



Joanna Nissel, Scott Thurston, Steve Spence and
Mélisande Fitzsimons, 'Conference Report: POETRY &
CARE.' (2024) 16(1): *Journal of British and Irish
Innovative Poetry*. DOI: [https://doi.org/10.16995/
bip.11688](https://doi.org/10.16995/bip.11688)



Open Library of Humanities

Conference Report: POETRY & CARE

Joanna Nissel, Universities of Southampton and Bath Spa, UK, J.F.Nissel@soton.ac.uk

Scott Thurston, University of Salford, UK, S.Thurston@salford.ac.uk

Steve Spence, Independent poet, UK, steve_spence1935@hotmail.co.uk

Mélisande Fitzsimons, Independent poet, UK, melisandef@yahoo.co.uk

The following multi-authored report provides an account of the Poetry & Care conference held at the University of Plymouth, 7-8 September 2023. With many thanks to the conference organisers, Anthony Caleshu, Mandy Bloomfield, and Russell Evans, and to all contributors.

Journal of British and Irish Innovative Poetry is a peer-reviewed open access journal published by the Open Library of Humanities. © 2024 The Author(s). This is an open-access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License (CC-BY 4.0), which permits unrestricted use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original author and source are credited. See <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>.

OPEN ACCESS



DAY ONE

Opening [Ceremony] (JN)

The academic conference can be a bit like an Olympics. There are podiums (at which to speak), plinths (on which to stand), and arenas (in which we hope to achieve personal best performances and push the overall boundaries of our specialisms). Within the *Poetry and Care* Conference, held at the University of Plymouth in September 2023, I was struck by the sprinklings of athletic language throughout the two days.¹

After one keynote address, co-organiser Anthony Caleshu (University of Plymouth) commented, ‘On to the next round’, and I found myself muttering, ‘ding-ding, fight!’ While in any conference there will be a conflict when one has to choose between sessions to attend, boxing is not the sport I would choose to frame this conference. At best, conferences are not spaces in which academics aim to land blows against one another, but pass the baton of dialogue between each other in a kind of long-distance relay race. As is appropriate for a conference focused on care, the relay at Plymouth was not contained to the intellectual realm. While the baton passed between speakers, continuing the thread of academic inquiry as they completed their presentations, the baton also passed between the wider community in attendance. Some took up the baton and asked questions while others needed time to mull. Some noticed others becoming tired between sessions and offered spaces in which they did not have to talk, conserving energy for the next sprint, or else waved them off to spend an hour at Plymouth Lido when they worried if taking such a break was acceptable. Care was also present in the organisational matter: providing fuel for the athletes in the form of food, water, or caffeine.

Our multi-authored account (authors indicated by their initials) of the conference follows the numerical ordering of the programme for sessions which were mostly taking place in parallel. However, to preserve continuity with our introduction above, we choose to begin with Panel 2!

Panel 2 ‘Food and Biographies’ (JN)

Perhaps this athletic analogy was unavoidable, since I began the conference by chairing a session that featured its fair share of sport. First came Philip Coleman’s (Trinity College Dublin) presentation on John Berryman’s *The Dream Songs* (1969), which, echoing Cohen and Golston, asked us to consider the endurance involved in writing the long poem form.² I was struck by Coleman’s discussion of how the composition of a long poem can be a social act, evidencing this through the elucidation of Kate Donoghue, Berryman’s third wife, who supported his practice throughout his

alcoholism and bouts of depression. Donoghue managed much of Berryman's social and domestic arrangements, even extending to edits on the poems themselves.

Next, Christina Thatcher (Cardiff University) neatly continued the discussion of hidden women, giving a memorable presentation on poetic biography and the forgotten athletes of women's rodeo. As Thatcher raised, the rider Mabel Strickland Woodward was one of the most photographed of all time, yet since the publicity focused on her beauty rather than her prowess as an athlete, she ironically remains hidden, much in the same way Donoghue's role is remembered as wife rather than literary collaborator, which itself connects to a wider history of women-poetry-mentors' contributions being erased, as commented on by Malika Booker on the Verse Mentors podcast.³ Thatcher's analysis brought up a tension between the figure commemorated and the entirety of a person, and offered segmentivity as a potential method for poetry to illustrate a fuller (though never entirely complete) representation of historical figures.

The final paper in this panel was given by Eleri Fowler (Queen Mary, University of London), who moved from notions of the individual to those of the collective. In her work on Bernadette Mayer's utopian poetics of food-sharing, Fowler raised the relentlessness of cooking as an act of endurance care, which women are often coerced into providing. She presented 'poetry, with its connections between speaker, addressee, and audience, [as] an inherently communal and future-orientated form', that might offer a space in which to imagine ways such burdens can be removed from a single set of shoulders.

Panel 1 'Care and Sexuality' (ST)

Panel 1, chaired by conference co-organiser Mandy Bloomfield, opened with an intriguing presentation by Kaplan Harris (St Bonaventure University), entitled 'Housing, Healthcare, and the Power Couple: On Dodie Bellamy's *The Letters of Mina Harker*'. This paper was a deep dive into the unconventional marriage of writers Dodie Bellamy and Kevin Killian – a bisexual woman and a gay man – became married on the principles of mutual aid and mutual risk, Harris placed their union in the context of New Narrative's rejection of the stereotypical structure of American success stories. Picturing the couple at home, watching Hill Street Blues and discussing Blanchot, whilst haunted by the impact of AIDS on their community, Harris (drawing on a larger book-in-progress about Bay Area poetry and activism in the wake of the New Left), argued for this couple as an exemplary emblem of New Narrative's commitment to community activism, contrasting this with their Language Poetry contemporaries' commitment to visibility. A memorable moment for me was being reminded how

Allen Ginsberg had described cut up as a critique of the ideology of heterosexuality, and this felt a salutary reminder of the conjunction between form, care and conflict.

The second paper ‘Gore as Care: the poetics and ethics of queer body horror’ was co-presented by Tom Bamford-Blake (Greater Brighton Metropolitan College) and Gabriel Larenas Rosa (The Catholic University of Chile) and presented GORE – a queer, international, online experimental poetry and writing workshop, which began in 2022, convened between Chile and the UK. Starting from the recognition of how the pleasure that queer people find in horror – even if it excludes or includes queer identities in order to marginalise them – allows a creative and potentially healing encounter with the way that horror connects with narratives of abuse and trauma. An incredibly rigorous dialectic threaded through this presentation, noting how care immediately evokes the notion of harm, and how the etymology of care across Spanish and English evokes notions of lament, sorrow, anxiety, grief, and call, provoking the question, ‘what is grief calling?’ and an understanding of a poem as both a wound and also capable of inflicting pain. Although the pair declared that they were not therapists and were at pains to distance themselves from the assumption that the work would be healing or redemptive, I felt that no therapy worth its salt would claim this but the work being done in this workshop is clearly therapeutic, if not to be named as therapy per se. Certainly, the pair had a rigorous understanding of the power of the group to contain difficult experiences, and also to convene a community as a liberating rupture of/from individuality. There was a very strong sense of the pair ethically standing alongside participants, breaking down boundaries, creating a space to hear the call of care, and being aware what it would cost a person to make it, using trigger warnings to support agency, and interrogating the machismo of the avant-garde. In the discussion that followed, Gabriel spoke movingly about the challenge of writing about the Pinochet era without recreating the experience (‘the poem is there not there’) and the power of the group to resist fear. Tom characterised the pair’s approach as ‘we’re not going to harm you, but we are willing to be harmed with you and that’s care’. As I typed my first draft of this report using voice recognition software, the software translated ‘that’s care’ as ‘that scare’ and feels like an apt figure for this fascinating and nourishing contribution.

