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[Episode 107: National Poetry Day 2017](#) – (28/09/2017)

Transcribed by David Turner – (27/09/2017)

Producer: David Turner – **DT**

Intro:

DT: Hello and welcome to the latest episode of Lunar Poetry Podcasts, I'm David Turner. Happy National Poetry Day in the UK. Though, if you like ninety-percent of our audience are listening at a later date, then just, hello. The LPP series began in the first week of October 2014 so it's now three years old, which is a bit wild. The series now has 107 episodes from 7 countries including 13 hosts and over 200 poets appearing as interview guests or reading a poem or two. Thank you to everyone that has listened and contributed but especially to my

wife Lizzy who has done the most to help the series reach its third birthday. And like most three-year-olds it's really cute but just refuses to do what I say.

Today's episode is a collection of readings by some really great poets, some have been guests already on the podcast and hopefully those that haven't will be appearing for a chat very soon. So, coming up we've got poems from Rishi Dastidar, Mary-Jean Chan, Holly Corfield-Carr, Lizzy Turner reading a poem by Scott Laudati, Thomas Darby and Khairani Barokka.

Though, before that starts I wanted to read something from a couple of pamphlets that I've really enjoyed this year and I'll be back at the end with the second poem. First up I'll be reading from Susannah Dickey's *I had some very slight concerns* which is out through The Lifeboat who are based in Belfast. I really recommend you check out both Susannah's writing and The Lifeboat's collection of prints.

Milk

I trawl for little scraps of you, the bits left behind like dandruff crumbs or paperclips – things you've written, things that have been written about you, things that have been written about an event you attended. Even a review, written two years later, written by a stranger, seems dented by you, as if your attendance a tiny stone painted with your image has been set on every marquee and every word and they have been weighed down, spread out, made soft like soft cheese with pebble-shaped simulacrum. When I exhaust these avenues I expand my quadrat and throw it a little further. It's not even really a quadrat anymore, it's a misshapen fishnet blob and it hauls in more and more material of increasing irrelevance, but I cling to all of it. Have you ever tried to draw a grid freehand? One square is always monstrous, a whole lifetime, a whole ecosystem contained inside. Another struggles to accommodate even a hollowed out snail shell that isn't fit to be lived in.

I read the receipts of a man who went to school with you – he publishes them online under the guise of found word poems, but they are not found word poems, they are just receipts. *I found this cutlass and decided to use it as a cutlass, as opposed to I found this cutlass and refashioned it into a hat and now nobody can bear to stand too close to me.* I call this 'immediate transference', and my therapist tells me I'm using the phrase 'immediate transference' wrong. When I look it up it's satisfying to apply it to my own feelings. *I found this cutlass and despite having had no prior history of libidinal thoughts towards swashbuckling weaponry I now find myself impossibly unconsciously grasping the very soul of this cutlass.* I wonder if the receipts will act as a time capsule,

and in twenty years I might revisit them and think, how did we exist before milk was pasteurised to the point of ubiquity, before it became a fine dust like that on moth wings, to be put on cured meats, door hinges, my body after a shower. You slide your hands under my towel and knead my skin and make me into something new. The sole-purpose milk I've grown up with will seem laughably primitive, which I suppose is similar to how I feel about how I felt before I met you.

© Susannah Dickey, *I had some very slight concerns*, The Lifeboat

It's a lot better when Suzie reads it.

As always, if you want to know more about what we're up to with the podcast you can find us @Silent_Tongue on Twitter, Lunar Poetry Podcasts on Facebook and Instagram or over at our website www.lunarpoetrypodcasts.com where you can also find a transcript of this episode and many others from the series. If you like what we do then please support us by telling your friends, colleagues, family, 'Parcel Force delivery person' about us. It really helps and is the best form of advertising for a podcast.

Some of the following poems contain what some consider to be rude language so please bear that in mind if you're listening with small children or Conservative politicians. I have made an effort to put the ruder poems toward the end of the episode but don't really want to start bleeping people's poems. You get me?

Happy National Poetry Day, here's Rishi Dastidar.

Rishi Dastidar:

RD: I'm Rishi Dastidar, sitting on a bench in Kennington Park, on a slightly grey but thankfully dry afternoon. I have a poem from *Tick tape* in front of me, which I think speaks to *freedom*, which is the theme of this year's National Poetry Day. It might not be the most positive advocacy of freedom ever but it gives you a sense of the tension inherent in the word. It's called;

Contour

In every map is a kind of trance,
a whisper that insists geography
is destiny, no matter what you say.
Remember the bridges of Königsberg,
the whisper continues. That was an unsolvable
problem, and so is your desire to keep
moving, to lose yourself in whatever

new topography you can conjure
with the spin of a compass –
as if it's a roulette wheel,
rather than a divining rod
that keeps reminding you
he who changes the sky above him
without changing his soul changes nothing.

