

WRITING



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EDUCATION

25th Anniversary Conference: Randall Albers; Gail Aldwin; Catherine Temma Davidson; Rich Elizabeth Forbes; Goodson; Nicky Harlow; Denise Hayes; Pippa Hennessy; Paul Houghton; Robert Hull; Eleanor Markland; Moy McCrory; Mary McDonough; Joan McGavin; Joan Michelson; Cheryl Moskowitz; Jane Moss; Janet Olearski; Peter Rumney; Bryony Stocker; Curtis Tappenden; Niki Valentine; Jennifer Young

plus: CPD updates; membership benefits; news; reviews



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I was proud to be a part of NAWE's 25th Anniversary Conference in York last year, especially as I have been involved with the Association in some form or another for the whole of those 25 years. What I realize, however, reading the articles deriving from the event, is just how strong a programme it was and how little I experienced, on a personal level – the organizer's inevitable fate.

Editing this edition of *Writing in Education* has somewhat made up for that and given me a greater insight into the riches that were on offer. This is possibly the most diverse (yet related) set of articles that we have published to date, and they are complemented by some of the most satisfying news we have ever reported and a review (Martin Goodman's analysis of James Lasdun's recent book) of outstanding importance.

I'm particularly struck by the way the conference articles relate so much creative activity that went on at the conference itself: most 'obvious' was Curtis Tappenden's sketching of our conference guests, but there was also the production of war poems, *reguerías* – and a creative reflection between one session and another.

Having taken stock of delegates' very useful feedback, we have decided to hold this year's conference in the same venue, though making use of a more central and compact section of the hotel, which has undergone further refurbishment. We have real confidence in delivering an event that will be even better tailored to our members' needs.

The intervening months have been extraordinary. Just before Christmas the news came through that the AQA Creative Writing A Level had finally been accredited. None of our NAWE news over the 25 years has made me rejoice so much. Work with AQA (and other awarding bodies) will continue, and we believe that an exciting new era of Creative Writing in schools has dawned – yes, at the most unlikely of times.

Shortly after the A Level announcement, NAWE was invited to be involved in the new Poetry by Heart initiative, masterminded by the Poetry Archive. Having been quick to criticize the government's insistence on primary school pupils learning poetry by heart without

any apparent rationale, we were impressed by the thoughtfulness that had been applied to this initiative from the start, and the scope for engaging in a deep debate about the nature of poetry and its place in education. NAWE organized 6 events for teachers, around the country, and I will be writing a reflective report on the extraordinary range of work that took place.

Running the Poetry by Heart events, I was unable to attend the AWP Conference in Boston, but the NAWE presence was well positioned and 750 booklets promoting UK Creative Writing programmes were distributed. We will no doubt repeat the venture in Seattle next year and details will be circulated shortly. There is now a record number of HE courses in the UK, as listed on our website (at an intriguing discrepancy with UCAS statistics as reported in the article on page 62) and I am currently working on a new report on Creative Writing in HE, commissioned by the HE Academy.

There has, of course, been less edifying news. Our Stage 3 Complaint against the Arts Council's funding process was addressed by the Parliamentary Ombudsman, and has, unsurprisingly, failed to revoke the actual decision. We were however pleased that certain aspects of our complaint were fully recognized, and that ACE were obliged to issue us with an apology. Further detail is published on page 3.

We have operated now for a whole year without ACE funding, and we're pleased to report that the financial outlook is entirely healthy, with our reserves remaining at the same level as before.

Meanwhile, hundreds of you have been registering on the new *cutalongstory* website, and submitting short stories to be sold as downloads for e-readers. I'm delighted that NAWE is a partner in this venture, and that members stand to benefit in very real terms. Such a major online service is inevitably taking time to perfect, and with writers' interests its prime concern, no corners are being cut. All those who have registered will be kept fully informed of progress. A further opportunity for members to sell their work is announced here on page 3.

Finally, I'm somewhat relieved to say that the next two editions of *Writing in Education* will be guest edited: the Summer edition by Elisabeth Charis and Garrie Fletcher and the Autumn edition by John Killick. Submission details and deadlines will be circulated soon.