Panel 3 ‘External Phenomena’ (ST)

This panel, chaired by conference co-organiser Anthony Caleshu, began a thread throughout the conference of a series of five poetry readings, integrated fully into the panel structure, and importantly giving equal weight to the delivery of the art, as well as critical reflections, rather than reducing poetry, as often at literary conferences, to the status of after-dinner entertainment.

Sarah Cave (University of Plymouth, co-editor of Guillemot Press), began her performance entitled, 'A Circle of Earth: a performance of the poetic sequence 'Dove Dove'' by installing a series of props into the space including shawls, hats and stones and marking out a ritual space on the floor to perform. Cave introduced the work as exploring the voice of an imagined sister of Jesus of Nazareth, known as Yona – one of the women mentioned but left nameless in Matthew – who, having been present at her brother's crucifixion, broke from Peter and Paul's influence to teach her own interpretation of Jesus' life, resulting in her being cursed by the apostles to never receive the comfort of death. Thus, Cave's poetics enabled a vision of Yona inhabiting and commenting on contemporary life through her immortal perspective. Cave read from texts stitched onto a large piece of fabric which she wore like a shawl, rotating it and reading – and at times singing – the poems in an seemingly unplanned sequence. I found the atmosphere and intensity of the work quite compelling, and it introduced me to elements of the queer theology that Cave was to speak of later in the conference (Panel 8).

Tony Lopez (Emeritus Professor, University of Plymouth) had initiated the series of major poetry conferences at the University of Plymouth, of which the current conference was the fifth, since the late 1990s. In tune with this this sense of history, Lopez chose to present a reading from his 1994 book *Stress Management*, entitled, 'A Path Marked with Breadcrumbs' (the title of a poem from the book), thus opening up a near thirty-year perspective on that earlier work. Speaking of the context of the poems as written during his first experience of parenthood, Lopez set their incessant and unrelenting critique of consumer capitalism in tension with his then intense preoccupation with ideas of responsibility and dependency. These very elegant, low affect, seamlessly collaged lyrics (with disarming modesty Lopez declared that the book was 'maybe 60% firing'!) delivered in Lopez's typically downbeat and gently ironic way, provided a not-so distant mirror on events such as the war in Bosnia, housing insecurity, and university management, that was somehow both depressing and reassuring at once.

Simon Smith (poet, librarian, formerly University of Kent) drew on a trilogy of collections: *Municipal Love Poems* (2022), *Last Morning* (2022) and a forthcoming project *The Magic Lantern Slides*. The first of these began in 2015 with the Paris bombings, Smith disclosing a personal connection to someone involved in the attack on the Bataclan Theatre, and presenting his poetry as having the idea of care embedded as 'theme and treatment', trying to navigate the tension between the vulnerable caring voice and the face of atrocity on an international scale. These expansive and wide-ranging lyrics came right to the edge of the abyss and stared in with statements like

‘I’m trying to break your mind’ and ‘lost my mirth’, but Smith was nevertheless able to hold the despair lightly and keep it in perspective, making for an emotionally engaging performance.

Unlike a normal poetry reading, the conference context enabled some dialogue to take place following the performances. A key theme to emerge was how all three performers had traversed the edge of public and private language in their work – echoing the Plymouth conference theme of 1997 – and how this difference has become toxic and un-caring in contemporary culture. Cave reflected on the private and public nature of prayer, whilst Lopez spoke about his early discovery of new poetics that were ‘absorbed in everyday reality’, such as the Language poets he invited to Plymouth in 1997. Smith reflected upon how the National Poetry Library had been free to access when he started there in the early 90s, but had been privatised by 2004, seeing poetry as a ‘small, inappropriate weapon’ of resistance. Poet Steve Spence commented from the audience how he felt that aesthetic pleasure could be thought of as resistance too, an apt comment to close a richly thoughtful discussion.

Panel 4 ‘Ecology and Cross-Speciesism’ (JN)

My next panel/relay of the day focused on the environment, in a session chaired by Suzanne Conway. Mark Howarth-Booth (Independent Scholar) delivered a hybrid poetry reading and talk with wonderful humour. He argued that to care for the more-than-human world, we must stop idealising nature and instead acknowledge its ugliness, which we often attribute to humanity. Likewise, Min Wild (University of Plymouth) problematised our notions of animal behaviour. Using the eighteenth century poet, Christopher Smart, she traced moments where humans used their moral, political or religious dogma to interpret the characteristics of animals. Finally, conference co-organiser, Mandy Bloomfield (University of Plymouth) stepped into the blurry boundary of human and non-human, offering the shoreline as a place of conscious overlapping. Even Bloomfield’s slight slippage was entirely fitting – during her talk she meant to say ‘The sea has a voice’ but instead said ‘The voice has a sea’. Together, the speakers called for a reobserving of binaries and boundaries in the context of environmental care.

Keynote 1 ‘On Caring / For Poems of Pregnancies Undone’ (JN)

Jennifer Cooke’s (Loughborough University) keynote furthered both the discussion on binaries and on hidden narratives. Cooke foregrounded the work of Erica Miller, Holly Pester, and Sophie Robinson, by stating half a million women in the UK per year experience pregnancy loss, either through miscarriage or abortion. Poetry on these

subjects, Cooke raised, is not exactly hidden (citing publishers such as The Emma Press) but is not collected together as poems of pregnancy loss, since these writings deal with two different emotional fields: shame and tragedy. It felt only right, then, that this talk was given at the University of Plymouth's cinema-cum-lecture theatre, the presentation projected in grand scale. For me, one of Cooke's most fascinating insights related to the language of pregnancy loss. She highlighted the similarity between abortion and miscarriage and the arbitrariness of the boundary between them, a boundary that is informed by the political beliefs in a given region, exemplifying, as Min Wild mentioned, how humans fill gaps in narratives to suit our own agendas.

Panel 5 'Sound, Dance, Video, Painting: Readings 2' (SS, MF, ST)

Chaired by Luke Kennard, this panel featured four performers, three of whom were also contributing academic papers to the conference.

