



# Voicewalks

Edited by Darren Richard Carlaw  
and Angela Woods

First published  
By StepAway Magazine / Hearing the Voice

October 2013  
Hearing the Voice  
c/o School of Education  
Durham University  
Leazes Road  
Durham  
DH1 1SZ

Copyright © remains with the contributors

All rights reserved

Lines from *Complete Poems* by Basil Bunting and *Wolf Tongue: Selected Poems*  
by Barry MacSweeney reprinted with the permission of Bloodaxe Books Ltd.  
[www.bloodaxebooks.com](http://www.bloodaxebooks.com)

Editors: Darren Richard Carlaw and Angela Woods

Cover design and layout: Rachel Smith

Typeset in Sabon

Printed by Communisis

Printed and Bound in England

[www.stepawaymagazine.com](http://www.stepawaymagazine.com)

[www.durham.ac.uk/hearingthevoice/](http://www.durham.ac.uk/hearingthevoice/)

# Voicewalks

<b>Foreword</b>	Darren Richard Carlaw and Angela Woods	5
<b>Scoring Silence</b>	Iain Sinclair	7
<b>Voice</b>	Gill McEvoy	13
<b>Behind the Wall</b>	Roz Oates	14
<b>The Other Berlin</b>	Pippa Anais Gaubert	17
<b>Running with the Wandle</b>	Liz Cookman	19
<b>Sanctuary</b>	Martyn Halsall	21
<b>They Say Jump!</b>	Adam Steiner	22
<b>Voices in Motion</b>	Rebecca Chamaa	25
<b>Only a Girl</b>	Carole Glasser Langille	26
<b>You Get Around A Bit Then</b>	Ed Attlee and Hannah Gregory	28
<b>Voicewalks Contributors</b>		



*This publication is supported by a Wellcome Trust Medical Humanities Strategic Award (WT098455/Z/12/Z) to 'Hearing the Voice'. The editors would like to thank Durham Book Festival, New Writing North, The Arts and Humanities Research Council, Will Viney, Rachel Smith, Victoria Patton, Ami Plant, Charles Fernyhough and Rebecca Wilkie.*

## Foreword

Imperceptible to others, the voices in our head accompany us through every moment of exploration. Whether as company or cacophony, the singular expression of the self or the interjections of an Other, the voices only we can hear are one of the most fascinating, and at times frightening, facets of our inner experience.

*Voicewalks* is a creative collaboration between Hearing the Voice, a Wellcome Trust funded interdisciplinary project led by researchers at Durham University, and *StepAway Magazine*, an online journal which encourages writers to walk in the city and record what they see, hear and feel.

For this special issue of *StepAway Magazine* we asked contributors to consider how they experience voices in their minds, how voices help or hinder the navigation of familiar and unfamiliar urban spaces, and what it feels like to ‘see and be seen’ when hearing voices.

Calling into question any hard and fast distinction between everyday inner speech and what can be highly distressing experiences of auditory verbal hallucination, our contributors recognize that one of the most enduring perceptions of mental illness or distress is that it is envisioned as taking place in hidden spaces: hospital wards, doctor’s offices, and in the home. This collection of poetry and prose reframes such problematic perceptions by creatively examining the individual’s experience of hearing voices whilst moving through public and semi-public spaces, challenging the stigmatising stereotype of the ‘crazy person’ who breaks the social laws of such spaces by speaking loudly to their voices.

Our call for submissions received an overwhelming response both from voice-hearers and those who creatively imagine voice hearing. The selection process was challenging in the best possible way, and we would like to thank every writer who submitted their work.

The following ten pieces explore the collision of external and internal stimuli experienced by the urban walker, each presenting a strikingly unique voice and profound personal understanding or interpretation of

voice-hearing.

Our opening short story, **Scoring Silence**, is a commissioned work by the acclaimed London-based writer, Iain Sinclair. The story takes us on a spellbinding drift through the streets of Durham and out into the haunting Northumbrian countryside, introducing us to a key theme which unifies the work of all ten writers presented here, namely: a personal quest for understanding.

As each writer examines the external world surrounding the urban walker, they too discover and reveal glimpses of the complex and often conflicted inner territory of the mind.

*Voicewalks* is an important document which challenges the stigma associated with hearing voices and the perception that it is a static, meaning-less, or otherwise empty phenomenon.

Darren Richard Carlaw and Angela Woods

## Scoring Silence

*This great bell soon died away, however, and its place was taken by a feeble monotonous little tinkle... It certainly harmonized better with the slow-going journey...*

Franz Kafka

It was late in the morning when Norton crossed the town bridge. The apparent frosting of the river, far below, was a consequence of a steeply climbing temperature graph: a cloud-swallowing white haze the man from the capital registered as wavebands of some still-to-be-transcribed riparian score. Water music to counter the rude thrust of basalt, unexorcised hammer blows absorbed into the dark geology of the North: a cliff, a mound, a castle. The road curving towards the famed cathedral, worn smooth by the tread of pilgrims, tourists and purple-robed ordinarys, shone like a wash of beaten hay. And then a slow brown glacier. Weeks of extreme heat had displaced this ancient Celtic Christian rampart, transposing the seasons, melting old stone into virtual snow, and the sweating windows of charity shops into sheets of shimmering blue ice.

Nothing distinguished the exhausted Londoner, beyond the angularity of his batlike ears and the white-gloved, prehensile fingers. He was dun-coloured, head to toe, sun-protected in smoked spectacles and jungle hat, zipped tight in a fisherman's waistcoat of many pockets. These pockets, buttoned or Velcro-sealed, were Norton's marsupial pouches. They contained his notebooks, pens, compasses. He was here under commission. A room had been secured, close enough to distinguish the sonorous drift of the river from the concrete hum of traffic on the arterial road.