Paul Munden

The Poise of the Pen

Reflections on the relationship between drawing and writing

Curtis Tappenden

The poise of pen, sweaty palms and an adrenaline rush. The scene is set for the acclaimed Yorkshire poet, Ian McMillan, to take to the floor. It is an academic conference on this occasion (but needn't be) and the whole experience begins to refocus for me, through a sharpness of mind and an intensity of looking. Suddenly, I anticipate everything, assume nothing – open eyes and ears fully and wait to begin. The intensity is huge as I anticipate the opening of his mouth and the colourful 'bardish' gobbings that will spray over us! So great is my anticipation that I have made a leap and assumed a self-appointed responsibility of observer and recorder for my own whimsy, for posterity, for the greater good of indulgence, for learning, for others' enjoyment, and because I simply can't help myself. I have a driven need to draw in the moment and must at all costs do it.

For decades, the discipline of drawing has been a catalyst in my life and an amazing enabler of some bigger personal thinking and development. I am no longer able to separate the nature or importance of sketching strokes from the structure and powerful use of words. I intertwine them in my mind and on the page and they prompt one another to new invention. I draw everyday and it has wrought profound changes over a dedicated period of 25 years. What can I condense for a word-based academic magazine that could ever do justice to its richness or value? Humbly, I hope to show how it has become part of a holistic structure embracing values and purposes in creative expression as a tool for education and personal development.

The final part of this article will recount some small insight into the wonders of the live sketching experience, where I hope it might resonate or even intrigue those who do not practise drawing alongside writing.



sketch of Simon Armitage at the NAWE Conference In York, 2012

Drawing directing values, beliefs and pedagogy

It is strange how we develop and shape our creative lives under the various labels of writer, lecturer, mentor, teacher, professor, reader, novelist, poet – and in my case, artist too. The labels we wear define us to others and establish our roles, where we need to be defined and categorized to become useful in purpose to others. Our labels enable an understanding of our function within structures and I have always appreciated this from an academic point of view. But my struggles with

the labelling began at the beginning of my artistic education, when as a young diploma student I refused to call myself a graphic designer or illustrator on the 'business card' project. Back then, I recognized that I was undergoing specialist training in drawing and painting for a specific call to a recognized artistic profession but that my developing skills might just enable me to go elsewhere and pursue other creative tracks too. In retrospect, I realize that I was already mapping a path to my future, but little did I know then that the faculty of being able to draw would enable and coax the writer within, or allow the educator to speak up and cross the borders of subject definition, sometimes leading and leaving trails of controversy.

Drawing is definitely to blame! Sketching as a pursuit which can be allied to all of the creative fields has kept my mind open to possibility. It is a process linking experience and knowledge to cognition, the pursuit of knowledge and understanding as demonstrated through personal expressive marks, which in turn are interpreted and have the potential to raise ongoing dialogue. That is a powerful punch for any teacher. Working through drawing processes has altered my thinking in realizing its importance in broader terms for the development of ideas with more lateral leanings. As such I use it as a tool for learners of all ages – professed artists and those who apologize for only being able to chalk up stick men. Over the years I have witnessed profound changes when preconceptions and judgements about the nature of 'good' or 'bad' drawing are jettisoned; lives have been unlocked to reach fuller potential.

It is hard to explain this: sketching live poets at a conference can hardly be relied upon to reveal the hidden side of the brain or pass the rigours of quantitative research testing. All that is immediately seen is the drawing of the face itself – connected sketchy lines capturing something of the essence of the subject as he leaps around in honour of his craft.

*

I still don't know why we have to be so partisan in education about subject definitions – a BA in this or an MA in that, leading to a specific career as though it were readily tailored and waiting for the latest graduate cohort. Being a practitioner who works as an educator in academia, in national newspapers as an artist and writer, for publishers as an illustrator, and as a performer, I am keen to let students know that their character, attitude, ability and skills should set them up to explore the breadth of the working world ahead of them, and that their skills can offer fulfilment beyond

vocation. I am no scientist, but I love the idea that studies could be combined. What would Leonardo da Vinci make of our distinctions between writer, scientist and artist? There were many nodding heads at the NAWE conference as the brilliant keynote speaker, David Morley, declared with unabashed and confident belief (as both scientist and artist) that the separation of education was little short of a lie that has sold us short.