Hazel Smith (Western Sydney University), read from her books *Word Migrants* (2016) and *ecliptical* (2022). Formerly a professional violinist, she talked about the relationship between writing and music, which provided a mix of humour and sharp analysis. Scott Thurston (University of Salford), danced a rehearsed performance to Smith's reading of 'Snow Monkeys' from *ecliptical*, which generated various movement metaphors inspired by the text whilst also freely improvising in the moment.

This was followed by Holly Pester (University of Essex). Her mesmerising performance drew on her 2021 book, *Comic Timing*, but her newer work in manuscript felt like a continuation of the concerns of her conference paper on Hannah Wiener et al, a kind of lyric essay dense with thought, and tracing the plight of the domesticated body under capitalism.

Scott Thurston's solo performance offered a three-part 'kinopoetic' score which combined dance and poetry. He began with improvised movement, which then gave way to movement combined with recitation of a memorised poem, finally followed by improvised movement combined with an improvised poem. Thurston made a playful use of the lecture theatre space by climbing onto desks, wedging himself under tables and at one point, leaving the room entirely through one door and reappearing through another!

Finally, Anthony Caeshu, (University of Plymouth; conference co-organiser) read from his new collection, *Xenia* (2023). His ekphrastic poems, relating to the work of artists including Julie Curtiss, Shara Hughes, Emma Webster, and Henry Taylor, also dealt with the idea of the poet as a liar. This was a very seductive reading, which led the reader down many blind alleys before we emerged, intrigued and delighted.

Panel 6 'Talking, Writing, Mentoring' (JN)

Sarah Hesketh (Modern Poetry in Translation) began the next panel, chaired by Ann Grey. Hesketh and lead collaborator, Dinah Roe (Oxford Brookes University), pioneered a popular creative writing workshop series for carers. Their project tackled care on multiple planes: the emotional and physical toll of care; the need for carers to express their experiences, free of judgement; and how to design a workshop when the participants may not be able to pause caring even for an hour. Through the poetry of Christina Rossetti, Hesketh's session spoke to the 'Food and Biography' panel. She detailed how Rossetti's caring responsibilities led to fragmentation in her poetry, since Rossetti was constantly being called away from her desk. Contrast this with John Berryman and how his practice was put first, resulting in longform poetry.

My own paper (Universities of Southampton and Bath Spa) focused on workshopping intensely personal, or even traumatic, lyric and confessional work in undergraduate seminars.⁴ I challenged the idea that one can separate the writer from the writing, a common technique in poetry mentorship to reaffirm its scope, keeping the mentorship grounded in literary skills as opposed to personal matter, which some believe could lessen the quality of the writing. I argued that in incredibly vulnerable moments, abandoning that binary and including more care for the person rather than the poem is beneficial, and can result in some excellent poems. I was extremely grateful for being scheduled next to Hesketh, since her participants' poems clearly demonstrated the literary power of the poems written in a context where care was taken into account.

Panel 7 'Death and Mourning' (JN)

In this session, chaired by Mae Losasso, JT Welsch's (University of York) paper, 'Poetry and the Good Death', firmly grasped the conceptual batons passed in Cooke's keynote, wrestling with further forms of loss, namely suicide, assisted death, and the knotty and contentious definitional line between them. Welsch problematised the notion of dying with dignity, connecting it to potentially eugenic beliefs – such as those held by American novelist Charlotte Perkins Gilman – that equate our worth as human beings to our ability to complete acts of service. During his discussion on the Canadian poet, Al Purdy, and his assisted death, Welsch nailed the underlying tension we were dealing with in our various debates on binaries and boundaries, namely the battle 'between care and control'.

Suzanne Conway (University of Exeter) moved the topic towards memorialising in her paper on Edward Thomas. Conway traced a track from the imaginative spaces Thomas creates in his poems, which she argued build a kind of memorial that remind

the reader of the beauty of what must not be lost – in this case ‘the earth and countryside he loved’, threatened by war. Conway argued that, through this process, writing can be seen as an act of care, since it engenders care in the reader. Knowing that the poet died fighting to ensure the survival of his vision only enhances the poignancy of the writing.

Panel 8 ‘Theology and Pilgrimage’ (ST)

This absorbing panel, chaired by Philip Coleman, drew debates around care into the penumbra of faith, religion and spirituality. Sarah Cave’s (University of Plymouth) presentation felt satisfyingly continuous with her performance earlier and, indeed, ‘Somewhere Solomon is Singing’ was presented as a kind of hybrid critical-creative paper punctuated by passages from Cave’s homophonic queering of the Song of Solomon, once again in the voice of Yona. Evoking Hildegard Von Bingen’s theology of kissing, Cave spoke of her desire to undo the heterosexual politics of the groom and bride, call and response structure of the Song and reconfigure it as a dialogue between intimacy and faith, opening up a queer space for a dialectic of care. Cave posed a moving critique of the notion of ‘being forgiven for being queer’ –arguing for the need to own and ‘enjoy the theology of sin’ because ‘queerness is not a sin’.

Edward Clarke (University of Oxford) read generously from two collections, *A Book of Psalms* (2020) and *Cherubims* (2022), punctuated by a vitiating and forthright commentary on his poetics of care for ‘a world that’s dead and probably should be’ – a form of ‘writing as initiation’ that has to overcome the ‘embarrassment of praise’. Rooting his theology deeply in the spiritual commitment of parenting, Clarke’s take on Psalm 23 (‘The Lord is my Shepherd’) was voiced by a sheep that realises ‘his carer will become his butcher’, a tension that ‘Christ had to internalise’ and which Clarke linked to being angry with children. This was a bold and unflinching offering, beautifully counterpointing Cave’s translations of scripture.

Ellen Dillon (Independent Scholar) and Kit Fryatt’s (Dublin City University) inventive collaborative poem entitled ‘All Things that are Passing’ focused on the figure of Hugh Byrne, a soldier in a government militia turned devout Catholic custodian of St Declan’s holy well at Ardmore, on the south coast of Ireland between Youghal and Dungarvan. Treating Byrne as an archetype of ‘the impulse to care in the wake of trauma’ this hybrid performance, illustrated with stunning photographs of the location, explored Byrne’s place in a theology of care of the ‘inanimate or numinous’ rather than ‘direct human need’, and its tension with the raucous carnivalesque rites of the pattern festival. I am still thinking about Dillon’s evocation of the ‘efficacy of words’ (in a theological sense) in the following discussion as a figure for the role of language in this enquiry (partly delivered in Gaelic) in which, nevertheless, ‘no stories equate to absolution’.