Norton's first thought when the offer was made – 'a piece of prose on the relationship between hearing voices and writing' – was to return to territory, unvisited in forty years, where place had first spoken. By lodging once again a short step from the echoing vaults of the great

cathedral, he could tap ironstone, stroke marble, drum tower steps - and provoke oracular sentences. Voices speak in empty rooms. Or, rather, one voice: grave (as Allen Ginsberg heard Blake in Harlem), steady in pitch, slow. Meticulous in diction. Gregory Corso and William Burroughs traded visionary experiences. They saw keys turn in locks, beds move. Presences touched them as they lay, boneless, in drought of language, on rented beds. Corso challenged Ginsberg: 'What did *you* see? *Niente*, no word.' Sunflower weary of time. Within the hot room in the city of sirens, sexually bereft, self-pleasuring, friends scattered to the winds, Ginsberg hears Blake transmit his unbroken code of words.

Norton had a job description: Surveyor of Sound. But 'a piece of prose' was awkward. Like a slice of pie. Norton's prose came in gouts and spills. Like Kafka's functionary in *The Castle*, brought from a distant place to affirm long-established borders, Norton was present but unrequired. He took his name too seriously and made it a law: North One. Like K. before him, he was held in a straggle of pubs, courthouses, private banks, all satellite on the ancient rock. The Norman cathedral was a living organism built to confirm its own essence: pre-architectural, carved from solid air. A stone score from an eternal cycle of praise and future remembrance. Norton knew of a local collector of sounds – birdsong, footfall on clay, petrol-spill fired on sand – who made it his life's work to record the buried layers of *silence* within the cloisters and transepts of the Durham sanctuary.

The primitive concept, back in Haggerston, in the airless clasp of East London, in his shuttered office, was that Norton should walk away from the cathedral – and transcribe, through what highway planners call 'acoustic footprints', the various points at which you could no longer hear the peeling of the bells. But what of atmospheric conditions, prevailing winds, seasonal leaf growth, cloud-cover? Brass bands? Weekend binges? Walking, in Norton's experience, required the filtering out of voices. *In order to allow the oracle in*. Walking, properly managed over many days, formulated the question. The trick, as John Clare discovered, was to venture out of your knowledge, beyond memory-markers that recognise you (and hold you back). Kafka's Land Surveyor



does not survey. Norton's ears were tin: he sang like the gas escaping from a punctured flatfish.

By tramping from London up the Great North Road, Norton did not channel Clare. The poet's head, wherever he lay down, on straw or gravel, was his compass. Movement was melody. The natural world fired him but was indifferent to his achievement. Clare pulled away from source and unravelled: Emmonsales Heath on foot; Wisbech by water; then Newark-on-Trent in the folly of adolescent flight. 'I became so ignorant in this far land that I could not tell what quarter the wind blew from & I even was foolish enough to think the sun's course was altered & that it rose in the west & set in the east.'

The voices in the stones, as transcribed on stolen scraps of paper inside the shelter of a hollow tree, were grounded. The journey out of the High Beach asylum was a séance for lost sound, the summoning of a dead woman, not a passage of miles that would unlock voice as a form of possession. Ventriloquism. Hallucination. Foot-foundered, down in the ditch – the messengers come. Achieving rest in the shade of an oak, at the edge of the village, forgetting how to breathe: *it speaks*. The other. Place.

Miles beyond Clare's Stamford, rubbed raw by salt patches, and reeling from diesel fumes, Norton crashed an ersatz Texas. He took his late breakfast, five days out from London, in the silver tube of an American Diner. He noted: heavy car throwing up showers of loose chippings, clatter of plates, splash of coffee, motorway rhythms shaking the hanging hub-cab decorations. *Heroes and Villains* by The Beach Boys repeating on the jukebox. His nib gouged paper: writing is not walking. Regulate breath. Slow the heartbeat. 'Precision clarifying vagueness,' Bunting said. 'Boundary to a wilderness of detail.'

Botanic gardens stifle human whispers. *Cut the wire*. Nobody to be seen. The physical presence of a recording instrument inhibits the accessing of acoustic fossils: gasps, cries, random sentences floating outside time. *Cut the wire*. New York, Bronx. Russian-Jewish? Male. A heavy smoker clearing his throat of phlegm. Some memory-trace brought from the roadside American Diner? A photograph is a certificate

of imprinting, not the record of a significant moment. 'Did you hear something?' 'I didn't hear a thing.' Early visitors had infiltrated the gardens. Norton heard bells. Were they the right ones? Thick woods baffled his reception of the fatal chimes. *Bury the bell*. That was his first auditory hallucination. In an empty Whitechapel warehouse, close to a library, from which, under certain atmospheric conditions, words escape. Like a voice in a cave. *Bury the bell*.

When Norton marked the spot where the peeling of hours could no longer be heard with any certainty, he was through the woods and up against the farm, the Sewage Farm.

Out west, beside the River Browney, he registered the remains of Bearpark. Water confused the issue. Sometimes, at home on the Lea, white bears with their paws hacked off, were found floating. Beating the bounds was mapping a field. Undertaking the task Kafka's Land Surveyor was never permitted to begin. Here again was a demonstration of Norton's defect (which was also his talent): an overwhelming experience of simultaneity. Synthaesthesia.

A cluster of houses with a public telephone: Pity Me. Wires confused the issue. Norton could follow them to cathedral or castle. Police barracks or prison. Kafka has a pertinent passage clarifying the uselessness of telephones for the transacting of public business. 'We can hear this continual telephoning,' says the village Superintendent, 'as a humming and singing. Now this humming and singing transmitted by our telephones is the only real and reliable thing you'll hear, everything else is deceptive.'

