

“In the café in the Midland hotel framed upon the walls are selected verses of WH Auden’s poem Night Mail made famous as part of the eponymous film. In the film the poem is read to an original score by Benjamin Britten. I have used this poem heavily as the source, inspiration and character of the first of the conference poems.”

Night Training

This is the night mail crossing the border,
And oblige bark the bailiffs, by order,
Letters from providence letters to the poor,
The lot on the corner and the girl next door.
Pulling out tears on debts steady climb
The grades are against her on poverty’s line.
She carries past like it were a boulder
Shovelling screams over her shoulder,
Snorting noisily as law passes
The children like wind bent grasses.
Some turn heads as invisibility approaches
She stares on the sideline at blank faced coaches.
Seems noone can turn her course;
As she stumbles, broken by unspoken laws.
In this disquiet she passes yet noone wakes
And shoulders in bedrooms gently shake.

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Dawn does not freshen her climb is undone.
Down towards depression she descends
Towards the screams thugs yelping in shades of shame,
Towards fields of statistics and furnaces
Set upon the dark plain, like giant chessmen
Her family waits for her
In the dark of them, beside pale steel locks
Men long for news.

No letters of thanks, nor from the banks banks,
No letters of joy from the girl or the boy,
(but receipted bills and citations
To inspect new stock or their relations),
Nor applications for situations,
No letters above declarations,
Of her illegality and complications
And gossip, gossip, plans for nation's,
News substantial no ring fenced financials,
Letters with faces scrawled in the margin
The breakdown uploads the bailiffs charge in,
No letters from uncle cousins nor aunt
They too locked in the same dance

Letters of demand delivered by hand,

Letters of law delivered by claw

Written on paper of every hue,

I think the violence is fighting you;

The cold and official pouring,

Into the breaking passage of falling.

Clever stupid short and the long

The typed replies spelt all wrong.

Thousands are still asleep

Dreaming of increasing demands

Of disappearing in the quick sand

Or invisibility like Branston's and Crawford's.

But we shall continue our dreams

Shall wake soon and long for letters,

And noone will hear the postmans knock

Without a quickening of the heart,

For Who can bear themselves forgotten?

When a child is in care, government is the legal parent. It would not be unfair to say that government can be judged upon its effectiveness in its role as parent above all other roles. The way government treats its childrens services must be the top indicator as to the way government is across all sectors. This poem is about the positive hard working nature of the conference.

Who Can bear to Feel themselves Forgotten

We'll be building capacity in the system

We'll be introducing the reforms

There'll be high quality care for all

There'll be shelter, there'll be storms

Every Child Shatters in every class

Children Trust so needs must

Rain splinters the midlands glass

Amongst pressing panic, no fuss.

We'll be building capacity in the system

We'll be introducing the reforms

There'll be high quality care for all

There'll be shelter, there'll be storms

We'll be masters of teaching and learning

Raising the bar to the sky

There'll be better meta-cognitive letters

Through the child's eye,

We'll build capacity in the system

We'll introduce the reforms

There'll be high quality care for all

There'll be shelter, there'll be storms

It isn't good enough to survive

When each deserves to *live*

If one hand takes away the day

Then two at night shall give.

For here is the extended service

The blockers gone to enable

The core offer from where all leads

The truth behind the fables

And so here we are, in the delivery unit

Babies pass at an alarming rate

Policy's through one door

The children of The state.

We'll be building capacity in the system

We'll be introducing the reforms

There'll be high quality care for all, after all.

There'll be shelter, there'll be storms

There'll be unpredictable factors

There'll be bad practise and good

There'll be detractors amongst contractors

There will be blood.

We re closing the attainment gap

Between then and now

Progress and challenge

And how

Lemn Sissay for ADCS Conference July 11 2008

We'll be building capacity in the system

We'll be introducing the reforms

There'll be high quality care for all

There'll be shelter, there'll be storms

Lemn Sissay