Keynote 2 'Poetry Readings by Will Harris and Anthony (Vahni) Capildeo' (JN)

The evening's keynote readings began with Will Harris (University of East Anglia) honouring the poet Gboyega Odubanjo by reading his poem, 'Brother'. In particular, Harris drew attention to the lines, 'we won't / make a difference will we'.⁵ These words will hold different meanings to all of us. Just some may include: self-consciously, what difference will this conference make? What difference can we make as poets, both to the artform, and to the wider world, either by our poetry's impact or directly by our actions? In my own research, I am preoccupied by questions of how poets' supposedly isolated supportive activities have a larger significance. The outpouring of grief, love, praise, and appreciation for Odubanjo's many acts of care as an editor, a poet, a facilitator, a critique partner, a mentor, and more, reaffirm for me our potential to create change. I am sure this change will continue in the Gboyega Odubanjo Foundation for low-income Black writers.

To close the day, Anthony (Vahni) Capildeo's (University of York) keynote loosed some vital rallying cries: 'I renounce the pseudo-care that sanitizes the past', 'paying your freelancers is an act of care', and they also reminded us that tone-policing, requiring people to be nice all the time, is not an act of care. Their following reading, playing with this concept of putting on masks – such as the mask of a decent person – was thoroughly enlivening. Pivoting the praise poem to incorporate unpleasant voices, as well as animal voices (at one point Capildeo treated us to an imitation of birdsong) felt, to take us back to sport, like a bottle of water thrust by someone leaning from the refreshment station during a marathon. Capildeo called into question that seemingly undisputed synonymy between kindness and care.

DAY TWO

Panel 9 'Consciousness, Tension, Anxiety' (ST)

One of the opening panels of Day Two, chaired by Edward Clarke, began with Hazel Smith's (Western Sydney University) paper, 'Dolphins in the reservoir: Care, Consciousness, Affect and Electronic Literature', asked the fascinating question of how electronic literature can engage with questions of care, consciousness, and affect. Drawing on her own internationally renowned creative work in this field, as well as a rigorous theoretical understanding of the issues, Smith carefully and generously set up and distinguished key terms around consciousness, affect and emotion, touching on what David Chalmers has called the 'hard problem of consciousness', captured in the question: how do you explain feelings which accompany and colour sensory experience? Proposing that care is connected with the affective-emotional relationship, Smith asked if care is conscious, and whether artificial intelligence can mimic consciousness.

This provided a very rich frame for an encounter with John Cayley's electronic text, 'The Listeners', which poses a series of questions to Amazon's Alexa and records her answers. I found this text utterly captivating and it became a bountiful source of reflections from Smith about how Cayley uses this device to comment on how affect and listening are central in acts of care yet how, in this context, affect and emotion seemed to have been conflated in Alexa's apparent emotional volatility and gender stereotyping. Smith intuited that Cayley's work seems to point out how, despite the huge need for listeners in our cultural moment, we seem to have outsourced care to a robot. Turning to her own collaborative digital work, 'Dolphins in the Reservoir' (with Will Luer and Roger Dean, the latter of whom was in attendance), Smith ran this recombinant, interactive audio-visual text collage for a number of minutes, so we could get the measure of how its endless permutations pan out. Exploring themes as diverse as challenges to health, democracy, and environment; order out of chaos; philosophical and scientific ways of thinking about consciousness; and possible futures, including the rise of AI, this seething and vibrant text provided for me a strong example of thinking through the poetics and politics of care in a profoundly ethical way. One of the many clipped and changing phrases that drew me was: 'disagreements that refuse to converge' – an apt figure for the subtle dynamics of care, scrupulously explored in this engaging paper.

Gavin Goodwin (Aberystwyth University) presented a paper entitled, 'Poetry, Uncertainty, and Reading as an Act of Care', discussing a feasibility study examining how reading poetry might decrease anxiety by increasing a reader's tolerance of uncertainty. This interdisciplinary work between creative writers and psychologists seemed to take John Keats' famous concept of *negative capability* as a starting point for thinking about how reading poetry can be both an act of care for self and other through treating it as a form of graded, relatively safe, exposure to uncertainty, the intolerance of which is a key recognition in some forms of talking therapy treatment, such as Cognitive Behavioural Therapy. Though beset by a number of challenges in this study (including issues with recruitment) Goodwin's team nevertheless found that their readers' practice in forming their own interpretations, and facing the challenge of doing so, as well as taking into consideration the context, author's intentions, and perspectives of others in the group, appeared to increase cognitive flexibility in some cases. Whilst also recognising to what extent the group environment itself was beneficial and enjoyable, participants reported how enriching they found their ensuing awareness of other minds thinking differently. Goodwin reflected that, at their best, the groups felt nothing short of utopian, and that this multiplicity of viewpoints could only seem a hopeful sign in our ragingly polarised online culture.

Caterina Stamou (University of Athens), paper ‘CCCare-full ppoetics’ explored – in a way relevant to Cayley and Smith’s work – the idea of active listening as an act of care, drawing on an impressive array of contemporary thinking, most notably the abolitionist, feminist writings of Alexia Arani and Mariame Kaba, and applying it fruitfully to the work of JJJJJJerome Ellis, a black experimental writer who explores the lived experience of stammering and stuttering in his work, *The Clearing* (2021). Taking the view that listening can generate self and collective care and following adrienne maree brown’s sense that ‘our entire future may depend on learning to listen without assumptions or defences’ – a kind of ‘listening through the fear’ – set the stage for asking how we can attune listening towards relation, creating a differential erotics and poetics of relation. Stuttering in this context was seen (by Joshua St Pierre) as against capitalism’s diktat to not waste time and Stamou’s attention to Ellis’ fascinating work explored how this so-called dysfluency became a way of thinking about how to live time differently, Ellis himself claiming that ‘blackness, dysfluency and music are forces that open time’. Stamou’s complex and committed account saw Ellis as performing vulnerability as an act of resistance in line with Arani’s vision of a world in which disability is not excluded from art or from relation, compatible to some extent with Benjamin’s concept of ‘now-time’. Stamou concluded her paper with a powerful insistence on our need to attune to the ‘sound’ of abolitionist struggle, further extending the scope of care as explored in this intense and rewarding session.

Panel 10 ‘Co-Creation, Workshops, and Practice-Based Research’ (JN)

Betraying my background as a researcher embedded in public-facing, fairly practical projects, I chose to begin Day Two with the ‘Co-creation, Workshops, and Practice-Based Research’ panel, chaired by JT Welsch. Rebecca Hurst (University of Manchester / Creative Manchester) and John McAuliffe’s (University of Manchester / Carcanet) detailed their collaborative, practice-based projects with NHS staff, as well as the families of organ donors and artists, as in the case of McAuliffe. I felt sympathy with Hurst’s collaborators, who raised their frustrations about being over-researched but not actually listened to, due to repeated governmental insistence that research projects must quantify care and self-care acts in order to evidence the potential benefits of poetry, which have already been well-evidenced. Cooke’s keynote had warned against valuing poetry for its capacity to create more empathetic beings and Hurst and McAuliffe’s papers spoke to this, setting out the ramifications of funding bodies seeing poems in transactional terms, valued only for their function rather than intrinsically.