By the time he acknowledged the sonar echo of Maiden Castle (as a homage to John Cowper Powys), and felt the layers of aura stripped by winking red-eye surveillance systems around the high-security prison, and encountered a Remand Centre under royal patronage, and stepped with relief on to a dismantled railway that led towards more sewage works and a hissing motorway, there was no turning back. 'Sanctuary.' Durham was as much ringed by rivers, roads, waste disposal, and privately-operated, state-approved dungeons, as by the rattling tills and praise songs and seven-year pilgrim porterages of Cuthbert's bones.

Norton walked north until he came to the crucified Aeroflot angel

on the hill, the one who branded the sprawling retail park beneath, and then he ran.

At the approach to Holy Island, wooden posts and sagging telegraph wires confirmed the route to be taken. Dimly, Norton recalled the visitation among the deserted ruins of the priory. It was his instinct, more than forty years ago – years? centuries? – to make a pilgrimage to this place. Journey without maps. Texts read. Books of demons. ‘Disobedience, disavowal, the shedding of woofs and weaves,’ Barry MacSweeney said. ‘The salivating of microphones.’

Very calmly, as with the hours spent in the shade of the oak, wondering if he would ever move again, if he had put down roots, Norton was benched among a forest of pinkish-grey stones. Carved faces as portraits of aliens and invaders. The sculpture of decay. ‘Poet appointed dare not decline.’ The castle hump visible through the arches: marram grass and daisies. No coaches, not then. No honey or strawberries. Gulls. Sea birds. An owl. Chickens somewhere. He listened. A brown presence announced itself in the cold grave-sweat of one long buried but active. *Niente*, no word. ‘Something peculiar. Something inexpressible.’

Now – and he was not the first to do it, the footprints, the scents, cheap cigarettes, blood on tweed – he followed telegraph wires in the vague expectation that they would lead to language. A chalice of words. Norse. Latin. Irish. The clumsy warrior fated to bluster right into the cul-de-sac. Film dialogue, misheard, misremembered, written in Paris, intended for Croatia, fashioned in Poland, travels through sacred air: ‘Still the hooting.’

Kafka’s Surveyor, out of his country, gets his hands on a telephone receiver in a low pub. He could be taking a message from Lionel Stander (in Polanski’s film), when he tries to call the elusive Mr Katelbach. ‘It was like the hum of countless children’s voices – but yet not a hum, the echo rather of voices singing at an infinite distance – blended by sheer impossibility into one high but resonant sound which vibrated on the ear as if it were trying to penetrate beyond mere hearing.’

Fingertips white. Blood streaming from Norton’s pointy ears. Blood was in the stone. The agonies and cramps and blisters and frustrations of the road brought him back to the retreat of original silence, sodden feet

dried by otters. Entrance fee prohibitive. Norton moved away, beyond the chained enclosure, to a columned monument that overlooked a broad sweep of incoming tide. The flat roof of this miniature necrophile temple was weighted down with a curved pyramid that Norton recognised: a bell! The sound he had lost in Durham. A solid bell gravid with compacted language and stopped songs. Then the word came, loud and clear, from the other side of the low wall: *Haggerston*. And again: *the swans*.

A short step, not much more than a mile from Holy Island, through the military target area, the hidden bunkers in the dunes, over the railway, searching out the path of the saints, Norton staggered into the maelstrom. The anti-cathedral. A cavernous vault of electronic interference and flashing lights. Of excited children. And coin-devouring machines set in vitrines like sacred relics. The attendants and smiling servers and change-givers were huge, munching on their own product, a swill of burgers and paper cones of fat yellow chips. Here language was shredded. The fun palace was grafted on the flank of a Victorian folly tower.

And this too was Haggerston. Norton, drudging across England, had come full circle. Back to the place from which he had set out, an old village of market gardens and brick kilns, a mile north of the City of London. The hallucinatory voice, coming over the wall into the Holy Island burial ground, confirmed the futility of his long traverse. In Hackney walkers babble constantly into their own fists, into clips and pretty wafers: an acoustic slum. Everything is copied, recorded, processed. The words of the world spin around secret-state doughnuts in Cheltenham, listening posts with no time to listen. In Northumbria, on the fault line of the sacred and the perverse, sound is a manifest of eternity. 'A mason times his mallet / to a lark's twitter,' Bunting wrote, 'listening while the marble rests.'

And the swans? Mute. Carrying passengers across the lake. Hard plastic. Red-yellow beaks and painted teardrop eyes. Circling around green Chinese dragons. Around the splash of a fountain. Voices fade. Norton slumps. The map of this place: YOU ARE HERE.

Iain Sinclair

## Voice

It comes before the squeak  
of wheel and chain,  
booming up the tow-path,  
frightening the ducks,

hits the phone mast,  
scuttles down the water-tower walls,  
crosses the canal and bounces off  
the red-brick terraces.

It's not addressed  
to any of us walking here.  
His hood is a megaphone  
round his face, amplifying

words that baffle  
with their lack of sense.

The bike creaks by at last;  
his feet turn even circles,  
his eyes fixed on some future  
like a sailor's seeking land.

When he's passed  
we hear harsh laughter  
ripping back along the path.

Gill McEvoy

## Behind the Wall

Perhaps it was in the middle of January that I first looked up from my desk and heard the voices coming from the other side of the wall. I thought that they must be the men collecting the rubbish from the shed. But it was after nine in the evening, and already pitch dark outside. I was relieved to be cocooned safely in my flat with the door locked. Still, a part of me was curious, too.

I turned down the Bach I was listening to and concentrated on the voices. “She’s spending a lot of time alone,” a male voice said.

