the last tilt at life, there being no sign of the storm that would approach, that should approach - to tear out the roots of this stagnant existence. The man who held the parasol avoided eye contact. The eyes of my partner were circling the cliffs along with the gulls as we kicked aside shells, shale and seaweed.

I danced with Vettriano, where all is primary colours and lines are not blurred and the impossible is made possible. And the place, the time, the people and the tides are all intertwined. Where the natural order of things is turned on its head and the screeching and feathers invades all aspects of our souls.

I danced with Vettriano, blocking out ice creams, pleasure parks, deckchairs, flotsam and jetsam, charabancs, car park rendezvous, empty crates of men-only trips, public toilets used as changing rooms, children skidding along the shoreline, sodden donkeys caught in showers and old couples, safe in their years, gazing out at tankers on the far distant horizon.

I danced with Vettriano, knowing that this moment in time would end in a dim-lit bar. Knowing that all the cacophony would mute across the baize of a pool table – just me and the man on the stool, lighting up in the gloom, one of many whiskies picking up the headlights of a low slung black car, picking its way down the rain washed street.

Author: Anne Aitchison 27.10.22

This poem is a homage to the artist, Jack Vettriano and his painting 'The Singing Butler' (right)



## Looking Back

It was a big mistake to return to my old house, I mean, what did I expect to gain, all it did was stir up old memories.

Memories of broken furniture, flickering fire light, the table covered by the Daily Herald, sadness made tolerable by knowing you were safe and amongst your own kind.

The air-raid shelter had gone and there's a modern patio where our coal house used to be.

I notice a large white conservatory has been built on what used to be my Grandad's house next door, god knows what he would have made of it: different worlds.

No kids are playing under the street light that's just flickering into life.

And of course no chickens are wandering about, pecking and scratching; what we now have is a fake lawn and a sodding water feature!

Oh look, they've even taken our pig sty down: you could cry.

A light comes on in our old front room, back then it was kept for show or when the doctor called, it was pristine and we were never allowed in.

A large TV springs to life and a woman draws the curtains.

She doesn't see the ghost, watching, perplexed and resenting all these alterations.

And in the gathering dusk I thought I could hear my dad's pit boots ringing on the pavement in the frosty stillness of this winter night.

I walk back to my car, sit and think and become upset, upset for allowing myself this indulgence.

I start the car giving the old house one last look.

I hit the radio button, the news comes on.

Apparently Boris has spent £100,000 on decorating his Downing Street flat: you give up.

*Denis Marsden*

## Television Food

Morning everyone and welcome to the 'BBC Food Appreciation Course'. Let's get started.

When tasting food for the BBC you can't be honest and say things like: well that was nowt to write home about. It was okay but I've tasted better or the potatoes could have done with boiling a bit longer. And whatever you do, do not say - it's just something to get down your neck!

No, no, no, when tasting food on the BBC you need training in how to 'go into a sort of ecstasy' you need to show the audience how really good it is, even if it's only a chip you're tasting.

The aim of this BBC advanced course in the art of physically showing your appreciation of food is to simply up our ratings.

You 'the public' are drafted in to try the food so just remember, saying it's very nice or very good won't do. It's TV, it's fake so every thing has to be absolutely fantastic.

Also keep in mind this is not real life, no toast ever gets burnt no milk boils over; it's a show full stop. So remember, just roll your eyes and do your best to avoid spitting food out: Nigella really hates that.

And finally we want you to practice becoming emotionally overcome during the tasting. Do remember you may be asked to cry again for the camera, if so - just do it.

You can turn the paper over and start now.

Good luck to you all.

*Denis Marsden*

## Incentive

Using a Stanley knife she expertly popped the back off. Then spins on her chair to get a small battery and carefully inserts it.

Holding it up to the light we both watch the second hand jerk into life.

Job done she says.

How much?

Four pounds.

Ya what!

Well it is guaranteed for five years.

But I wasn't planning on living that long.

She looks at me, she says nothing; I pay.

So that's it, to get my moneys worth I'm burdened with continuing with this farce.

Anyway, I suppose it's an incentive to persevere.

But still, I mean - four pounds!

*Denis Marsden*

## False Witness

To catch the September drizzle the Aspidistras were all out along Park Avenue.

When ours died a few weeks later my mam suspected Mr Hartsorn had peed in it on his way home from t' club. Eventually she became convinced of this and warned all our neighbours. But later chucking it into the bin my father discovered the roots were absolutely infested with vine weevil.

He took great enjoyment pointing this out to my mam suggesting she should do the right thing and inform all the neighbours. But no. Sticking to her guns she first claimed he could have put them there. Then she came up with the crackpot idea that because Mr Hartsorn was a big wine drinker the vine weevil could have somehow entered through his urine! He'd once vomited his denture up into our front privet hedge, after that my mam never had a good word for him.

From that moment every time my mam came out with one of her opinions or some gossip we dismissed with - Oh, it's the Hartsorn theory all over again. And of course we made sure she never, ever, lived it down.

