

New Writing News

The newsletter of the Centre for New Writing

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The Centre for New Writing

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Hanif Kureishi visits the Centre

The Centre for New Writing welcomed leading novelist and screenwriter Hanif Kureishi to one of its Literature Live events in early March, where he gave the very first reading from his newly published novel *Something to Tell You*.

Kureishi, who was recently awarded a CBE for his services to literature and drama, has written novels including *The Black Album* and *The Buddha of Suburbia*, which won the Whitbread First Novel Award and was televised by the BBC. He is also well-known for his highly successful screenplays, which include *My Beautiful Laundrette*, *The Mother* and *Venus*.

He began the evening by reading from the opening of *Something to Tell You*, a freewheeling, often comic account of narrator Jamal's social interactions and pursuit of pleasure. Descriptions of his work as a successful psychoanalyst and relationships with 'significant others' are interspersed with memories of his coming of age in the 1970s, including his haunting experience of first love and furtive involvement in a murder.

After the reading the author participated in a discussion of his work with Centre co-director Ian McGuire, when he discussed his interest in psychology and its parallels with writing, his motivation in deciding whether to develop a story into a novel or a film (often financial!)

and how all fictional writing is essentially the same: "... you invent characters, then you torture them!"

He also confirmed that he continues to be as interested in popular culture as high, stressing the importance of writing something a reader will relate to and want to read.



The evening concluded with a lively Q & A session with the audience, when Kureishi outlined his view that a society's culture is itself a form of therapy. In his view, "It's where we all go to think about ourselves - every teenager reads *The Catcher in the Rye* to find out why they're going mad."

Asked whether advancing years were making him any more careful about what he writes, he concluded, "Just existing upsets people; you have to write what's in you and other people have to deal with it."

www.manchester.ac.uk/arts/newwriting

Horses released

2006 MA in Creative Writing alumnus Mark Piggott had the novel he wrote on the course, *Fire Horses*, published on 31 May.

The book, which is published by the independent Legend Press, tells the story of Joe Noone, a degenerate and enthusiastic explorer of the gutter, and his confused relationships with the friends and women in his life. It depicts England over the last 25 years through the eyes and lens of this disturbed wanderer, revealing the country's back streets, small towns and sleazy metropolitan

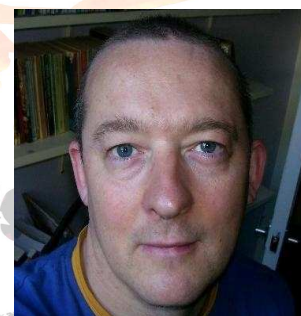
underbelly.

Laced with dark humour and angry political asides, *Fire Horses* is both an unflinching lesson in modern history and an epic love story. According to its publisher it "...tells of the pain-inducing traps we can set for ourselves in life, and the ways in which we try and escape them."

Mark's own life story is certainly one of extremes - from living on the streets of London in his youth to writing features for the *Telegraph*, *Guardian* and *Independent*. He has also previously had short stories and poems published in several collections,

magazines and anthologies, including *Down the Angel* (Pulp Books, 2006).

Centre co-director Ian McGuire said: "We are delighted to hear that another of our graduates has been published. Mark has worked long and hard on his novel and thoroughly deserves his success."



Centre's students launch *Wufniks* magazine

***Wufniks*, a new writing magazine established by students on the MA in Creative Writing at the Centre, recently held a launch party to celebrate its first two issues.**

The magazine publishes short stories, interviews and other writerly features, and commissions a writing challenge from a well-known author each month. This challenge is then put on their website, and the best

responses are published in the next issue.

The launch party included readings from several writers featured in the first two issues of the magazine. These contain work from both graduate and undergraduate students of The University of Manchester, as well as from up-and-coming young writers around the UK, and feature special writing challenges from M.J. Hyland and Geoff Ryman, lecturers at the

Centre for New Writing.

Issue 3 of *Wufniks* contains a challenge from Irvine Welsh. Zadie Smith has provided a very special challenge for issue 4, details of which can be viewed at www.wufniks.com.

Wufniks is currently and always accepting submissions, and copies of *Wufniks* are available from Manchester's Cornerhouse and the website.

Martin Amis debates Literature and Terrorism

The Centre's Professor of Creative Writing Martin Amis was joined by writer Ed Husain and novelist and journalist Maureen Freely for his second public debate in December, on the subject of Literature and Terrorism.

Around 600 people packed into the University's

Whitworth Hall to hear the debate, which was chaired by Centre Co-director Dr Ian McGuire and covered such topics as the links between literature and terrorism, the legitimacy of the perceived 'East/West divide', responses to September 11th and the role and condition of 'Western values'.

The floor was then opened up to questions from the audience, which touched on the Arab-Israeli conflict, the moral efficacy of literature in the face of terrorism and the differences between writing about the modern world as a journalist and a novelist.



Photo by Ed Swinden (07817 303 585)

Mulcahy & Viney Foster new talent

The Centre's annual **Mulcahy & Viney Prize**, for the best novel-in-progress by one of its **MA in Creative Writing** students, has been awarded to **Katherine Foster**, for an extract from her novel *Three's a Crowd*.

The prize of £1,000 was awarded by Charlie Viney, co-founder of the literary agency, at a ceremony at Manchester's Central Library.

Mr Viney said: "The extract from Katherine's novel was the stand-out submission - her writing is extremely confident, page-turning and

commercial." Katherine, whose novel focuses on the break-up of a love triangle from alternating perspectives, will be represented by Mulcahy & Viney.



Ian McGuire, Co-Director of the Centre for New Writing, said:

"The Mulcahy & Viney prize is an excellent way for us to recognise and honour the work of the talented young writers in our programme.