“She likes it that way. No boyfriend, I expect,” another man’s voice, nasal and brittle, replied.

I felt numb. *How did they know that? Were they spying on me?*

They were chattering again. My heart thumped against my ribs as I struggled to follow their words.

“She makes no effort,” the man with the brittle voice was saying.

“She’s getting ’em to do the chasing,” the other man replied.

His tone was ambivalent, neutral. I couldn’t make up my mind whether he was being unkind or not. It was the sort of thing that my grandpa might have said.

Then I stared abruptly at the wall. *These men were outside, surely?* A distant memory flooded my mind of the voice I’d heard in another flat, six years earlier. It was like the second man’s neutral voice, though perhaps warmer. But then, when I had searched for this voice all around my top-floor flat, I had found no-one. Sometimes that earlier voice teased me, seeming to come from above. I had even found a ladder and overcome my fear of spiders by climbing it and poking my head up into the attic. I shone my torch around, but didn’t see anyone. With nothing to explain it, I had put it down to being a sort of half-phantom. I couldn’t say that it was entirely disembodied. Somehow it seemed that a person was really there.

A few months earlier my grandpa, to whom I was very close, had died. He died slowly, a series of strokes gradually robbing him of his

capabilities and dignity. At last, he became a shell of a man, connected to various tubes in the dreary ward of a hospital. When I last saw him he didn't speak at all, and only lifted his hand after being prompted by my gran. I wanted to cry, but my gran was giving me one of her tight-lipped smiles, so I held back.

I remember wishing that the voice I then heard would change into the voice of my grandpa. Though it had a kind tone, it never did. Mostly it gave broken commentaries on things that had happened in the day; just a phrase here and there. I tried talking back to it, but it didn't want to have a conversation. Then, after a few weeks it faded away altogether.

I stared ahead at the beige wall, waiting for the new voices to start again. Two voices, which meant they could talk about me. I didn't like that.

The voices seemed to project through the wall. Being a rented flat, the wall was impersonal to me. Now, they spoke indistinct chatter, and I strained to listen. I wondered if it would make a difference if I painted it my favourite colour, cornflower blue. This could be a 'protective shield' to keep them out, because they were as frightening as they were intriguing. Didn't Freud write of 'the unconscious' having a protective shield guarding the ego from the id's terrible impulses which threaten to destabilise it? Or was I stretching an analogy too far?

"She wants to be understood. That's what I think," said the neutral voice suddenly.

A chilling sensation spread through me, as I started to wonder again if men really were there. The neutral man's voice sounded older and wiser than the brittle, clipped voice. I didn't like the idea of someone explaining me.

I got up, and moved across to the window to watch the shadows of branches shaking in the wind. I listened again to the voices. They were quieter now, like murmurs. This made me afraid again. If these were people, they would be quieter this side of the room.

I suddenly wished that I had a friend here, who could go outside with me to check out the garbage-shed behind the wall. Better still, I could be round at a friend's now.

But I was here. For a moment, I thought about calling a friend. I'd

not told my friends about the voice I used to hear. What if these were ordinary voices? They might think I'm crazy.

I had to go out and see for myself what these voices behind the wall really were. I grabbed a torch and picked up a tennis racquet for my defence, just in case. I wasn't sure what help the racquet would be, but it was better than going empty-handed. I took my mobile, too. I wanted to know that I could ring for help.

It was chilly outside.

Cars were passing, and as they rushed past me the voices became louder. I could still hear each voice separately – and as more cars passed they became a deafening roar.

"I thought she wouldn't come out," shouted the brittle voice. His tone was nasty.

"Maybe she needs to find out," roared the older voice.

Find out what? I wondered. Then, I remembered that I was meant to be searching in the sheds for the voices. So where were they? There was more shouting as the cars sped past. Were the men on the other side of the road, in the darkness? I felt oddly disorientated.

I wanted to shout out, *Just go away! Leave me alone!* But something stopped me. Perhaps it was fear about the neighbours hearing me... all the same, I couldn't bear having these men spying on me and judging me...

Could I?

Roz Oates



## The Other Berlin

I walk the streets of Berlin early in the morning, before the pale winter sun has risen. It is then that I can hear the voices of another city, beneath the surface of ordinary reality. Before the lights have come on and before the people have gotten up and walked their dogs and deiced their cars, before they have started for work and school and errands, it is then that I can hear. Voices, just out of reach of daily awareness, like the rush of a stream in a deep underground cavern.

Outside the ornate locked doors, I listen to the drifting murmur of my neighbours' minds as they lie sleeping in their winter beds; I know what they are hearing in the formless lands we call dreams. I listen to the melodic thought patterns of the city mice hibernating in their nests, to the chirping and hissing of the cockroaches crouching between the snow and the cobbles underfoot. Alone on the street, I pause to look up to the open spaces above, to the snowy predawn sky. I hear subtle messages emanating from the stone walls of the tall *Jugendstil* buildings, the groans of the past soaked deep into the stone; the voices of all those that have lived here before integral to these structures as surely as the beams and the bricks. Generations of crying, of laughter – screams, murmurs, gasps.

I continue past the large dark church whose bells will later clang out demanding across the neighbourhood. I hear the centuries of hope and oppressive despair condensed in the icy air all around. The biting wind clutches at my clothes and relentlessly attacks any area of bare skin. The cold also has stories to tell, it speaks of the northern forests and the grey Baltic sea, of the breath of the Lusatian Highlands, travelling to these low plains with the Spree river; of the ancient travails of generations fighting against the bitter cold for their very lives. So many voices sounding out across the countless lifetimes of harsh survival, building this other city with murmurs, cries and screams.