Christopher Seymour (Manchester Metropolitan University) caught me thoroughly off-guard, entering the room fully in-character as a nurse, and handing over a patient,

Hassan, to the audience, detailing his symptoms and the treatment he had received. Seymour asked us what we would say to Hassan and had us act this out in pairs. I was quite literally speechless; I had not a clue what to say. For me, this demonstrated in the starkest terms the difference between theorising care, its histories and tensions, and the reality of having to, in Seymour's words, become 'more fluent in the world of mercy'. It demonstrated how the concept of care had become somewhat external, at least for me, during the conference – an academic concept, cerebral, immaterial. Seymour, I felt, rightly called me out. Moreover, he evidenced one of the many benefits of practice-based research. It forces us to re-examine where textual research can become disconnected from reality and repair those fractures.

Panel 11 'Pain, Loss, Recovery' (JN)

Russell Evans (University of Plymouth) took us back to collaboration in the next panel, chaired by Sarah Cave. This time the collaboration was between text and image in Evans' poetry comics, which offered an alternate way of reading a poem that encouraged the eye to bounce around the page. For me, this felt like a manifestation of care particularly for neurodiverse readers that may find the traditional left-to-right, text-based poem more difficult to digest. One such neurodivergency could be ADHD, which lends greater importance to Evans' approach, given that ADHD is becoming more recognised in women⁶ and adults generally.⁷ Rather than demonising their way of interacting with the world, Evans' comic poems instead offer a reading experience that actively generates meaning and possibilities from atypical reading styles.

Rachel Gippetti (University of Plymouth) then presented her upcoming doctoral project, an autoethnographic exploration of carrying the BRCA2 variant. BRCA2 is a genetic mutation that often causes breast and ovarian cancers. It is prevalent in Ashkenazi Jewish communities. Gippetti's project promises to be a rich and moving one. Among its questions and experiences, the research will cover difficulties in conceiving, the potential of passing on BRCA2 to her daughters, mastectomy, hysterectomy, and creating 'new traditions of not getting ill' against centuries-old stories of Gippetti's ancestors becoming ill and dying due to BRCA2.

Finally, Emma Filtness' (Brunel University), *Bandaged Dreams* (Broken Sleep Books), described living with chronic illness, and made an important intervention in equating relief from pain with pleasure. This raised the question: is care only about filling a lack? Righting a wrong? Can we expand our definitions of care to include pleasure?

I was grateful to be able to ponder such questions a while longer, since Evans had organised an exhibition of poetry from the speakers in the university's atrium, including Gippetti's work and one of his own poetry comics. Using his keen awareness of the influence of spatial arrangements in reading a poem, each poet's work was staggered throughout the space, offering us the chance to view them as individual pieces or as a loosely flowing set.

Panel 12 'Altered Witness' (ST)

This panel, chaired by Jennifer Cooke, opened with Holly Pester (University of Essex) delivered a fascinating paper, which she prefaced as addressing the relationship between poetry and bathrooms! 'Sink, Shower, Toilet: Hiding Bays and Poetry's Keeping in the work of Hannah Weiner, Ashley Barr and Roberto Bolaño', took three unlikely scenes from poetry and shed the light of care on them anyway, consistent with her long-term concerns about the embodied plight of humans under capitalism. Weiner's book *The Fast* (1970) is an account of a durational writing experiment, involving fasting, ritual, hallucinations and auras as the poet spent three weeks at home, literally in her sink, in her loft in New York City whilst navigating a psychotic episode. Pester read Weiner's activity as linking the textual body with the 'social architecture' of plumbing, with all of its associations with civility, and commented on how she effectively turned a domestic space into a site for performance where both safety and sovereignty converged in a generative confrontation with reality, rather than a retreat from it. Similarly, Barr's response in 'How to Access "Spreading Pleasure"' (2021) to the conundrum of a shower placed in the middle of a room in a rented flat, became the focus of the dislocation between creative activity and tenancy – you can't be a poet and tenant at the same time – in capitalism's confusion of the need to clean oneself with the idealisation of identity in advertising. Finally, the heroine in Bolaño's novel *Amulet* (1999) hides in a toilet cubicle for twelve days at the Universidad Nacional Autónoma in Mexico City in 1968 order to escape from soldiers occupying the campus, surviving on toilet paper and a volume of poetry. Evoking a sense of a bathroom as a place for transgressive activity (the shower scene in the film *Carrie* was mentioned, that Holly's mum had once forbidden her to watch!) Pester evoked and critiqued Heidegger in asserting that 'dwelling is harassed by housing shortage', but that the resources of poetry may provide shelter. At this point Cooke supplied one of the best quips of the conference: 'a sink of one's own'!

Mao Losasso (University of Warwick) delivered a paper entitled, "'This morning, I changed bedding": Routine acts of care in the poetry of James Schuyler'. Taking her coordinates from a series of reference points, including Yves Bonnefoy's *The*

Arrière-pays ‘what are the names of those villages over there?’ and Andrew Key’s blog ‘Late Sleep Early’ which evokes ‘an elsewhere just over there’, Losasso set the scene for a consideration of how aesthetics can become a form of care, a sort of promise of transformation inside the everyday, rather than in or through the sublime. Through the quotidian concerns of Schuyler’s poetry, Losasso read against the grain of the New York School’s ‘too cool to care’ (my phrasing) attitude to celebrate how Schuyler cares about things as they are, even if they are hardly anything, showing a love for the seemingly boring, which Losasso framed by Silverberg’s interest in Schuyler’s ‘commitment to care for things in language’. Illuminating this account further through an awareness of the mental illness that saw Schuyler regularly in care facilities from 1951 onwards, Losasso generated poignant and persuasive readings of poems which explored the complexity of relationships negotiated through care, such as Schuyler’s relationship with Eileen Myles, which, at times, seemed to question who is caring for whom in the context of their queer kinship.

Nikolai Duffy (Manchester Metropolitan University) brought the panel to a conclusion with his paper, ‘The Healing Machine: a Poetics of Care’, which took the work of American artist Emery Blagdon (1907–1986) as a focus for a hybrid, critical-creative meditation on the notion of care, and the ethical gesture of creating an art form that invites engagement. Blagdon is famous for his creation of ‘The Healing Machine’, a shed filled with all kinds of extraordinary home-made instruments designed to generate electromagnetic energy to aid healing and prevent disease. Whilst originally built in Nebraska, the shed is now kept in a museum in Wisconsin, which Duffy refrained from visiting whilst in the area, not wanting to see the shed reduced to an exhibit. Delving into a series of associations encompassing Lyn Hejinian’s famous essay, ‘The Rejection of Closure’, alongside Nuar Alsadir’s desire for poems to be experienced as art installations, Duffy built a poetic sense of healing as a kind of endless re-collection and re-articulation. Brilliantly navigating Jean-Luc Nancy’s notion (in *Being Singular Plural*) of a contiguity between reference, rather than a continuity, Duffy departed from the orthodox reading of Blagdon’s work as driven by the mourning of deep personal losses by asking instead whether healing has less to do with consolation and more to do with the acceptance of loss, leading to an ethics of care.