Combining writing and drawing and deliberately studying the complementary relationship they hold, has been exciting and enabled deeper, more reflective learning and teaching both in creative writing and visual arts education. It is a delightful and ongoing journey and has profoundly affected the methodology and conceptual understanding in my current part-time PhD studies.

In the following memo-style journal entry, forming part of an ongoing doctoral journey, the benefits of drawing – assisting both thinking and writing – allow for a deeper learning and understanding.

...consider self as identity in culture and a point of access into deeper thinking and reflection... It enables feelings, intentions, memories, knowledge, experience, role, power to be brought into the open and enables writing around these thoughts and even dialogue with others of like-mind to begin.

In establishing the wider use of the arts and creativity – creative writings, drawings – to elicit intellectual thinking and bring forth arguments from them, it is hoped that the outward expression of these thoughts as tested against existing theories and rationales might remain open and creative – a true reflection of the creativity from which these concepts are launched, and not 'normalized' by the expectation of outcome against formalized literature.

Tappenden, C (2010)

The Brazilian educator, Paulo Freire (1967), used drawing as a metaphor to empower illiterate workers by encouraging their narratives in response to poetic, stylized, black and white pen illustrations. The peasants began to believe in themselves and their abilities to learn and change lives. The regime of the time realized the power of images when coupled to the spoken and written word and readily confiscated the drawings. It confirmed for me the power of images and words and has fuelled the desire to continue to use both in academic contexts. I often use drawings made from the imagination to encourage immediate thoughts, which in turn assist conceptual thinking – especially the writing of reflections and memos. Learning leaps have resulted

from this method and have pointed to new leads in interpretive research. Whenever there is fallow thinking, a gap or a block in progress, the use of drawing can overcome inertia, and get things moving again.

Drawing, its processes and the effect on cognition and understanding operates at many levels; the physical process of making marks straight from the mind soon causes cohesion and structuring occurs. I don't know if this is effective for everyone but it certainly works for me, according to my ability as a visual artist, and I have been keen to pass on tips and methods to students I facilitate in a non-curricular writing group at the Creative Arts University where I teach.

Sketching Ian McMillan – the drawing process

There were three extraordinary guests at the NAWA anniversary conference: Ian McMillan, Simon Armitage and Alan Bennett. Drawings of each to add to my growing collection of live sketches of poets and writers was a must. Step up to the 'mic', Ian Macmillan. First conference guest poet, anticipated and loved for his inimitability. He is a thee and thou man. It seems so quaint and very old-fashioned – do they actually speak like that in Barnsley nowadays? Is a poet really still welcome on his own home terraces and in a highbrow BBC Radio 3 studio? Questions race through my head, preparing me, teasing me to want to draw him. Ian is an interesting man and capturing his essence presents a challenge, not least because he will not stay still, but this is where accessing 'visual memory' becomes essential. Students always want to learn the trick of visual memory. They become less keen when I tell them that it is a skill requiring constant nurture. Draw everyday and everywhere, I say: on buses, trains, in pubs and coffee shops, in the street waiting on the corner or walking to catch up with your mates.