©Rishi Dastidar, *Ticker tape*, Nine Arches Press

Mary-Jean Chan:

MJC: My name is Mary-Jean Chan and I'm a poet from Hong Kong and I'll have my debut pamphlet, *Coming Out* next spring with Ignition Press which is a new press founded by Oxford Brookes Poetry Centre. So, I'll be reading two poems today and the first one is called;

Conversation with Fantasy Mother

Dear fantasy mother, thank you
for taking my coming out
as calmly as a pond accepts a stone
flung suddenly into its depths.

You sieved my tears, added
an egg, and baked a beautiful cake.
You said: *let us celebrate, for today
you are reborn as my beloved.*

The candles gleamed and the icing
was the colour of truth – creamy white –
speckled with the sweetness of
hundreds and thousands. We sat together

at the table and ate. Afterwards,
I returned to my room and touched all
the forbidden parts of myself, felt
a kindness I had not known in years.

©Mary-Jean Chan

MJC: My second poem is called;

They Would Have All That

To sing the evening home, the lover prepares
a pot of lentil stew, her smartphone radiant

with messages, imagining her lover's steady

hand gripping her phone to navigate towards
some notion of home, their flat now a familiar
place of worship – their bodies growing close

and moving apart with the regularity of heart-
beat, morning breath. There the lover is, running
to catch a bus that she knows will take her some-

where so she can feel once again the sensation of
lack: wondering at her lover's motions throughout
the flat, how her feet must press on the floor with

each step, how the orchid must have stretched itself
a few millimetres overnight, how the stew must be
whispering on the stove and the table set for dinner.

The lovers are gentler with each other now because
they have memorized one another's fears like daily
prayer: how too much salt brings back the years of

loneliness, how a warm bath may be more necessary
than a rough kiss after a day's drought of tenderness.
The lovers are gentler because they have grown too

knowledgeable to love any other way. *How have I
hurt you?* Such asking becomes routine, almost like
walking down the aisle of a supermarket at evening,

but it is what they do best as lovers. Beyond desire:
two clasped bodies holding the heart's ache at bay.

©Mary-Jean Chan

Holly Corfield-Carr:

HCC: Hi, I'm Holly Corfield-Carr and I'm a poet and artist based in Bristol and I'm going to be reading Z. One thing I want you to know about this poem before I start reading is, I often write as though you might be able to see this written down on the page so, if I'm going to be reading this for your ear I want you to think I'm maybe speaking at a high volume. Maybe I'm writing it all in caps? That should be enough, I think

Z

A. This capped peak, this retractable point. Without asking, you take it.

Then B will be mine, rigged brigantine, plump home winds will be mine.

Loose horseshoe of C, lost its tack, its luck spilling down the wall. You can have that.

D. Your half of the moon.

If you want E, I will have F, even though it has lost its bottom shelf.
I am kind like that.

But let me keep G, this lovely whelk of your ear, this salt water almost boiling.

I know neither of us want H, that sneeze, that moveable goalpost. Do not say it is mine.

We must dispose of the picked bone together. It will be impossible to use after this
(unless you plan to speak in the first person without the first person,
who is, in any case the last person, the very last person on earth.)

If I want to, I can keep your cute crowbar, your candy cane.

While you are out buying milk for my tea, I hide K, press skip to the start.

I promise to think of you each day, twice, at three
when the clock holds an L to its forehead.

I still sweep from your feet a corona of crinkled light,
every M, every N, falling like cut hair.

O! You have taken the full moon. I will not forgive you.

That way you laugh at me now, your head cracked back like that,
like a Pez dispenser choking on a tablet, like a cutlass singing through the air.

You return Q which is a cancelled moon.

R, who is loyal as a terrier to you, growls at the question.

We both ask the question at the same time, which cancels the question.

Or let me put it like this: one question lies directly over the body of the other until it
disappears, tête-bêche, fine mess, like this ¿—? like this ¿? like S like this.

The S hangs between us like a cord, cut, springing back up.

You brandish the deflated hammer of your T, its wretched squeak.

U, who glisten like a cold washing-up bowl.

V is how both of our copies fall open, spines broken in the same place.
I don't know which to take.

I pause at the W, vertiginous thing. This landscape is so expensive and backlit.

I paused the first time I had to sign with your initial not mine, as if some part of me remembers
writing the fickle stirrup of the rune and the sound of it, when W was pronounced 'wen' meaning
either *bliss* or *cyst*, take your pick.

I know the X was a gift to treasure. I do.

I pack Y. My slingshot, my dowsing rod.