Following a short but rich discussion, which reflected on notions of the ‘vigilantism of care’ (Hitchcock’s *Rear Window* came up!), the concept of the efficacy and the idea of refuge, brought this interesting and thoughtful panel to a close.

Keynote 3 'Poetry Reading with Luke Kennard' (JN)

Oursports metaphors reappeared in time for Luke Kennard's (University of Birmingham) keynote address as the organisers began by stating, 'We're on the downward slope now'. While they were referring to the delegates' collective energy levels, skiing or mountainous hiking came to mind, which was appropriate as Kennard's reading was an exhilarating experience, much like going downhill at speed. Kennard performed a twenty-seven-part long poem that read like a sermon from a mildly-insane preacher, and which brought together everything from the grand ideas of Spinoza, to the buy-to-let landlord, to a holographic Pikachu bookmark. The background for Kennard's performance was a cinema-scale projection of John Martin's 1840 painting, 'Jonah Preaching Before Nineveh', which depicted a preacher (Jonah) on a plinth outside crenelated city walls and a quite literal sea of people, painted with monochrome undulations that mimicked the movement of a shoal. The biblical backdrop transformed Kennard's twenty-seven fragments into commandments. The audio, too, reinforced the idea of Kennard as preacher, as the slight echo on the mic made the sound resemble the echoes that may have been heard in Martin's sweeping landscape. Perhaps it was Russell Evans' paper at work but I felt that, especially to a reader unfamiliar with the story of the Ninevites, the painting backdrop worked to create further meaning in the poem. While at first the painting appeared to show the crowd listening to Jonah, with God hovering above the preacher (like a big brother backing up his sibling as he threatens to fight some other kid on the playground), upon closer inspection, I realised the figures behind Jonah were pointing towards God, as if his appearance was unexpected. I wondered if God had arrived to contradict the preacher. As if he, or in this case Kennard as an extension of Jonah, was spouting nonsense. And what glorious nonsense it was.

Panel 13 'Memory and Psychotherapy' (JN)

The following panel on 'Memory and Psychotherapy', chaired by Mandy Bloomfield, took the baton of madness and the mind, and continued the race in a much more sober fashion. Eleni Stecopoulos (Independent scholar) read from her forthcoming book, *Dreaming in the Fault Zone* (Nightboat, 2024), which examines the poetics of healing and 'its entwinement with harm' on social, political, and ecological levels. She also stated that her work is concerned with 'the ways trauma and art double each other'. This felt entirely fitting as her use of fragments reflected the way in which trauma can cause resurgences and fractures of memory, and perhaps drew on earlier legacies of modernism, such as Virginia Woolf's conceptualisation of memory as a nonlinear entity.⁸

The next speaker – and a collaborator on this review – Scott Thurston (University of Salford) gave me my first introduction to Verity Spott. I was fascinated to discover Spott’s exploration of care settings and therapy through the ‘poem as a container’ in *Click Away Close Door Say* (2017). In particular, I found Thurston’s analysis surrounding care within the capitalist complex – informed by his currently underway MSc in Counselling and Psychotherapy – most interesting. He reflected, ‘it may be that Spott wants us to think about how privatised systems of care debase the principles of any healthcare model they come into contact with’. Indeed, the integrity of the speaker’s voice becomes damaged by existing within and becoming complicit with such privatised structures: ‘as my voice speaks its damage so it itself damages’.⁹ Contradictions, dualities, and unresolvable conflicts are rife within this text and I look forward to further ‘Scott-on-Spott’ papers in which Thurston continues to articulate these.

Panel 14 ‘Language, Exile, Locality’ (MF, SS, JN)

In the adjacent room to Stecopoulos and Thurston, Russell Evans chaired a four-poet performance that illustrated the local Plymouth poetry scene’s flourishing environment, which Steve Spence describes as having ‘an increasingly diverse output, both in terms of publishing and live events’. The four poets in the session, Mélisande Fitzsimons, Norman Jope, Kenny Knight and Spence, are key members of The Language Club, the longest lasting voluntary organisation relating to poetry in the city.

Mélisande Fitzsimons has published three collections and read recent work, often playfully featuring vocabulary linked to chemistry and science while also displaying a strong lyrical gift allied to dream landscapes and imaginative projections. Fitzsimons is a French writer who has published in both French and English and is building an impressive record as an important writer of experimental poetry in English. She is currently working on a larger collection of her work to be published by Aquifer.

Norman Jope’s work embraces both a lyrical and a journalistic sensibility while discoursing on Europe and on Great Britain in its recent political detours. His poetry is about travel, ‘real’ and imagined (often via google street maps) and combines an analytical grasp both in terms of geography and history with flights of lyrical beauty. Jope also gave a rundown of local history as related to the Plymouth scene via a brief description of the controversial appointment of the first ‘poet laureate’ for the city in 2013. Norman has published several poetry collections, including a recent collection published in Hungarian.

Kenny Knight has published three collections of poetry with Shearsman and is most recognised locally in terms of writing about his home city. His work deals mainly with the place that is Plymouth and he read recent work of a mainly autobiographical nature from his new book. In the question-and-answer session at the end of the reading, he talked about his work as a promoter of events via his Cross Country Writers workshop and also as co-editor of the magazine *Clutter*.

Steve Spence read mainly from recent material aimed at a forthcoming collection but also from his back catalogue which includes six book publications. During the discussion at the end of the event he answered questions on the local scene, in relation to the publishing record (books and magazines) and to an emerging live event culture. He suggested that there is space for an enthusiastic post grad student to produce a thesis on the poetry profile in Plymouth since the early 1990s and its relations to the wider poetry scene.

Panel 15 'Slave Lullabies, Trans*Poetry, and Capitalistic Parasites' (JN)

Two PhD researchers presented in the final panel slot of the conference, chaired by Anthony Vahni Capildeo. The first, Lottie Howson (Queen Mary University London), is working towards a PhD on lullaby but her presentation was anything but twee. Howson explored John A. Lomax's mission to collect 'authentic Black song', detailing how its problematic data collection methods resulted in corrupting the very songs it tried to capture with sanitized white versions, which, ultimately, produced an inaccurate stereotype of the black Mammy, selflessly tending to her white wards. For me, Howson's paper brought back the hidden figures from previous panels, in particular, Coleman and Fowler. In order to absolve the blame of forcing particular groups to provide care, that care gets written into notions of their ideal character – the happy housewife, the generous carer – a kind of idealisation that self-polices through internalised blame and shame.