*Denis Marsden  
Writers Group*

## CORONA NIGHTS

Woken from sweaty slumber these haunted  
Corona nights by visions  
of writhing reptilian wriggling -  
the 'wet markets' of old Wuhan.

Repelled in perspiring repugnance, replaying  
oriental officialdom pleading to be understood  
not to point the finger of blame.  
But I cannot. Will not. Understand. My finger rises.

With revulsion and abhorrence, repulsed  
by a society pretending advancement yet,  
despite the world's disapprobation eats  
snakes, bats and lizards, sold live.

Even the pretty pangolin who, in innocent mutation,  
may have produced the cankerous covid  
metamorphosing monstrosously into the virus  
escaping to blight us.

But wait! We have a saviour. Admittedly self-  
proclaimed, but beggars cannot choosers be.  
The orange skinned super hero, presidentially  
pontificating, whilst his advisers stand aghast,

that a daily dose of disinfectant will diminish the  
developing death-toll. Simple and cheap.  
Just like him, presiding pandemically over a veritable  
confederacy of misguided fools.

*Colin Brown  
May, 2020*

## THIS HOUSE

Yes, I could be happy living in this house, in this house on  
the cliffs above the sea.

I would lie in the sun and on those long afternoons; time  
would stand still.

Over and over I'd play Maurice Chevalier's La Mer.

The booming sea would lull me to sleep.

Yes, I'd be happy in this house, half the world away.

As the days slid by and the years roll on I would become  
round, plump and brown.

In the evenings when the cicadas vibrate I'd shower and go  
out looking for women.

I'd put my suit on and leave the shirt collar out, I'd wear my  
medallion and smother myself in Old Spice.

Sitting in bars drinking sophisticated cocktails I'd smile  
showing all my teeth, my eye lids would droop just like Robert  
Mitchum's: women would have no chance.

Yes, yes I would be happy living here in this house  
on the cliffs, above the sea.

*Dennis Marsden  
Writers group*

## What next?

Will the shepherd tend his sheep  
And the church clock stand at ten to three?  
Will milk come frozen home in pails  
And will the valley bloom again?

We won't know yet not for a while  
But in a land across the sea  
If Dick the shepherd blows his nail  
He is but one, the rest are gone  
For the landowners grow restless  
Agitated, anxious, itchy  
And from the Great White House  
Wherein dwells the current Great White Chief  
Comes the order,

'Back to market!  
Go work! Go buy and sell and pay your debts!  
Make the world - the bits that count -  
Make us great again!'

And we hear him over here.  
We are not sure we want to follow suit.  
Some hesitate. Some challenges are made.  
Will planes and cars continue to pollute  
Still feed the myth that blames volcanic spouts?  
Will people of colour still fare worse than white?  
Surely while the world is relatively still  
We could consider changing wrongs for rights,  
If only to vow we won't repeat mistakes  
But will make pacts with Nature to be kind.

There never were bluebirds swooping over  
Any British cliffs, not even Dover.

But wouldn't it be lovely if a bluebird could evolve  
From the germ of kindness born of new resolve?

*Sue Levan  
May 2020*

- References:
1. There'll be bluebirds over the white cliffs of Dover' as sung By Vera Lynn
  2. Stands the church clock.....The Old Vicarage Grantchester by Rupert Brook
  3. Loves Labours Lost: Act 5 scene 2 by Wm Shakespeare  
'When icicles hang by the wall  
And Dick the shepherd blows his nail  
And Tom bears logs into the hall  
And milk comes frozen home in pail'

### **If only I could.....**

If only I could run  
Life would be more fun  
I'd race the kids  
And do some skids  
If only I could run

If only I could dance  
I'd salsa, chassee and prance  
I'd even compete  
With my two left feet  
If only I could dance

If only I could sing  
Such happiness I'd bring  
I'd hold a note  
And prepare my throat  
If only I could sing

If only I could fly  
I'd launch myself on high  
I'd sit on a wall  
A hundred feet tall  
If only I could fly

If only I could write  
I'd bring so much delight  
My books would sell  
And my head would swell  
If only I could write

*Lynne Harrison  
16 October 2019*

### **I used to like**

I used to like singing  
At the top of my voice  
Joining the chorus  
Now I've no choice  
(Voice cracked, one lung)

I used to like drama  
Doing a play  
I'd be restricted to mime now  
Because, as I say  
(Cracked voice, one lung, no memory for ...erm)

I used to like walking  
Up and down gentle hills  
An hour max on the flat now  
Otherwise the pain kills!  
(You've guessed it, one lung, wonky hip, dicky ticker)

I used to like writing  
Any old theme  
Now coming up with ideas  
Is one more past dream  
(No memory, no imagination, brain death etc)

But I'm good at self pity  
I do that so well  
And the effort it takes  
I expect you can tell  
(Why suffer in silence is my motto)

*Sue Levan  
Oct 2019*

'Orange' was a recent topic. We hope that the following poems demonstrate how simple, but different, our writing can be and we would like to show 'would be' writers, thinking of joining us, how easy it is. Nothing grand is expected of us, just simple heartfelt stuff, written for enjoyment.