It will be a long year before I find the final N,
which take to be a Z, which I lift suspiciously

from the sleeve of my winter coat and do not recognise.

©Holly Corfield-Carr

Lizzy Turner:

LT: Hi, I'm Lizzy Turner and I am going to read *Putting the Art back in k-mart* by Scott Laudati from his collection *Hawaiian Shirt in the Electric Chair*. I chose this poem because I found this book in the Oxfam bookshop in Belfast, I hadn't heard of him but really loved the collection, particularly this poem. This is;

Putting the Art back in k-mart

when we were young
rocks
were the thing
to throw.
it taught me
a lot about
glass.
(sand and soda)
sometimes
the rocks
would sail through, nice
and clean, and only
a small
hole, the size
of a golf ball, or
baseball, was made, like
bullets spraying
across a stone
wall. other times
the glass
would shatter
off in
huge chinks, like
countries falling from
a map, and hit the floor –
it made the sound of a wave crashing
on a

dirty beach.

 i guess the more
chemicals, the shittier
the glass

car windows
were my favourite, especially
the windshield. we
dropped boulders from
trees, we
put rocks
into
potato guns,
we even
ran and cannonballed,
but the windshield
never broke
open, and
nothing
ever got through.
instead
these beautiful designs
formed, rings over water, a
thawing pond,
a map of the galaxy.
and after
we were
sweaty
and bleeding
we'd look at our abstraction.
turned a used car lot
into a modern art gallery
 sometimes
 we took pictures

in high school, they made
us take
art class. we
learned a lot
about
the old masters, and
they were good
but
there always seemed to be
some element
missing.
the mad flash

the knife or the canvas
it never got through.

THE ASSIGNMENT

was to be creative “you
can do anything
that inspires you”

so

we got canvas
and threw paint

and pissed
on it

dumped our burning cigarettes

someone even

jerked off on it

but

it was still lame

and nothing to be proud of

we took mushrooms

to get deeper, and

like mushrooms usually do,

we went out

into

the woods.

i only

remember spiderwebs,

big webs,

lactating

silk

like pure

fresh squeezed milk.

they were so lush

i wanted to eat them.

so i did

i woke up in a hospital two days later

with a fever,

delirious,

and covered in

huge

red bites.

no memory,

but they told me

i had said, “the

webs look

just like

broken glass”
my friends were inspired.
after they called
an ambulance they went
to smash a car
window, and bring the
windshield in
for our
“inspiration project”
but we weren’t
nine anymore –
too much taco bell
and cigarettes
will cut “fleeing the scene”
to “complying
with the law”
very quickly.
 everyone who didn’t
 go to the hospital that night
went to jail.

our teacher was fired
the next monday. Her
replacement had
a psych degree and
we spent the
rest of the year
gluing
pasta together.
 we were all safe after that
 but none of us
 went on
 to make something
 anybody would ever stop and look at

©Scott Laudati, *HAWAIIAN SHIRTS IN THE ELECTRIC CHAIR*, KUBOA

Thomas Darby:

TD: Hello, my name is Thomas Darby and I’m going to read;

Alfresco in Waves

Feeling the brunt of wild expectation,
we double back and park
at the garden centre.

We traipse and get lost beyond electric
trap fences, over stinger surrounded
styles. Outstare a horse.

You go first and take the bag, these yellow –
rimmed and grass-bleached
ditches are too prickly.

Where is my phone? Climb and be crowned
King of the Pylons on a rackets,
rush moulded throne.

Wait here. Just an old woman talking
to her walking stick.
This way; let's strip.

Every angle, each pore, is pink flicked
against the shadow from the wind –
played leaves. Your back

sweat pools in flat garments creasing
from our weight, our movement,
free roaming into the present.

Floating above, among the bird calls
and cell towers, the thought:
will this, now, be enough?

©Thomas Darby

Khairani Barokka:

KB: Hi, my name is Khairani Barokka or Okka. I have a debut, full-length collection of poetry out called *Rope* which will be out the first week of October with Nine Arches Press and it's available for pre-order now. There will be a launch party with costumes on October 31st that you are all invited to. I thought I would read some poems from *Rope* that I have never performed on a podcast before. This first one is called *Meteorology* and if you don't like puns you should stop listening.

Meteorology

I.

In summer,

I am your purple-and-soot,
my fingers in your mouth,
my ear against your supper plate.
Epidermis mixed
with creamed potatoes, Turkish bread.

I live here because you said
to storm in, briefly,
sans breathing cloud into
cracks in wooden beams.

I never weather anything
because I am told.

II.

Hailstorm in the mouth,
crockery breaking
into repentance.

Coalfire temp,
a feather burning charred
against the grate
where we dry socks.