A solitary old man in a grey coat, with bowed head, hunched shoulders and deep lines etched into his face, walks slowly towards me. As he passes me, decades of grief, disappointment and longing speak

to me with each faint thump of his heart. He says, *We are alone in a desolate place. There is no God to care.* For an instant his eyes find mine and beg me to give him a different answer. I respond, *Yes, but listen to the whispered voice of the snow falling on our faces, surely that is our sign.*

I continue across the empty square.

Pippa Anais Gaubert

## Running with the Wandle

I hadn't meant to go running with the river, but she told me that, with all the junk I eat, it was about time I did some exercise.

*Don't you think you're getting a bit of paunch?*

*I don't know*, I said.

*Right, get your running shoes on.*

We started near Wandsworth dump and by the time we passed the electricity plant we were flying, midges tailing us, shining in the sun like a swarm of gold dust. The path ahead was strewn with obstacles, the rotting detritus of the city, but she didn't care. We went past rusting motorbikes, over a pile of industrial rubble, just missing a broken washing machine. It skimmed my leg, blood wept down my skin, but still we kept on running.

*Better duck*, she said. Then everything went black.

*I think I... we should go back*, I said and she grabbed my hand. Faster we went, faster in the dark, guided by chance along the underground tunnel. The walls drew close, closer again and we jostled for space in the black.

*Watch out* she said. Our shoulders clashed, bone on bone ricocheting us both hard onto brick. My arms were wet and sore, but we didn't stop. Then, just as suddenly as it had vanished, daylight returned.

*Wait*, I said. *Just till I can breathe again.*

She said, *d'you think I stay looking this good by stopping?*

We twisted through tall buildings, past blacked-out windows and long patches of scrub. The river racing and me alongside, lagging a little, but I didn't stop. Something snagged my heel, ripping skin and my trainer went flying.

*Oh yeah* said the river. *Careful of the others, too. It's been raining.*

Behind two, no four, others joined us. Graveney, another Wandle. Or was it seven? More. We ran, all of us, quicker, stronger, ripping through the city like a tidal wave.

*We can't keep this up forever*, I said.

*We don't have to*, she said. Up ahead, the Thames cut across our path. Traffic lights loomed, then turned red.

*We've gotta... gotta stop*, I said, but they just kept going. *Stop*, I said, *stop, stop*. They kept on running, spilling out into the Thames until they weren't running with me anymore. *STOP*, I said, but they didn't. And just like that, they were gone.

Liz Cookman

## Sanctuary

She towed her trolley, hubble-bubble, over cobbles  
and entered the cathedral through the door with a hiss  
and knock-back. She waited for deafening Amenning echoes to fade.

New words bombasted in the language of stone and brass,  
long military roll calls under bats' wing creak of flags;  
the *The* in the slate floor that followed her everywhere.

So many dead were announcing themselves in the dust.  
She flinched, preferring candles with their tongues of fire.  
She heard half-remembered singing, and went to hide

backstage behind the altar. Men were emerging  
out of the walls, chanting their status and rank:  
*Bishop, Archdeacon, A Great Servant of the State.*

She watched a woman collapsing under dead weight  
of murmuring among arches that propped medieval air.  
She saw that her lips barely moved, and knew she made

the same sounds as voices clamouring in her head,  
sometimes from the powerbrokers, sometimes from memories  
that inspired the saint by the lake at work on his prayers

whose eye she caught in stained glass; who understood.  
She knew he would stay by the water with its lap and beat,  
and bring her the stillness of beech trees that answered back

only in breathing, that hosted absolving birds.  
She went outside, and found the whole city miming,  
except for the daughter spelling *Welcome* in sign language.

Martyn Halsall

## They Say Jump!

I've never quite fitted into a crowd. I like my own company without too many people. At best, it can be me and someone else, not talking too much, or too loud, then I'm happy and it's right.

Saturdays are always bad for this. We all go bobbing along together, whether we want to or not. The tall men with open shirts and not enough hair stand out at the top and everyone else has to slip by them as they look down. Go past the glass fronts and stepped-out corners of little white shops that all throb at you. Shouting light and reflecting all the sun, I can't go in because they all play their music too loud. It's full of voices, voices singing from the stereo and other people singing along to them, and talking about lists and the rest shouting above the rest. It messes up your thoughts so you can't even see straight, never mind to think what you're supposed to.

Bad enough on the outside, they suck you in and it ends up where everyone has to go one-way, or go home, all along cobbles that they put out just to trip you up. But I'm going to meet my friend, Luke. He's kind and doesn't talk too much, I can stay with him for maybe an hour, but I don't like him much longer than that. I have to get out somewhere near here, to get above the voices and the noise and people stepping on my shoes, I'm glad I don't have laces.

The next exit was a stairway that runs up to the city wall, it rolls over the edge like spare pie crust, like that sticking out from girl's jeans – *we call that a 'muffintop'* –. I'll look for Luke up there, I always see him wandering about back at the big house, he wears his hair brown and has a big thick fisherman's jumper – *too hot for today* –

Eleven, twelve, *twelve*, I've counted that one twice and voice says: "scusa-mai, scusa-mai," then giggling. Two very small girls are coming down the narrow stairs blocking my way. They look different with small dark eyes and start giggling at me. I feel the fabric on my chest, are they laughing at me or my clothes? They're small but I can see their bodies bouncing under stretched elastic braces, they go on giggling. I just want to get by. I turn my head up flat to try and slide past. My back scrapes

along the tough stone wall I'm pressed against them – *not all bad, not bad at all* – I'm at fifteen steps now, I yell: "nice chests!", right into their faces. They've stopped giggling and I start sweating. I go much faster up the rest of the stairs without counting, shouting 'sorry' behind me. Not sure why I did that – *great fucking tits* –

It's a relief to get to the top. It's brighter, and closer to the sun and sky on all sides. Too dizzy to look up for long. Wrapped all around it's the city walls, a stone sea and I'm the captain in the middle. Over there, on the far side by that squat tower, there's a figure in black bobbing about. It must be you, trailing your shadow after every corner, there's no one else here – *you cannot catch what does not turn around* –

I've got to find his face, just to check. I keep going but the dark bulge is slowly shrinking further away. It's cobbles and old bricks again, they force your legs wobbly and push my feet at bad angles. It's zig-zags following round the big battlement nose. It's hotter out here but you have to get out to the edge before you can move back in again. It's all too many steps: having to tell everyone your feelings, it's just another waste of time, like being told to smile when you don't even feel like it.