"I am sure that, with the able assistance of the agency, Katherine Foster will go on to achieve great things."

The three other short-listed writers this year were Louise Marr, Richard Hulse and Vicky Lee.

Demolition man

The Centre's poet in residence for 2007/8, **Neil Rollinson**, has published his fourth collection of poetry, *Demolition* (Jonathan Cape).

A long central poem about the death of his father influences much of the book, which also features translations of other poems touching on loss by Neruda, Borges and Vallejo.

Other poems explore the loss of childhood and innocence, but - although its themes and interests are concerned with the shadow of loss - Neil hopes that "...the book is an optimistic and hopeful look at the human condition,

suffused with candour and a sense of humour."

The book explores a more formal, structural approach than his previous collections, and includes several sonnets. Neil describes its title poem as a 'found' poem, having been carefully lifted from an interview with a demolitions expert in the magazine *New Scientist*.

Reviewing the book in *The Sunday Times*, Alan Brownjohn described *Demolition* as "...surely his best book..."

"...The fears and ironies are altogether gentler, and his gift

for quirky variations on common experience is given free rein in what he tells us about cutting vegetables in the poems *Cauliflower* and *Cucumber*," Brownjohn continued, "while *Waiting for the Man* (at a Kyoto pedestrian crossing) catches to perfection the sensation of finding happiness in sheer oddity."



New boy makes a big noise



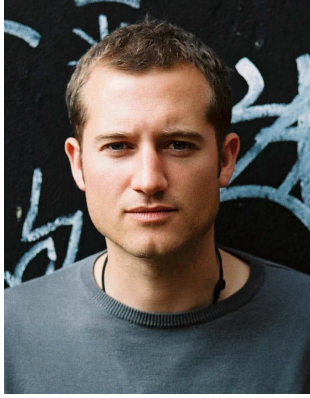
Joe Stretch, who joined the Centre for New Writing as a **Writer in Residence** in February, is making a splash with his first novel, *Friction*.

The *Independent* heralded Joe as a "hot star of 2008" in its talent issue at the start of the year, and when it reviewed his novel in March, delighted in how Joe's "prose is a

rhythmic jumble of aphorisms" and declared that the novel marked "the arrival of a promising satirist".

In February, *Manchester Confidential* published an interview with him in which he talked about his influences and what readers can expect from his book, and Joe recently appeared at a fringe event to the *Guardian* Hay Festival.

Everyone's talking about Boy A



Creative Writing graduate Jonathan Trigell's first novel, *Boy A*, has been voted the best Book to Talk About in a 2008 World Book Day poll.

Boy A, which has recently been made into a feature film for Channel 4, was the top choice for more than 2,000 readers polled on a World Book Day website where readers and reading group members spread the word about their favourite books.

The novel tells the story of the introduction of a young man back into the community after spending his childhood in juvenile institutions. Although guilty of a monstrous childhood crime, he is utterly innocent of the world outside.

The poll was carried out to bring to light hidden gems amongst the thousands of books published, and to provide an alternative reading agenda to that dictated by critics and prize juries. The choice of *Boy A* highlights readers' thirst for books which present the complex moral dilemmas at the heart of contemporary life.

Jonathan said: "I'm totally delighted that *Boy A* has been named 'The Book To Talk About 2008', it's a real honour and I'd like to thank everyone who voted for it.

"I started writing *Boy A* several years before I took the Manchester MA in

2002. But the structure of the course really helped fine tune my skills and give me the confidence to finish the job. The degree also allowed me to prioritise my writing, instead of trying to squeeze it in around work."

One reader joining in the discussion on the World Book Day website said, "I finished reading this last night; 24 hours later I'm still mulling it over, seeing patterns and thinking and rethinking. It seems trite to say I've been on a journey but I do feel that genuinely."



Poetry Review hits the north

The UK's leading poetry magazine, *Poetry Review*, came to Manchester in April, to launch its 'green issue'. Editor Fiona Sampson was joined by featured north-west poets Michael Symmons Roberts, Michael Murphy and (Centre PhD student) Sarah Corbett, who each read a selection of their work.

Michael Murphy's 'The Garden' and 'Thrush', from his collection *Elsewhere*, reflected the crossover of his new-found preoccupations at the time of their writing: tending the wilderness surrounding his derelict house and writing his first poems. He then unveiled a selection of work from forthcoming collection *Allotments*, as featured in *Poetry Review*.

Sarah Corbett began with two

poems written on protests: 'Tunnels', written during the Newbury by-pass protests, and 'Lights', written at last summer's Heathrow climate change camp. She then read the title poem



from her first book *The Red Wardrobe*, one of the 'mother poems' which formed both its starting point and its heart, and 'Rainbow', inspired by her son's holiday homesickness.

The 'Pelt' in Michael Symmons Roberts' first poem is the world's, found hanging on the back of a door in a dingy hotel. The poem can be found in *Corpus*, which also includes a

series of poems relating to the human genome after Michael worked alongside the leader of the UK team mapping it. 'The Half-healed' and 'Armistice' then gave tasters of Michael's forthcoming collection, while his poem from *Poetry Review*, 'Horsemen', imagines the horsemen of the apocalypse absorbed into modern life.

The panel discussion which rounded up the event touched on poetry's role as a vehicle or medium for political discussion, and the potential tension between inward-looking and 'external-facing' dialogue. Asked whether every aspect of life related to poetry, Michael Symmons Roberts concluded that anything could indeed be a subject, but that if everything could itself be perceived as poetry "...the unique moments it tries to create in language wouldn't exist."

To find out more about the Centre for New Writing, please contact jo.nightingale@manchester.ac.uk.

For applications to postgraduate courses in the Centre for New Writing, please contact andrew.rigg@manchester.ac.uk.