Your silence speaks fences,
also sky.

Parse this quiet for me when we fuck.
Lightning. I am a woman
unaccustomed to calm, so like
a sudden swallowing it is, cold snap.

This is how you pitch my winds
like tentpoles in the dirt.
"Hurricane yourself in one place,"
until I will.

Mathematical artistry,
make the arcs
of cosine, sine.
Precipitation tries
and fails to drop.

Loquaciousness thundering in other lives,
you become a mute lover.

With all this grasping soundless,
are you saying "Thank you"?

III.

Tangent:
gerimis is the Indonesian word
for light rainfall.
Sounds encapsulated:
grit, porridgey,
granular drops.

A sudden squall.

IV.

Galileo himself could not
predict weather by telescope.
You give me a brass miniature
that magnifies three times over.
The less soupy the fog,
the clearer.

Ave Marias make
bluebell-coloured echoes
from the church to the side.
In these skies,
silver linings desecrated
by pigeons.
Shits and giggles.

Our ideas
of what constitutes
extreme humidity split,
deep and opposed.
Too much, or
not nearly sufficient
for the required
warm trough of sweat.

Changes in the chill
like a metronome
to pacing, outpacing,
changes in the pulse.

Breathing so harshly
through our chests

that the rest of us is drought.

V.

Deluge.

©Khairani Barokka

KB: So, that was the podcast debut of *Meteorology*. This next one is called *Pineapple*, and it was first published by the online journal Transom.

Pineapple

Henceforth, Fruit may never stand for Woman as a matter of course, automatic simulacrum. Representing desiccation and death, its husk shrivels seeds, invariably consumed by the fairly indiscriminate, pulped, ground, chopped. Tossed; force-fed syrup. This pineapple on the canvas may only be a woman when laid right, against an abstract background and cleaved by its self alone. Mane of forest, feral, fecund. Imposing, monolithic, millennia apart from the tales our grandmothers tell us of *nanas'* curse of vaginal ill-health when eaten, yet retaining *all the menace of such myth*. *A pox on you and your vaginas*, it could say—but it loves the pith of a woman, and would never strike fear in her heart, like the murder of armoured, segmented flesh, fork gone runny with sweet yellow juice.

©Khairani Barokka

KB: For a little bit of context, that was in response to a painting of a pineapple that a colleague did. When I was little I never drank pineapple juice because I heard it would give you a lot of vaginal discharge [LAUGHTER], so, happy National Poetry Day!

Outro:

DT: Hello there, you made it. I hope you've enjoyed listening so far, this episode was a pleasure to record and with recently relocating to Bristol from London it seemed to make

sense that half of the recordings would be made in London and the other half back here in the south-west.

I'm going to finish off with a poem by a very good friend of mine and a fantastically talented writer, Sean Wai Keung. I remembered the other day that after I read a poem in public for the first time at Poetry Unplugged in London, three and a half years ago, Sean was the first person that came and spoke to me. That fact makes it all the more shocking that he was so happy for me to read one of his poems in this episode. Sean was the winner of the inaugural Open Pamphlet Competition held by The Rialto and *you are mistaken* was published this summer and is something that you need to go and buy.

On the back of the pamphlet competition judge Hannah Lowe says, "I loved these poems for their simultaneous sense of puzzlement and wisdom about the world, and specifically the things Sean Wai Keung has to say about ethnicity, mixedness and ancestry." I also think he's hilarious, although I would never say that to his face.

On the contents page of *you are mistaken* this poem is listed as being called *over skype* though I think it is actually untitled.

—

over skype you tell me you are much happier now you arent in norwich
+ i feel this shooting pain somewhere because im in norwich without
you i feel less grounded its like theres less structure somehow as if
the time we spent together when you were here was a perfectly
dimensioned cube + now its more like fragments of varying shapes
+ sizes + i cant help but wish you were here now even though i am happy
that you are happy now + you ask me how im finding norwich now
+ i launch into this story about some guy with an air pistol who i saw walking
down my street he was shooting at street lights + from my position by
the third floor window of my bedsit he looked kind of sad + it reminded me
of the time i got attacked by a crow i felt its claws on my head + i turned
to look at it + it was wearing this frantic bashful expression as if to say
i dont know why im doing this + i don't why im here
but at least we are both defining ourselves in somesortaway

©Sean Wai Keung, *you are not alone*, The Rialto

DT: That was Sean Wai Keung, or rather it was me reading Sean Wai Keung's poem. I tried my best there to not do an impression of Sean. I've seen him read so many times. This idea of how much we want to copy people we admire, whether it's their writing or performance, will probably come up a bit more in the podcast at some point in the future. Until that point, have fun. Bye.

End of transcript.