Chris Short & Lynne Harrison

## Orange

*Orange surrounds our being  
Carotene helps our seeing  
Turmeric is health giving  
Sunshine gives us our living*

*Orange is the new black  
Satsumas make a healthy snack  
Clementine, navel, chocolate or blood  
Peppers and squash are all orange food*

*Make orange when mixing yellow and red  
Eat orange fruit and veg to keep well fed  
Orange a phone network, justice too  
Tangerine, carrots and even Bear Pooh*

*Lynne Harrison  
7 July 2018*

## Orange

*I shout  
I'm loud  
You can't ignore me  
I'm vibrant and garish  
I'm not subtle  
I'm orange.  
I'm a colour of the rainbow.  
I'm the centre of dawn and sunset,  
The beginning and end of the day.  
I can be the eye of a storm.  
I can be that welcome orb in the sky in summer  
And the refreshing drink in the heat.  
I'm the dying leaves of autumn  
And the glowing centre of spring flowers.  
I'm the stripe of a tiger  
And the fur of a pampered cat.  
I'm the colour of marching bigotry,  
But I'm also the colour of fun.  
I'm happy  
I'm bright  
I'm warm  
I'm orange.*

*Chris Short*



## Memory

*Memories are made of this, that and the other  
Some fond, some bad, some of father and mother.*

*Memory plays tricks and alters the fact  
Reminiscence, nostalgia and joy re-enact.*

*Now I remember to forget and forget to remember  
Remind me mine's short and dies like an ember.*

*Life long ago, however, remains clear and distinct  
Why aren't the two inextricably linked?*

*Lose it or use it with recalling a name  
Finding my keys is my daily game!*

*Amnesia, Alzheimer's and dementia abound  
My memory, I'm losing it, will it ever be found?*

*Lynne Harrison  
Writers group*

The **Writers** group have been writing about some of the irritations of daily life.

### Irritations

As my age increases I find my tolerance levels and patience are decreasing. When I look around at life today there is so much that not only irritates me, but saddens me as well. The march of progress seems to be leaving so many people behind. There is a general assumption that everyone has, or has access to, a computer and is computer-literate. Many are penalised by it in so many ways. Those who can least afford it often end up paying more not just for utility services but all kinds of goods and services that are cheaper when bought online.



I have a computer and I find it a useful tool but to many it isn't a tool, it's become a dominant feature of their lives. Social media with its 'tweets', its 'friends' and its 'likes' and 'dislikes' is alien to me. It all seems a trivial waste of time, especially for the young who should be getting out and doing things and making real friends; friends they'd actually recognise if they saw them. It saddens me when I see young people on their phones in a family group and not taking part in the conversation. It irritates me that their parents do nothing about it.



Another thing that irritates me is the reduction of the English alphabet to twenty-five letters. I miss hearing the letter 't'. It's hardly used now. The 'g' at the end of words also seems to be fading.

I don't know where to go next in my irritations' list. I know – celebrities! What are they? I go to the hairdresser's and am presented with 'Hello' magazine to read. I see articles and pictures about people who wear gorgeous clothes and live in fabulous houses, but I don't know who they are! I see names in television listings for 'celebrity' programmes – they don't mean a thing. When I was young – here I go! - people were famous for their achievements or special talents. Singers could sing, actors spoke clearly so you could hear them and comedians were funny without shouting or swearing.

Adverts! Well what can one say? The majority of them seem to be intended for people with the intelligence and concentration span of a carrot. I record most programmes I watch on ITV so that I can skip them. Some adverts are, I admit, clever and some are amusing. The ones I dislike are the ones that imply that if you don't use a certain product, drive a particular car or enthuse over a mediocre take-away meal, you're one of life's losers.



What else irritates me? The audiences on live TV programmes. I can't stand the whistling, hooting and screeching. It sounds so false. I stopped watching 'Strictly Come Dancing' for that reason. The final straw was when the cheering for the dancers drowned out Andrea Bocelli's singing.

I could go on, but I must finish, I'm depressing myself. If I look out of my window I can see the snowdrops and crocuses and the one narcissus that's out. Spring is on its way. There! I've managed to end on a positive, not so grumpy old woman note.

Chris Short - Writers Group



?? COULD CHRIS BE A POSSIBLE CANDIDATE FOR BBC's 'ROOM 101' ??



I hope the illustrations do not add to the irritation!

**Washday Blues  
The Trials of a Yorkshire Woman**

Monday morning and up with the sun,  
Washing to do and a lot to be done.  
White load first while the water was hot  
Soaked overnight to remove every spot.  
She rubbed it and scrubbed it then put it to boil.  
Aching back, tired arms but pleased with her toil.  
On the line gently blowing and sun beaming down  
The sheets looked translucent and white as swansdown.

Shouts from the yard, like from a town crier,  
“Come quickly, come quick. A chimney’s on fire.”  
From above black soot was falling like rain  
Smuts covered her washing. It needed doing again.

**By Marjorie Utley  
(Writers’ Group)**