The second presenter, Harry Brooks-Kent (University of Roehampton) detailed Eleanor Perry's re-examination of the phrase, 'I hope you are well and thriving'. In discussion with Holly Pester in the Q&A, Brooks-Kent pointed out that, when used in the context of a business email, this phrase may not be the simple kindness many imagine. Instead, it is a comment on our ability to work. Our health is being constructed in relation to capitalism, through our capacity for productivity. Brooks-Kent highlighted the importance of the situational context of language in relation to care, and, linking back to Howson's talk, the potential ulterior motives of care.

Panel 16 'Loss, Hospitals, and Crematoria' (ST)

This, somewhat ominously entitled panel, chaired by Rachel Gippetti, was the sixth and last of the so-called reading panels which I thought were such an important aspect of this conference.

Samantha Carr (University of Plymouth) is a former nurse working on a PhD in Creative Writing. Her fascinating poems explored her experiences of working in the NHS as well as her own chronic illness, developing a remarkable dual perspective as health professional and patient. Partly in dialogue with Rafael Campo's poem, 'The Chart', Carr's poem, 'MyChart' reflected on the tension between the objectification of the body in clinical practice and the lived experience of the person being cared for. This poignant and charged performance – moving both audience and performer – found resourceful ways of navigating the terrifying ambiguities of medicine in her account of physiotherapists disagreeing on treatment for her hypermobility condition, giving rise to questions such as: 'is this your pain?' and the statement 'neither of us know if the patella is in the right place, or if it matters'. At its most effective, Carr's poetics reconfigured traditional lyric tropes to give them an eerie subtext, so that the line, 'listen to the wind whistle all night long', also referred to attending to the airway of an ill child.

Richard Westcott's (Independent poet) presentation, 'A Careful Place', narrated this retired GP's unlikely decision to install himself as a writer in residence in a local crematorium. With a gentle humour, but also a rigorous, unsentimental approach, Westcott described the complexity of his engagement with the community of employees in the crematorium, as he explored the capacity of poetry to perform a duty of care in parallel to the performance of care itself – both acts being 'attentive, heedful and focused'. The resulting poems were thus a series of both frank and generous acts of caring attention to the life of the crematorium as it undertook the practice of care beyond death, where Westcott found a sense of loyalty, pride, and love of the local landscape among employees who ultimately felt cared for as a result of his observations of their caring.

Ann Grey and David Woolley (both independent poets and a couple with links to academic and cultural institutions – Grey through her MA in Creative Writing from Plymouth and Woolley through his previous role running the Dylan Thomas Centre) jointly run a care home, and had also jointly composed a collaborative sequence of poems called *Dear Life*. This charming and witty pair spoke of how they had come together following the loss of their partners, and how this shared loss had become a shared poetics. Care thus had a shifting, multivalent quality in this sequence, both present in the poetry and in the relationship/s that the writing explored – in which

each writer had composed poems about their meetings from their different points of view. Navigating the complex trauma of Grey's loss of her partner through a road accident, the couple had taken the remarkable step of moving their bed into the garden and enclosing it with a glass canopy: an astonishing act which seemed to me in itself to figure an act of care through vulnerability. One of the lines which has stayed with me felt like a profound, but gentle, piece of wisdom: 'give worry its own space, let it run around on its own'.

Arriving at this tender and vulnerable place with this panel, which had really foregrounded lived experiences of care, felt like an apt and satisfying conclusion to my experience of the conference and one which I remain very grateful for.

Round Table 'Poetry and Community' (JN)

It made sense for this academic Olympics to have a panel of experts to end the event, lined up like the judges of a figure skating competition. I am, of course, being glib here, as the poetics of the three panellists, Cat Chong (Nanyang Technological University, Singapore), Will Harris (University of East Anglia), and Aaron Kent (Broken Sleep Books), firmly refute such notions of hierarchy and privilege. The round table featured readings from Kent and Chong, Harris having read yesterday. Kent first detailed the community-oriented aims of Broken Sleep Books and then his upcoming collection of poetry, interviews, and essays, *The Working Classic*, which continues his work advocating for working class arts. He highlighted how working-class voices are generally only accepted if they are being appropriated by the middle class. Additionally, Kent detailed a frank and impactful story about being invited to a dinner for a literary prize, which elucidated the disconnect between celebrating underrepresented voices, such as working-class writers, and the often upper-middle class ways in which the literary establishment celebrates them.

Cat Chong began their reading with an apology, stating, 'I don't have anything easy to say', which resonated with Anthony (Vahni) Capildeo's sentiments earlier in the conference, distinguishing care from forced pleasantness. Indeed, Chong's collection, *712 Stanza Homes for the Sun*, is a durational mediation on an array of difficult entanglements, including chronic pain, gender, and state violence. The durational form of Chong's work, plus their use of em-dashes in place of full stops, forced us as the audience to feel the overwhelming onslaught of existence in hostile environments, in bodies for which the world is hostile. Chong's work certainly made me empathise with these injustices and tensions more deeply. But here is the danger that Cooke signalled towards earlier in her discussion around valuing poetry for its empathetic capacities – is it the persecuted poet's responsibility to make audiences

care about what is happening to them? Does such an expectation simply continue the phenomenon that the poet Stephanie Sy-Quia details: ‘the person of colour in the literary marketplace is expected to excavate painful experiences in order to make them eligible for a presumed, majority-white readership – or, indeed, to have this pain emphasised to the point of reduction by critics’.¹⁰ As I write this article, this narrative continues in the Gaza strip, leading Hala Alyan to write in the *New York Times* on 25th October 2023, ‘Why Must Palestinians Audition for Your Empathy?’, a title that was changed within a day, perhaps for asking too controversial a question.¹¹ So, rather than reduce Chong’s work to simple empathy, I would prefer to draw attention to their startling, intriguing, and masterful poetic leaps in the piece. Through a single word, ‘pip’, Chong took us on a journey through the sound of radiation meters and guns, to ‘a poetics of pips that knows how long I have left — to plant or search for soil — a kinship to acknowledge the land — [...] I have no interest in weapons or their complicity — I am love hungry — I want to reply to you’.¹² I encourage your own mediations on (or replies to) this rich, experimental text.

The three speakers’ preceding discussion had far too many fascinating nuggets to recount them all here. One of the repeated and most interesting points was what care means for the individual and for the community. In response to the question, ‘how do you use your poetry to signify and showcase care and how do you use care in your poetry?’, Will Harris responded that ‘you create on a small scale what you want to happen socially’. Meanwhile, Kent’s relationship with care, the individual, and the community was intriguing. He spoke about how he did not want his own poetry and poetic endeavours to be about the self and becoming a better person, but rather about uplifting others. Kent then illustrated the dangerous territory this can stray into, alluding to panic attacks and his recent brain haemorrhage. To my mind, it brought back the notion of care for the carer. Harris noted that poetry practice can act as a turning away, in the sense of a turning of care towards the self, which I felt linked to the concept of mindfulness and the poet’s eye – allowing the world to slow and to pay attention to minute details, a concept I will return to later.