There's no one here. I go right round the small tower in a stupid circle – nothing but more rows of brick and dull teeth. I hop foot-to-foot, everything is hot today, very hot. Might be best if I walk round – *stumble on* – and try to find him – *wander hopeless* – will you stop being so negative, this isn't helping.

High walls are made to keep you safe, but it just traps you in. With more and more people talking, walking and taking up space with their rough voices bouncing all over telling you: 'stay, go, stop, run, do it – jump!'.

I flap my arms to cool off, feet hurt, – *mine too, you shouldn't have walked so far* –. I ask it out loud, not caring who else hears, – *there is no one else* – "Well what else am I supposed to do? I'm not allowed on the bus, the girls on the stairs keep laughing at me and I had to try and get here on time. It's hard to be on time." – *And you're always late* –

I sometimes cover my ears when I get too angry and struggle to calm down, it's technique they give us to try. I definitely feel safer with my ears closed-off, my palm like an echoing hollow shell. But it makes my face

even hotter and the sounds come bubbling up, pushed back at me, all m-m-make-making fun of me, and that stut-stut-errrs back – *what what what's wrong wrong with youyouyouyouyou?* –

Face to face with an old window by my side and something behind it, pushed in by the narrow frames with a big drooping mouth. I hear nothing now. It has messy brown hair, and a fisherman's pullover on, it's bottle green and has holes in it. I have met someone that moves with the sun watching over his shoulder forcing him to wink and glimmer. He is wearing a sticker – *we have a winner* – it says: 'Hi, my name is LUKE.'

Adam Steiner



## Voices in Motion

I walk for whole days  
The voices don't tell me to walk  
But I do  
The voices talk to me  
Constantly  
As I pass from pavement  
To sidewalks  
Wandering through gang riddled  
Parts of the city  
I am scared  
Terrified  
Tortured  
I listen  
And I must keep moving  
Each part of the city  
Becomes a piece of the landscape  
For the voices to create  
A story  
Generally religious  
I think I am Jesus  
And it is the second coming  
I go on like this for days  
Until my husband finds me  
Half starved  
And frightened  
The voices begin to subside  
After several days  
Of medication  
And sleep  
I still walk  
But there is a hallow sound  
Inside  
The voices lay silent  
Waiting to start

Their symphony  
Of sickness  
And collaborate  
My motion driven  
Demise

Rebecca Chamaa

## Only a Girl

Only a girl hungry as I would have kept walking  
those bewildering streets, looking for something  
she couldn't find, not knowing there would be different roads  
in other cities about to disappoint her, offering  
only sticks and wire and smoke. What did she want?  
She could see, from the edge of her eye,  
something disappearing around the corner,  
but where did it go, why was each sharp turn  
like a crumbling bridge she was nervous  
to cross over? Why did 4th street  
run into 11th and where was the East Village anyway?  
It was a good hour to wander, dusk washing up on the shores of plazas,  
gathering enough strength  
to spill over into the scummy light, flickers from city lamps  
rising to the surface of early evening as people headed  
for distinct destinations, while her walking  
was a way of waiting, the only thing  
she knew how to do. She moved faster, desperate to arrive before it was  
too dark, not knowing  
her life could not copy  
anyone else's, though she was not yet able to speak  
its language or decipher its hidden messages or trust  
where it was heading, it felt sticky and tight around her.  
She had no money to buy what was in windows, no where she wanted  
to return.  
*You can't beat a dead house.* Shops had turned their back on her.  
Her name was being called, she heard it, but it wasn't her  
name yet, she couldn't make out where the voice  
was coming from, her long hair,

useless, her blue dress, the mess she left behind,  
useless. What was in her way? Years accumulated  
like the dark, but they were so frayed that they seemed, when she looked  
back,  
layered and threadbare at the same time. It was cold  
but her face was burning, the hours  
galloping away, *who set the horse on fire?* Joy in simple things  
had let her go, had washed its hands of her, and still she kept walking,  
as if she had a single purpose, as if she knew *nowhere*  
was also a destination, that these voices were one way  
she could get as close as possible  
to who she was, and she was all she had  
of herself.

Carole Glasser Langille

**You get  
around a bit  
then**

12.34      On Bethnal Green Road I spot John Wayne in a dress  
Dylan's in my pocket, as always, talking about boys.  
It's hot, and the street makes its case for

swimming costumes *or* leatherwear,  
for the aviator, sportsman and motorist.

*Bethnal Green Rd, E2*

19.02      The hijab mafia (again)  
careening round the corner.  
Scarves, dresses tied in place with weights,  
sailing, hiding the road. Cups of tea and  
turbans, gold and henna.  
Comparing wrists from billowing sleeves.  
Just coming up to Arnold Circus.  
There now.

*Arnold Circus, E2*

13.05      A shirt, from Shoreditch High St, or...  
Pink petunias, out now, and lavender  
*Blue... baby blue...*  
Looks good in the shirt, dapper.