With much anticipation and trepidation I begin. The first three sketches don't hit it. This is common when having to work so rapidly. Like drafting a paragraph or just trying to get started on a fresh piece of writing, it is always a struggle. I am trying to read beneath the surface of my subject. His hair reminds me of a friend and colleague who was a teddy boy in the fifties, with that same thick silvery mop which echoes an Ivy League flat top. The shirts.... reminiscent of Elvis in the movie, *Blue Hawaii*. Rightly or wrongly I am building a parallel, mental picture whilst scrutinizing him, and so far, he hasn't spoken a word! He has a tricky face with strong features. Stocky neck, plump jowls, intense yet friendly eyes and a strong, straight nose, the type sported by rugby players. These are important for recognition. I

So Curtis
all in
KA
very good




will need to rely on vital visual characteristics to thread the drawing together and assist my likeness. Tensions always arise. The intense focus contrasts with a detachment from the scene which cannot be stopped. I hear Ian Bellow 'Far away in the distance: Ah've soiled ma breeks!' and as my concentration intensifies I become steadily detached from the rest of the audience in the room. The sounds around are blurred as I look three times and draw once. Each pen mark cannot be erased and has to be delivered with economy, which is good for confidence. This part of the drawing process has really helped with word economy – saying what needs to be said, directly and with the intention to communicate as effectively and clearly as possible. One's own voice or signature is important too. The image needs to display something of the poet and of the artist-creator. Years of rapid practice as a reportage illustrator – courtroom work and documentary visual journalism – have elicited a kind of fluid 'line' shorthand with a combination of fine-liner and Japanese brush. I have learnt from 'reading' the drawings of heroes – Ronald Searle, Edward Ardizzone, Paul Hogarth, Feliks Topolski – how to deliver under time pressures so that the drawing speaks to an audience with spirited energy and accuracy.

The final sketch of McMillan was the best in terms of economy, repose (the folded arms were something he repeatedly offered with perfect timing and punchlines) and likeness, akin to travel writing, rather than heavy novel description. He had darted all over the shop and my tracking eye and hand had followed. This was essential to define in a complementary way the pace and rhythm of this rumbustious performer.

I know when it has been a good experience, as I feel heady, detached and temporarily exhausted. There are often approving nods around me but they are never mine. Trusting past experiences, there is a knowing that something new has been learnt and that it will surface within drawing or writing on another day. Next time I will do it better and I will do it differently. Reflection and criticism will teach me to draw from experiences and press on to greater accomplishment. In the moment I shall still experience the same feelings, but what is created will be unique and different... and we all know how that feels.



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Curtis Tappenden is a lecturer in Further Education at the University for the Creative Arts in Kent and Surrey. He also facilitates a non-curricular creative writing group at Rochester campus. As a practitioner he continues a 25 year career as an author/illustrator, poet, performer, editorial artist and travel writer for The Mail on Sunday newspaper in London. He continues to research the relationship between image making and writing for artists and designers in higher education, and is studying maverick educators in higher education for a part-time theoretical PhD in education at the University of Brighton.

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Staff

Director: Paul Munden
paul@nawe.co.uk

Programme Manager: Anne Caldwell
a.caldwell@nawe.co.uk

Administration Manager: Clare Mallorie
clare@nawe.co.uk

Conference Manager: Gill Greaves
g.greaves@nawe.co.uk

Young Writers Co-ordinator/Information Manager:
Wes Brown w.brown@nawe.co.uk

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Maggie Butt
Liz Cashdan (Chair)
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As the Subject Association for Creative Writing, NAWE aims to represent and support writers and all those involved in the development of creative writing both in formal education and community contexts. Our membership includes not only writers but also teachers, arts advisers, students, literature workers and librarians.

Membership benefits (according to category) include:

- 3 free issues per year of *Writing in Education*
- reduced rate booking for our conferences and other professional development opportunities
- advice and assistance in setting up projects
- representation through NAWE at national events
- free publicity on the NAWE website
- access to the extensive NAWE Archive online
- weekly e-bulletin with jobs and opportunities

For Professional Members, NAWE processes Enhanced Disclosure applications to the CRB and can assist in dealing with any other government clearance schemes. The Professional Membership rate also includes free public liability insurance cover to members who work as professional writers in any public or educational arena, and printed copies of the NAWE magazine.

Institutional membership entitles your university, college, arts organization or other institution to nominate up to ten individuals to receive membership benefits.

For full details of subscription rates, including e-membership that simply offers our weekly e-bulletin, please refer to the NAWE website.

To join NAWE, please apply online or contact the Administration Manager, Clare Mallorie, at the address below.