All three speakers were conscious of their roles as individuals in a wider community, with Harris wisely questioning what we mean by ‘community’. Kent spoke about small acts creating larger change for the community of poets, and our indebtedness to the poets around us who support each other. Harris mentioned a particular gratitude for his editor, Rachael Allen – who was extremely influential on his first collection, *RENDANG* – and Kent to Chong – whose poetry helped him understand how to write about his experiences of trauma. The speakers discussed the figure of the editor and the care involved in editing – for instance, knowing how to edit while respecting the

integrity of another person's experiences. They also spoke on wider interactions within the poetry ecology, reframing competitiveness as an act of collaboration, which brings us nicely back to sports...

Closing [Ceremony] (JN)

While I have spent some time having fun with the unintentional sports metaphors and language at play at this event, there was another tension throughout the conference – stillness and movement. While we (certainly I, at least) were excited by the ideas ping-ponging around, the power of this conference actually lay within its attention to detail – its moments of observation, of focus, stillness. Take Sophie Robinson's *Nacre*, the first stanza of which Jennifer Cooke displayed in her keynote. In this poem, it is the little things that have the most power. The first two lines read:

'Little things. little things move / me the most. always have. keep me'.¹³ The first line break makes us linger on the movement of the child that has died and is forever still.¹⁴ It brings to mind that famous line from Ada Limón's 'Instructions on Not Giving Up' – 'it's the greening of the trees / that really gets to me'.¹⁵ Here, the old idiom is true: the devil is in the detail. It is the detail that hurts, the reality which makes us believe 'we could be thinking it, living it, saying it'.¹⁶ In David Constantine's words these are the 'real details of life on earth' for which 'poetry in Britain and Ireland has been notable'.¹⁷ What hammers home in Robinson's poem is the specificity of the folic acid tab, the toilet. Really, the entire conference seemed to say that it is (to invert Hannah Arendt) the mundanity of care that strikes the hardest. In Hesketh's poetry workshops for carers, it resided in Catherine Graham's 'curled up corners' of stickers she uses to distract her Mum when she bathes her.¹⁸ It was being rendered speechless in the face of Christopher Seymour's hypothetical patient. It was Cat Chong's decision to use their time at the podium first to highlight Sarah Jane Baker's wrongful incarceration, reminding us that brutalities happen close to home, in our 'local habitation'.¹⁹ Paradoxically, in order to make strides in care, we must use our poet's eye and pay attention – embrace stillness.

Notes

- ¹ Perhaps the echoes of sport-poetics were filtering through – see works on running by Elisabeth Sennitt Clough, or the recent explorations on mountaineering by Samantha Walton, Anna Fleming, or on swimming by Elizabeth Jane Burnett, Rachel Spence, or JLM Morton.
- ² Uri S. Cohen and Michael Golston, 'Rereading the Long Poem: Introduction', *Dibur Literary Journal*, 1.4 (2017), p. 2 <https://arcade.stanford.edu/dibur_issue/long-poem> [accessed 9 October 2023].
- ³ Will May, 'How Do Poets Learn?', Verse Mentors <<https://open.spotify.com/episode/7Bmxkc5ak-AG3yy62TB9CII?si=891ce193cdad46b6>> [accessed 3 September 2022].
- ⁴ Of course, it is not only lyric and confessional work that can be considered intensely personal, or drawing on trauma, but that is a debate for another paper.
- ⁵ Gboyega Odubanjo, 'Brother', *SAND*, 2020 <<https://sandjournal.com/brother-poetry-by-gboyega-odubanjo/>> [accessed 10 October 2023].
- ⁶ Saskia O'Donoghue, 'Women's History Month: Why Is ADHD so Underdiagnosed in Females?', *Euro News*, 2023 <<https://www.euronews.com/culture/2023/03/14/womens-history-month-why-is-adhd-so-underdiagnosed-in-females>> [accessed 10 October 2023].
- ⁷ Lucie Heath, "'I Had No Choice but to Spend £950 on a Private ADHD Assessment Due to Long NHS Waiting Lists'", *Inews.Co.Uk*, 2023 <<https://inews.co.uk/news/adhd-private-diagnosis-long-nhs-waiting-lists-2344856>> [accessed 10 October 2023].
- ⁸ Jessica D. Payne and others, 'The Biopsychology of Trauma and Memory', in *Memory and Emotion*, ed. by Daniel Reisberg and Paula Hertel (Oxford University Press, 2004), pp. 76–128 (p. 76) <<https://doi.org/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780195158564.003.0003>>.
- ⁹ Verity Spott, *Click Away Close Door Say* (London: Contraband, 2017), p. 68.
- ¹⁰ Stephanie Sy-Quia, 'It Is Psychotic to Draw a Line Between Two Places: On Bhanu Kapil', *The White Review*, April 2022 <<https://www.thewhitereview.org/reviews/it-is-psychotic-to-draw-a-line-between-two-places/>> [accessed 7 December 2023].
- ¹¹ Hala Alyan, 'Why Must Palestinians Audition for Your Empathy?', *New York Times* (New York, 25 October 2023) <<https://www.nytimes.com/2023/10/25/opinion/palestine-war-empathy.html?smid=tw-nytopinion&smtyp=cur>> [accessed 25 October 2023].
- ¹² Cat Chong, *712 Stanza Homes for the Sun* (Talgarreg: Broken Sleep Books, 2023), p. 11.
- ¹³ Sophie Robinson, 'From Nacre', *The Poetry Review*, 2023 <<https://poetrysociety.org.uk/poems/from-mother-o-pearl>> [accessed 9 October 2023].
- ¹⁴ Robinson.
- ¹⁵ Ada Limón, 'Instructions on Not Giving Up', *Poets.Org*, 2017 <<https://poets.org/poem/instructions-not-giving>> [accessed 9 October 2023].
- ¹⁶ Glyn Maxwell, *On Poetry* (London: Oberon Books, 2012), p. 14.
- ¹⁷ David Constantine, *Poetry*, 1st edn (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), p. 14.
- ¹⁸ Catherine Graham, 'Catherine Graham, "Pantomime"', *Carers Poetry*, 2023 <<https://carerspoetry.podbean.com/e/catherine-graham-pantomime/>> [accessed 10 October 2023].
- ¹⁹ William Shakespeare, *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (Minneapolis: First Avenue Editions, 2014), p. 74.

Acknowledgements

Many thanks to the South, West, and Wales Doctoral Training Partnership, who have funded Joanna Nissel's doctoral study, as well as her attendance at this conference.

Competing Interests

The authors of this report were all presenters at the conference that it describes. In addition, Scott Thurston is editor-in-chief of this journal.