*Virginia Road, E2*

15.35      I don't like the way he makes me feel – uneasy,  
on edge, but somehow – attracted.  
More tanned now, arrogant. I don't like...

*Stamford Rd, N1*

14.10            There now.  
                 Coconut oil on warm chest,  
                 elbow creases,  
                 bits unnoticed until they get wet.  
                 Short shorts, really short. Black.  
                 I don't mean to be disrespectful or anything,  
                 but I can see your panties,  
                 *just.*

*Dalston Lane, E8*

22.30            Laughter from behind pot plants.  
                 Look, I'm sorry,  
                 I thought it was obvious.  
                 I thought you said to come there  
                 because that's where I thought you were.  
                 Palm-open-angle, tilted to the sky,  
                 that's where the signal is.  
                 Now we have to turn around.

*Bishopsgate, E1*

18.40            Orientation shifts with  
                 where the shade is,  
                 a slow altercation  
                 *une cigar-ette?*  
                 French Lolita, pushes mouth up close.  
                 Soft touch, silky touch (a twelve year old boy).  
                 No (another) it's silk *cut.*

*Abney Park, N16*

20.36            That's what they say in Brideshead.  
                 Bananas, washing-up liquid, apples,  
                 behind lace curtains an argument, a meal, a burble,  
                 a dog barking from inside a car  
                 (hopeful, hopeless, hopeful, hopeless)  
                 Boundary St getting its wires crossed.

*Boundary Street, E3*

18.20 Come on in here love.  
(A bowl of something indescribable  
eaten on a formica table.)  
The kind of human-sized  
street you don't find much anymore.  
Nice type – deco;  
caffs and healthcare between scaffolding.  
You get around a bit then.

*Lower Marsh, SE1*

12.15 Advance warning.  
Weak bridge.  
Just keep your wits about you.

*Shoreditch High St, E1*

Wits?  
White roses,  
19.20 a souvenir of just after seven o'clock,  
on a day you wouldn't quite believe was Friday.  
The calm inhale of the roundabout and its finer pointing roads.  
Calvert, Virginia, Camlet and Club.

*Romilly Road, N4*

17.00 One day, one day.  
Are you waiting?

Montague Street, W1

7.10 Yes.  
You must have to use telephone booths  
all the time.

Newington Green, N16

I'm sorry?  
No.  
You've lost me.

*New N St, W1*

7.30

I spotted  
abandoned answering machine  
by the recycling bins.  
Come.

*Newington Green, N16*

Alright then.

*New N St, W1*

7.35

What peace is brought by  
Swimming in sunlight.  
Or just swimming.

*Southgate Road, N1*

That's that dear.  
There now.

*Mount Pleasant, WC1*

12.34

Rehearsing all the options,  
then returning to the same thing.

*De Beauvoir Square, N1*

There now.

*Gray's Inn Square, WC1*

**Ed Attlee and Hannah Gregory**

## Voicewalks Contributors

**Ed Attlee** is a writer and researcher currently undertaking a PhD at the London Consortium. She is writing about dream spaces, laundry practices and the space of the home. She has written for *Time Out*, *Intelligence Squared* and *Kicking Against the Pricks* and has had poetry published in *Poetry & Audience* and *Trans Script*.

**Rebecca Chamaa** recently completed her first volume of poetry about living with schizophrenia. She has been published by *San Diego Writer's Ink*, *Evangel*, *Hallmark* and *Judson Press*.

**Liz Cookman** is a London-based writer. She is currently working on her first book which creatively explores our relationship with nature. She holds an MA in Travel and Nature Writing and a BA in Creative Writing.

**Pippa Anais Gaubert** is a writer and artist based in Berlin. She was born in Austin, Texas but grew up in Southwest England and has since lived in several different countries. Her writing has been published in various anthologies and journals including *Litro Magazine*, *Digital Americana Magazine*, *Cactus Heart Press*, *Black Scat Press*, *94 Creations Journal*, *Telling our Stories Press*, *StepAway Magazine* and *The Erotic Review*. She is also a contributor for NPR. She is currently working on a novel. Her website is: [www.pippaanaisgaubert.com](http://www.pippaanaisgaubert.com)

**Hannah Gregory** is an independent arts writer based in London. Recently she has written on topics from Google Glass to Minimalist art to espresso, and has been published in *The White Review*, *Frieze*, *Domus*, *Icon* and others.

**Martyn Halsall** is a retired journalist whose work included 15 years as a staff correspondent for *The Guardian*. He continues to review poetry



for the *Church Times*, and is poetry editor of *Third Way* magazine. For the past year he has been Poet in Residence at Carlisle Cathedral. He lives and writes in rural West Cumbria and holds postgraduate degrees in creative writing and creative literary studies from the Universities of Lancaster and Cumbria.

**Carole Glasser Langille** is the author of four books of poems and a collection of short stories. Her latest book, *Church of the Exquisite Panic: The Ophelia Poems*, has been nominated for The Atlantic Poetry Prize.

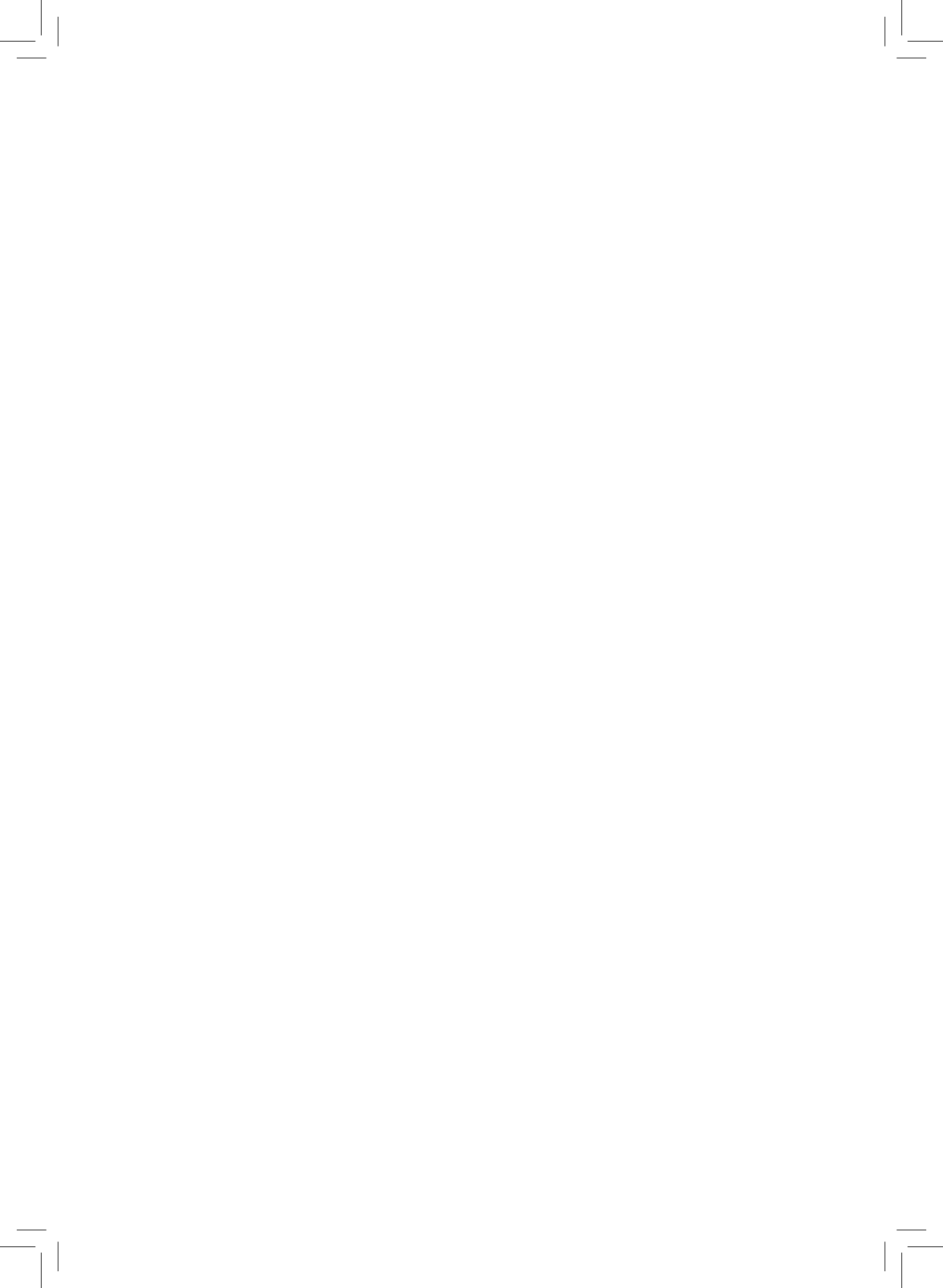
**Gill McEvoy** has published two pamphlets of poetry (*Happenstance Press* 2006, 2008), and two full collections from *Cinnamon Press: The Plucking Shed* (2010) and *Rise* (2013). She runs several regular poetry events in Chester, and was formerly Artistic Director for the spoken word section of Chester Literature Festival. She is a Hawthornden Fellow.

**Roz Oates** is a first-year Ph.D. student at Durham University, who is part of the *Hearing the Voice* research team. Her thesis explores how narrative can be used to assist voice-hearers with distressing voices. She also has an MSc in Medical Humanities from King's College London, and an MA in Critical Theory from Sussex University. In her spare time, she enjoys creative writing, and has written a novel about anorexia for teenagers.

**Iain Sinclair** has lived in (and written about) Hackney, East London, since 1969. His novels include *Downriver* (Winner of the James Tait Black Prize and the Encore Prize for the Year's Best Second Novel), *Radon Daughters*, *Landor's Tower* and, most recently, *Dining on Stones* (which was shortlisted for the Ondaatje prize). Non-fiction books, exploring the myth and matter of London, include *Lights Out for the Territory*, *London Orbital* and *Edge of the Orison*. In the 1990s, Iain wrote and presented a number of films for BBC2's *Late Show* and has, subsequently, co-directed with Chris Petit four documentaries for Channel 4; one of

which, *Asylum*, won the short film prize at the Montreal Festival. He edited *London, City of Disappearances*, which was published in October 2006. Recently he has published *Hackney, That Rose-Red Empire* (2009) and *Ghostmilk* (2011).

**Adam Steiner** worked in the NHS for many years as a cleaner, driver and administrator. His first novel, *Politics of The Asylum*, is a modernist nightmare about the decline of a West Midlands hospital and will be published in 2013. He has written on J. G. Ballard, Elizabeth Taylor, death of affect, hospital life and the Apollonian desire for black and blue. Adam has been published on the *Sabotage Times* and *Erotic Review* websites and is co-founder of the literary magazine, [www.herecomeseveryone.me](http://www.herecomeseveryone.me)





Iain Sinclair

Gill McEvoy

Roz Oates

Pippa Anais Gaubert

Liz Cookman

Martyn Halsall

Adam Steiner

Rebecca Chamaa

Carole Glasser Langille

Ed Attlee and  
Hannah Gregory

A special issue of

-----  
**STEPAWAY  
MAGAZINE**

In partnership with

-----  
**DURHAM  
BOOK  
FESTIVAL**

**wellcome**trust  
Strategic Award

hearing the voice

 **Durham**  
University